

STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE:

BRITISH BALUCHISTAN - A CASE STUDY IN IMPERIAL
POLICY AND TRIBAL SOCIETY, 1876-1905.

SIMANTI DUTTA

Ph.D.Thesis in History.
School of Oriental and African Studies.
University of London.



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A B S T R A C T

This thesis intends to explore the relation of tribe and empire in Baluchistan, as an interaction of distinct political entities, and also as an experimental confrontation between the opposed social and cultural norms associated with imperialism and tribalism. The discussion will start with a preliminary definition of tribal society in chapter one. This introductory section will also trace the evolution of local political structures in the historical context of tribal strategies to secure resources and capture local power, and the early influence of imperial forces in particular those of Persia, Afghanistan and British India, in re-aligning tribal politics within the matrix of external empires, culminating in the creation of the British Baluchistan Agency of 1876, which set the larger historical framework for subsequent political patterns and trends. The second chapter will explore the imperatives of the British imperial involvement in Baluchistan, and the interlocking of the politics of the Great Game in Asia during the nineteenth century with local tribal factors, which led to significant territorial restructuring of tribal homelands, at the expense of tribal ethnicity, and old established patterns of political linkages. Internally for

Baluchistan, the process of imperial penetration entailed the political and administrative encapsulation of a tribal society by an external and higher political power. Consequently Baluchistan became the political meeting ground for cultural norms fostered in contrasting social milieux. The tribal aspect of this equation is discussed in the third chapter in terms of group identity, social exchange, and material assets, which sponsored a culture of conflict intrinsic to Baluchistan society. In imperial ideology, tribal turbulence was incompatible with political control and stable government. Thus the fourth chapter sets out to explore official British strategies designed to remould tribal society in the colonial image of order and stability, and assesses the reaction of tribes to this external manipulation of their social order. The fifth chapter concentrates on the economic aspect of imperial penetration, by studying the impact of British revenue policy on tribal land structures, levels of rural income, and their adequacy for material survival. This will be followed by a concluding section, dissecting the balance sheet of empire in Baluchistan, to see if the intrusion was merely an exercise in the strategic restructuring of a military frontier, or a catalyst as well for new role definitions in tribal society, and altered social perceptions.

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S.O.A.S.

Introductory Note

This thesis is a specific case study of imperialism and tribalism in a localised area, reconstructed on the basis of historical data, and social structural models derived from anthropology. In general, the subject of British India's tribal frontier, has been saturated with political analyses of the Afghan wars, tribal revolts, punitive expeditions, and British strategic manoeuvrings. Such approaches have brought tribal society into focus primarily through imperial lenses. Thus nineteenth century British writing on tribal Baluchistan mirrored the classic imperialist concern for political mastery over 'savage' tribes, the need to civilise and use them in the equation of imperial power politics. Biographies like T.H.Thornton's Sir Robert Sandeman: His Life and Work on our Indian Frontier, and J.J.M. Innes's The Life and Times of General Sir James Browne were exercises in image building, corresponding to the Victorian ideal of the strong paternalist minded administrator, anchoring the discipline and culture of empire in the turbulent depths of tribal society. Similarly R.I. Bruce's The Forward Policy addresses itself to the main debate on the extension of the Indian frontier in the late nineteenth century, and interprets the imperial advance not just in military-defence terms but as the progress of civilisation rolling back the

boundaries of primitivism. Essentially such writings constituted an ideological licence for empire, while the emphasis on personality and character created the heroic icons of imperial culture.

In later writings, Baluchistan was increasingly treated as a minor strand in the general history of the Indian frontier, perhaps because after the period of initial colonisation, the main political interest shifted to the North-West Frontier Province and Afghanistan which continued to provide violent spectacles of tribal militancy and conflict. C.C. Davies's The North-West Frontier depicts this marginal interest in Baluchistan, for after discussing very briefly the establishment of the Baluchistan Agency and the Sandeman system of government,¹ he devotes the rest of his work to a study of the northern Pathan sector of the frontier, Afghanistan, and the impact of the Russian threat on British policy in general. D.K. Ghose's England and Afghanistan also restricts itself to a similar cursory treatment of proposals and events leading to the occupation of Quetta.² Lambrick's John Jacob of Jacobabad is essentially biographical, and attempts to credit the Sind officials for the type of tribal administration undertaken later in Baluchistan.³ Other writers, like J.A. Norris, have discussed Britain's controversial interference with the Kalat State during the course of the first Afghan War.⁴ Malcolm Yapp's

Strategies in British India also offers an analysis of the Government of India's early involvement with Baluchistan, in 1839, and makes the interesting point that from this period, Baluchistan claimed attention as a major strategic alternative in the scope it offered for direct control, to structure British influence on the frontier, as insurance against the fragility of the Afghan buffer, and the misadventure of Britain's Afghan war.⁵

While the above works highlighted the strategic significance of Baluchistan, and placed it within the general context of frontier history, there was still a need for specialised studies on the area in order to bring into focus the regional structure of politics and society. Baluchi writings like those of M.S.Khan's History of the Baluch Race, and M.K.Marri Baloch's Searchlight on Baloches and Balochistan, concentrate on Baluchi activities in ancient Syria and Persia, tribal migrations and conflicts in medieval west Asia and Baluchistan, and conclude with brief comments on the British-Baluch confrontation in the early nineteenth century. T.A.Heathcote's thesis, Baluchistan and British Policy was the first of its kind to concentrate primarily on the history of events in mid-nineteenth century Baluchistan. Although it limits itself to a purely political study, it does undertake a detailed

examination of the Baluch tribal struggles between 1857-1876, with a synchronous analysis of imperial policy priorities, as well as the contradictions and rivalries between the provincial governments of the Sind and the Punjab, which exacerbated the internal crisis in Kalat, and set the course towards British occupation of Baluchistan in 1876. The main conclusion he draws from his study, is that while the occupation was officially presented as growing out of the need to re-order the internal tribal crisis in Baluchistan, in reality it resulted from the British Government's desire to strengthen its position against Russia in central Asia.◀

As opposed to the primarily imperial focus in Heathcote's text, Inayatulla Baluch's study, Greater Baluchistan offers a nationalist interpretation of Baluchistan's political identity and niche in history. The text attempts to reconstruct a national identity for Baluchistan on political and cultural criteria, which articulate a sense of alienation from the imperial process, and also consciously reject any common cultural ground with India. This nationalist definition asserts that Baluchistan is physically more central Asian than Indian, ethnically Baluchis would like to be regarded as Arab, their language is Persian in origin, while socially the tribal normative order

Baluchmayar, distinguishes the Baluch from the Hindus and Muslims of India.⁷ Politically, I. Baluch claims Baluchistan was a sovereign state, and never vassalized by a foreign power. The spirit of independence survived in popular poetry, which was both anti-colonial and nationalist in outlook; conflicts with the British were extolled as patriotic acts. Between 1923-25, Baluch politicians translated existing national sentiments into a formal demand for a sovereign state of Baluchistan, which was aborted by the British and the leadership of the Muslim League on political grounds.⁸ While the study has made a significant contribution to the understanding of regional politics in pre-1947 Baluchistan, it has suffered from the malaise of interpreting past contradictions in mainly nationalist terms. Much of nineteenth century tribal politics in Baluchistan has been interpreted as nationalist inspired, without taking due account of the relationship between tribal behaviour patterns and the tribal political process itself. Moreover historically the notion of a sovereign Baluchistan is dubious, since the area acknowledged Persian supremacy in the eighteenth century; subsequently various districts paid tribute to the Afghan monarchy; and finally in the nineteenth century it came under British political and military occupation.

The particular study of Baluchistan undertaken in this thesis, between 1876-1905, attempts to fill a chronological and interpretive gap in the study of the region as undertaken by Heathcote and I. Baluch. Heathcote's account concludes in 1876, while I. Baluch's study focuses on the early history of Baluchistan, and the emergence of nationalist politics between 1919-1947. I have taken 1876 as the point of departure to begin this thesis, in order to bridge the continuity in narrative between the above mentioned works. It is also my intention to interpret the thematic content of the period as a dynamic exchange between the large political concerns shaped by the British Empire and specific tribal interests. Tribal reality stretched on the wider canvass of empire allows, the particular to be viewed in a varied and general contextual framework. Personality and politics, ideology and inspiration, prompted the extension of imperial power and the structure of control in tribal lands. The kinds of images, themes, and motifs circulating in the imaginative and administrative field of empire are relevant for defining the hegemonic context within which tribal society had to readapt in the post 1876 period. My analysis consequently tries to depict the shape of this field, its internal constraints, its pioneering figures, and ideological canons, which extended a new political culture in the

borderlands. Imperial directives however had to contend with tribal reality in redrawing the political map of Baluchistan. Discussing the significance of this tribal dimension in the political restructuring of nineteenth-century Baluchistan, I have explored tribal culture patterns and the social structure of groups based on strategies of conflict and co-operation, prior to the intrusion of any alien authority. The nature of the tribal societies and inter-groups relationships are essential for an understanding of the type of political control which evolved in tribal areas, which hinged on paramountcy being tempered by a large measure of tribal autonomy. This intersection of empire and tribes may be conceptualised in social science terms, as one of encapsulation, with the political structure of the tribe being "partly independent of, and partly regulated by,"⁹ the larger encapsulating, imperial structure. A distinctive feature of encapsulation as Nina Swidler has pointed out in her anthropological study of the Brahui tribes of Baluchistan, is "that each political structure operates with different normative and pragmatic rules".¹⁰ Within the constraints of such a model, consensus and control in British Baluchistan, must be perceived as types of political accommodation negotiated between imperial authority and tribal society. While the empire sought to impose its order and ideology on tribal society, by co-opting tribal

chiefs to represent imperial interests, at the same time tribal leaders sought to exploit imperial resources to reinforce their status and power in the social system. Such perspectives have largely guided my discussion on the empire-tribe structure in Baluchistan. Assessing the social implications of this restructuring, I have analysed mutations in traditional tribal models adapting to alien political pressure. I have used two view points to survey the impact of imperial intrusions on the social symmetry of the tribal order. In the first instance I have examined the interlocking of colonial administrative form with the tribal political structure, which I aim to show created ambivalence and ambiguity in tribal leadership roles, exacerbated internal conflicts in the tribe, and instituted a new political framework which left no legitimate space for tribal type violence and military adventurism, causing ideological disjunction and distortion of the tribal normative order. Secondly I propose to study the economic constraints which underpinned the social order, in terms of the colonial reorganisation of tribal landholding patterns, rent and revenue structures, which endorsed the powers and privileges of the traditional ruling elites, at the expense of ordinary tribesmen caught in the web of archaic custom and the new often inflated revenue demand imposed by the British.

By analysing the above aspects of the imperial-tribal encounter this thesis attempts to highlight the significance of the imperial era in shaping and influencing political leadership and the socio-economic structure of late nineteenth century Baluchistan, which crystallised into an enduring, exploitative social pattern, persisting into modern times. Historically, the infusion of imperial politics in tribal society redefined Baluchistan to serve as a front for political ambition and expansionism. The imperial script reinterpreted tribal territorial and social diagrams, in order to legitimise external authority, and alter the strategic contours of India in the northwest frontier. The use of Baluchistan's social and strategic resources to prolong the politics of conquest and empire was the leitmotiv of British involvement in the region, and the accompanying imbalances in tribal society, part of the inevitable fall-out of the imperial experiment in drawing new boundaries of power.

The specific area under study in this thesis is limited to British Baluchistan, and the territories administered by the Agent to the Governor-General, known as the Agency territories. This directly administered part of Baluchistan, covered 46, 692 square miles, an

area about the size of Sind. It comprised six Districts - Quetta-Pishin, Sibi, Loralai, Zhob, Chagai, and the Bolan Pass.¹¹ As the Political Agent in Sibi exercised political control over the Marri-Bugti tribal areas, these tribes have been included in the subject matter of the thesis. The decision to restrict the area of study in Baluchistan was dictated by lack of space in the current work. A detailed history of the Native States of Baluchistan requires a separate thesis on its own. Secondly in the late nineteenth century, the directly administered districts of Baluchistan were central to imperial power politics and strategy options, and therefore of greater relevance in construing a history of the empire-tribe relationship in Baluchistan, forged in the wake of macro-political concerns and local tribal criteria. Greater political and administrative attention also ensured better documentation of archival material on British Baluchistan, which led me to undertake a sectional study of the districts on which adequate source material was available. Essentially the themes explored here, and the material accessible, suggested containing the field of research to the directly administered areas of Baluchistan.

Chapter ITribal Society and Imperial Linkages in Eighteenth and
Nineteenth Century Baluchistan.

Locked in the bleak mountain and desert environment of India's northwest frontier, Baluchistan constituted a natural incubus for the survival of a tribal form of society, screened from the urban influences of the Persian and Indian civilisations, which encompassed it on the west and the east. In this hermetic retreat of remote mountain valleys, rocky escarpments, and sandy wastes, social existence was patterned on a rule of warrior chiefs, a militarised tribal structure, and a predatory ideology, which sanctioned violent options in the struggle for material existence on a poor economic base. The cultural marginalism of the area also ensured the primacy of animistic beliefs and magic rites over Islam, which provided a veneer of religious orthodoxy, without displacing the corpus of ritual sanctions that imparted a mythical, phantasmic flavour to the spiritual preoccupations of tribal society.

Physical Setting

Embracing the eastern tip of the Persian plateau

and the westerly arc of the Himalayas , the Baluchistan landmass carries the scenic imprint of deserts and mountains which intrude on either side. Describing Baluchistan in The Imperial Gazetteer, Hughes Buller wrote:

"The general outlook resembles that of the Iranian plateau...Rugged, barren, sunburnt mountains, rent by huge chasms and gorges, alternate with arid deserts and stony plains the prevailing colour of which is a monotonous drab".¹

The shifting desert front, separating Chagai District from Afghanistan to the north and Persia to the west, deludes the eye with its strange "moving sandhills ... mirages... and severe sandstorms".² Northeast from Chagai the arid volcanic complexion of the country transforms into the rugged mountainscape of the Quetta-Zhob-Loralai region. Here the mountains of the Toba Kakar and Central Brahui ranges girdle the Quetta-Pishin valley and serve as the boundary line with Afghanistan. In this rocky terrain of vastly contrasting elevations, valley bottoms lying below 3000 feet and mountain peaks rising to over 8000 feet above sea level, the Toba Kakar range reaches spectacular heights of over 10,000 feet, before dropping south westwards to continue as the Khwaja Amran range. Across the Khwaja Amran offshoot lies the Khwajak Pass, the main arterial link between the Quetta valley and Afghanistan. The historic Bolan Pass commanding the main approaches to India from central and western Asia appears south of Quetta, in the high

mountains belonging to the Central Brahui range.³ Eastwards from Quetta, the spurs of the Sulaiman range constitute the mountainous backdrop in Zhob, Loralai, and Sibi. This mountain system consists of a main ridge running north-south, flanked on the east by parallel serrated ridges. To the north, narrow gorges and clefts in the mountains provide outlets to the Punjab. The highest point of the mountain chain, at 11,295 feet, is known as the Takht-i-Sulaiman (Solomon's throne), and serves as the focal point of Hindu-Muslim pilgrimages.⁴ These mountains in northeast Baluchistan share the barrenness peculiar to the Western Himalayas, where rocky scarped inaccessible mountain faces alternate with long narrow valleys.

Rivers draining this mountain basin do not carry large permanent flows of water. Heavy autumn rains usually create flash floods in river beds that for the rest of the year contain no more than shallow streams, that frequently disappear into the pebbly bottom. As one observer remarked: "Baluchistan was a 'land of rivers without water, of forests without trees...'"⁵ Among the rivers which carry any significant volume of water are the Zhob and Pishin Lora. The Zhob River rises to the east of Pishin, and receives the drainage of the Toba Kakar range from the north. Together with a smaller stream the Kunder, it constitutes the main water

reservoir in the Zhob valley. The Pishin Lora rises in the western slopes of the Toba Kakar range; it carries the drainage of Quetta-Pishin and finally dissipates into sand channels near Nushki. Further south the Nari River drains Loralai and Sibi.⁶

Climatic variables heighten the aridity of the land. The low humidity combines with great evaporation in summer, and a scanty rainfall to create a dry semi-desert type environment. Lying just outside the monsoon belt the annual rainfall averages between 3-12 inches.⁷ Temperatures fluctuate between extremes of heat and cold. During summer the temperature climbs to 122°F. in the plains of Sibi, while it plummets well below freezing point in winter at northern hill stations like Ziarat.⁸

The dry rocky terrain frames a barren landscape with a sparse vegetable covering. Upper valleys have thin coverings of cedar, juniper, and dwarf palm, while the lower ones are covered with bushes and shrubs. Few large forest trees are to be found, and mountains in many places stand bare and brown. In 1887, Lord Dufferin, the Indian Viceroy, travelling along the Baluchistan frontier, was struck by its bleakness: "It is awful country to pass through - bare and highly mountainous, and empty of everything but desolation".⁹

This colourless parched up land only springs briefly to life after sudden falls of rain, when as a Baluch ballad describes:

"The heavy atmosphere laden with dust and haze is transformed into one of transparent clearness... the brown mountainside is covered...with a bright green carpet, the dry water courses become flowing streams, waterfalls leap from the heights and...the shepherds stride along singing in front of their flocks".¹⁰

Ethnological Composition and Ecological Adaptation

Baluchistan provides a social contrast of three major ethnic types - Pathan, Baluch, and Brahui. According to gazetteer information compiled in 1905-1907, the Pathans constituted the bulk of the population in Zhob and Loralai. In Quetta as well, they formed 78 percent of the population. By way of contrast, the Brahuys living in the southern part of the district numbered only 8 percent.¹¹ The Baluch presence here was negligible, being confined to a few transient flockowning groups. However the Baluch commanded a stronger presence in Sibi, where they occupied the foothills of the Sulaiman Mountains, and the canal tracts in Nasirabad Tahsil.¹² Here they numbered about 48,000, and the Pathans followed with 18,000.¹³ The Brahuys were an insignificant migrant group in Sibi, merely visiting the plains in winter months. However the Brahuys commanded a majority in Chagai, where two of their main tribes, the Mengals and the Muhammad Hasnis

numbered 4,600 and 4,300 respectively, with local Baluch groups adding another 3,500 to the total population.¹⁴

The demographic balance therefore created a Pathan enclave in northeast Baluchistan. The sense of Pathan identity was strengthened by tribal tradition which looked back to Zhob as "the cradle of the Afghan race".¹⁵ Pathans have probably lived in the northwest frontier since the time of Herodotus, if the identification of his Paktyake with Pakhtuns is accepted.¹⁶ The original Aryan occupiers of northern India probably figured among the early ancestors of the Afghans. Subsequently as Greek, Persian and Turkish invaders passed through the frontier, some of their numbers must have intermixed with the local population and broadened the ethnic identity of the Pathan tribes. Physically the Pathans conform to the Indo-Aryan racial type¹⁷ and their language Pashtu is commonly regarded as an eastern Persian dialect.

Pathan genealogical memory offers its own version of the tribal past. Tradition traces descent to a putative ancestor Qais bin Rashid of Ghor in Afghanistan. Qais's ancestry is traced to Afghana, the descendant of Saul, the first king of the Jews. According to tradition, Qais travelled to Arabia and received a blessing from the Holy Prophet. He had three

sons, Saraban, Ghurgusht, and Baitan, who became the eponymous ancestors of the three major branches of the Pathan community.¹⁸ In Baluchistan the Kakars, Panis, and Mando Khels, claim descent from Ghurgusht; the Tarins, Shiranis and Mianis are among those who trace their ancestry to Saraban; while the Ghilzais and Suleiman Khels look back to Baitan as their early ancestor.¹⁹

Spread across Zhob to Quetta-Pishin, the Kakars numbered 105,444 persons, representing 53 percent of the total Pathan population in Baluchistan. Among their major sections the most numerous group, the Sanzar Khels (64,000), inhabited Zhob.²⁰ Other sections like the nomadic Sargharas and Targharas migrated from Zhob towards Quetta-Pishin and Toba Kakar in search of new pastures, and settled in their new locations by the nineteenth century. At about the same time, the Sanatias (another Kakar section) also appeared as an established land owning community in Quetta.²¹ Among other important Pathan groups migrating to the Baluchistan borderlands were the Panis who made their way from Ghazni and Peshawar to Sibi during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries;²² The Tor and Spin Tarins also seem to have established themselves in Sibi and Quetta-Pishin at the same time.²³ The Achakzai Pathans strategically situated on the Baluch-Afghan

borderland, migrated from their homeland towards the close of the eighteenth century. One of their leaders, named Achak left Afghanistan with his followers, and migrated to the Toba region of Baluchistan. By the nineteenth century, the Achakzais were in possession of the western part of Toba, known as Toba Achakzai, and the Khwaja Amran Range in Chaman, as well as some additional land in Pishin.²⁴

Synchronous with the emergence of a Pathan niche in northeast Baluchistan, Baluch tribes migrating from western Asia successfully colonised parts of Sibi, Nushki, and the desert tracts of the Perso-Baluch borderland. The word 'Baluch' implies nomad or wanderer, and traditional accounts recall a migration from Aleppo in Syria, where before the Prophet's birth they lived in low hills surrounding the city. Subsequently, when Yazid the second Ummayyad Caliph fought with Hazrat Imam Husain, the Baluchis who sided with the latter, fled eastwards after Husain's martyrdom in 680 A.D. to avoid Yazid's revenge.²⁵ Modern Baluch scholars support an early Syrian connection mainly on entomological evidence. They point out that the names of present Syrians, such as Al Marri and Al Buledi, correspond with Baluch names like Marris and Buledis.²⁶

Others like the Victorian explorer Thomas Holdich

perceived a similarity between the Arabs and the Baluch, suggestive of a common ethnic origin.²⁷ But R. Burton, another nineteenth century traveller dismissed the Arab connection in favour of a Persian one.²⁸ He was supported by M.L.Dames, a Baluchistan Political Officer who had studied the Baluch closely and concluded:

"The Baloches ... were mounted archers like the Parthians;... they had striped rugs and carpets - all characteristics referring rather to Northern Persia than Arabia. When they came to close quarters they alighted and fought on foot, like the warriors of the Shahnama... They are an open hearted race ... in religious matters they are free from fanaticism ... it would be hard to find a greater contrast than that which they offer to the intense, concentrated fanatical Arabs."²⁹

The Baluch language as well was a derivative from an archaic form of Persian.³⁰

Historical sources also support the Persian connection. Firdausi's Shahnama suggests that the Baluchis were originally located near the Black Sea, and that they actually served in the Persian army under Kaikhusro, the sixth century ruler of Persia. But the raiding activities of the Baluch forced the Persian ruler Nausherwan to lead a punitive expedition against them,³¹ which probably set in motion the first exodus of the Baluch from northern Persia to Kirman. Subsequently the changing political climate in central Asia forced the Baluch to migrate further east. The military power of the Ghaznavids,

followed by the strong centralised government of the Seljuk Turks, probably rendered the entire Kirman-Seistan region unprofitable for raiding and set in motion large scale migrations towards Baluchistan. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries some of the important Baluch tribes like the Marris and Bugtis had taken up permanent abode in the Sulaiman Mountains, bordering on Sibi; the Dombkis occupied outlying areas of the Sibi District; the Jamalis and Umrans settled in the Nasirabad tract.³² Among the important tribes which settled on the western frontier along Chagai and Western Sinjerani country were the Rakhshanis, Sinjeranis, Damanis, and Rekis.³³

The third major racial type in the ethnic mosaic of Baluchistan were the Brahuis, an enigmatic group bearing a strange linkage with the Dravidian population of south India. In the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the writer on Makran states: "The ancient Dravidians, of whom the Brahui is typical, still exist in many parts of the Makran districts which are assigned to them in Herodotus".³⁴ But Denys Bray in his ethnographic study of the Brahuis, found no particular physical resemblance with the Dravidians, yet he was forced to conclude that the Brahui language in its grammar and structure belonged to the Dravidian language group.³⁵

Brahui tribal tradition, however, claims descent from Mir Hamza, the Prophet's uncle, who migrated from Aleppo. Thus Brahuīs trace their lineage from the seven sons of Ghwaram, the son of Braho or Ibrahim, who was descended almost immediately from the Prophet's uncle. Only the descendants of these sons are regarded as true Brahuīs. They include the Ahmadzais, the ruling family in Kalat, and their collaterals, the Iltazais, Sumalanis, Kalandranis, Gurnaris, Kamabaranis, Mirwaris, and Rodenis.³⁶ Hughes Buller suggests this nucleus of 'pure' Brahuīs was drawn into Baluchistan from the west,³⁷ and that its leaders were successful enough in local tribal struggles to establish permanent political dominion in the precincts of Kalat. But for the remaining tribes, the generic term Brahui subsumed a wide assortment of ethnic affiliations. In Quetta, the main Brahui tribe, the Raisanis, derived from an original Afghan nucleus located in the Thal Chotiali area. They are credited to have helped the Brahuīs to acquire Kalat, in the aftermath of which they donned the Brahui title and acquired lands in Quetta.³⁸ The nucleus of another Brahui group in Quetta, the Shahwanis, had a mixed Baluch-Afghan pedigree.³⁹ Interestingly in Chagai, the predominant Zagar Mengal tribesmen (Brahuīs) believed they came from a district called Zughul, situated somewhere in Samarkand in central Asia.⁴⁰ Another numerous Brahui tribe in

western Baluchistan , the Muhammad Hasnis, could have a central Asian origin , since they are also found extensively in Seistan, Luristan, and along the Helmand valley. Thus the Brahuis were a heterogenous group, composed from different ethnic strands drawn from the far reaches of western and central Asia, Afghanistan, and even India, if the Dravidian strain in their language is interpreted as some form of past interlinkage - a kind of "mute witness" as Hughes Buller writes, "to ethnical movements occurring before the rise of authentic history".⁴¹

Existing on the fringes of tribal society were a few minority groups like the Dehwars, Jats, and Hindus. The Dehwars, a peasant group, with a probable Tajik/Persian background, lived mainly in dehs or collections of mud houses in the Quetta region.⁴² The Jats located in Sibi and Nasirabad were also cultivators, and numbered among the early inhabitants, who were probably converted to Islam by the migrating Muslim tribesmen.⁴³ The Hindus who lived under tribal protection, served as traders and were dispersed in scattered settlements around the country.⁴⁴

Ecological Adapatation

Adaptations, territorial distributions, and movements effective among the Baluch, Brahui, and

Pathan, conformed to a specific pattern, which showed the Pathans living mainly as agriculturists in Quetta-Pishin, Sibi, and Zhob; the Baluch as landowners and cultivators in the plains of Nasirabad, Sibi, and Nushki; while the Brahuis seemed to combine a small degree of agriculture in the Quetta region and Nushki, with pastoral pursuits in Chagai.

As the principal eco-type of northeast Baluchistan, agriculture absorbed a majority of the Pathan and Baluch tribes. The Census of 1911 showed 43 percent of the Pathans as settled, with another 33 percent as partially settled.⁴⁵ Among the Baluch, except for the Marris and Bugtis, the remaining tribesmen in Sibi were largely agriculturists.⁴⁶ The major Brahui stake in the agro-economy of northeast Baluchistan, was confined to the landholdings of the Shahwanis and Raisanis in Quetta.⁴⁷

Agricultural landuse in Baluchistan was severely hampered by physical factors. In Quetta-Pishin, the main constraints on agriculture stemmed from the presence of large mountain tracts which could never be brought into cultivation. In other areas like Sibi and Zhob, large stretches of alluvial land lay uncultivated due to lack of water. It seemed as if nature had conspired to create a wasteland. As Denys Bray noted: "... often

enough nature is so perverse that where there is land, there is no water, and where there is water there is no land".⁴⁸

In this hard environment, tribesmen practised three types of cultivation - khushkaba, dependent on rain or snow; sailabha, subject to flood cultivation; and abi, which relied on permanent irrigation from karezs,⁴⁹ springs and streams.⁵⁰ Despite the severity of its mountainscape, Quetta with its higher rainfall (ten inches) annually, and efficient karez irrigation, was the most populous and productive of the Baluchistan districts, with an average density of twenty-four persons to the square mile.⁵¹ For abi cultivation, tribesmen relied on artificial irrigation from wells, springs and karezs. Additionally for dry crop cultivation, lands in the Quetta region were usually embanked, the cultivated plots being known as bands. These bands were filled with rain or flood water in the summer or winter, after which they were ploughed and the seed was sown.⁵² But in other areas like Pishin, Sibi, and Zhob, dry crop cultivation depended precariously on summer rainfall, except for the Nasirabad plains which benefited from the periodical inundations of the Indus River which supplied the high level canals from June to September.⁵³ Two principal harvests, rabi (spring), and kharif (autumn), marked

the agricultural calendar; the former produced barley and wheat, the main subsistence crop of the region, and the latter maize, juari, and rice. Cultivators however, tended to rely more on the spring crop, which was regarded as the ghatta fasal or major harvest. Tribesmen relying on agriculture as their main source of livelihood, were often exposed to hardship from fluctuating crop yields, due to the erratic water-supply. This often caused periods of acute scarcity, like the spell between 1830-1840, and again between 1897-1902.⁵⁴ For many tribesmen therefore, the reality of the agro-economy spelled a below subsistence level existence, in which the main objective was not the accumulation of a surplus but survival itself.

The pastoral sector in Baluchistan encompassed the Kakar Khorasan tract north of the Zhob valley, Achakzai Toba in Chaman, the Marri-Bugti country in the Sulaiman hills, and most of Chagai and Western Sinjerani country, where grass covered hills were only suitable for rearing livestock. Herding activities were controlled by the seasonal cycle as well as the availability of water and pasture. The Mando Khel Kakars and the Haramzai Sanzar Khels were usually active in Kakar Khorasan. They migrated to the upper hills in May, and returned to the Quetta-Pishin valley in August to find fresh pastures and water holes which tended to be scarce in the

grasslands of Zhob.⁵⁵ In the Toba plateau, the Achakzai nomads spent several months (April-October) tending livestock, and engaging in a measure of khushkaba cultivation during years of good snow and rainfall.⁵⁶ Northeast of Sibi in the valleys of the Sulaiman Mountains, the Marri Baluch scratched a living from a barren land, where only three percent of the surface was culturable due to lack of water. The Marris lived in small nomad camp communities, circling around their tribal area in relation to the availability of pasture and water. Even in good years the country offered no more than scattered pasture grounds⁵⁷, and in years of drought when local resources contracted, they usually encroached on the resources of neighbouring tribal lands to survive.

In the west, desert tracts along Chagai constituted the hub of pastoral activity. Here sandhills thickly sprinkled with bushes and vegetation formed a lifeline for the families and flocks of nomadic tribesmen.⁵⁸ The Zagar Mengal Brahuis who owned land in Nushki, the more fertile corner of the District, lived by bartering surplus livestock for grain from the local Rakhshani Baluch tribesmen, who were primarily cultivators. The Mengals also spent the major portion of a year, and in times of drought the entire year, pasturing their flocks in Afghan Registan.⁵⁹

The pastoral nomadism of the Mengals was therefore a useful safety valve against the uncertain rainfall in western Baluchistan; it also allowed for co-operation with the agricultural Rakhshani tribesmen, minimising the dangers of niche competition and over exploitation of local resources.

In the more arid lands of Chagai and Western Sinjerani country, the tribes subsisted almost entirely on pastoralism. As one nineteenth century account of the area described: "Camels, donkeys, sheep, and goats, thrive on its thorny bushes, grasses, and shrubs. Its climate, its sticks, its sand and stones seem to suit them and the inhabitants who are quite contented with their lot".⁴⁰ The Baluch and Brahui nomads who inhabited this region usually herded their flocks in the hills to the northwest; and they supplemented their pastoral incomes by cultivating a few acres near Chagai Fort after the rains.⁴¹ There was no money in circulation among these nomads, and all business transactions were conducted by barter.⁴² The fertile wheat growing district of Garamsel in Afghanistan offered a close and cheap market to the nomads for purchasing goods they required.⁴³ This easy access to grain across the border, also helped to perpetuate the nomadic scheme of tribal existence in western Baluchistan. Moreover the simplicity of nomadic life

pared material demand down to the minimum. As one report on the nomads of Chagai described: "Spring brought with it immense swarms of locusts. The nomads found in these pests sufficient food to supply their wants."⁶⁴

The flock-owning industry turned primarily on the rearing of camels, horses, sheep and goats. Sheep were more valued than goats in the pastoral economy, as their wool fetched a higher price, usually between Rs.13 to Rs.22 per maund, as compared with goats' hair which retailed between Rs.10 and Rs.8 per maund.⁶⁵ Goats' hair was used for making ropes, sacks, and tent flaps, while sheeps' wool was used for making felts, cloaks and rugs.⁶⁶

Livestock was frequently owned by one man or a group of males related as brothers sharing an undivided patrimony. Work roles were determined by sex and generation. A man would see to the breeding and shearing of flocks, while a woman would pitch the tent, churn milk, and take the flocks out to graze.⁶⁷ Old people and children assisted in the latter activity. Only large herdowners could afford to hire shepherds whose wages were paid in kind, in the form of food, clothes, and a few livestock.⁶⁸

The subsistence level tribal economy could only support a low standard of material existence. The infertility of the land was matched by a low density of population. Quetta-Pishin had the highest density with twenty-two persons to a square mile, and Chagai the lowest with only one person per square mile.⁶⁹ The majority lived in rural areas where they congregated in small villages of less than five hundred inhabitants. These villages were merely collections of mud huts, which were evacuated in the summer when cultivators encamped near their fields in blanket tents.⁷⁰ G.N. Curzon, later Viceroy of India, noted in his travels across eastern Persia in the late nineteenth century, that the Baluch village was a "cluster of squalid huts round a central keep or fort where the Khan [tribal chief] resides".⁷¹ These huts were made from matted palm leaves in south and western Baluchistan; and in the colder northeast they were constructed with mud and sun dried bricks. Huts were shared with the livestock belonging to the families, and domestic possessions were usually limited to a few felts for bedding, skins for holding grain and water, and some wooden bowls.⁷² Purely nomadic tribes lived in mat tents made from goats' hair which could be easily dismantled and carried as required.⁷³

The underdevelopment of the region was also

marked by the scarcity of urban centres. In pre-British Baluchistan, the typical town was only the fortified stronghold of a tribal chief or community, which served as a symbol of political dominance in the locality. Historically, the towns of Kalat, Quetta, Pishin and Sibi, developed as fortified military centres in a warring marchland, scarred by the struggles for survival and power among rival tribal groups, and the violence of foreign imperial armies forcing a passage to India. Kalat, the centre of Brahui power in Baluchistan, was a typical fortified town, with mud walls, bastions, and mounted guns.⁷⁴ Between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries Quetta and Pishin served as garrison towns for the Afghans, Mughals, and Persians, as each group sought to control the frontier.⁷⁵ In 1614, two English travellers visited Pishin; they called it Pesinga and noted that it contained a small fort and a "store of soldiers for securing the way".⁷⁶ By the mid-eighteenth century Quetta passed under Brahui control, while Pishin reverted to the status of an Afghan dependency.⁷⁷ Like the other Baluchistan towns, early references to Sibi describe it as the fortified capital of Sewistan (probably a Hindu kingdom which pre-dated the tribal migrations), which ultimately converted into the stronghold of local Pathan tribes.⁷⁸ Central to these militarised centres was the chieftain's fort, about which Curzon wrote: "In Persia, a fort is

seldom more than a rectangular walled enclosure with flanking towers. In Baluchistan it has more the appearance, except for its material, of a medieval European keep, having lower walled courts and a lofty central tower with a watch turret above all".⁷⁹

The juxtaposition of fort and village was the tribesman's architectural imprint on a desert and mountain environment.

Tribal Structure - Chiefdom and Confederacy.

Pivotal to the social design in Baluchistan was the tribal structure, which evolved along different lines among the Baluch and Brahui on the one hand, and the Pathans on the other. The Baluch and Brahui organised into centralised chiefdoms, which later linked together to form a confederate structure, approximating a rudimentary regional polity. The Pathan tribal scheme was acephalous in concept, and internally segmented on the basis of lineage. Moreover among Pathans there were no trends to evolve a pan-tribal union like the confederate structure of their Baluch and Brahui counterparts.

The tribal chiefdom was probably conceived in violence. Among the Baluch, associations in clan organisations or bolaks, based on familial ties, represented the earliest recorded form of social

groupings.⁶⁰ But the pressures of migration, and the scarcity of material resources in Baluchistan forced Baluch, Brahui and Pathan groups into conflict relations for territory and survival. This warring environment created the need for strong leadership, based not only on age and clan relations, but on competence and the need for continuity. Consequently clans re-grouped around leaders who were successful in the course of conflict and the acquisition of territory. During this transitional phase old clan names were submerged; the term bolak became obsolete by the close of the eighteenth century, and in its place emerged the tuman representing the new composite Baluch tribe drawn from the amalgamation of clans and leaders.⁶¹

As the tribal structure crystallized under external pressure, among the Baluch and Brahui, it assumed the form of a military style command unit, based on a hierarchy of sections and leaders, geared to mobilise in a crisis situation. The sectoral plan of the tribe rested on a hierarchical arrangement of sections which were not functionally equivalent. At the highest level of segmentation, the section was termed as takkar in Baluch and Brahui; below this level, came the subsection, known as shalwar in Brahui and phalli in Baluch; and the minimal lineage group at the lowest end of the tribal scale was called pira

in Brahui and paro in Baluch.⁸²

The pira or paro, represented the extended family group, consisting of the eldest living male and all his descendants; family members were responsible for the day to day production of subsistence goods. Above this level, the shalwar was composed of a number of kindred groups of agnates, occupying a common area, based on patriliney and patri-locality.⁸³ Here group cohesion invoked the brother-brother bond as well as lineal father-son solidarity. Members of the group were required to be close collaborators in subsistence activities. The extended family and agnatic kin group tended to regulate access to the material resources of the household economy like cultivable land and domestic herds.

At the level of the tribal section itself, membership was ascribed by a share in the section's landed estate. Such shares were granted to male members only, on the basis of their agnatic status as patrilineal descendants. But at this superstructural level, where strategic decisions were taken, battles fought, alliances pledged and co-operation effected to ensure the future of the tribe, cohesion based on patrilineal descent was forced to accommodate the principle of political union based on contract, and

ideological commitment to the good and ill of the tribe. This was mirrored in the concession of tribal membership to alien groups without agnatic status, on the basis of political contract between leader and follower. Joining a section in war for a share of the booty, or simply moving on to follow a more successful leader, were standard ways for aliens to become incorporated in a different tribe. The newcomers were called hamsayas (sharers of the shade) and required to identify with the common political interests of the tribe, namely the corporate blood feud liability.⁸⁴ But affiliation involved subordination to the group leader; the term hamsaya implied an alien would receive protection, but he would have to place his services at the disposal of his protector. In this manner the crucial structural principle of the Baluch/Brahui tribe came to be established, namely the subordination of the section members to the leadership. After a trial period, the political admission of the alien was sealed by giving him a share in the tribe's landed estate and a woman in marriage.⁸⁵ This gave the new member a vested interest in sustaining the material resources of the tribe.

A complement of political offices and leaders exercised control over the sections and subsections. In the scaled leadership scheme of the tribe, authority devolved from the sardar or chief at the head of the

whole tribe, through the section leader termed wadera in Baluch, and mir in Brahui, to the motbar or headman of the subsection. The offices of sardar as well as that of wadera/mir were hereditary.⁶⁶ Customarily the chief's near relatives assisted in tribal management,⁶⁷ forming a ruling caucus in the tribe. Consequently the chief's section or sardar-khel, evolved into a small aristocracy within the tribe, enjoying special status and privilege in the system.

The figure of the tribal chief dominated the socialscape. His authority reached into most spheres of tribal life. To ordinary tribesmen the chief's person was specially sacrosanct, invested with divinity, and an oath on his head or beard was the most binding of all oaths taken in the tribe.⁶⁸ Armed with supernatural attributes, the tribal chief functioned as the ultimate arbiter in society, settling disputes, imposing life sentences, and fines, from which there was no appeal.⁶⁹ The corpus of customary law provided him with guidelines, and section leaders could give him advice, but the verdict was his decision, and no appeals were allowed against it. The chief's privileged status was underwritten by an economic order, which allowed him to hold in addition to his ordinary share in the tribal land, a special share in the centre of the tribal area known as sardari baksh. Moreover on

the accession of a new chief he was allowed to inherit an extra share of the patrimony. Apart from landed wealth the chief was entitled to charak, or one-fourth of the value of the thing in dispute, for all cases which came before him for settlement. Traditionally he received one sheep or goat from every separate flock of forty as dan or offering. He also received a contribution in cash or kind on ceremonial occasions of births and marriages of ordinary tribesmen .⁹⁰

By its prerogatives, the chieftaincy not only distanced itself from the bulk of common tribesmen, it also grew sufficiently in stature to exercise effective control over the chain of secondary leaders in the tribal system. Although section leaders participated in corporate decision making with the chief, through representation on tribal councils⁹¹, their main function was to interpose a chain of officials between the chief at the head of the tribe and the lower sections, ready to carry out his instructions. For the chief, they were useful tools for clamping controls on the tribe.

The mir or wadera controlled an entire section in the same way as a chief presided over a tribe. He participated in strategy making and settled disputes, for a proportionate fee, at the sectional level. He was assisted by another official figure the mukaddam

who was responsible for collecting the fighting men of a section prior to a predatory expedition, in return for which he was allotted a special share of the plunder known as gul.⁹² Among the Baluch there was another official - the rahzan; he held a hereditary office, accompanied all military expeditions and functioned as an executioner whose primary duty was to punish any deserter from the battlefield.⁹³

The wadera and mukaddam communicated with tribesmen through the headmen or motbars, who controlled the various subsections. Denys Bray observed that the motbar, "...is the mouthpiece of the mukaddam and wadera among the tribesmen under him and is responsible for the execution of their instructions."⁹⁴ Thus if a fine was imposed on the tribe, the motbar would be responsible for collecting the amount owed by his group, and delivering the sum to the wadera.⁹⁵ The position of motbar tended to be hereditary, but an incompetent headman could be dismissed by common consent. He was responsible for the behaviour of his phalli or paro, settled local disputes, and referred unresolved cases to the wadera for decisions.⁹⁶

Among the Baluch and Brahui, therefore, the tribal scheme of merging sections with ranked offices inserted a chain of command through the political spine of the

tribe. The tribal structure effected what M.Sahlins has described as a "a system of chieftainship, a hierarchy of major and minor authorities holding forth over major and minor subdivisions of the tribe: a chain of command linking paramount to middle-range and local-level leaders, and binding the hinterland hamlet to the strategic heights."⁹⁷

Among the Brahuis political organisation assumed a pan-tribal dimension, with the evolution of a confederacy or an alliance of tribes in the seventeenth century. This superstructural development probably owed its inception to the early inter-tribal wars for survival, and the need for coherent self-definition and co-ordination to ensure the future of the tribes, against the threat of intrusive imperial powers, like the Mughals, the Persians, and the Afghans who sought to weld the frontier to their empires. The territorial nucleus of the confederacy was laid by early chieftains like Mir Ahmad I (1666-1695) and Mir Abdullah (1715-1730), who consolidated their hold on Kalat and expanded into Kach Gandava, which was acquired in battle from the Kalhoras of Sind⁹⁸. Subsequently Nasir Khan I (1750-1793) acquired Quetta, and threw the confederacy open for membership to Baluch tribes like the Magassis and Jamalis.⁹⁹ Straining under the pressures of migration and niche competition, Baluch groups joined the

confederacy, hoping to share in its growing resources.

Moulded in a warring environment, membership in the confederacy turned on a system of military combinations, known as pallay sharik. Member tribes were grouped into two dastas or divisions. Each tribe within the division was required to furnish specific quotas of armed men to the confederacy, proportionate to their numerical strength. In return for the supply of armed men, each tribe received a share of the the confederacy lands.¹⁰⁰

The focus of inter-tribal loyalty and leadership was the Khan of Kalat, the ruling title assumed by the early founder of the confederacy Mir Ahmad and his successors, who belonged to the Ahmadzai subsection of the Mirwari (Brahui) tribe.¹⁰¹ The Khan of Kalat exercised dominance in the system, by his presidentship of the royal darbar, which served as a high court of justice for settling inter-tribal disputes, and his formal right to confirm each new succession to the chiefship.¹⁰² However, despite these prerogatives the Khanship typified an arrested form of central authority. Significantly, the internal government of a tribe remained the exclusive political preserve of the chief, in which the Khan of Kalat exercised no control. Essentially, the confederacy served as a communal

platform for regulating the external affairs of the tribal fraternity. Even at this level, in the councils of the confederacy, the Khan was required to act in concert with the tribal chiefs to determine strategies relating to war, alliance and the distribution of resources. As C.H.Masson, a nineteenth century traveller in Baluchistan, noted: "Nothing of importance was to be undertaken without the concurrence of these Sardars, who possessing an influence among the tribes independent of the Khan could at pleasure withhold their support".¹⁰³ The confederacy structure was therefore dominated by sovereign tribal groups, standing equally and severally under the formal paramountcy of the Khan of Kalat. The inability of the tribes in the confederacy to supersede local cleavages, except for military purposes, underscored the strength of segmentary divisions of the infrastructure, composed of self-centred local groups, which strained against higher political union, and effectively inhibited the development of a full fledged regional polity.

The world of the confederacy and chiefdom, organised under powerful chiefs and primitive nobilities, was underpinned by rank and privilege. But in return for rank, titles and political submission of section members, the leadership echelon in the tribal structure had to reciprocate by ensuring the stability

of the group, as well as adhering to a chart of mandatory expenses. Stability implied a consensual style management of disputes by the section leader, as well as protection of the material interests of his group in the wider tribal context. Inability to achieve these standards would devalue the section leader in the opinion of the tribal chief. Similarly a chief without ability to carry the tribe would have little influence in the confederacy. The other area of obligations turned on expenses related to adjudication duties. The chief, in particular, was required to extend hospitality to all who came on business, and the claims on his purse were often so pressing that he had to pawn his wife's jewellery to meet them.¹⁰⁴ Similarly the Khan of Kalat had to bear the full financial cost of litigants, while dispensing justice in the royal darbar.¹⁰⁵ But such expenses were also strategically motivated to strengthen the leadership's influence over common tribesmen. According to Denys Bray, hospitality was the key to the chiefs' extraordinary hold on the tribesmen. "Hold out a joint", Nasir Khan of Kalat would say, "and the Brahuis will flock to you from all sides"¹⁰⁶

In contrast to Baluch and Brahui chiefdoms, the Pathan tribal scheme envisaged a decentralised structure, in which small local, autonomous groups claimed primacy at the expense of weak higher level

organisations. The Pathan tribe represented a constellation of communities composed of several internally segmented patrilineal descent groups or khels. Theoretically defined a khel consisted of all the local descendants of a named ancestor, from which the group received its name. In practice however, the term had a wide application, being used to denote groups at all levels of segmentation. Groups and subdivisions were defined by three main criteria: descent, a working alliance, common ownership of territory and co-residence. At the lower levels of segmentation, membership to groups was determined by patrilineal descent and agnatic kinship. A typical group at this level of segmentation (termed khel/zai in The Baluchistan Census Report, 1901), comprised members living in close proximity to each other and sharing common rights to water and pasture lands based on ties of agnatic lineage. Below this level was the kahol or extended family group consisting of related males and their families; inheritance of property through the agnatic lineage was applicable at this level of segmentation.¹⁰⁷ These primary segments were structurally and functionally equivalent. There was no hierarchical status differentiation between these communities, which tended to function as economically self-sufficient groups, thereby minimising the need for collective exchange. The atomistic social scheme

promoted a sectarian attitude in political behaviour. The main focus of political loyalty was the group; collective combinations of groups for the purposes of offence or defence were episodic, as the membership dispersed once the objective was secured.

On the level of major segments and apical ancestors of maximal groups (also termed as khel), membership was determined by residence in a common locality and liability for blood feud, despite tribal assertions of union through agnatic kinship. In the unsettled environment of Baluchistan, the need to maintain numerical levels in a tribal section, would have forced new admissions to the tribe based on political contract. Thus a Pathan section often absorbed aliens who were known as minduns,¹⁰⁸ on the basis of their participating in the good and ill of the tribe. Evidence of such assimilation may be observed in the accretion of the Dumar group to the Kakar Pathan complex, despite their original Baluch identity.¹⁰⁹ In time the political admission would acquire a genealogical graft and contribute to the fiction of common descent. In effect the khel was more like a political party rather than a superstructure of lineage relations based on common descent.

As in the political scheme generally, leadership

in a Pathan tribe had to be asserted in the system, not inherited as a birthright. There were no hereditary leaders dominating the politicalscape. As The Census of 1901 observed: "Among the Afghans...though leading men...exist, it is more difficult to find them. There is continual chopping and changing, the weak giving way before the strong, and the apt before the inept"¹¹⁰ In this competitive arena two types of leadership flourished - the malik and khan. A malik was usually the official headman of a community or local descent group. Traditionally he was the mouthpiece of such a group, and offered guidance in local affairs.¹¹¹ But he exercised no mandatory powers, and group compliance with his directives was discretionary. The position could pass by descent from father to son, or it could fall by tribal choice on the ablest member of the group. Customarily maliks enjoyed no special privileges. Only later, under British rule, the position became lucrative owing to government allowances for administrative assistance.¹¹²

The office of khan operated at the level of major segments; there was no central, unifying leader for the entire tribe. For instance the Kakar tribe was divided into four major sections - Sanzar Khels, Sanatias, Targharas, and Sargharas - each of which functioned under a separate chief or khan. Since the khanship was not a

hereditary privilege, every aspiring khan had to prove his competence as a leader by making others follow him; he induced compliance by exerting his prowess as a warrior, spiritual leader, or a bit of both. For a leader to capture the internal power structure through military success was particularly rewarding, for as Sahlins describes: "Militarism... gives scope to the personal achievement of power, rewarding with followers those who can reward followers"¹¹³ For the successful contender, the status of khan unlocked the door to privilege and authority in the system. It was customary to set apart a portion of the tribal land for the khan's personal use; he was also entitled to a fifth of the plunder looted in conflict, and a special contribution in cash or kind during marriage ceremonies or the lambing season.¹¹⁴ But the khan had to manage his wealth strategically; some of it was calculatedly disbursed in order to put its recipients under obligation to him, and thereby tighten his grip on the community. This was critical for counteracting the underlying fluidity of leadership roles in the tribal structure. However, during the lifetime of a successful khan, his authority was firm. As Denys Bray, noted, "the authority of a Pathan chief was "...paramount, to thwart it was to incur the corporate displeasure of the tribe. He decided questions of peace and war, and assumed the lead in the field".¹¹⁵



Status and hierarchy among Pathan tribes was also historically induced by contact with neighbouring imperial powers like Persia and Afghanistan, who chose to control an outer dependency like Baluchistan through client tribal leaders. Alluding to this process Hughes Buller wrote: "From the sanads in possession of various persons in Zhob and Thal Chotiali, it appears to have been customary in the times of the Emperor Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah, for men of influence with their fellow tribesmen to be selected to conduct the affairs of particular groups. Once selected their power was upheld and strengthened by the support of royal authority."¹¹⁶ Thus the Jogezai chiefs of Zhob exerted control over the Sanzar Khel Kakars, partly on the strength of the title 'Ruler of Zhob', granted to their founder-leader, named Bekar Niko, by the Afghan monarch Ahmad Shah Durrani.¹¹⁷

The sectoral scheme of groups and leaders which defined Baluch, Brahui, and Pathan tribal structures, was also buttressed by custom and convention. Inheritance rules and marriage contracts were particularly critical in underwriting political status and landholding in the tribe. In the patriarchal design of tribal society, inheritance was strictly confined to male agnates.¹¹⁸ Women were excluded from inheriting land to ensure their economic subordination in a male

dominated society, and also to prevent land from passing out of the woman's natal group or tribe into the new one she entered on her marriage. The property of a tribesman without male heirs always passed to the chief; female dependants were only entitled to maintenance from the property.¹¹⁹ This helped to further consolidate the chief's position and power in the tribal system.

Marriages were perceived as contracts, intended to reinforce internal political hierarchies, and also to regulate material resources of the group. Baluch and Brahui tribes were typically endogamous; marriages with agnatic first cousins was the preferred norm.¹²⁰ Chiefs preferred to marry close relatives, because such an arrangement satisfied ideas of their own nobility and maintained the structure of elitism. Among Pathans marriages were treated as commercial decisions, with a daughter being sold to the groom who offered the highest price.¹²¹ For Pathan chiefs the question of status also counted. In order to maintain their social distance from common tribesmen, chiefs would not give their daughters in marriage to ordinary tribesmen.¹²²

The ideological moorings of tribal society rested in the political principle of 'good and ill', on the basis of which tribal participants confronted each other

not merely as distinct but opposed interests, each body looking to maximise its position at the other's expense. Force was the traditional medium for conducting competition and conflict in society, thereby creating a fertile ground for long-standing hostilities or feuds to take root. Violent interaction also fed on the concept of izzat (male honour) and sharm (shame) which made it mandatory for a tribesman to take violent revenge in a situation which threatened to tarnish his honour, like the murder of a close kinsman or the shame of having an adulterous wife. In each case only the exaction of a counter-life would vindicate the victim's honour in society. The nature of such reprisals not only perpetuated repetitive violence in society, but it also idealised force as a medium for winning social status and public esteem. This in turn gave tribal society a culture code which endorsed physical prowess and the reprisal psychology of feuds and raids. As a nineteenth century British observer noted about tribesmen: "... marauding expeditions have a great charm for them... In the case of adultery they are unappeasable... Blood for blood is a matter of honour."¹²³

Religion and Ritual

In the tribal mind Islamic faith co-existed with a spontaneous vein of magic and ritual practice designed to influence the course of people and events, through

imaginary communication with the supernatural. Islam probably touched the tribal world through migration and conquest. The Baluch migrating from the Muslim Middle East and the borders of Persia must have served as an early conduit for Islamic precepts. A parallel process contributing to the Islamic genre in Baluchistan, was the expansion of the Muslim empire-states, Mughal, Persian and Afghan in turn towards the Indian sub-continent. During the period of Mughal dominion in India, Sibi was a revenue paying district of the empire, while the Baluchis and Brahuīs were enrolled as tribal auxiliaries in the Imperial army.¹²⁴ The imperial-tribal nexus could have spurred a fresh political impulse for the adoption of Islam by tribesmen, seeking a measure of accommodation with the empire; a shared religious identity could have been perceived as a bridge towards that end. Subsequently the century long connection with the Afghan Empire, starting from the time of Ahmad Shah Durrani (1757-1790), and the subsequent colonisation of northeast Baluchistan by Pathan tribesmen, contributed still further to the Islamic direction of society. The period of Mughal and Afghan imperialism in Baluchistan could also have released sectarian impulses, encasing tribal Islam in Sunni wrappings. As a sequel to the migrations and conquests which re-routed Islam from western and central Asia to Baluchistan, the emergence of the Brahui

confederacy in the seventeenth century, provided a state platform for the new religion. R. Southey, compiler of The Baluchistan Gazetteer of 1891, noted that the transfer of power from Hindu rule under the Sewahs in Kalat, to Muslim Brahui tribes, unleashed a phase of forcible conversions to Islam.¹²⁵

But while the force of tribal and imperial politics planted Islam firmly on the tribal soil of Baluchistan, popular adherence to the new religion was never more than skin deep. As Denys Bray observed: "...with the vulgar mass Islam is merely an external badge that goes ~~awk~~wardly with the quaint bundle of superstitions which have them in thrall".¹²⁶ The tribal perception of Islam was limited to the belief in a "God, a Prophet, and a Day of Judgement". They knew there was a Quran, but were ignorant of its contents. The practice of the Faith, based on prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and alms giving, was muted.¹²⁷ The responsibility for praying was often collectively transferred to the tribal chief. Common tribesmen were also inclined to share the religious beliefs of the chief. "Put me down the same religion as the chief", was a frequent response from them, during the census operations.¹²⁸

Veneration for the chief seemed to have devalued

the role of mullahs and sayids, the two categories of spiritual leadership in Islamic societies. Mullahs were required to teach the young, and preside over domestic ceremonies, for which they received payment in kind. But they were excluded from decision making in tribal councils. "The power of a mulla", as the Brahui put it "should reach as far as the mosque" and no further.¹²⁹

Sayids were more socially esteemed as descendants of the Prophet, and miracle workers. Accredited with supernatural powers, sayids and sometimes sheikhs, were required to terminate drought, and bring down the rains; cure mildew, drive out locusts, and make trees yield fruits by magic spells and incantations.¹³⁰ In return for their miraculous services, sayids were usually given a share in the group's land and water resources. A sheikh would receive a share of the agricultural/pastoral produce, for his service.¹³¹

At the heart of tribal religion, however, was the worship of pirs (saints) and their ziarats (shrines). Shrines would be cluttered with pieces of wood, hair, clothes, and horns of wild animals, in order to interest the particular saint in a child's welfare, or bring good sport for the hunter.¹³² Many of the shrines were dedicated to saintly ancestors, like the ones

consecrated to Sanzar Nika, pro-genitor of the Sanzar Khel Kakars, or Bhawalan, ancestor of the ruling family in the Marri tribe, who were credited with divine powers.¹³³ The cult of the shrine with its ritual prayers and offerings symbolised the tribal need to construct an imaginary world of saintly beings, imbued with magical properties, capable of influencing the sequence of events in the real world.

In the tribal mind therefore religion and ritual were emblematic of magical communion with the unseen world of natural forces, as insurance against the uncertainties of earthly existence.

Tribal Politics and Imperial Linkages

Commanding the southwest approaches to India, Baluchistan functioned as a marchland in the imperial scheme of the Mughals, Persians, Afghans, and the British. Imperial authorities tended to view the local tribes and chiefs as useful instruments for moulding indirect rule in a poor, and far flung, but strategically vital region of their domains. While such a strategy gave the tribes some access to imperial resources, it also *secured* the dependence of the region on external imperial interests, enmeshing tribesmen in foreign wars and rivalries. Inevitably this uneven exchange stirred the tribal brew of dissent, rebellion,

and alliance as the tribes adjusted to imperial realities.

The early growth of the Kalat confederacy mirrored the mercurial relationship between intrusive imperial powers and the Baluch-Brahui tribesmen. The early Khans of Kalat, between 1666-1714, combined a policy of subservience to the Mughal Empire with an aggressive zeal for raiding Zhob, Bori, and Thal Chotiali, in order to stamp their authority on the local scene.¹³⁴ The decline of Mughal power in the eighteenth century seemed to loosen the shackles of imperial control further. Mir Abdullah Khan (1714-1730), started the struggle for the acquisition of Kachhi from the Kalhoras of Sind. His successor Mir Muhabbat (1730-1750), however, had to contend with the forces of Nadir Shah, en route to the invasion of India in 1739. The Kalat ruler submitted to Nadir Shah and thus ensured the survival of the confederacy. The next ruler of Kalat, Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan I (1750-1793), continued the Persian alliance while it was profitable. He cemented the alliance by contributing tribal forces to Nadir Shah's army, and received the title of Beglar Begi (Chief of Chiefs) from the Persian monarch.¹³⁵ But on Nadir Shah's death in 1747, Nasir Khan I transferred his allegiance quickly to the political camp of Ahmad Shah Durrani who assumed power in Afghanistan in the same year, and proceeded to weld an Afghan Empire on

the ruins of the Persian one. For Kalat the immediate fruits of the Afghan alliance, contracted in 1747/1748, was the acquisition of Quetta from the local Pathan tribes. But in return the Khanate had to pay an annual tribute of Rs.2000 to Afghanistan, and maintain one thousand soldiers at the court of Qandhar. The price was too high for Nasir Khan, who revolted against the Afghan yoke ten years later in 1758. In the same year there was an inconclusive military confrontation between the two powers, which led to the formulation of a new Treaty. The terms of this Treaty freed Kalat from paying tribute to Afghanistan, and restricted the contribution of soldiers to select campaigns.¹³⁶ The new settlement still left Kalat within the political orbit of Afghanistan, but the ties were now more tenuous and fragile.

Like the Kalat Khanate, the Pathan tribes of Baluchistan were caught in the currents of imperial expansion which swept across the frontier. Historically Pathan politics was squeezed between the demands of imperial powers, Mughal, Persian, and Afghan, in turn, who wished to use northeast Baluchistan as a corridor to India, and the local tribal need to exist as independent units. These divergent interests were reconciled by the tribes entering into tributary relations with imperial powers, in return for which they were given political

freedom at the local level. The Mughal Emperor Akbar extracted tribute from the local Pathan tribes of Sibi, Pishin, and Quetta, which usually took the form of grain contributions, as well as a quota of horses and fighting men for the imperial army.¹³⁷ In the seventeenth century, these areas were caught up in the rivalry between the Mughals and the Safavids in Persia for the control of Qandhar.¹³⁸ Local governorships in the region still remained under tribal control, subject to Mughal authority. But in the period after 1712, as Mughal power declined, there were tribal revolts against imperial control. The chiefs of the Pani tribes in Sibi embarked on such confrontation, which proved unsuccessful and only depleted tribal resources, so that Sibi fell victim to Nadir Shah's forces, and for a time became part of the Persian Empire.¹³⁹ But the connection was shortlived, for soon after Ahmad Shah Durrani's accession in 1747, Afghan supremacy became the new imperial script in Baluchistan. Ahmad Shah followed a calculated strategy of planting Pathan tribal chiefs as heads of local government, on the bases of political loyalty, ethnic ties, and kinship solidarity. Sibi was restored to the governorship of the Barozai subsection of the Pani tribe on condition of loyalty to Ahmad Shah.¹⁴⁰ Similarly the Batezai Pathans were installed as governors of Pishin.¹⁴¹ In neighbouring Zhob, the local Jogezi chief was given

the title 'Ruler of Zhob' by Ahmad Shah,¹⁴² as a mark of imperial favour and patronage, calculated to bind the local leadership close to the Afghan political system. The chiefly section of the Achakzai Pathans, who were strategically situated in the Baluch-Afghan borderland, were 'Abdals', and therefore collateral descendants of the ruling dynasty in Afghanistan.¹⁴³ The structure of local government in northeast Baluchistan, therefore, mirrored the close linkages between the Pathan leadership and Afghan imperial power.

On the eve of the nineteenth century therefore, the political scene in Baluchistan was marked by the divide between the confederacy of Baluch/Brahui tribes, and the Pathan tribal complex of segmented nuclear units. Imperial intrusions sparked tension, but on balance the tribes appear to have opted for collaboration. Essentially the tribes bartered sovereignty for local autonomy, the strength of which varied according to the power of the imperial centre. This interflow of imperial and tribal politics traced its own distinctive pattern on the event horizon of the borderland; as Walter Fairservis described:

"Each petty chiefdom had its own border refuge area, a 'land of insolence', over which ... it extended control. The chiefdom in turn was tenuously connected to the empire. Weakness at any political centre led to the repudiation of treaties and a drive for local autonomy"¹⁴⁴

Early in the nineteenth century, as the shadow of Afghan rule waned on the frontier, the new force of British imperialism touched the tribal world. By the mid-nineteenth century, the frontiers of British India had advanced to the Punjab and Sind. As the empire matured, the political emphasis shifted from acquiring power to preserving and defining it in an international context. The heated search for strategic frontiers and political boundaries in the late nineteenth century point to this turn in British policy making. One immediate effect of this political turn was to suck the marginal tribal belt on the northwest frontier into the vortex of British imperial tensions and conflicts.

The seeds of tension had incubated for half a century in the troubled politics of western Asia. In particular, the decay of Turkey and Persia gave Tsarist Russia the keys to an Asiatic empire. By 1828 Russian forces had detached Georgia from Persia, and threatened to overrun Constantinople, the heart of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁵ As Turkey and Persia were progressively dismantled, the Russians seemed set to cast their political net deeper into central and southern Asia. General Paskievitch, the architect of Russian successes against Turkey and Persia, encouraged the idea of conflict in Asia, and talked openly of the coming war with Britain.¹⁴⁶ In Anglo-India this raised the spectre of

a Russian threat to imperial survival, which haunted the official mind for most of the century. Alarmists viewed Persia and Afghanistan as possible venues for the spread of Russia's imperial design to the very borders of India itself. Officials close to the Persian scene, like John Malcolm, who had served as British envoy in Tehran in 1800 and 1810, feared that without British aid the Persian court would drift into dependence on Russia, impairing Britain's imperial standing from the "Araxes to...the Ganges".¹⁴⁷ Others like Alexander Burnes, British envoy at Kabul in 1837, advocated support for the Barakzai ruler Dost Mohammed, so as to interpose a friendly united Afghanistan as a credible buffer against hostile combinations from the west.¹⁴⁸ But an alliance with Dost Mohammed could have prejudiced Britain's Sikh alliance, since the Barakzai ruler had a serious dispute with the Sikhs over the possession of Peshawar.¹⁴⁹ Unwilling to jeopardise the Sikh alliance, Lord Auckland, the Governor-General in 1837, and his Chief Secretary, William Hay Macnaghton, favoured the scheme outlined by Claude Martin Wade, Military Governor in Ludhiana, to depose Dost Mohammed, and set up in his place, Shah Shuja, the ex-Sadozai monarch (the grateful beneficiary of a British pension since 1809), in order to implant a puppet regime in Kabul.¹⁵⁰ As the British army of invasion set out in 1838 to rearrange Afghanistan, it passed through Baluchistan, and came

into confrontation with local tribes.

The collision course started with tribal raids on British supply convoys as they moved through the Bolan Pass into Afghanistan. As the problem of tribal raids festered, it gave an opportunity to Macnaghton, now acting as British envoy in Kabul and in charge of directing political affairs in Quetta, to embark on the adventurist course of deposing Mehrab Khan of Kalat, as the covert author, in his view, of tribal violence against the British.¹⁵¹ British forces were used to depose Mehrab Khan, and Shah Nawaz Khan, a rival scion of the ruling dynasty, was placed on the throne.¹⁵²

Macnaghton then proceeded to confiscate privileged landholdings of the tribal chiefs to re-distribute them among the supporters of his other protégé in Afghanistan, Shah Shuja. But this led the tribes to revolt, storm Kalat, and depose Shah Nawaz in favour of Nasir Khan II.¹⁵³ The violent turn of events in Kalat proved that Macnaghton's policy was a rope of sand. The Government of India now intervened to retrieve British interests from local mismanagement. James Outram, Political Agent in Lower Sind, was instructed to draw up a settlement with the new ruler in Kalat. A Treaty was accordingly concluded on 6 October 1841, which restored some lost territory to Kalat, but the new Khan alienated control over foreign policy to the British, and also

gave them the right to station troops anywhere in Baluchistan.¹⁵⁴

The Treaty of 1841 started the process of transforming Kalat into a client state of the Indian Empire, while its military clauses staked out the future use of Baluchistan as a launching pad for an active trans-border policy. But the new Governor-General in 1841, Ellenborough, was less inclined to risk involvement in the trans-Indus, and for more than a decade the Baluchistan option remained in deep freeze. In the meantime the frontier experienced significant changes. In 1842 Dost Mohammed recaptured his throne in Kabul, and Burnes and Macnaghton were murdered. British reverses in Afghanistan were partly offset by the occupation of Sind in 1843, and the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. As a result of these moves the borders of India now touched on Baluchistan, erasing its political marginalism, and drawing it into the orbit of Anglo-India's fears and fixations on imperial survival.

Active interest in the Baluchistan frontier was rekindled in the wake of the Crimean War of 1854, which seemed to flash the familiar British nightmare of a Russian advance towards the Dardanelles, Persia, India and China. Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control, was concerned that Russian intrigues with Persia aimed to

destabilize the tribal belt along Baluchistan's western borderlands. To counter this danger, he believed the Khan of Kalat should be strengthened by British resources, and interposed as an effective barrier against possible Persian encroachments from the west.¹⁵³ Dalhousie, Governor-General at the time, was instructed to implement the new requirements, and he accordingly transferred the task of detailing a new agreement with Kalat, to John Jacob, Military Governor of Sind, who was closer to the local scene.

With a strong sense of imperial mission, Jacob believed that "The red line of England on the map", could only be kept by occupying "posts in advance of it."¹⁵⁴ A new Treaty with Kalat, he felt should be the first step in the direction of acquiring control over Quetta, thus permanently securing the Herat-Qandhar line from any danger in the west. But he was forced to trim his objectives to meet requirements in London, where the aim was to turn the Khan of Kalat into a reliable political ally rather than to seize his territory.

The Treaty Jacob negotiated with Kalat in 1854 not only retained the clamps of political and military control, instituted in the 1841 agreement, but it also inserted a new financial grip by giving the Khan of

Kalat a personal subsidy of Rs.50,000 per year, for the purpose of policing Baluchistan, and raising an army to quell Persian inroads from the west.¹⁵⁷ The consequences of the financial clause were ominous for tribal politics. For the first time one of the Kalat Khans could raise a standing army without contributions from the tribal chiefs. Nasir Khan used the British subsidy to start the nucleus of such a mercenary army, and his successor Khudadad Khan who assumed power in 1857, used the military weapon, to restructure the monarchy's relations with the tribal chiefs. In 1857 the tribal chiefs encircled Kalat, in order to put pressure on the monarch to disband the army. But Khudadad Khan opted for confrontation by ordering his troops to open fire on the assembled groups.¹⁵⁸ This marked the end of the traditional consensus between the monarchy and the tribal aristocracy, which had supported the Kalat confederacy, and the scene was now set in Baluchistan for more than two decades of internal conflict, which ultimately delivered the country to foreign control.

In the early years of the crisis British policy towards Baluchistan was largely dictated by Sind. Sir William Merewether, Commissioner in Sind, 1857, adhered to the policy enshrined in Jacob's treaty of controlling Baluchistan through the Khans of Kalat, propped up by British support. Sind gave direct military assistance

to the Khan of Kalat. Henry Green, Political Superintendent in Upper Sind, assisted the Khan of Kalat to crush the rebellions in 1857 and then again in 1865-66. But the tribal chiefs were resilient; they deposed Khudadad Khan for a brief spell in 1863, and started to prepare for a new rebellion in 1869.¹⁵⁹ In the meantime the Khan of Kalat retaliated by confiscating the revenue-free holdings of the tribal chiefs. But the Khan's assault on chiefly privileges only escalated the conflict, and the growing violence became a graveyard for Merewether's Baluchistan policy.

As the crisis deepened in Baluchistan, a new initiative emerged from a political officer on the Punjab frontier; he was Robert Sandeman, Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan in 1866. Originally a protégé of John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, 1853-1859, Sandeman had little in common with the conservative traditions of the Punjab school. Unconvinced by the thesis of 'masterly inactivity', which frowned on any extension of power in the trans-Indus, Sandeman believed in drawing the Indian frontier as far outwards as possible. He believed such a strategy would create the political space for imperialism to grow on the sub-continent, and survive the threat of external challenge. But the pursuit of distant frontiers was also a kind of political journey to achieve personal ends.

Unadministered tribal territory across the Indus, was virgin land for re-writing personal political reputations and realising dreams of personal power, all in the name of empire. Sandeman's strategy in Baluchistan was an exposition in this linkage between imperial ideology and personal interest, which fuelled successive waves of British expansion into tribal territory on the Indus frontier.

Sandeman's opportunity to carve a niche for himself in Baluchistan politics occurred in 1866, when the Marri tribe nominally subject to the Khan of Kalat, carried out a big raid in the Harrand Dajal District of Dera Ghazi Khan. Subsequently as Sind and Kalat confessed their inability to coerce the Marri tribe, Sandeman assumed the initiative to clamp controls on border violence. Having thoughtfully detained some of the Marri raiders as hostages in Harrand, Sandeman forced their chief Ghazzan Khan to attend a tribal conference in Mithankote. Here, he adjudicated on disputes between the Marris and other border tribes, and instituted a small levy service for the Marri tribesmen, in order to safeguard the south Punjab frontier.¹⁴⁰ As most students of the frontier have pointed out, Sandeman's measures of 1866 marked the beginning of the concept of tribal control associated with his name in Baluchistan. But there were also other implications

in Sandeman's policy. By entering into independent political relations with the Marris, Sandeman was in fact bridging the political distance between his own position as a mere voyeur of events in Baluchistan, to assuming active directional control over a tribe at odds with the Kalat Government. The Marris were an early example of how Sandeman would use the conflict between the Khan of Kalat and the tribes, to establish a personal rapport with the leading rebel chiefs by encouraging their cause, and thereby aiding their detachment from Kalat. Implicit in such a policy was the emasculation of central authority in Kalat, and the erosion of Sind's control in Baluch tribal affairs.

Sind's Baluchistan policy was not just under pressure from Sandeman. In 1869 the new Superintendent of the Upper Sind Frontier, R.B. Phayre, departed from Merewether's official line to agree instead with Sandeman's assertion that the Khan of Kalat was using British assistance to subvert the confederacy and the powers of the tribal chiefs.¹⁴¹ Even more ominously for Sind perhaps, Lord Mayo's Government in Calcutta became increasingly sceptical of Merewether's political judgement. "As far as I can judge" stated Mayo, "the probability of truth lies more on Sandeman's side than the other".¹⁴² The first evidence of this shift in confidence was seen in February 1871, when a conference

was summoned of the Punjab and Sind officials, on the subject of tribal control along the frontier. Here the management of the Marri-Bugti tribes was transferred to Sandeman, under the nominal supervision of Sind. The sum of Rs.32,040, set aside for employing these tribes on patrol duty, was to be paid, in the name of the Khan of Kalat.¹⁴³ But this only kept alive the fiction of the Khan's authority while transferring real control to Sandeman. Mayo's encouragement also led Sandeman to play for higher stakes in Kalat politics. In 1871, he paid Imam Baksh Khan the Mazari chief in Dera Ghazi Khan Rs.600, for opening communications between Bakhtiar Khan Barakzai of Sibi, reputed for his hospitality to rebel Brahui chiefs.¹⁴⁴ Sind officials were quick to point out that Sibi had nothing to do with Sandeman's own borders. And there was even local speculation that Sandeman had developed a vested interest in keeping the tribal conflict alive, in order to "ultimately get charge of the country".¹⁴⁵ It appeared as if Sandeman was trying to rewrite Kalat politics on his own terms; to motivate the rebel chiefs to look for an external answer to their problems.

However before Sandeman could implement the policy of managing the Marri tribes, a fresh rebellion broke out in Baluchistan, as a result of the new land policy introduced by the Khan of Kalat during 1870-1871, to

confiscate further lands from the tribal chiefs. This provoked further hostility, swelled the ranks of the rebel chiefs, and by 1872 the latter were in control of southern Baluchistan and Quetta.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, Sandeman's policy of support for the tribal chiefs in opposition to the Khan, bore fruit at this stage as the rebels refused to make any settlement without the presence of official British mediators.

Mayo was sufficiently perturbed about events in Baluchistan, to observe that the money poured into the country had "produced very poor fruit".¹⁴⁷ In 1872 he summoned a new conference of Sind and Punjab officials at Jacobabad to resolve the Baluchistan question. According to the new British terms of peace, the chiefs were to receive their confiscated lands back again, on condition they abstained from rebellions, and the Khan of Kalat would forego compensation for all damages incurred, and receive in return the allegiance of the chiefs and the gift of one lakh of rupees from the British.¹⁴⁸ Sandeman's influence was clear in the settlement which acknowledged the tribal chiefs as party to an international agreement on their own right, distinct from the Khan of Kalat. For the Khan the terms were less promising. Elevation of the chiefs had devalued his own worth, and seemed to leave him stranded as an obsolete relic of Sind's mistaken policy. He felt

betrayed as there seemed no prospect of help from his former allies to crush the rebels. The settlement only served to embitter the Khan, and the post-Jacobabad scene in Baluchistan was dominated by his active hostility to the British which found expression in border raids calculated to harass the Indian frontier, and the plunder of merchant caravans which brought trade to a standstill in the Bolan Pass. Amid all this animosity, the Jacobabad settlement became a dead letter; the British agent was withdrawn from Kalat, and by 1874 William Merewether, previously the Khan's staunchest ally, was advocating his deposition.¹⁶⁹

As Britain's informal structure of influence crumbled in Baluchistan, new events in central Asia threatened to turn the tribal crisis into an emergency. Against the odds of climate and geography, Russia had used the decades after the Crimean War to acquire a large slice of central Asia, stretching from the mouth of the Sir Darya to TransCaspia. By 1876 the steppe country of the Kazakhs, as well as the Khanates of Khiva, Bokhara, and Khokand, were designed into the imperial landscape of Tsarist Russia.¹⁷⁰ As the independence of central Asia melted into fiction, the future of Merv and Herat in particular engaged British minds. A Russian presence at Herat would press uncomfortably close to Afghanistan. Herat also commanded

the shortest route to India, via Qandhar, the Bolan Pass and Quetta. In fact Quetta was only twenty miles from the Bolan Pass leading towards Qandhar. Two main strategic considerations flowed from Quetta's geopolitical location. The first, as pointed out by Henry Green, was that Afghanistan would act as Russia's catspaw, and occupy Quetta in order to frustrate British ambitions on the frontier.¹⁷¹ In the second instance it was argued that Britain could pre-empt any such danger from developing by moving Indian troops to Quetta. This would enable her to intercept any hostile movement originating from Herat, long before it could threaten India. As George Pomeroy Colley, Military Secretary to the Viceroy in 1876, stressed "with Quetta properly militarised "all the armies of Central Asia could not take it, as it commands a flat and absolutely shelterless plain for miles around."¹⁷² To close the gateway of Herat therefore, Baluchistan had to be transformed into a British enclave. Yet in 1874 British fortunes in Baluchistan were at their lowest ebb. The Khan of Kalat had moved into open hostility against the British, and tribal raids on the Sind frontier went unchecked. The synchronous development of the tribal crisis in Baluchistan, and the Russianization of central Asia encouraged official opinion in India to view the two problems in an inter-related context. The Governor of Bombay, voiced the general fear: "Is it

wise... considering the progress of events in Central Asia, that the country immediately before us should be torn by factions, and be the prey of the first strong power that should choose to sieze it".¹⁷³

Calcutta and London had different answers to the political question posed on the frontier. Lord Northbrook, as Indian Viceroy at the time, was really averse to taking any firm action. Unaffected by the Russo-phobia of Anglo-India, Northbrook observed: "I feel no alarm so far as the safety of India is concerned. I dont expect that we shall have to encounter another Xerxes, or leave our bones in an Afghan Thermopylae".¹⁷⁴ Northbrook's passive style, however, was out of step, with the political temper of the new Tory Cabinet in London, led by Disraeli and Salisbury, who were determined to put Britain back on the map of central and southwest Asia. Their attitude breathed new life into old arguments about Russian ambition, Persian duplicity, and Afghan treachery, which formed the staple of Anglo-Indian debate. Forward minded men like Bartle Frere, Governor of Bombay, 1855-1867, and Henry Rawlinson, Member of the India Council, 1877-1878, could address their views to Salisbury's receptive ear. Frere advocated the immediate occupation of Quetta,¹⁷⁵ while Rawlinson went further and proposed a move to

Herat.¹⁷⁶ As Secretary of State for India, Salisbury favoured the Quetta option, for the steady flow of forward proposals convinced him of the critical significance of Baluchistan as the link-pin between central Asia and India. This led him to write to Northbrook: "It is on the road from Herat that our eyes should be fixed...",¹⁷⁷ and that the British ought to be as ready for a military march to "Quetta or Herat as the Prussians were for a march to Paris."¹⁷⁸

Under pressure to take some action in Baluchistan, Northbrook adopted a scheme floated by Sandeman and the Punjab Government to re-establish order in Baluchistan. The pith of this plan was that instead of bolstering the authority of the Khan of Kalat, the British Government would now by pass him, and arrive at separate understandings with the tribal chiefs. The man entrusted with the mission was Robert Sandeman. In November 1875, Sandeman set out on his first mission to Baluchistan, with instructions to separate the Marri-Bugti tribes from Kalat's control, and place them under the authority of the Deputy Commissioner, Dera Ghazi Khan; the Khan of Kalat was to be divested of all responsibility for keeping the Bolan Pass open, while local tribes needed to keep the route open would be brought under direct political relations with the British Government; and finally Sandeman would

adjudicate on the disputes between the Khan of Kalat and the tribal chiefs.¹⁷⁹ It was a controversial mission, geared to curtail the tribal jurisdiction of the Kalat State, detach geo-political areas like the Bolan Pass important in British strategic calculations, and finally to impose the principle of British paramountcy on the internal framework of tribal politics.

Sandeman's mission, however, proved abortive owing to opposition from Sind officials; Merewether questioned his authority to arrive at a solution of the Baluchistan crisis without the consent of the Sind Commissioner.¹⁸⁰ This rift in official attitudes prompted the Khan of Kalat to refuse to negotiate with Sandeman while his authority remained undefined. As a result, Sandeman withdrew from Baluchistan without accomplishing his objectives. But Sind paid the price for its obstruction, as the Viceroy decided in the aftermath of the controversy to divest Sind of all responsibility for Baluchistan affairs, which were now transferred to A.A.Munroe, Commissioner of the Derajat Division of the Punjab. Northbrook also empowered Sandeman to lead a second mission to Baluchistan along the lines of the first one.¹⁸¹ This was the Viceroy's last act to contain the Baluchistan crisis. He resigned soon afterwards, and the story of the second mission unfolded in the wake of the new religion of empire and

nation preached by Disraeli and Salisbury.

Central to Disraeli's ambition of reasserting power in the east was the rectification of India's northwest frontier, in order to bring Herat and Qandhar under British control. It was a scheme for which he needed to install a British agent in Afghan territory, and station troops in western Afghanistan. Aware that such a policy would stir controversy in the frontier, he chose the volatile Earl of Lytton as the new Viceroy for India. "Had it been a routine age", he explained to Salisbury, "we might have made, what might be called a more prudent selection, but... we wanted a man of ambition, imagination, and some vanity and much will-- and we have got him."¹⁰² To Disraeli's vision of dominating Afghanistan, Salisbury added his own perspective of controlling Quetta and the Bolan Pass, calculated to expose west Afghanistan to British military pressure, thus reducing Kabul's bargaining power with the Government of India. "If Baluchistan is well in hand", he observed, "the importance of the Amir to us is terribly diminished"¹⁰³ Anxious to exploit the Baluchistan card, and impatient of the recurring tribal conflict there, Salisbury came to believe that a political solution was required along the lines of a covert British occupation of the country. He wrote to Lytton in May 1876: "It is a pity that the British

boundary opposite to Jacobabad was not pushed to the foot of the hills... I suspect that the only effective cure for Khelat disturbances will be that we should undertake, for an adequate consideration in the Khan's name, to keep order up to the foot of the hills and perhaps up the pass as well".¹⁸⁴

Lytton came out as Viceroy to India in 1876, well versed in Disraeli and Salisbury's political message, and filled with the purpose of "not merely scratching the back of Russian power, but of driving it clean out of Central Asia".¹⁸⁵ Lytton was determined not to humour the Amir of Kabul with arms and money unless he agreed to the presence of British Agents in Herat and Qandhar. Part of Lytton's secret instructions involved a political mission to Kabul, in order to force the Afghans to accommodate British strategic interests. But its proceedings were to be screened by a secondary mission to Kalat, both to cover up the possibility of failure in Kabul, and also to restructure British influence in Baluchistan, in order to intimidate Afghanistan and make the Amir more pliant to British terms. Lewis Pelly was selected to head the Afghan mission, which if it went wrong was to be converted into the Baluchistan mission.¹⁸⁶

But Lytton was unable to work his particular

strategy, because Northbrook refused to recall Sandeman's mission to Baluchistan. Under the circumstances the original idea of sending a mission to Kabul and Kalat had to be abandoned. Interpreting Northbrook's act as a deliberate conspiracy to cripple his "freedom of action and judgement",¹⁸⁷ Lytton reluctantly agreed to Sandeman's mission, while nursing his own misgivings that the Baluchistan mission would prejudice the Amir against British intentions on the frontier.¹⁸⁸

Sandeman's second mission set out in March 1876. The signs were ominous for the Khan of Kalat. At the very start of the mission, the rebel chiefs communicated to Sandeman: "If you want to settle this country, you must either annex it or depose the Khan".¹⁸⁹ This attitude of the tribal chiefs virtually mirrored the end of the traditional confederate structure in Baluchistan. In their rejection of the Khan of Kalat's authority, the chiefs were opting out of the indigenous skeletal, state structure, which had evolved in the eighteenth century, in favour of a new colonial future within the orbit of the British Empire.

As the tribal chiefs served formal notice on the Kalat Government, Sandeman proceeded with the task of dismantling the monarchy without any fear of internal

opposition. The terms of reference he drew up for the Baluchistan Settlement foreshadowed the political sentence on the Khan of Kalat's future. As a preliminary measure, Sandeman moved that the British Government would in future assist the Khan of Kalat to maintain his authority in a manner consistent with the rights of his subjects. Additionally the tribal chiefs were to be treated as a separate group in their relations with the British Government, and their privileges protected in future.¹⁹⁰ In this manner Sandeman inserted two sources of control on the Khan of Kalat's independence; namely, the British Government and the resuscitated powers of the tribal chiefs. As Lytton remarked, that the message implicit in Sandeman's political restructuring was that the Khan should "place his throat in the hands that are itching to throttle him".¹⁹¹

In August 1876 Sandeman sought to formalise British influence in Baluchistan, by issuing a Proclamation which decreed the Government of India as a permanent court of appeal in all civil, financial, and revenue cases between tribesmen themselves.¹⁹² It was a measure designed to remove "the last vestige"¹⁹³ of the Khan's independence, and it even embarrassed the Government of India. Lytton set out the opinion of his Council: "We are not prepared...to weaken ostentatiously

the independence of any frontier prince who is loyal to us."¹⁹⁴ Lytton was worried that Sandeman's handicraft in Baluchistan would feed new suspicions in Kabul about British intentions on the frontier, and Sandeman was instructed to modify the Proclamation.¹⁹⁵

The objectives of the second mission were finally wrapped up in the Treaty of 26 December 1876, which Lytton and the Khan of Kalat signed at Jacobabad. Both in foreign policy and internal government the Khan accepted British direction. The British Political Agency was re-established in Kalat to guide civil administration, and also to function as the highest court of appeal in disputes between the Khan and the chiefs.¹⁹⁶ The rephrasing of terms of control already agreed on earlier was Sandeman's only concession to make the occupation less obtrusive. In reality the independence of Baluchistan was now a mere fiction, and the Khan a trapped creature in the circle of British power. Describing the defeated Khan of Kalat, Lytton wrote: "He has the furtive face and the restless eye of a little hunted wild beast which has long lived in daily danger of its life".¹⁹⁷

The political knot around Baluchistan was tightened still further by the stationing of troops in key strategic positions like Quetta and Kalat. However

in order to avoid diplomatic censure, Lytton instructed Sandeman to elicit a request from tribal chiefs for the presence of British troops in Baluchistan. The Viceroy wrote: "We must not seem to be forcing the presence of British troops on the territory of a reluctant but a helpless prince".¹⁹⁸ *An unobtrusive military presence* in Baluchistan was a way of masking the new extension of British power in southwest Asia, to make it less objectionable to Russia, Persia, and Afghanistan, and to provide a platform of tribal support for the occupation to placate critics of the Forward Policy. Salisbury in particular felt the military presence should be kept quiet, for "publicity with notoriety", would be prejudicial to his talks with Schouvaloff, the Russian envoy at the Constantinople Conference (1876) to discuss the Turkish problem.¹⁹⁹ But the forward nature of the move to Baluchistan was difficult to conceal. As The Times pointed out that the advance would "produce events necessitating in their turn, the adoption of still more vigorous precautions".²⁰⁰

By entering Baluchistan, Britain turned a new corner in frontier history. In the game of conquest and empire with Russia, the Treaty of 1876 redefined Baluchistan as India's strategic external frontier, and the probable combat zone of future military confrontation. The principle of the advance into

Baluchistan was distilled from half a century of political argument over strategic and imperial priorities in the trans-Indus zone. In 1854 the policy of interference in Kalat had sought to establish a client government loyal to British interests. But this had undermined the Khan of Kalat's authority over his subjects, alienated him from the support of powerful tribal chiefs, and provoked rebellion for more than two decades. During this period of destabilization, British power, although informal, tended to be drawn in to fill the vacuum which it had helped to create. At the start of 1870 therefore a reappraisal of British policy in Baluchistan was dictated by the failed experiment in informal influence, as well as other points of pressure stemming from the growing neuroses about Russian power, and the strains of a conscious commitment to a macro vision of empire. In relation to the problems posed, the Treaty of 1876 sought to alter the terms of the imperial-tribal equation in Baluchistan by exchanging the principle of influence for paramountcy and occupation.

In Baluchistan, Sandeman had effectively released imperial expansion from the shackles of the old informal system resting on influence, to the new ground of political control. But in achieving this end, the political contours of tribal Baluchistan underwent

critical changes. The emasculation of the monarchy, in particular, removed the overarching canopy of the confederate structure which had promoted a measure of pan-tribal consciousness in society. As the monarchy, the formal symbol of unity in Baluch and Brahui society declined under the weight of the British connection, the political order fragmented into multiple centres of power, localised within individual tribes. Such a society inevitably left its political centre exposed to capture by interested foreign powers. The Treaty of 1876, in effect, exploited the political schism between the Khan of Kalat and the tribal chiefs to centre British paramountcy in the political heart of Baluchistan. In this new architecture of power, Britain occupied the commanding height at the apex of the political pyramid; the tribal element at the base was reserved to flesh out the structure of imperial control. The heiratic relation between empire and tribe was formalised in an internal realignment of power, geared to redefine the role of the tribal chief not just as group leader, but as a collaborator with British imperialism, its main protector and patron under the terms of the 1876 Treaty, against any expansionist ambitions revived by the Kalat monarchy. The Treaty deliberately redrew the internal boundaries of political power in Baluchistan in favour of the tribal chiefs, at the expense of the Kalat Khanate, to foster a politically loyal local elite, with

a vested interest in the permanence of empire. The tribal chief, locked into the imperial system through self-interest, could be trusted to *circulate* ; *effectively* the message of external control in tribal society. For the British, the Treaty of 1876 was the vital key to future political dominion in Baluchistan.

The Treaty of 1876 therefore carried a double edged significance. It was at once an expression of British imperial power in Eurasia, and marked the definition of a new area of paramountcy on the Indian border. Also as Sandeman must have foreseen, the Treaty provided the bone structure for a future British Baluchistan, even as it extended British India's strategic and psychological frontiers against Russia.

Chapter IIBlueprints and Boundaries: BaluchistanRestructured 1876-1905.

The Treaty of 1876 uncovered in Baluchistan virgin ground for the exercise of imperial options, promising new boundaries of power, even while harbouring seeds of future tension for a tribal society caught in the toils of colonial rule. Threads from past problems like the dystopia of Russian power and the vulnerability of empire still continued to pattern the texture of British involvement in Baluchistan, consciously twisting the imperial-tribal nexus into ever closer political knots. Held as insurance for Britain's imperial future in the Indian sub-continent, tribal Baluchistan came to function in the late nineteenth century, as a new balancing ground between the demands of empire and tribes. The imperial-tribal exchange set the stage for a redistribution of territorial and ethno-political resources which led to the emergence of British Baluchistan. This structural mutation created in turn new relations of power between imperial authority and tribal society, and the nation states of Afghanistan and Persia, who were caught up in the changes altering the balance of power on the Indian frontier, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Russo-Afghan Threat and Baluchistan Restructured.

Despite the Forward Party's optimistic prediction that Baluchistan would be the new promised land of political and strategic rewards, initially the move to Quetta opened a Pandora's box of complications for the British. It proved impossible, as Salisbury had *foreseen*, to take up the Baluchistan option without attracting political attention. In London at the Admiralty, Northbrook moralised if it was "proper reward for the loyalty of the Khan to annex any part of his territory at all?"¹ For C.U. Aitchison, the departing Secretary of the Foreign Department, the acquisition of Quetta was emblematic of a critical dysjunction between ethical imperatives and official policy: "Political morality", he wrote to Northbrook "seems utterly cast to the winds".² For others as well, the move to Quetta seemed to breach political and psychological boundaries on the frontier. Neville Chamberlain, Resident at Hyderabad, feared that any move to Quetta would open "a new set of relations or complications, the end of which is quite beyond our calculations".³ The Times commented pessimistically that the move to Quetta had "deeply offended the Amir, and had done more than anything else to throw him into the hands of the Russians. It was the turning point of our Indian policy - the final abandonment of masterly inactivity".⁴ In fact the militarisation of Quetta not only laid the ghost of

Afghan imperialism in Kalat politics, but it also fuelled fresh fears in the Amir's mind. A nervous Amir confided to the Turkish mission which visited Kabul in 1877: "The English have encroached upon my possessions.... Quetta has been taken as a permanent military station by them without my consent, according to what rules of friendship, and in accordance with what Treaty?"⁵

Unsettled by the British presence in Quetta, the Amir initially tried to set on foot a tribal conspiracy to regain freedom for the region. He tried to goad the Kalat ruler into action, by exhorting him as a Mussalman Prince to reject money from the kafirs (infidels) and throw the Treaty of 1876 to the wind.⁶ The Khan was not averse to indulging in such a gesture, but the plan was still born as the Baluch and Brahui chiefs refused to join him, and jeopardise their recent gains in the Treaty of 1876.⁷

Foiled in his strategy to destabilize the British presence in Baluchistan, the Amir provocatively received a Russian mission in Kabul, but refused entry to a British one led by Neville Chamberlain.⁸ This temporary Russian bend in the Amir's policy was only insurance against the aggressive turn in British activity on the frontier. As Northbrook pointed out, the military

build up on the Indian border could have appeared to the Amir as an intention to "interfere in Afghanistan, if not to attack him".⁹

For Lytton however, the Amir's overt hostility provided a legitimate cover to exercise certain pre-determined options in the Indo-Afghan borderland. Lytton devoted an unusual amount of time to frontier policy, and was intent on extending the Indian border deep into the heart of tribal country across the Indus. He was irked by the legacy of 'masterly inactivity', which he felt had only hemmed in imperial expansion, behind self-styled fences of non-interference in trans-frontier politics. Criticising the Indian frontier for stopping at the Indus, he wrote: "It was not a strong line, except in the sense that a prison wall is strong to the prisoner... it left our boundary peculiarly exposed to inroads and insults, while limiting our power for external influence and chastisement".¹⁰ The Viceroy believed that British inaction had allowed islands of tribal anarchy to float free on the mainstream of political life in the borderland. Masterly inactivity had misguidedly sought to buy Afghan support with guns and money, without considering that "the Afghan will take any amount of money you like to give him, but he will... give you nothing in return".¹¹ The end result, it seemed to Lytton, was that British political interests

were left hostage to the caprices of the Amir, "the barbarian prince of a turbulent state".¹²

Working on the supposition that the Afghan alliance was a liability, Lytton chose to dismantle it by weakening it as a political force on the frontier. Dismemberment and annexation of Afghanistan to India were ruled out by the lack of financial and military resources to sustain such ventures, and the only feasible plan left was to convert the tribal zone on the borderland into a militarised sector under British control.¹³ This would erase the last remaining traces of Kabul's political writ on tribal lands, and also give India the much coveted scientific frontier. The existing frontier he felt was honeycombed with passes held by tribesmen whose support for British power was uncertain. Whether these tribes were to constitute a "bulwark to our power", Lytton observed, "or a thorn on our sides depends on whether the predominant influence is exercised from Kabul or... by ourselves".¹⁴

Lytton's dual strategy to emasculate Kabul and lure the frontier tribes into the British net received unexpected help from the Amir himself when he rejected the British mission. By this act the Amir gave Lytton the excuse he had wanted to negate the Afghan alliance. Lytton had only refrained from making such a move because

of opinion at "home of some secret determination" on his part to annex territory.¹⁵ The Amir's rebuff conveniently released the brake of English liberal opinion on Lytton's action. He correctly judged that the Afghan attitude had alienated a large cross section of political opinion, even those of his opponents. Lytton could now declare that he would not allow the Amir to fall under hostile influence: "A tool in the hands of Russia I will never allow him to become. Such a tool it would be my duty to break before it could be used".¹⁶

On this imperious note, Lytton despatched forces across the frontier into Afghanistan on 21 December 1878. After Afghan reverses when Amir Sher Ali fled from Kabul in December 1878, Lytton telegraphed London that it was necessary for military objectives to occupy Jallalabad, detach the Kurram valley and Pishin from Afghanistan.¹⁷ When the new Amir Yakub Khan negotiated the Afghan surrender by concluding the Treaty of Gandamak, 1879, Article IX restored Qandhar and Jallalabad to Afghanistan, but not the Districts of Kurram, Pishin, and Sibi. The limits of these Districts were to be eventually defined and they were to be treated as Assigned Districts, for the moment not "permanently severed from Afghanistan".¹⁸ This informal control in Pishin and Sibi gave British Baluchistan its

early contours, and established the cornerstone of Lytton's alternative imperialism in the political restructuring of tribal lands, to break free from the Afghan connection.

Immediately after acquiring Pishin and Sibi, it became the object of British policy in India to convert the temporary nature of these possessions into a permanent political arrangement. Thus the Government of India emphasised to the Secretary of State that a permanent extension of the Indian frontier to Pishin would place British "military outposts within striking distance of Kabul and Kandahar".¹⁹ In a similar vein Alfred Lyall, Secretary to the Foreign Department, pointed out that the possession of Pishin and Sibi gave Britain the command it was looking for in south Afghanistan. He wrote:

"We took Pishin and Sibi because those two districts appeared to give us the necessary footholds; Pishin covered Quetta, and flanked all the roads to Kandahar and India. Sibi commanded the Marris, pressed the Afghans back from the Baluch, and was of great importance in view to our communications with Dera Ghazi Khan".²⁰

The rectification of the Baluchistan boundary to include Pishin and Sibi was therefore designed to alter the balance of power on the frontier, by giving the Indian Empire a new strategic stranglehold over Afghanistan's southern approaches.

In order to cement the newly acquired tribal enclave to the imperial edifice, Lytton directed local British agents to cultivate tribal chiefs and headmen with "handsome presents" and "cordial assurances", to impress tribesmen that their interests would be better served by deserting the Afghan standard for a British one.²¹ In Baluchistan itself, Lytton could depend on strong support from Robert Sandeman, appointed Agent to the Governor-General in 1876, to steer imperial control through the untried course of a newly occupied tribal country. Sandeman believed as firmly as the Viceroy in an imperial solution for the tribal problem; he was quite explicit:

"The greater number of tribes we are able to bring under our influence...bound to us through their own interests ...the better it will be for our Government".²²

In order to bind tribal allegiance to the British standard, Sandeman exploited existing divisions in tribal society. The fall-out from the tribal chiefs rebellion, 1857-1876,²³ for instance still continued to disturb Sibi. During the period of rebellion, the Barozai chiefs of Sibi had provided shelter for rebel Brahui chiefs. The Amir's interest here was to keep Kalat weak and divided by keeping the rebellion alive. After 1876, the Khan of Kalat plotted his own revenge by trying to subvert the local Afghan leadership in favour of his own protégé, Sarbuland Khan, head of a particular section of the Barozai sardar-khel. But in

return for Kalat's patronage, Sarbuland Khan had to give strategic information on the location of livestock to the predatory Marri tribesmen. At the Khan of Kalat's instigation, the Marris carried out damaging raids in Sibi, which led to the widespread abandonment of fields and villages.²⁴ The local economy was paralysed and Sibi dried up as a source of revenue for the Amir. The Khan of Kalat's revenge was now complete. But the long suffering tribesmen of Sibi now approached the Baluchistan officials for help, referring to the fact that the Marris always returned goods taken from areas under British protection.²⁵ But Sandeman would not interfere to resolve the problem, for the purpose of British policy at this stage was to impress on tribesmen the difference between the protection given to those in alliance with the British, and those who were subjects of the Amir, and therefore excluded from protection.²⁶ The point of this strategy was to create a 'tribal need' for British rule, as a kind of local insurance against ever having to return Sibi to Afghanistan. For Pishin, Sandeman could argue that the local tribes had aided British forces during the campaigns of 1878-79, and to retreat from the District now, would expose local tribesmen to the Amir's revenge.²⁷

But Sandeman's attempt to anchor tribal society

safely in the political moorings of British rule, threatened to slip loose as a fresh crisis enveloped Afghanistan, ending in the massacre of the British garrison in Kabul on 3 September 1879. Military defeat followed, and in Baluchistan the first casualty was the frontier railway through Pishin. Work was halted on the line as there were no troops to spare for its protection.²⁸ As the situation deteriorated on the frontier, in England Beaconsfield's Government was succeeded by Gladstone's Liberal Ministry in the spring of 1880, and Lytton departed from India, conscious that his imperial vision had fractured on the hard surface of Afghan resistance.

The new Liberal Government seemed poised to shake out the cobwebs of the old Forward Policy on the Indian frontier. Lord Hartington, the new Secretary of State, argued the case against retaining Pishin and Sibi:

"The chief objections I take to be the considerable force and expenditure which would be required even for this limited extension of our frontier, and also the temptation to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, which would be caused by our proximity to Kandahar, and by the facility of advance upon it".²⁹

Hartington's original proposal to withdraw the imperial boundary behind Sibi and Pishin, soon choked on the thorny corpus of opposition views maturing in India. Paradoxically Lord Ripon the new Liberal Viceroy in India was most at odds with Hartington's

determination to erase the scientific frontier in Sibi and Pishin. In this respect Ripon believed in the argument, that some degree of territorial control was required over Afghanistan to monitor Kabul's political line on the frontier. He wrote:

"If we retain Pishin and keep our hold on the Khojak Amran Passes, we shall be within striking distance of Kandahar, in a position from which we can seize it at any time... I believe that the retention of a position from which we could dominate Kandahar without occupying it would tend greatly to keep the Amir in friendly relations with us".³⁰

The hold on Pishin was therefore calculated to keep the Amir on a firm political leash, and retain strategic control in the Baluch-Afghan borderland. Ripon was criticised for attempting to save "a shred of the scientific frontier having let the substance go".³¹ Ripon himself admitted that a permanent British presence in Sibi and Pishin was intended to appease a section of military opinion, which really favoured a move beyond Pishin and Shorawak to Kelat-i-Ghilzai and the line of the Helmand.³² To such forward minded men Pishin and Sibi were not just far away places on a map; they were symbols of prestige and the imperial image. As Frederick Haines the Commander-in-Chief maintained, "a retreat would be construed in India as a sign of weakness of will or military power".³³ Rawlinson typically warned that by retiring Britain would abdicate her position as a first rate Asiatic power, and must be content "hereafter to play a very subordinate

part in the history of the world".³⁴

From the heart of the disputed areas Sandeman wrote that the prospect of withdrawal "sent a cold shudder through my frame and made me tremble for our future influence on the Frontier".³⁵ He also stressed the balance of power dimension to Ripon : "...the possession of Pishin and Sibi, would act so to speak as a buffer between the Khan of Kalat's people, ourselves and the Afghans".³⁶ Sandeman was clearly anxious not to contract the margins of his new provincial charge for the sake of Liberal scruples about a frontier extending deep into tribal territory.

Despite these mounting objections, Hartington still hoping to withdraw from Pishin, reiterated the "strain on ...military and financial resources" attending its occupation.³⁷ But Lytton dismissed the point by arguing: "The possession of empire must always be an expensive privilege. But the loss of empire may be a ruinous disgrace; and the safety of India is worth more than a few pieces of silver. We cannot haggle with destiny".³⁸

Caught in this labyrinth of political speculation the future of Pishin and Sibi eluded a clear cut settlement. The Government of India advised by Alfred

Lyall, now Secretary in the Foreign Department, played for time, and informed London that the two areas could only be given back to the Amir "whenever we leave Quetta",³⁹ and that pledges of protection to tribesmen on the frontier should not be jeopardised by a sudden retreat.⁴⁰ On Lyall's advice the political titles of Sibi and Pishin were left deliberately vague; the Amir was to be excluded from any future discussion on the sovereignty of these areas, because Lyall felt this would weaken British claims to the titles of the two areas.⁴¹ In this way he hoped to keep open the option of annexation at a future date, while leaving a loophole for retreat, should the Baluchistan experiment prove untenable. In effect he was putting the scientific frontier in the Sibi-Pishin sector on trial, before making the final decision.

In view of the Government of India's stand, Hartington was forced to postpone the withdrawal.⁴² As the advocates of retention correctly judged, the passage of time would only draw the places closer to India, and consign the idea of retreat to a mere footnote in history. In 1881 The Government of India sent a map to England, in which Thal Chotiali was marked as included within the boundary of British Assigned Districts, and they submitted revenue reports on the Districts of Pishin, Sibi, and Thal Chotiali.⁴³ For all practical

purposes therefore, the dialogue between London and Calcutta closed with the establishment of a new British controlled enclave on the Baluch-Afghan borderland. Thus the early contours of British Baluchistan were traced against a political backdrop of divided opinions and uncertain minds.

As a result of the forward move to Pishin, India's strategic frontier crept further northeast to the precincts of the Zhob valley, which gave access to the Gomal Pass leading into Afghanistan. Tribal valleys and strategic mountain passes were the desired props for supporting British India's imperial frontage. In consequence both the Zhob valley and the Kakar tribes who lived in the area, became valued commodities on the imperial scales, as the strategic significance of the Zhob-Gomal route became increasingly clear. The Pioneer Mail, quoting Sir Thomas Holdich, a Victorian authority on boundary making, wrote about the Zhob-Gomal route: "This route is the most important and probably the easiest on our whole North West Frontier. For hundreds of years past it has been the Powindah highroad between India, Afghanistan, Khurassan, and Kandahar. Yet up to date the course of the great Gomal highway into Afghanistan is marked on our maps by conjectural lines".⁴⁴

In Baluchistan, Sandeman was keenly aware that the opening of Zhob would reset the margins of frontier control deep into the tribal territories of the north-east and complete the encirclement of Afghan power. As early as 1879, when the British army was moving through Kakar country into Afghanistan, Sandeman had speculated on permanently controlling the area. The acquisition of Pishin brought this objective closer. As he explained to Alfred Lyall: "Having possession of the Pishin District will enable us to do what we like with the Kakar tribes, whereas had we been cooped up in Quetta we could only have got at them at the greatest disadvantage through the Amir's Government".⁴⁵ Here Sandeman was reviving Lytton's old concept of structuring frontier policy on direct relations with the tribes, rather than relying on the Amir as an effective broker of British political interests in tribal territories.⁴⁶ Addressing himself to the imperial minded, Sandeman described Zhob as the key to Baluchistan; a controlling influence in Zhob would open the Gomal Pass, and give the British command over all the approaches leading from Afghanistan to the Derajat.⁴⁷

The instability of local tribal politics gave Sandeman an initial opening to interfere in Zhob. Historically Zhob's tributary relationship with Afghanistan had fed violence in the local system, as

the Amir used the Kakar tribesmen to keep the frontier destabilized when it suited his purpose. In 1879 the Kakars had joined the Amir's forces against the British army of invasion in Afghanistan.⁴⁸ Subsequently as the Indian frontier crept up to Quetta, Pishin, and Sibi, and the prospect of defeating the British militarily lay buried in the dust of the Afghan wars, the Amir escalated his policy of creating tension in Baluchistan. In 1880 a section of the Kakars rebelled against the passage of the Qandhar railway through their valleys in the Chappar Mountains, and killed a British officer H.L. Showers.⁴⁹ The violent action of the Kakars was probably the Amir's reply to the frontier railway which threatened the heart of southwest Afghanistan. Violence continued to spark, as Kakar tribesmen raided military outposts near Thal Chotiali, Kach, and Duki, all through 1883-1884, causing loss of ammunition and men guarding the stores.⁵⁰ Sandeman linked this militant outburst of Kakar xenophobia to the maverick figure of Shah Jahan, the local Kakar chief, "whose whole prestige", he wrote, "rests on his violent hatred of and active opposition to us".⁵¹ And behind the scene of local violence Sandeman detected the hand of the Amir. He wrote to Ripon early in 1883 that emissaries from Kabul were circulating letters among the Kakars of Pishin and Zhob, to set up local governments under Afghan control.⁵² And for Sandeman the Afghan

propaganda seemed to succeed when one of the Pishin Kakars killed a troop follower. He wrote: "This is the first act of real enmity that has occurred."⁵³

For Sandeman the opposition between British and Kakar forces articulated the unresolved contradiction between imperial order and tribal anarchy. He wrote:

"They have always shown hostility to British rule. This feeling has its origins chiefly in a spirit of fanaticism peculiar to all Pathan tribes ... and perhaps to some degree also in the dislike all wild tribes have, at seeing a strong government inimical to evil doers, established in their midst".⁵⁴

But more than a confrontation of cultural norms, such violence also challenged the exercise of force majeure on which any structure of foreign rule must depend for survival. Alive to this danger, Sandeman proposed a punitive expedition to Zhob in 1884,⁵⁵ to root out Kakar hostility, and prevent the further spread of local violence, which would only corrode British political control in Baluchistan.

In the Foreign Department the Kakar problem was dismissed as trifling, but a punitive expedition to Zhob was sanctioned in response to Sandeman's request.⁵⁶ Since the tribal issue was of marginal concern, the moving cause behind the official decision to act in Zhob, may be traced to the new points of pressure developing in central Asian politics. In March 1884,

the Russians occupied and annexed the oasis of Merv, bringing their imperial frontier to the brink of contact with Afghanistan. To many British observers, Merv was the psychological rubicon in Russia's century long march towards India. Blackwoods Magazine warned that through Merv, Russia "could ... bring the Cossack within sight of India, the 'garden of the east', and the cynosure of Russia's unwavering policy for a hundred and fifty years".⁵⁷ In Parliament, Lord Salisbury declared that the crisis in Merv had touched the very heart of imperial prestige, that "impalpable influence"...without which even strong frontiers and impregnable fortresses would "dissolve and crumble".⁵⁸ This flood of alarmist opinion inevitably washed up the debris of the Liberal Government's policy of retreat on the frontier. Members of the Forward School felt their moment had come again in Indian politics, and old priorities like the scientific frontier and Qandhar railway were re-injected into the mainstream of political discussion. The idea of a military rail link through Baluchistan to dominate southern Afghanistan gained ground as the most feasible counter to Russia's domination of Merv. The Times attempting to steer government policy onto the old tracks of the abandoned Qandhar railway quoted Rawlinson: "The railway was the most efficient arm of defence hitherto devised against Russian aggression, far more efficient than the conquest of Cabul, or the

establishment in power of a friendly Amir, for its effect when completed would have been to transfer our military base from the Indus to within 350 miles of the threatened point of attack namely Herat".⁵⁹ At about the same time, news that the Russians planned to complete the Askabad Railway to Merv and the Oxus by the summer of 1885 increased pressure on the government to invest in strategic projects in India which would match those of their Russian rivals in central Asia. The expected change of course occurred with a government announcement in June 1884, that the present position of the Gandhar railway would be extended from Sibi to Pishin and Quetta along the Harnai road, and the new line was to be renamed the Sind-Pishin Railway.⁶⁰ In Baluchistan itself, the railway acted as a touchstone for drawing the Zhob tribes within the imperial orbit. For now the Kakar problem could no longer be viewed as a routine trouble spot on the tribal map, since the Zhob valley dominated the northern approaches to the Pishin railway, and continuing Kakar militancy could make the project an expensive mistake for the government. As the local factor of Kakar violence fitted into the imperial equation, Sandeman could write with confidence: "The opportunity is now most favourable for settling with the Kakars, and I think the Government will act unwisely, if with the railway under construction, they neglect the opportunity to do so. It

is not so much with the object of punishing for the past as settling for the future that I propose the expedition".⁴¹

The Zhob expedition started out on 15 November 1884, with a mixed military and tribal escort. As the marching force reached the outskirts of Bori, the Panezai, Sarangzai, and Dumar Kakars submitted to British terms without opposition. Inside the Bori valley, feuding patterns dictated the choice of alliance or hostility with the British. Thus victim groups like the Hamzazis and Mando Khels opted for British protection, against predatory tribes like the Musa Khels and Kibzais, who on their part held aloof from negotiating with Sandeman.⁴² Across the Bori valley in Zhob itself, Shah Jahan the rebel leader absconded across the border into Ghilzai country, to escape the reach of the advancing force. But this only helped Sandeman to rearrange Zhob politics without any challenge from local tribes who were now virtually leaderless. Sandeman was further aided in his task, by the feuding divisions within the Jogezai sardar-khel (the ruling family in Zhob), which allowed him to splinter the Kakar opposition at the leadership level, before any new aspirant stepped into the position vacated by Shah Jahan. In line with this divisive strategy, Sandeman offered to recognize Shahbaz Khan (a nephew of Shah Jahan and

leader of the Ishak-Kahol faction among the Jogezaïs) as the new chief of Zhob, and promised him future support in leadership contests against claimants from the rival Nawab-Kahol faction. In return Shahbaz would be expected to function as a politically loyal and dependant client of the British Government, and sever all political links between Zhob and Afghanistan.⁶³ Predictably for Shahbaz Khan the lure of chiefship was worth more than the new adjustments required in Zhob's external relations with Afghanistan, and he opted for co-operation with Sandeman. His decision also dismantled any residual opposition among tribes like the Musa Khels and Kibzaïs, who now felt unequal to the task of continuing their struggle against the British unaided by the Zhob Kakars in their rear.⁶⁴

With the tribal surrender underway, the expedition was brought to a close, by a formal admission of British supremacy from the chiefs and headmen in Zhob and Bori. Fines were paid and hostages taken from tribesmen as human deterrents against future threats of violence.⁶⁵ The mission was acclaimed in the Anglo-Indian press as a very great success; as The Pioneer Mail observed: "The whole Kakar countryside has been brought under subjection and a powerful tribe has learnt that the Sarkar Anqrez is a reality and not a myth".⁶⁶ There was also satisfaction that yet another section

of the unexplored tribal frontier was now open for political observation. Historically, Sandeman's success in planting imperial supremacy on Kakar soil altered the traditional mould of local politics, by terminating Zhob's past linkage with Kabul, and instituting in its place a new patron-client relationship between the Indian Empire and tribal authority. He had manoeuvred Zhob successfully out of the Afghan orbit to the British one, and the next forward move by Russia could even make it the western arc of the scientific frontier, which would claim new urgency in the aftermath of Merv.

It was not long before the disparate threads of central Asian politics knotted into a new crisis along the Russo-Afghan border. Merv's capitulation to Russia had left Afghanistan's northwestern frontier particularly vulnerable to external attack or encroachment. Consequently, Britain suggested and received assent for a joint Anglo-Russian Commission to delimit Afghanistan's northern boundary, in the hope of committing the Tsar's Government to an international line which would mark the southern limit of Russian expansion.⁶⁷ While the work of boundary delimitation was in progress, Afghan troops clashed with Russian ones at Panjdeh, in northern Afghanistan on 31 March 1885 and lost the position to Russia.⁶⁸ Panjdeh brought England and Russia to the brink of war.

The pacifism of the Liberals appeared obsolete in the cold reality of Russian militarisation of central Asia. By the middle of June, Gladstone asked Parliament to vote on war credits, and the Cabinet decided that a Russian move to Herat would be treated as a cassus belli.⁶⁹

"The frontier of the future", Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for India asserted, "must be a military one".⁷⁰

In India, The Englishman reported "The shadow of war is stealing on us fast".⁷¹ And from Quetta a correspondent wrote: "We are on tiptoe of expectation here with regard to a forward move on Herat ... our nerves are... jumpy. Russia has encroached quite far ... any further advance may cause us to lose something more tangible than prestige".⁷² But the idea of war which beguiled the minds of politicians and public alike, proved illusory by the end of June 1885, when the Russians prepared to accept arbitration, and the Afghans agreed to abandon Panjdeh in exchange for Zulfikar.⁷³ But Panjdeh remained a critical pointer to British weakness in Asia. There was need for a new image and a fresh appraisal of strategic priorities. The first indication of change was the defeat of the Liberal Party in the 1885 elections, making way for the new Conservative Government to reassess the balance sheet of central Asian politics.

By 1885 it was axiomatic to any scheme of imperial

defence. that the security of India was not primarily an internal issue, but an external one linked to the political challenge of Russian imperialism in Asia. Men like Sir George Chesney, Military member of the Viceroy's Council liked to talk of a "day of trial", when India would have to face an antagonist supported "by the hordes of Central Asia, and equipped with all the warlike appliances of a first class European power".⁷⁴ On the same note The Times urged the government not to slacken for a moment the construction of the scientific frontier, which would require not one "hillside" from the Amir, but only the courage to "take possession of strategic possessions now lying absolutely at the mercy of the first comer".⁷⁵ Responding to the clamour for an extended frontier, Salisbury, the new British Premier, dismissed as perilous the fortress Indus theory, which he feared would make the Indian plains the future theatre of war, and also the notion of a fortified base at Herat which he felt would overstretch Indian resources.⁷⁶ Instead Salisbury favoured a militarised Baluchistan as the key to India's defence requirements. He observed:

[like]

"There are places, Quetta, the Khojak Pass and Kandahar...and somewhere in that part of the country I believe...will be found in future ... the centre of the defence works which we must make to sustain our power...Let no desire to balance the budget...to respect the susceptibilities of the tribes around us...prevent...giving security to that vast frontier".⁷⁷

The scientific frontier presupposed a political borderland, stretching beyond the administered realm in India, where British paramountcy and influence would prevail. In official estimations British dominance in this outer zone, which included Baluchistan and Afghanistan, was scarcely less essential for Britain's position in India, than its "predominance in Baroda or Hyderabad".⁷⁸ But this blueprint for extended influence posed a problem, for the outer frontier did not really coincide with the zone of absolute control. As Viceroy, Dufferin, uneasy about the government's hold on the outlying borderland, wrote to Cross, Secretary of State for India: "The worst of it is that our nervous tissues extend a good deal beyond the limits of our material and military jurisdiction".⁷⁹ A way out of the dilemma was perceived in a planned expansion of arterial railroad links covering the far flung Baluch-Afghan borderland, which would provide a permanent structure for British influence in the region, and complete the political encirclement of tribal groups, whose lands dotted the imperial circuit, traced by the scientific frontier. This blueprint for power and control in tribal country owed much in concept and execution to the Military. At the close of 1885, the Indian army had a new Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Roberts. On paper Roberts favoured the Hindukush as India's northern border; in practice, such a high risk concept

was untenable, and he settled for the narrower alternative of dismantling the independence of peripheral tribes on the western margins of Afghanistan, thereby staking out these lands as the conflict zone of the future. Rejecting the Indus line of defence as insular, Roberts argued for a 'continental' approach to India's defence needs. The term 'continental' subsumed wide ranging military measures, calculated to give the Indian army an increased capability for offensive action along the Quetta-Qandhar-Herat route. In line with this strategy, frontier fortifications were to encompass an outer barrier of protective works at select points, backed in the rear by a series of heavily armed cantonments, completely equipped with the material of war, and forming the immediate base for a British force acting against an invading army. The inner and outer lines were to be connected with railways and military roads on the one side, and on the other side with the great network of railway communications in India.⁸⁰ As a footnote to the military theme Roberts touched on the corrective impact of railroad penetration on the frontier, which would allow for better internal control, and help to chisel away the non-conformist edges in tribal social patterns.⁸¹

In Baluchistan, the new defence strategy spurred a programme of railroad developments, which led to fresh

territorial readjustments. If Quetta was to function as the base for a forward move towards Qandhar, she needed supporting lines of communication with Sind and the Punjab. The Sind-Pishin Railway afforded linkage in the south with Sind, but there was still need for better communication with the Punjab. Thus in the spring of 1885, the Foreign and Military Departments of the Government of India worked out the route for a new military road, which was to leave the Punjab at Fort Munroe, proceed north westwards through Khetran country, and then curve in a westerly direction through the Bori valley to Pishin.⁸²

The road, which cut across the homelands of the Kakar Pathans in Bori, and the Khetran Baluch, just across the Dera Ghazi Khan border, inevitably placed the political future of these groups in the balance. Sandeman predictably raised the old spectre of tribal violence to argue for British control in Bori, without which he insisted he could not ensure the safety of the new road.⁸³ He had support from Roberts, who pointed out that a move to Bori would centre British power in the tribal heart of northeast Baluchistan: " We could eventually.... be in a position to control Zhob politics and command the Gomal Pass without losing touch with the Marris and other Baluch tribes... it is most desirable that our frontier should be advanced so as to

include Bori".⁸⁴ Under pressure from Roberts and Sandeman, Bori became part of British administered territory in Baluchistan, confirming the relentless logic of the Forward policy, intent on plucking the scientific frontier from the depths of tribal territory.

A Bori type solution for the Khetran valley proved marginally more difficult to achieve. Here Sandeman had to run the gauntlet not of tribal hostility, but opposition from the Punjab. The Punjab which had already lost its frontier status when the Indian boundary moved up to Quetta, was unwilling to concede further ground to the Baluchistan Agency, and used the making of the new road to claim control over the Khetrans, as a buffer to force Sandeman as far back as possible from the Dera Ghazi Khan borders. The question of control was further complicated by the fact that the Khetrans sustained a wide network of social and economic linkages with the Punjab and Baluchistan tribes. Kinship ties existed with the Legharis on the Punjab side and the Bugtis in Baluchistan.⁸⁵ Their main market of exchange was in Dera Ghazi Khan, but feuding relations existed mainly with the Marri and Kakar tribes of Baluchistan.⁸⁶ The feuding perspective allowed Sandeman to stress the danger from tribal frictions to the safety of the new road as it skirted the south eastern sweep of the Khetran valley. Raids

and counter-raids by the Marris and Kakars had desolated the area. The Khetrans did not participate directly in violent duels, but they received stolen property and gave asylum to raiders who plundered on their behalf.⁸⁷ In order to dismantle this structure of violence, Sandeman believed that he should manage the Khetrans in addition to the control he already exercised over the Kakars and Marris; to hand over the Khetrans to the Punjab would only fragment government authority and impair control over the tribal complex entangled in raids and reprisals. As he wrote to the Foreign Department, "One political officer can best manage contending factions or tribes, because he can so to speak knock their heads together".⁸⁸ For the Government of India, law and order had a higher priority in a frontier region like Baluchistan, over ethnic factors like kinship ties and trading exchanges. In 1887 therefore it sanctioned the incorporation of the Khetran valley in the Baluchistan Agency.⁸⁹ The decision interposed a new administrative divide across tribal territory, interrupting the free flow of inter-tribal linkages between the Khetrans and the Punjab tribes, and restricting their access to the markets of the Punjab. Apart from the tribal perspective, by underwriting this new expansion of the Baluchistan frontier, the Government of India seemed set to enter the expansionist course uncovered by Sandeman in the borderlands.

Implicit in such a policy turn was Sandeman's evident success in eclipsing the political ascendancy of the Punjab in frontier affairs. Lord Connemara, Governor of Madras, 1890, emphasised the point to the Viceroy: "Indeed Sandeman's policy is based upon progressive influence over the tribes, and it would be inconsistent now to allow the Punjab Government to build up any wall of difficulty between Sandeman and the future".⁹⁰

The new imperialism of roads and railways which had probed deep into tribal Baluchistan on the northeast, shifted focus after 1886 to the western borderlands of Afghan-Baluch country. Emblematic of this political drive was a strategy which sought to convert the Sind-Pishin railway into an instrument for shaping a new balance of power on the west, structured on the military dominance of Qandhar, and the domestication of the Baluch-Afghan border tribes. In the political stocktaking after Panjdeh, Herat had given place to Qandhar as the realistic forward point of British resistance to Russian advances. Dufferin made the point clear to the Military: "It would be far more to our advantage to tempt the Russians to drive us out of Candahar than for us to embark on the converse operation against them at Herat".⁹¹ But Dufferin had to contend with Afghan opposition to any scheme for a British presence in Qandhar. To circumvent this problem,

Dufferin, in concert with Roberts and Chesney, came out in favour of extending the Sind-Pishin rail line from its existing terminus at Gulistan, through the Khwaja Amran Range to New Chaman on the Afghan side of the border. At Chaman all the rails, rolling stock, and other material known as the 'Candahar reserve', would be stored in complete readiness, to begin at a moment's notice the extension of the Sind-Pishin-Chaman line towards Qandhar.⁹² The new military leverage over Qandhar was designed to facilitate the pursuit of an attacking trans-frontier policy. Dufferin wrote to Salisbury:

"The moment we pass the Khwaja Amran range with a tunnel... in order to carry our railway twelve miles further towards a point which leads no where, it becomes evident that our policy is no longer that of guarding the entrance to our own house, or making a temporary excursion beyond, but that we are contemplating a permanent advance into foreign territory, in accordance with the ideas of the Forward school as opposed to those of Lawrence and his adherents".⁹³

In this political spring of the Forward movement, Roberts and Sandeman carried the imperial manual into still unclaimed tribal tracts. Roberts, keen to use tribal resources to secure British control of the Kabul-Qandhar line, envisaged a contact zone "between India's present and proposed frontier, where the tribes would be prepared to accept British influence".⁹⁴ Permanent occupation executed with a bold front was his political solution for the tribes in the intermediate zone.⁹⁵ In Baluchistan the dynamics of this policy drew the British Government to the last stretch of the tribal

tableland in Zhob, where the Saran Kakars had so far escaped the net of formal control. Focusing attention on Zhob as a catchment area for trapping tribal resources to strengthen the sinews of empire, Sandeman urged how necessary it was to be in touch with local tribesmen, "to prevent our enemies using the Ghazni-Candahar line as a base of operations against India," and "the greater number of tribes we are able to bring under our influence, and the nearer we can get to Ghazni with them...the better...it will be for our Government".⁹⁶ The imperial interest in cementing Zhob to British India arose from the need to plug the only discernible gap in the Kabul-Qandhar line of defence, namely the Gomal route to Ghazni. While control of the Khyber and the Bolan covered the main approaches to India from Kabul and Qandhar, yet as The Englishman pointed out, the possibility remained "of an enemy occupying a base at Ghazni, between the two great cities of Afghanistan and striking at the unguarded centre of our line through the Gomal pass".⁹⁷ The solution seemed to lie in the occupation of the Zhob valley, which stretched in an east-west direction to the rear of the Sulaiman Range, giving command of the Draband, Gomal, and Tochi passes on the Afghan side, while itself being easily accessible from Quetta. "The Gomal route", The Times observed, "abuts on the Ghazni road from Herat to Cabul, and should enable an adequate force in occupation

of the country near Appozai [in the Zhob valley] to cut an invader's communication between the two Afghan fortresses".⁹⁸

Sandeman had already cleared a passage to Zhob by the Kakar expedition of 1884-1885, in the course of which the anti-British members of the sardar-khel had been purged from the tribal power structure, and leadership conferred on Sandeman's protégé Shahbaz Khan.⁹⁹ On his own initiative Sandeman had buttressed this structure of indirect influence by subsidizing the local chief with Rs.1000 per month.¹⁰⁰ But this model of internal control in Zhob started to fracture at a critical time in the post-1885 period, when the swing in favour of the Forward Policy required a major realignment of tribal politics with British India. Even as the strategic value of Zhob climbed the imperial scales, the fragile strands of British influence in the valley were about to snap, as a new power struggle broke out for the leadership of the Kakar tribes. Shahbaz Khan, the British appointed leader, found his authority challenged by Dost Muhammad, leader of a rival faction in the sardar-khel. As the conflict progressed through 1886-1887, Dost Muhammad skilfully inflicted violence on Kakar groups which traditionally supported Shahbaz Khan, with the object of weaning them away from old loyalties. The success of Dost Muhammad's

strategy progressively devalued Shahbaz before his own tribal audience and also caused destruction of life and property in Zhob.¹⁰¹

The destabilization of the Kakar enclave was Sandeman's opportunity to re-open the question of permanent occupation in Zhob. Pressing for a second punitive expedition, Sandeman warned that prolonged unrest in Zhob could create a corridor of violence stretching from Pishin to the Afghan border, and the only solution guaranteed to safeguard British strategic interests in Baluchistan was to transfer the Kakar tribes to his jurisdiction.¹⁰² Sandeman could count on support from the Military, while the wider strategic significance of Zhob in giving access to the Gomal Pass and Ghazni led the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, to extend his approval. The Viceroy felt he could risk another mission to Zhob, if it would open the Gomal Pass for trade and military purposes. To allow tribal misdemeanour to close the Gomal was in his view a "confession of impotence utterly unworthy of a great power".¹⁰³ He wrote to Cross, Secretary of State for India, that before he left office, he wished to see a good road made through the Pass without tribal opposition.¹⁰⁴

Sandeman and George Stuart White, Commander of the

Zhob Field Force , started out on the new expedition in November 1889. The show of military strength soon led Kakar groups like the Hamzazis, Kibzais, and Musa Khels to make separate submissions to Sandeman. In Zhob itself, the approach of the troops alarmed Dost Muhammad, the principal offender, and other minor headmen in his camp, who fled north across the border into Thanishpa. This allowed Shahbaz Khan to reassert his leadership over the Zhob Kakars with British support. To gild the reality of the military occupation, and secure tribal consent for the pacification of Zhob, Sandeman promised financial assistance to bolster the authority of the chief and headmen. In return he found the headmen willing to petition the British Government, to take them and their country, under "protection and administration, and station troops at such places in Zhob as they deem fit".¹⁰⁵

In Zhob, Sandeman provocatively occupied Appozai as his headquarters, a strategic position which dominated the Gomal Pass, and the whole Pathan country of semi-independent tribes, in order to blunt the edge of Afghan ambition in the area. Local Mando Khels, Waziris, and Shiranis were each given service to the value of Rs.25,000 to keep the pass open. On paper it seemed as though Sandeman had achieved the objectives of securing control in Zhob

and opening the Gomal Pass. The Secretary of State noted optimistically: "I have no doubt that the success of the arrangements will materially promote the pacification of the whole border".¹⁰⁶ But this was the first real trial of Sandeman's policy in the Pathan country around the Gomal. Compliance was not the tribal watchword here, and early in 1890, the Kidderzai section of the Shirani tribe rejected the arrangements,^{which} Sandeman had just made in the Gomal.¹⁰⁷

The defiance of the Kidderzais blacklisted them in Sandeman's book. He preferred to hold them responsible for many of the raids perpetuated on the border without any conclusive proof, and in April 1890 he broached the idea of a punitive expedition against them.¹⁰⁸ While the proposal was being considered, the Kidderzais offered their own terms of submission in June. They wanted the British to repeal the tax on imports and exports which had been levied in lieu of a fine of Rs.10,000 imposed after the expedition of 1889.¹⁰⁹ But Sandeman preferred to ignore the tribal terms of submission, and continued to press for a punitive expedition to coerce the tribe and secure the route between Appozai and the Derajat. Lansdowne bowed to pressure and sanctioned the expedition in August 1890, "not so much on its merit", as he confided to James

Lyall, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, but because he [Sandeman] is "difficult and dangerous to thwart".¹¹⁰

As military coercion followed, the Kidderzais had to pay a new fine and agree to the establishment of posts in their country. In the aftermath, George Stuart White, Military Commander of the expedition, marched troops to the top of the mountain, known as the Takht-i-Sulaiman [Solomon's throne], imbued with holy significance for local tribes, in order to teach a "useful lesson to the people".¹¹¹ But the ascent of a sacred peak, intended to intimidate the tribes, could only be a recipe for deep resentment. As Lord Northbrook observed: "The officer who went up to the top of the Throne of Solomon was not governed by the wisdom of Solomon in that operation".¹¹² The India Office was critical of the Kidderzai expedition and believed that by rejecting tribal overtures for peace, the Government of India had lost moral ground on the frontier.¹¹³ Even R.I. Bruce, Commissioner of the Derajat, and Sandeman's loyal henchman, warned Sandeman that military coercion would only win the temporary submission of the Shiranis.¹¹⁴

The controversial treatment of the Shirani tribe continued even after the expedition. Anxious to

pre-empt the almost inevitable bid from Sandeman for management of the whole Shirani country, the Punjab Government proposed a division of the tribe for purposes of control. The fact that there was a mountain range separating two sections of the Shirani tribe, the Barghas and Larghas, ^{that} and internally their constitution was segmented in the decentralised tradition of the Pathan tribal structure, forming an aggregate of "rude independent ... republics", was enough justification for James Lyall to recommend the political separation of the groups under different administrations, of Baluchistan and the Punjab, insisting it would not disrupt the Shirani tribe.¹¹⁵ But the argument carried the hallmark of using the evidence of spatial separation and internal segmentation to deny the Shiranis their corporate identity as one tribe. Lansdowne himself was doubtful whether "the distinction between the two sections is sufficiently substantial to warrant their being placed under separate administrations".¹¹⁶ But he conceded the point; the Barghas were transferred in 1891 to the control of the Baluchistan Government, and the Larghas were left to the Punjab. Tribal unity was sacrificed, and partition endorsed to satisfy the self-interested motives of the Punjab and Baluchistan Governments competing for local power.

Sandeman's successive missions in 1889 and 1890

also raised the question about the political future of the tribes in the Gomal Valley, i.e. the Mando Khels, Waziris, and Ghilzais. James Lyall was anxious to secure control of the "Gomal valley highway" as "a buffer between Sandeman and the Waziris", if the arrangements by which the Punjab controlled the latter were to last.¹¹⁷ But Sandeman argued that the conservative style of the Punjab Government would limit its involvement in Waziri affairs *merely to* the protection of the Gomal Pass, leaving their conduct beyond that point unchecked. "If Baluchistan posts are on the Gomal River", Sandeman pointed out, "the Punjab officers will be compelled to keep the Waziris in order, because there would be complaints from my officers if they did not".¹¹⁸

As a result of the conflicting views of the Punjab and Baluchistan, the Government of India was under pressure to opt for caution or adventure on the frontier. Lansdowne had little faith in the Punjab; he observed:

"I have no doubt that the regions lying beyond the Gomal pass could not be conveniently controlled from Lahore...The nomad hill tribes which frequent the borderland have to be kept in order, and must also be protected from Waziri raids from the country north of the Gomal River. For this purpose the country must be effectively policed and the easy going ways of the Punjab Government are by no means suited to such a task".¹¹⁹

The Government of India also persuaded itself that the escalation of the Russian threat, the passage of the trans-Indus railways, and the decision of the Military authorities to meet an external foe beyond the Indian frontier, made "it absolutely necessary to abandon the policy of non-intervention in the affairs of frontier tribes".¹²⁰ The tide of political opinion was distinctively in Sandeman's favour, and in the spring of 1891, the Government of India decided that the Gomal river between Kunder Domandi and Kajuri Kach, should be considered as the boundary between the Baluchistan Government and the tribal country supervised by the Punjab.¹²¹ Sandeman had gained control of the tract between the Kunder and Gomal river valleys, which Lyall had wished to interpose between the jurisdiction of the Baluchistan Government and Waziri country. At the same time the tribal margins of the Baluchistan Agency were stretched still further by the inclusion of the Mando Khel and Suleiman Khel Ghilzais within its political charge.¹²²

Sandeman's political dictation on the frontier not only restructured Baluchistan, but it also caused new complications between the Government of India and Kabul. The emasculation of Afghan power which was part of Sandeman's Baluchistan thesis was not lost on the Amir. The occupation of Zhob had effectively corroded

the Amir's sovereign relations with the Kakars, and infringed on Afghan territorial limits. As the Amir put it:

"I used to think that Russia was our enemy; but the British Government having encroached upon our territory from both sides, have taken possession of the Gomal and Khojak range".¹²³

The matter of allowing Sandeman to open relations with the Gomal tribes was particularly controversial. As James Lyall pointed out, the Amir regarded all the Suleiman Khel Ghilzais as his subjects; therefore to allow Sandeman to give tribal service to the Khoidad Khel in the Gomal Valley implied that the "Khoidad Khel are lost to the Amir, and a leak established in the soundness and allegiance to him of other Ghilzai tribes".¹²⁴ Lyall's forebodings were now justified. On the one hand the Amir now consistently accused the British of treachery and aggression in darbar and privately; and on the other he exacted vengeance on the Suleiman Khels for parleying with the British, by dismissing their leading men from his service.¹²⁵ These unfortunate victims of 'Sandemanising' the Gomal, were now as James Lyall described "beggared exiles whom we shall... have to support with substantial allowances".¹²⁶

Sandeman left this main negative in his policy, namely the hostility of the Amir, to haunt the Indian frontier during the closing stages of his own office in

1892, and that of his successor James Browne who took charge of the Baluchistan Agency in 1893. The new belligerence of the Amir was evident in the movement of troops to Tirah in Ghilzai country, even while Sandeman was engaged in the Gomal mission of 1890. Through 1891 and 1892 the Amir stepped up the blockade of new Chaman, terminus of the Sind-Pishin railway, preventing the entry of supplies from the Afghan side.¹²⁷ Tension continued to mount on the frontier, when early in January 1893, the Governor of Gandhar threatened to occupy Toba with Afghan troops. By occupying Toba the Amir hoped to put pressure on the Achakzais of Toba, to worry and threaten the line of railway from New Chaman to Qilla Abdulla, besides plundering in Pishin itself. On 27 January 1893, James Browne telegraphed : "Everything points to the amir's intention of asserting himself as defiantly as possible in the districts surrounding Pishin... concentration of troops, towards the southeastern frontier, is causing the people to believe...that friendly relations no longer exist between him and the Government of India".¹²⁸ The Amir also increased pressure on other parts of the Baluchistan frontier. He sent troops to Wano and Zarmelan on the northeast edge of the Zhob District, which caused local unrest, and incited Waziri raids on British posts.¹²⁹ If the tension was not defused, Bruce, Commissioner of the Derajat, warned it would undo

all the work in Zhob and the Gomal.¹³⁰

By 1893 the British were reaping the controversial political harvest of the Sandeman era. The Baluch-Afghan borderland looked increasingly insecure, and rumours of Jihad were rife in Afghanistan.¹³¹ Moreover the application of the Forward Policy outside the limits of Baluchistan, in Miranzai country and the Kurram Valley had left other Pathan tribes like the Afridis and Waziris edgy and suspicious.¹³² The Commander-in-Chief, musing on the steady progress of the Indian frontier towards the Hindukush, was concerned that the "storm may overtake us before we can do anything to strengthen that frontier".¹³³ As a preliminary, an understanding with the Amir was essential to lower the temperature on the frontier. In 1893, therefore the Viceroy sent Mortimer Durand to Kabul to reach an agreement with the Amir on the definition of the Indo-Afghan boundary line. According to the terms of the Durand Agreement, the Amir relinquished claims on Chaman and Chagai on the Baluchistan side, and agreed not to interfere in Swat, Chitral, Bajaur, and most of Waziri country, in return for the Birmal tract of land, a higher subsidy, and fresh armament supplies.¹³⁴ This arbitrary disposal of tribal territories by the Amir and the British was resented by tribesmen whose homelands were involved. In particular the violation of ethnic boundaries by the

Durand Line in Waziristan and the Mohmand country stoked trouble for the future.¹³⁵ There was a feeling among the tribes that the Amir had sold them out. Violence brewed, as the Mahsud Waziris destroyed the British boundary camp in Wano, in 1895, and only two years later in 1897 there was a general tribal uprising on the frontier from Tochi to the Malakand.

The rebellions melted the early euphoria evoked by Sandeman's Baluchistan policy. Observers like Alfred Lyall, who had pointed out in 1890 that it was "unnecessary to let the Baluchistan Agency put its outposts so far, and the eventual result would be seen in the acceleration of the forward movement, and in imprudent dealings with the Waziris which might create further friction",¹³⁶ found their position vindicated by the turn of events on the frontier. The Government of India was accused of having been "captured by a little clique of military gentlemen, inspired with a desire for wild schemes of annexation, and animated, above all things, by a thirst for medals and decorations".¹³⁷ Linking the tribal backlash to the aggressive restructuring of the frontier in the imperial vision of Roberts and Sandeman, Northbrook argued that tribes watching the annexation of Zhob, saw Waziristan being subjected to the same process, and forts dotting the Samana Ridge and the Malakand, were left feeling

cornered and encircled, and they reacted with violence.¹³⁸ As another critic pointed out, from the tribal perspective the Forward Policy threatened to "raise their purdah, which it has been a point of honour with them for ages to keep down".¹³⁹ Exposure to imperial order inevitably interrupted traditional tribal pursuits like "robbing, taxing, or blackmailing ...caravans",¹⁴⁰ which fostered animosity and created the ingredients for conflict. In the post mortem after 1897, Sandemanism was virtually put on trial, and found wanting especially in the Pathan tracts of the northwest frontier. The official consensus now aimed to confine the Sandeman system to Baluchistan, and "not harshly seek to introduce the Southern system under the more difficult conditions" of the north.¹⁴¹

Conceived in the heat of the Russo-phobia of the 1890s, Sandeman's political text perhaps suffered from the myopia of treating tribal resources primarily as raw material for building imperial defences. In cutting out the contours of British Baluchistan from the old map of Kalat and Afghanistan, Sandeman was led by the imperial perspective. By forcing back the margins of semi-independent tribal territory, Sandeman aspired to restructure the balance of power on the frontier, based on the domestication of the tribal front, and the devaluation of Afghan power. The move to Quetta,

Pishin, and Sibi. sketched a forward boundary, which not only gave British India new corridors of access into Afghanistan, but also instituted arteries of British control in tribal territory in opposition to the sovereign claims of the Amir. It was a provocative strategy, replete with echoes of the old Lytton-Salisbury formula to emasculate the Amir and reduce him to irrelevance in imperial calculations.¹⁴² Reacting to the extension of the Pishin railway through the Khwaja Amran Range, the Amir had said that the British were holding a pistol to his head.¹⁴³ The passage to Zhob and the Gomal, threaded Sandeman's ambition to extend the political limits of his own Agency and suppress Punjab's influence over frontier tribes, with the external imperative of dominating the Zhob-Gomal route to Ghazni, pointing at "the heart of Afghanistan",¹⁴⁴ to tighten the frontier of 'pressure' designed against Kabul.

In his task of framing tribal Baluchistan within new imperial margins, the Russianization of central Asia through the 1880s gave Sandeman a convenient political platform to rest his case for expansion. Aided by Frederick Roberts, Sandeman skilfully used every new turn in the central Asian scene, to move deeper into tribal territory in search of the scientific frontier. For most of the time he carried Dufferin and Lansdowne with his argument that Baluchistan could not

be defined by a final frontier, while the political barometer in central Asia continued to feed new strategic tensions in the Baluch-Afghan borderland.

In the evolution of Sandeman's Baluchistan, however, British policy did not turn just another corner in the political chase to mend frontiers and sustain the empire; it also entered a new course of rewriting the imperial linkage with tribes in the radical language of Sandemanism, which spelled the end of non-intervention, and exposed increasing tracts of the frontier to external penetration. As part of the forward surge, tribes were merged in the imperial scheme, boundaries revised, forts militarised, and tribal service distributed to enforce political subjection. For some tribes like the Khetrans, Shiranis, and Suleiman Khel Ghilzais, the reality of the imperial experience contradicted old ethnic affiliations and threatened tribal cohesion, as the priorities of British rule took precedence in the guise of protecting a military road, or securing a sensitive border. But as imperialism retextured the tribalscape in Baluchistan, it exported "fear and suspicion"¹⁴⁵ to the rest of the frontier, causing it to overheat in 1897. Yet while the tribal storm engulfed the frontier in 1897-98, Baluchistan remained an oasis of calm. This encouraged Sandeman's apologists to claim that the rebellions only reflected the imperfect

Sandemanisation of the Pathan tracts.¹⁴⁶

However despite the acrimony of the debate, the political turbulence and controversial footnote to his work, Sandeman had altered the frontier map in a definitive manner; as tribes and territories were detached from Kabul's political orbit, between 1879-1896, the outline of British Baluchistan took shape on the frontier as a threat and warning to the Amir, and beyond him for psychological effect on Russia, the ultimate *raison d'être* for such radical readjustments.

The Persian Factor and Realignment of West Baluchistan

While the Afghan element in imperial strategy was the mainspring for defining British Baluchistan in the northeast, in the west the margins of the province were set in the political context of Russian mastery in Persia. For most of the nineteenth century, the danger of Persia offering the Tsarist armies an alternative bridge to India had inspired tension, without actually influencing the basis of India's defence structure, which rested uneasily on a fragile Afghan platform. Meanwhile Persia had drifted into unsuccessful conflict with Russia over land claims, which left the Tehran Government with the unpalatable residue of military defeat and territorial humiliation. But in the long decades between 1830-1870, the Government of India

trapped in its tortuous course of creating an Afghan buffer in the north, proved inept in exorcising the Russian danger from Persian precincts. The British continued to support Afghan claims to Herat in opposition to Persian demands; and in 1872 F. J. Goldsmid, the British arbitrator settling the disputed Seistan frontier between Persia and Afghanistan awarded Seistan Proper to the Shah, but left Outer Seistan including the sluices of the canals, which irrigated Persian territory, in Afghan hands, much to the displeasure of the Persians.¹⁴⁷

At the Foreign Office, Lord Salisbury was uncomfortably aware that Britain's Afghan policy was driving "Persia into the arms of Russia".¹⁴⁸ Moreover half a century of strategic investment in Afghanistan had only locked the Government of India in a mercurial relationship with Kabul. Chronic dissatisfaction with the Afghan alliance, together with the tension generated by Russia's extension of power in central Asia and the projected Khorasan Railway, forced Britain to scan the Persian horizon more closely for new strategic options. Officials predicted that the Khorasan province of Persia would be the next target of Russian expansion, in which case "Russia would replace Persia as the neighbour of Afghanistan".¹⁴⁹ In 1889 Russian Consular Agents were established in Meshhed and Nasirabad

which brought the Russians disturbingly close to what Britain regarded as India's outer zone of defence stretching across the rim of southwest Baluchistan. The Consul at Meshhed actively promoted Russian interests to elbow British influence out of south Persia. A British newspaper correspondent reported:

"It is strange and somewhat humiliating, to find ourselves so thoroughly displaced in these southern districts where the sea coast offers us such a foothold, and where a little activity could have planted our prestige firmly in the minds of the governing and trading classes".¹⁵⁰

Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine stressed the point more dramatically: "The Czar has now got England by the throat in the east, and can tighten the grip as occasion may rise".¹⁵¹ It was the need to counter this attrition of British influence in southern Persia, which brought western Baluchistan into imperial perspective.

Henry Drummond Wolff, British Minister in Tehran, 1888, proposed the construction of a strategic railway from Baluchistan to Seistan, which would give Britain the benefit of a military corridor leading to the heart of southern Persia.¹⁵² The railway was conceived as an instrument for effecting the partition of Persia into Russian and British spheres of influence. As Wolff wrote to Salisbury: "If we secured ourselves in the south it would matter little what took place in the north".¹⁵³ Believing that the Baluchistan rail link would match the growing ambition of Russian

railway makers and reduce the Shah's fear of Russia, he added: "I wish it were possible to make the Baluchistan line - The Shah does not think the Quetta line near enough to oppose Russia successfully but this line would equal if not over trump the TransCaspian".¹⁵⁴

Salisbury was sufficiently disturbed to write to the Government of India:

"There is a defect or gap in the plans which your Government has been forming and carrying out for some years for the defence of the North West Frontier...the point about which I am anxious is Persia... The Russian forces provided with sea and railroad passage, lie along the whole line north of it... Its powers of resistance are...very small...Persia will not resist without encouragement. The only encouragement that is of value is support in troops, and money, and munitions of war. Any such support is out of the question now on account of the distance such assistance would have to cover...It is only by a railway from the sea, whether it starts from Quetta or Gwadur, the distance could be covered, and the possibility of assistance to Persia on the part of the Indian Government could become one of the elements".¹⁵⁵

In India opinion was divided on the prospect of pursuing a new Persian policy in the sandy wastes of Baluchistan. George Chesney, Military Member of the Viceroy's Council was supportive. He believed that the TransCaspian Railway had increased Russia's strike capability at Herat, to defend which Britain would now have to move up larger forces by railway.¹⁵⁶ Frederick Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief, favoured the idea of a railway commanding Seistan, but in the immediate context he regarded the Chaman extension^{as} more

vital for the defence of Qandhar.¹⁵⁷ The Government of India was less enthusiastic. Dufferin considered it speculative,¹⁵⁸ while Lansdowne believed that Drummond Wolff was "bored to extinction and...driven to take up schemes...he has lately been pressing so hard...Many of these schemes seem to be quite visionary, e.g., that for a railway through Persia to Quetta. I have told him there is no prospect of our being able to pay for such a line or to guarantee it".¹⁵⁹

From his local vantage point in Baluchistan, Sandeman believed that the intended railway and the interests it harboured mirrored the policy of the future. By 1891 the tribal and territorial resources of northeast Baluchistan had been optimised to give India a frontier line which would dominate Afghanistan. In Zhob and Chaman, Indian borders now touched Afghan country, and as Sandeman himself admitted, the effect of this restructuring had been "to offend the Amir of Afghanistan, and cause him to doubt the honesty of our actions with regard to his kingdom".¹⁶⁰ As new strategic options dried up in the northeast, the neglected Perso-Baluch borderland, and in particular Seistan, claimed attention as the field of future political exploration. The Seistan corridor to India's western approaches was an unstable tribal zone, ripe for the further penetration of Russian influence from the north.

The Times warned that if Russia reached Seistan before Great Britain, "a more serious blow will have been dealt at British influence in the East...than would be involved in the capture of Balkh, or the fall of Herat".¹⁴¹ To resolve the dilemma, The Pioneer Mail advocated the construction of a strategic railway through the Baluch desert from Quetta to Seistan, pointing out that "...a powerful British force in Seistan would ... strengthen Afghanistan, secure Herat, and ...menace Persia... the subservient ally of our great rival in Asia".¹⁴²

This renewed interest in Persia at the end of the 1880s, appeared to Sandeman as a useful turn for unlocking the political isolation of tribes and districts trapped along Baluchistan's semi-desert western front, and for converting this sector into the hub of Britain's future Persian policy. In 1891 he wrote to Drummond Wolff that the Baluchistan Office should be empowered to open direct relations with the Persian Prince Governor in Kirman,¹⁴³ ostensibly to examine new trade routes, but really to structure British interests in the region on a local tribal platform. Sandeman aimed to run a strategic road through western Baluchistan, leading to the heart of Persian Seistan. And control in the tribal country pierced by the road would be achieved not by "the construction of forts but by the consistent organisation

of the tribes and their gradual incorporation under our authority".¹⁶⁴

The tribal scene in western Baluchistan was ripe for external manipulation. Here the local Gitchki chief who administered Kej-Makran and Panjgur on behalf of the Khan of Kalat was embroiled in a destructive feud with Nauroz Khan, chief of the Nausherwanis, which resulted in the disruption of local government and halted revenue collection.¹⁶⁵ Tribal misgovernment was Sandeman's cue to intervene in local politics. In 1891 Sandeman went on a mission to west Baluchistan, and appointed a British official *overtly* to aid the Gitchkis in local government on behalf of the Khan of Kalat,¹⁶⁶ but really to start *circulating the message* of British control in the region. Sandeman's interventionist strategy also aimed to close the tribal borders of west Baluchistan to Persian influence. The main tribal arm of Persian power in the region was the Nausherwani chief. Being a recipient of Persian money, Nauroz Khan could afford to remain aloof from Sandeman's overtures, and fund the long drawn feuds which sapped the strength of his tribal rivals.¹⁶⁷ The anti-British attitude of the Nausherwanis led Sandeman to write: "...they are now notoriously under the influence of Persia, and all they do is known to if not directed by the Prince Governor of Kirman".¹⁶⁸ Persia obviously believed that keeping this tribal belt in a state of

permanent anarchy was her best insurance against British encroachments from the Baluchistan side. The parameters of the Persian-tribal problem in west Baluchistan led Sandeman to suggest solutions at two levels. First he pressed for British support for tribes intimidated by the rise of Nausherwani power. Secondly he proposed the delimitation of the Perso-Baluch borderland into spheres of official influence, in order to break the flow of trans-border communications, isolate the Nausherwanis on the Baluchistan side of the border, and force Nauroz Khan to a "proper sense of his duty" towards the British.¹⁶⁹

But Sandeman's strategy to re-order the tribal scene in the west proved stillborn, as the Government of India viewed it with scepticism. Cunningham, Secretary to the Foreign Department, voiced the general suspicion: "Sir Robert wants to take the authority of the Khan into his own hands, and to cripple the British Government by inconvenient obligations".¹⁷⁰ The British Chargé d'Affaires in Tehran was also directed not to entertain Sandeman's proposals.¹⁷¹

Blocked by the Government of India, Sandeman turned for support to Salisbury. Using the presence of Russian Survey Officers in Seistan to highlight the strategic significance of the region, he pressed the

point, about the great importance of "taking a railway as far as we can through a friendly country towards Merv, so as to give confidence to the people of south Persia and all concerned with her as well our own Baluch chiefs and people on that frontier".¹⁷² Sandeman's attempt to draw west Baluchistan into the imperial fold was also dictated by the desire to balance the importance of the Persian and Afghan frontiers in Indian defence strategy. Like the restructured northeast, Sandeman believed his blueprint for control in the west, would bring the 'forgotten Perso-Baluch' frontier back into the mainstream of imperial debate. The Times endorsed Sandeman's scheme to revitalise British influence in "Seistan - the watchtower of Baluchistan and Khorasan...the route through southern Baluchistan ... will undoubtedly some day claim attention as the likeliest line for the future railway to India".¹⁷³

But Sandeman was unable to influence the Government of India to embark on the Seistan railway scheme. His successor in 1893, James Browne, also believed such a line was of paramount necessity.¹⁷⁴ Despite such pressure from local officials, the Foreign Department decided to concede only a modest project of opening a disused caravan track between Seistan and Baluchistan, as a less expensive way of threading British interests in south Persia. In 1896

the Secretary of State sanctioned the opening of the Nushki-Seistan trade route.¹⁷⁵ The new commercial artery was conceived as an experimental run to test different policy options. At one level it was viewed as a preliminary measure to decide the future opening of the Seistan railway. But the ulterior motive, as Dennis Fitzpatrick, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab pointed out, was that of "checking Russia in her advance towards Southern Persia, and primarily to Seistan, and further of obtaining for ourselves, if possible, a position in Seistan, when Persia falls to pieces".¹⁷⁶ The immediate fall-out from the passage of the new route was the delimitation of the Perso-Baluch frontier from Jalk to Koh-i-Malik Siah,¹⁷⁷ and the Afghan-Baluch sector from Domandi on the Gomal River to Koh-i-Malik Siah,¹⁷⁸ to formalize spheres of influence and redefine political sovereignty in tribal tracts required for the safe passage of the road.

Redrawing the western frontier was politically controversial; it disrupted patterns of tribal activity and also raised the question of their future status in a zone staked out for promoting imperial interests. In the Baluch-Afghan sector, the first part of the boundary line from the Sarlat hills to the sandy edges of Registan inserted a new political divide between the Barech Afghans now left on the Afghan side of the line,

and the Rakhshani and Mengal tribes, confined to the Baluchistan side of the line. The new political marker promised better protection for the cultivated lands of the Rakhshanis and Mengals, who had suffered in the past from the plundering raids of the Barech Afghans. But at the same time the new boundary line stopped short of including the traditional grazing grounds of the pastoral Mengals within the limits of Baluchistan.¹⁷⁹ This left the grazing rights of the Mengals undefined and unprotected, subject to the whims of the Amir. The pastoral economy of the tribe was more vulnerable now to trans-frontier political tensions.

The other key adjustment in the frontier with Afghanistan was the inclusion of Chagai within Baluchistan. Wedged between Kharan on the one side and Afghanistan on the other, Chagai extended from Nushki to the Persian border. The Amir regarded Chagai as the key to the control of the Helmand basin, and in 1884 he had occupied it with his troops.¹⁸⁰ In 1893, however, he relinquished Chagai to the British, for territorial concessions in other parts of the frontier.¹⁸¹ In 1896 the change was implemented and Afghan troops withdrew from Chagai. For the local Sinjerani tribes, this removed the weight of the Afghan occupation which had pressed heavily in terms of revenue payments to Kabul and other dues on trade and merchandise. But the

respite was short-lived, for the British reinstalled Ali Khan Sinjerani, the former chief who had lived in exile during the Afghan occupation, in his position as head of the Sinjerani tribes in Chagai. And his return was marked by the revival of old chiefly privileges in the form of grain contributions and other dues from tribesmen,¹⁸² which merely traced an alternate pattern of exploitation in the space vacated by the Afghans.

The more controversial part of the boundary alterations, however, occurred in the Perso-Baluch sector. T.H. Holdich the British Boundary Commissioner, aspiring both for Persian approval and a strong natural feature like a mountain range for his line, shifted the frontier from Koh-i-Malik Siah to the Mashkel River considerably eastwards from Persia.¹⁸³ In the event the line dissected the tribal territories of groups like the Damanis, Rekis, and Rinds, who were now left on either side of the boundary line. The Rekis a poor nomadic tribe of camel breeders suffered material loss. Their date groves (20,000 trees), one of their principal assets was abandoned to Persia. As a sop to Reki susceptibilities, they were promised better protection against Damani raids, but in the event this proved to be a paper promise, and they remained as vulnerable as ever on the borderland. This led one of the Reki chiefs

to complain, that ever since the demarcation of the boundary line, the Rekis and Damanis have been at feud due to the indiscriminate transfer of tribal resources from one group to the other.¹⁰⁴ Essentially the line could not serve as stopcork to check the flow of trans-frontier tribal violence, as it abandoned key positions like Mirjawa commanding the southern gateway to the Perso-Baluch borderland; this left frontier tracts wide open to raiding forays from tribal bands operating out of the Persian side of the border. The line was also drawn too close to the trade route, leaving Persia in control of the springs of water on the hills commanding the trade route.¹⁰⁵ Critics also insisted that the boundary line should have been drawn further west since the Persian Government had proved itself "incompetent to maintain order in these lawless Perso-Baluch marches".¹⁰⁶ The infra-structure of local violence implied that the new boundary would not mirror a new divide between past anarchy and future order.

Synchronous with the impact on tribal lands and resources, the boundary line effectively altered the strategic map of west Baluchistan. The frontier rectifications redesigned the balance of power, and exposed a new seam of imperial options. In particular the separation of Chagai from Afghanistan unlocked new political angles. Expanding on the strategic value of

Chagai, A.H. McMahon, the British Commissioner for the delimitation of the Afghan-Baluch boundary line, 1896, wrote: "Situated as it is on the edge so to speak of a difficult desert it closes the various roads which converge here from Helmand and Persia on Nushki and Quetta".¹⁸⁷ Chagai was the valuable inter-connecting strip between Nushki and the Persian border, and therefore vital for the passage of the trade route and the extension of new economic and political linkages with Seistan. As the Government of India observed: "The chief value of the country [Chagai] lies in the trade route by which it is traversed - a route which is likely to be of much prospective importance, as it will form the easiest and most direct line of communications between Quetta and Eastern Persia".¹⁸⁸

The new border also helped to insulate the Baluchistan tribes from trans-frontier political influences. This was particularly important for instituting checks on ambitious groups like the Nausherwanis of Kharan who were not averse to colluding with the Persians or Afghans to keep the tribal fringe destabilized through the prosecution of private feuds, in exchange for money and local power.¹⁸⁹ But as one official described, the effect of reconstituting Chagai as a zone of British influence, was to bind the Nausherwani chief with a "band of iron all along his

northern border", thus completely shutting him from Afghanistan.¹⁹⁰ Further south along the Perso-Baluch sector Nausherwani territorial claims were disallowed with the same purpose of isolating Kharan from Persian influence¹⁹¹. Baluchistan's western border was therefore intended to function as a screen to intercept the flow of subversive impulses from outside.

The strategic definition of Chagai encouraged McMahon and Webb Ware, in charge of the newly opened trade route, to press for direct administration in the region. McMahon argued with some truth that the Sinjerani chief was too weak to serve as a reliable prop for indirect rule; to allow him to govern Chagai would be to abandon the region to "anarchy...encourage wholesale encroachment by Kharan on the south and the Afghans on the north, and effectively close the new Persian trade route to Nushki".¹⁹² This provoked critics of the Baluchistan Government to retort that its officials "have always displayed an almost passionate desire to bring under administration every wild tract of country they can get hold of".¹⁹³ From the heat of the debate, a compromise was gleaned by appointing a British Political Agent to supervise and direct the Chagai chief in the internal management of the district.¹⁹⁴ Thus a British backed tribal regime was planted in Chagai, and the new status of Chagai as part of the Agency

territories, administered under the executive orders of the Agent to the Governor-General, confirmed its reconstitution as a finger of British territory in the tribal heartland of west Baluchistan.

After Chagai attention shifted to the political picture in Nushki, the starting point of the new trade route to Persia. Political reorganisation geared towards annexation was difficult, for Nushki was part of the Kalat State, and a take over scheme threatened to embroil the British in violation of sovereign rights held by a client state. McMahon and Webb Ware believed they could unlock the problem by exposing Kalat's sovereignty *as* more nominal than real. The local tribal scene was anarchic and the Khan's authority nebulous enough to support an annexationist thesis. The Khan of Kalat, purely interested in revenue receipts from the region, had allowed inter-tribal violence to go largely unchecked. McMahon consequently reported that "petty intrigues" had reduced the "community to the condition of a set of miserable village curs, who snarl and growl at each other...They unite only to bully the weaker kaffillas as they pass through Nushki".¹⁷⁵ Such a state he warned, would only endanger the future of the trade route.

Despite pressure from McMahon to alter the status-quo

in Nushki, Lord Elgin's Government, being more interested in political expansion along the northwest frontier, deferred its decision on a final solution for Nushki. In the meantime, the local British Agent, Webb Ware, left in charge of the trade route, used his official position to start the erosion of the Khan of Kalat's formal authority in Nushki. He actively encouraged the tribes to bring their disputes to him for settlement, and reported with self-satisfaction: "During the halts I made at Nushki, I have been able to settle a large number of outstanding land and blood claims ... inhabitants of the district... now refer the most trivial cases for my decision".¹⁹⁶ But at the same time the large balance of unresolved cases and the birth of new feuds, gave him ground to write: "Under the present regime, Nushki can neither be pacified nor can it prosper", and the only realistic course was to offer the Khan of Kalat a quit rent for his rights in Nushki.¹⁹⁷ He was supported by Hugh Barnes, Agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan, 1897, who added that the Khan was fond enough of money to overcome his reluctance to alienate the District.¹⁹⁸

Conveniently for the Baluchistan Government, the new bid for Nushki coincided with a change of Viceroys. In 1894, Lord Elgin was replaced by Curzon as the new Viceroy, whose long-standing interest in Persia promised

new official support for the political reconstitution of western Baluchistan. There was less reluctance now to enter into new political territory. As the Government of India stated: "The work of administration cannot be undertaken without an extension of responsibility, which is not measured by the expenditure in money necessary to keep internal order, but by other and far reaching considerations of imperial policy".¹⁹⁹ Even the Foreign Department, usually sceptical of Baluchistan proposals, now murmured that the annexation of Nushki was in the imperial interest. As Cunningham, Secretary to the Foreign Department, reiterated: "As I am inclined to share the belief that the new route is a matter of imperial concern, I do not wish to be understood as definitely opposed even to annexation [of Nushki]".²⁰⁰

With the political climate in India moving in favour of imperially determined territorial mergers, there only remained the small obstacle of the Khan's opposition to alienate Nushki. But as a client state supported by British power, and with a poor record of internal control, Kalat was ill equipped to thwart British designs on Nushki. The Khan of Kalat now under increasing pressure from Baluchistan authorities for administrative incompetence and negligence in Nushki, and perhaps seduced by the prospect of receiving more

money from the quit-rent than the revenues he usually obtained, finally relinquished the District to the British in 1899 for an annual sum of Rs.9000.²⁰¹

By acquiring Nushki and Chagai Britain gained an uninterrupted political corridor stretching from Quetta across west Baluchistan to the Persian border. There was official optimism that the political changes in the west would give Britain new leverage in the domination of Persia and Afghanistan. As Webb Ware outlined:

"Prior to 1897 India was cut from Persia as completely as China is from Japan...and Russia had entered on a policy which had for its objective the complete subjugation of Khorasan and the overawing of Afghanistan... With the opening of the Nushki-Seistan trade route all this has been changed, and the Persians are now awakening to the fact that the Indian Empire lies immediately on their borders".²⁰²

The intended advertisement of British imperial power in the restructured Baluchistan borderland found its mark in Russian circles. At Ashkabad, The TransCaspian Review responded,

"The Northern Baluch desert has become full of life, and where mercantile movement hardly existed, there is now ready to enter into existence an even road for the insinuation of English goods into the very heart of the Iran tableland...More important is the political meaning of this road... An English fortress has risen on the very frontier of Persia, connected with Quetta by a road, which though only at present fit for pack animals will of course soon be made first a carriage road and then a railway, and then of course, the English artillery... which will decorate the Koh-i-Malik Siah will give great weight to the utterances of the English ministers

at Teheran ".²⁰³

But apart from a certain psychological and propoganda value it was not clear if the Baluchistan trade route had found its real mark of arresting the progress of Russian power in Persia. Perhaps provoked by the new trade route, Russia merely increased her grip on Persia between 1895-1900. In 1895-1896 Russia forced Persian officials to impose a customs tariff of five percent on all British goods in the TransCaspian region.²⁰⁴ But despite the tariff, the value of trade on the new route climbed from one and a half lakh of rupees in the first year, to twenty lakhs in 1902-1903.²⁰⁵ This was good for local trade, but it did nothing to relax Russia's grip on Persia. Thus by the end of the century, Russian engineers were surveying south Persia for a new railway to the Gulf.²⁰⁶ At the same time Persia contracted a loan from Russia as a result of which Russia became her sole creditor.²⁰⁷ Musing on the upward curve of Russian influence in Persia, George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, reflected that the use of the Baluchistan option merely threatened to dissolve the residue of Persian independence, without actually arresting the spread of Russian power. He wrote to Curzon: "I never like embarking on a policy which necessitates fighting against the stars in their courses. Do what we like we cannot prevent the influence of Russia increasing in Persia".²⁰⁸

Dismissing Hamilton's negative prognosis, Curzon's belief in deserts as useful frontiers²⁰⁹ led him to favour the reconstitution of arid west Baluchistan into a militarised marchland, for defence needs and to subject south Persia to British control. Rejecting the view that the Russians would march down the Tochi or Gomal, Curzon viewed Seistan as the key to imperial defences. Seistan commanded the approaches from Khorasan to the Gulf, it dominated the exposed southern flank of Afghanistan, and was therefore crucial for retaining control of the Herat-Qandhar line.²¹⁰ "Situated at the point of junction of the frontiers of Persia, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan," Curzon concluded, "the future of Seistan affects the destinies of all three countries".²¹¹ Led by this view, Curzon believed that the strategic potential of west Baluchistan should be maximised by converting the trade route into a railway between Quetta and Seistan; it would serve as British India's insurance against the possible menace of a Russian railway through southeast Persia to the Gulf.²¹² As he put it: "I would sooner have a railway from Quetta to Nushki than I would have a dozen lines in the Trans-Indus section".²¹³

Curzon's intended railway was a new version of the old scheme floated in 1890 by Drummond Wolff, Salisbury, and Sandeman.²¹⁴ But its objective was

better defined, and the target area of influence was narrowed to the south eastern corner of Persia,²¹⁵ adjoining Baluchistan; there was also less emphasis on saving all of Persia from the grip of Russia. The Quetta railway was primarily conceived as an instrument for securing sectional control of Persia; its aim was purely to acquire strategic command in a cross-section of Perso-Baluch territory, identified in Curzon's revised text as the future path of enemy intrusions into India. The eclipse of Persian independence, which was implicit in Curzon's Seistan scheme, was approved by George Hamilton; he wrote to Curzon: "As regard your view that a break up of Persia would not be to our disadvantage, I agree with with you, but we want some time...".²¹⁶

Critics of the scheme, of course, wondered if the presence of Russia in Seistan would add so much to British difficulties, as to justify dragging a train across a useless desert, which left in its desolate state would deter any invader.²¹⁷ But the Foreign Office was convinced of the need to restructure the balance of power on the Perso-Baluch borderland in the British imperial interest. In 1902 a secret conference at the Foreign Office concluded: "We should...steadily prepare for an occupation of Seistan by extending the railway beyond Nushki and pushing our trade".²¹⁸ The India Council was persuaded to accept the Baluchistan railway,

and communicating this consent to Curzon in 1902, Hamilton noted with satisfaction that this "transaction would practically settle our claim to Persian Seistan".²¹⁹ Britain's Baluchistan policy had now edged suspiciously close to an informal north-south partition of Persia, defining Russian and British spheres of influence respectively. In Parliament, Lord Cranborne summed up the spirit of the new policy: "We are anxious for the integrity of Persia, but we are anxious far more for the balance of power."²²⁰

With the completion of the Quetta-Nushki railway in 1905, the chapter on political reconstitution in west Baluchistan came to a close. Between 1890-1905, the western marchland was redefined in the imperial interest to distance the political influence of Persia and Afghanistan from the Baluchistan frontier. The trade route and the railway were stepping stones in a late imperial bid to grasp Persian Seistan. The Russians described the Quetta railway as "the first section of the great iron road which is eventually to connect Quetta with Seistan, and thus to bring the British on to the flank of the probable route of Russia's march to India".²²¹ In the process of designing a new balance of power in the west, a semi-desert zone of fluid boundaries and nomadic tribes was transformed into a military corridor to facilitate

aggressive action in Persia if necessary. Tribal complexes and territories necessary for the imperial scheme were detached from Persia and Afghanistan to give Baluchistan a new strategic profile. Client tribal leaderships were planted in Nushki and Chagai to check, any ~~hostile~~ reactions to the injection of British power in the region. Tribal homelands of groups like the Mengals and Rekis were divided by new boundaries, and artificial political barriers inserted to disrupt traditional patterns of migration and economic subsistence. In Nushki and Chagai tribal rivalries and unrest were reinterpreted to promote the idea of imperial control as a moral exercise to save tribesmen from the anarchy of their social system. But the reality of colonial Baluchistan was less reassuring, for the redrawing of imperial frontiers forced it within the vortex of the Anglo-Russian conflict, and exposed tribal homelands as battlegrounds for external powers. In the west now as in the northeast, the imperial motive had permanently altered the old tribal map of Baluchistan. Essentially structured from the contraction of three state boundaries - Kalat, Persia, and Afghanistan, the genesis and evolution of British Baluchistan in the late nineteenth century mirrored the central conflict between England and Russia for mastery in Asia, with the inevitable sacrifice of tribal resources at the altar of political imperialism.

Chapter IIICustom and Conflict in Tribal Society

The process of political expansion in Baluchistan, brought in its train the complex problem of internal control. Here the crux of the problem lay in the militant organisation of tribal society, where feuds and raids constituted legitimate channels for directing competitive political and economic activity. Moreover, in the imperial climate of late nineteenth century India, the increasing identification of good government with the ideal of order, focused attention on violence as the area of tribal life, most in need of reforming attention. A preliminary analysis of violence in tribal group relations is therefore essential in order to appreciate the social dimension of the administrative problem in Baluchistan, and the challenge which the tribal process spelled to the nascent colonial regime.

History and ethnology offer initial clues to the resilience of violence as a sub-culture in Baluchistan. Migrating Baluch tribesmen from west Asia brought to Baluchistan a tribal structure based on a military division of sections and leaders, oriented towards group survival in unsettled conditions. Raiding tactics

perfected by the nomadic Baluch became an integral part of their survival strategy in the new land. The Baluch word tuman (tribe) was a relic of their warring past.

As Denys Bray pointed out:

"The very name tuman, the Turkish tuman 'the ten thousand', almost seems to imply...a tribe on the war path, warring first with the alien people that stood in its way, and warring later with any rival tuman that disputed its spoils".¹

Responding to the pressures of alien migration and niche competition the Brahuis perfected a military confederacy which served as an instrument of war, and helped to carve out the Kalat State in the conflict ridden environment of eighteenth century Baluchistan.²

Both militarised tribal form and confederacy structure moulded society as a battleground, where violent competition was the gateway to material rewards.

In the matrix of influences which shaped a militant tribal society, the Pathans added their own esoteric flavour of non-conformism and rejection of central authority. The nuclear Pathan tribe with its tradition of dissent and rebellion against intrusive foreign powers,³ mirrored a commitment to political aggression and independence even at the point of the sword. As the Government of India observed:

"The Pathan tribesman is unstable and anarchic by nature; intolerant and resistant to control in any form by outside authority - Asiatic no less than European; on his own ground probably the finest minor tactician in the world, careless of

his own and other people's lives and prone to fanaticism".⁴

Historical experience therefore defined the tribalscape as a competitive arena, where the strategic use of force was pivotal in the master plan of success and survival. The militant inheritance from the past thrived in the ecological sterility of the region. The unproductive, arid mountain environment of Baluchistan imposed its own restrictive influence on tribal social patterns and norms. Here limited amounts of arable land, scarcity of water, and low population density constrained the production of wealth, and created an endemic insufficiency of material products in the regional economy. The economics of scarcity created the 'dynamics' for 'violent' interaction between groups, competing for access to limited resources.

Like other tribes existing under marginal social conditions in Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, conflict among the Baluch, Brahui and Pathans turned on a set of material choices dictated by the nature of environmental resources available to a tribe. In Somaliland for instance, the lack of water ensured that a typical cause of armed conflict among pastoral Somalis was a dispute over access to a well.⁵ Similarly E. Peters in his study of the Bedouins of Cyrenaica concludes that relations of hostility were a

a product of the semi-desert environment, where arable land, pasture and water were in low supply.⁶ Friction over preferential access to these limited resources led to loss of life and permanent hostilities, which were deliberately sustained as a pretext for continuing the essentially economic struggle to control land and water resources.⁷ In Albania and Kabylia as well, Black-Michaud argues, "the lack of land resources and water constitute the limiting factors, which result in social tension and group friction."⁸

As in Cyrenaica or Somaliland, the picture of conflict in Baluchistan was drawn on the canvas of economic marginalism. Here the tribal economy survived on a fragile balance between a low yielding agricultural sector and a supplementary pastoral section. The agro-economy suffered acutely from infertile soil conditions and an elusive rainfall, which made drought and scarcity familiar themes in tribal life.⁹ Migrations and pastoral incomes were the only safety valves against famine. In the tribal economy, sheep and goats had a special survival value as they stood between "large numbers of the population and starvation or wholesale emigration".¹⁰ Where the dividing line was paper thin between survival and extinction, inter-group relations were characteristically determined by competition and conflict for preferential access to scarce material

resources.

Inter-group rivalry was usually expressed through specific forms of retaliatory violence, typically labelled as feuds and raids. A raid was usually a finite act of hostility, operated for immediate political effect, or to enlarge the material holdings of a group by removing assets from a weaker group. By contrast a feud mirrored relations of permanent hostility, free from time constraints, which could freeze acrimonious group relations for decades. The specific material premises of group feud relations differed in relation to local ecological variables, which dictated the ratio of agricultural/pastoral resources in the tribal economy, and the availability/non-availability of permanent sources of water. The spatial distribution of these factors, which operated with greater or lesser intensity in a particular micro-area usually determined the lifespan of individual feuds. The historical literature of nineteenth century Baluchistan shows that tribes with a higher proportion of dependence on pastoralism, without access to permanent sources of water, such as the Marris and Bugtis in the northeast, were more frequently at feud with neighbouring tribes, in order to expand their own limited natural resources.¹¹ At the same time the absence of long damaging feuds among tribes like the

prosperous, sedentary Kasis and Durranis living in the fertile belt near Quetta, suggests that the accumulation of wealth tended to deter the prosecution of economic feuds, which only drained existing resources.

But the purpose of feuds was not just limited to redressing economic imbalances in tribal lifestyles. The significance of feud in the political process stemmed from its use as a mechanism for sustaining and renewing hierarchical divisions based on rank, status, and the privileges of holding office in the tribal system. Factors of rank and privilege stimulated endemic rivalry in the leadership echelon, aspiring to higher levels of political office associated with the graded order of tribal sections. This also gave rise to sectional and subsectional confrontation, determined by the political status of such groups in the system, derived from ascriptive membership in the particular group of a tribal chief or section leader. Articulating competing interests inherent in a ranked society, the political feud in Baluchistan sustained relations of hierarchy which defined the structure of groups and leaders.

Feud and the Tribal Structure.

The economic and military viability of tribes, sections, and subsections, determined their function as

participant units in the process of feuding conflict and rivalry. In Baluchistan, the institution of patrilineal inheritance, combined with limited arable land and other ecological constraints, militated for a high degree of agnatic co-operation. The minimal co-operative unit in the economic field comprised those agnates who held a patrilineally inherited share in communally exploited resources. This unit functioned as a minimal self-help group, sensitive to any injury inflicted upon one of its members, as this would reduce its working capacity. In the event of a loss of life, tradition allowed the deceased's immediate male relatives to extract some form of vengeance from the killer's group either in the form of another life or equivalent material compensation.¹² Thus primary responsibility for vengeance devolved on the murdered man's relations, who were grouped in the lower levels of segmentation in the tribal structure, namely the pira/paro of the Baluch/Brahui tribes, and the kahol of the Pathan tribe. If this group failed to take revenge, the responsibility would be assumed by the agnatic subsection or the shalwar in the Baluch and Brahui tribal structures;¹³ in the Pathan tribe this unit would correspond to the secondary level of segmentation, above the level of kahol, whose members lived in close proximity to each other and shared rights in water and pasture based on ties of agnatic lineage.¹⁴

In the case of blood feud the vengeance liability was incurred collectively by the offender's group. Vengeance could be extracted by taking the life of any male member of the offender's kin group such as father, brother or cousin.¹⁵

A strife situation could escalate to higher levels when the victim and killer's groups were not component units of the same sectional division, so that any instance of unavenged death at the lower echelons of the tribal structure imparted a vengeance liability to major sections. Similarly hostilities on an inter-tribal scale, based on the positions of killer and victim in rival tribes locked in conflict, would force the tribe to emerge as the vengeance unit. The operation of the vengeance principle implied that the virus of one murder could claim multiple lives, and ramify through society. As the Baluchistan Census Report observed:

"...if the murdered man is of a different tribe to the murderer, the feud may be taken up by the whole of the two tribes, each of which may again be joined by other tribes, so that a small spark may soon set a large conflagration ablaze."¹⁶

Social Premises of Group Conflict.

As a violent corrective for social injury, the origins of group conflict mirror the breakdown in patterns of exchange between families and sections. Breaches in contractual relationships like bride-price and marriage were common catalysts of violent opposition. In the

domestic economy of primary tribal groups, bride-price constituted a cash transaction between two families, according to which a daughter was sold by her male guardians for an adequate sum of money, varying from Rs.500-Rs.3000, as well as other assets like live-stock.¹⁷ Bride-price was therefore a source of income for the family group, and any breach of contract could involve pecuniary loss. The transition from custom to conflict may be traced through the changing relationship between two families of Aliani Marri.

In 1886 one Shahani Aliani Marri agreed to marry the sister of one Jamo Aliani Marri on the understanding that he was to give Jamo his sister in return and Rs.100 in addition. Shahali paid the bride-price and married Jamo's sister who died soon afterwards. Jamo now demanded the completion of the contract and asked Shahali to give him his sister in marriage. But Shahali refused to do so until Jamo returned the Rs.100 he had paid as bride-price.¹⁸ In effect the contract had miscarried, depriving the participants of the material benefits they had expected from it. To prevent the half-enforced contract from being buried in Shahali's refusal to give his sister in marriage, Jamo murdered Shahali, as a means of intensifying the struggle to gain the rest of his share. Jamo's act earned the attention of the Marri jirga (a council of tribal

elders), which ordererd Jamo to pay compensation to Shahali's family, but allowed him to take Shahali's sister in marriage. But Shahali's killing had activated the vengeance principle in the tribal scheme, and in 1893 Jamo was murdered in retaliation by two Aliani tribesmen.¹⁹ Here the economics of bride-price had provided the sub-text for violence in the form of reprisal killings. But hostilities were not re-cycled to prolong the feud, as the award of compensation and fines by a jirqa plugged any further haemorrhage of human and material resources in the social system accruing from this particular case of bride-price and vendetta.

Even more than bride-price, in tribal society, relations of inequality between men and women provided the raw material for violence touching on adultery and revenge killings. In tribal society women were accorded no rights or responsibilities; a minimal number of interactions were voluntary on her part, inequality was maximal. She was used in society to facilitate social transactions between men, which involved selling her in marriage, as well her use in cementing marriage alliances. In this social concept which viewed women as commodities, the main functional use of women was perceived in terms of their labour value in the tribal household, and their ability to provide descendants,

who would ensure the survival of the group as a viable socio-economic unit. As a tribesmen put it: "A wife does more work than a couple of bullocks and with luck will breed enough to pay for her bride-price thrice over".²⁰

The social exploitation of women was dramatically symbolised in the tribal concept of izzat and sharm - honour and shame - which presupposed that the attribute of sharm or sexual shame was latent in all women, but it impinged directly on a man's izzat or honour when a wife or sister was guilty of committing adultery. Such a view perpetuated the fiction that women were non-persons; thus their conduct was judged not in relation to themselves, but the men - husband, father, brother, - to whom they belonged. Any attempt on the part of a woman to break free from this pattern of bondage, as for instance through adultery to an alternative relationship, exposed her to the steel edge of tribal vengeance. The denunciation for adultery usually devolved on the husband; in his absence the responsibility passed to his agnates or her own natal group. Traditionally a husband had the right to kill the adulterer and adulteress, in vindication of his own prestige and honour, without drawing on himself any reprisal for such an act. But if he preferred, he could take compensation from the seducer, which was usually a cash sum varying from Rs.300 to Rs.1,500.²¹

depending on ability to pay. After taking compensation the husband customarily divorced his wife, who was then turned out of the district, and consigned to the care of a headman, in another district. The latter would keep her, until he could sell her in marriage again. He would then deduct the cost of her upkeep from the bride-price, and the balance would be returned to her former husband.²² A tribeswoman was virtually sentenced in her lifetime to be a mere "drudge about the house, a beast of burden on the march, in the courts a chattel in dispute, and too often a thing of dishonour".²³ The tyranny of male dictation, and the violence it spawned, attested to the strength of machismo and material cupidity in tribal attitudes, and the ready use of force to arrest any mutations in traditional sex determined role definitions and status symbols.

Interlaced with the ritual violence of tribal customs, was economic friction between families and groups over access to grazing grounds, water and land which often resulted in bloodshed. The scope and scale of such violence may be inferred from specific case studies. In 1889 it was reported from Quetta-Pishin that two families of Batezai Pathans quarrelled about camels grazing on certain lands, as a result of which one life was lost. A local jirga awarded a cash

compensation of Rs.2,800 to the victim's family, which prevented further violence.²⁴ In August 1891, there was friction between groups of the Alikhel Musakhel tribe in the Zhob District, over grazing rights, which led to several injuries. Subsequently however, the conflicting parties ended the dispute by accepting fines of Rs.100 each for the damage caused.²⁵ This would suggest that groups at lower levels of segmentation were unwilling to engage in long term destructive feuding rivalries over ecological essentials typified by livestock and pasture grounds. Another case of limited violence occurred in 1893 when some Utmankhel graziers clashed with Luni pastoralists over the use of a certain pool of water in Luni territorial limits. A fight ensued and several men were wounded. The case was referred to a local jirga for settlement, in the course of which the Utmankhels agreed to give sixteen sheep to the Lunis as compensation, and entreated the Luni chief to rest the quarrel. Both parties were satisfied, and the case was closed.²⁶ But the terms of the settlement had allowed the Luni chief to score a political point, namely ownership of the water; at the same time the submission of the Utmankhels was an admission of the superiority of the Lunis in bilateral relations between the two groups. A surrender on the political front was probably dictated by the need to avoid an escalation of the conflict over scarce resources like water; where aggression had not succeeded, perhaps submission would give the Utmankhels some use of the water.

The Spatial and Economic Mould of Inter-Tribal Conflict

As opposed to the defensive economic strategy of primary segments, external relations between tribes as corporate groups were dominated by conflict for limited material resources, particularly in the less fertile, semi-arid zones of Baluchistan. Here feud oriented aggression was primarily rooted in tribal territorial expansionism and the economics of scarcity. The northeast area of the Sibi District, stretching across the Bori valley and the Thal Chotiali plain to the foot of the eastern branch of the Sulaiman hills, mirrored in particular the linked problems of material deprivation, land struggles, and tribal violence. Here Pathan tribes like the Lunis, Shadozais and Tarins, co-existed with the Marri, Bugti, and Khetran Baluch. Both environmental factors and the state of political relations between neighbouring tribes were critical in shaping the local pattern of group interaction. The intensity of the economic pressure on each tribe, combined with a process of selective political bargaining to create a network of inter-tribal alliances, which defined the feuding/non-feuding relationship between one corporate group and another.

Luni tribal territory situated on the northern edge of this zone, included 1,920 square miles. Of this total area Luni pastoralists utilised only 400

square miles, while cultivators limited their efforts to the area around the Anambar River, and a few settlements in Thal Chotiali.²⁷ The scarcity of water was one factor in the under-utilisation of land resources. But in addition there was a political reason, notably a state of permanent hostility, between the Lunis and their neighbours the Marris and Kakars, which laid waste parts of former Luni territory. The enmity was rooted in a long-standing struggle for the acquisition of land dating from about 1850. In the course of the conflict the Lunis lost formal control of areas like Bagao and Chamalang, which bore the brunt of Marri and Kakar ravages, and turned into violent wastelands, where no man's life was safe.²⁸ Ultimately, the hard-pressed Lunis, who continued to lose ground, were driven back to the plains of Thal Chotiali, where they secured their lands by concluding a political contract with the locally dominant Shadozai tribes.

Shadozai dominance was structured on their control of the waters of the Thal River. They had purchased shares in the river water, from the original owners the Spin Tarins, who had been forced to sell their controlling interest in the waters, to meet a higher revenue demand imposed on them by the Afghans in the

eighteenth century.²⁹ As a result of the deal, the Shadozais prospered from the higher crop yields of the irrigated sector, while the Tarins became victims of a low yielding insecure rain crop sector subject to frequent scarcity. The depressed Tarins were forced to hire water from the Shadozais, and eventually became tenant cultivators, in an area where they had once enjoyed proprietary privileges. The social inequality fostered by the possession/non-possession of permanent water in turn locked the Shadozais and the Tarins in a hostile and violent relationship. As one nineteenth century report noted: "These water sales have been regretted ever since and have been the cause of a life long feud between the Tarins and Shadozais which has caused much rioting and bloodshed".³⁰

The Shadozais, internally hard pressed by their quarrels with the Tarins, and externally exposed to danger from predatory raids particularly by the Marris who were extending their depredations in the Thal region, found a convenient ally in the retreating Lunis to shore up their defences.³¹ The Shadozai-Luni alliance therefore matured under pressure, as a form of insurance to survive the trials of a strife torn society. More specifically it was aimed against the fear of Marri aggression, which overshadowed the troubled tribal scene in northeast Baluchistan.

Marri aggression was a product of social-structural pressures. By the turn of the nineteenth century a superior fighting capability (the clan numbered 5000 armed men),³² increased population growth, and pressure on tribal lands, created the ingredients for aggressive expansionism. Central to this expansion was the need to stretch the internal tribal economy, through the occupation of more than one micro-ecological area, for in Marri country the struggle to survive was more severe than most. As one description noted:

"A more miserably supplied and inhospitable country does not exist except of course uninhabited deserts. The culturable ground does not exceed three percent of the area, and although the soil in some places seems rich, the great scarcity of water prevents proper advantage being taken of it".³³

The material compulsion to expand was matched by an anarchist tribal psyche. Thus the Marris contended:

"We are the enemies of all our neighbours. We do no good to any one, nobody wishes us well, let us then afford every encouragement to strife around us, let us give passage through our country to anybody who seeks it to injure another, which ever side is injured or destroyed matters not to us in any case we shall be the winners."³⁴

Marri tribal territory itself was the heritage of a warring past. Kahan, Philawar, Nisau were acquired from the Hassanis between 1759-1780; Quat Mandai and Badra were won from the Pani Pathans between 1839-1842, followed by possession of the Kohlu valley from the Zarkhun Pathans. The residue of this expansionist course was political hostility with the defeated Pathan tribes.³⁵

But in the late nineteenth century, the scope for expansion narrowed as the spread of British power on the frontier, sealed the Punjab and Sind borders, the Bolan Pass, and most of Sibi, against Marri depredations. In 1881 the passage of the Sind-Pishin railway enclosed the Marris on the west, and gave the British better access to Marri country. The Marris were now cornered, and Sandeman reflected that the process of encirclement by troops and railways must have been "a great and sudden shock to a wild and uncivilised tribe".³⁶ In economic terms the new border clamps on Marri activity reduced an alternative source of income for the tribe based on plunder from raids. Moreover, this extra source of revenue started to contract at a time when there was a population growth in the tribe, with numbers increasing from 9,578 in 1891 to 20,391 by 1901.³⁷ This ^{growth} increased ^{the} pressure on resources, particularly in the pastoral sector. Here the common ownership of pasture grounds encouraged a policy of maximal extraction by individual herdowners; such communal use led to over exploitation of resources as the pastoral sector had to bear the ever increasing burden of human pressure, linked to the rising demographic curve. There was also some transfer of pastoral lands to the agricultural sector, to meet the customary requirement of apportioning equal shares in agricultural lands to every new male member in the

tribe.³⁸ The shrinkage in area coupled with the increase in grazing rights, overstretched the resources of the pastoral lands, and herders were forced to prospect for grazing outside Marri territorial limits, which provoked frequent clashes with neighbouring tribes.

For the Marris expansion eastward was no longer viable, as the British occupation of Sind and the Punjab had closed these traditional avenues of plunder. Encroachment southwards was blocked by the Bugtis, another tribe experiencing similar pressures, and with a fighting strength comparable to that of the Marris. The Marri-Bugti relationship centred on competitive rivalry for realistic assets such as livestock, to be acquired from each other through the periodic deployment of force. But it was also customary for the two tribes to unite at intervals to carry out joint raids against neighbouring tribes. At such periods the competitive basis in their relationship was subordinated to the common purpose of successfully plundering adjacent territories in order to supplement their marginal economies. Between 1860-1880, the Marris and Bugtis raided Punjab, Sind, Kalat, and the neighbouring hill tribes among whom they spread "desolation and terror", working in concert and sharing the spoils.³⁹ The Marri-Bugti relationship therefore reflected the equal political and military balance between the tribes, which

precluded the emergence of a dominant-subordinate structure in bilateral relations.

Unable to make any headway against the Bugtis, the materially hard-pressed Marris turned their attention to the militarily weaker Pathan tribes in the north, like the Lunis. The Marris opted for confrontation by regularly encroaching on grazing grounds wedged between Marri and Luni permanent settlements. The Lunis always resisted such advances, in order to defend their proprietary claims on the grazing grounds and to protect their livestock from thieving Marris. Luni resistance usually provoked retaliatory violence from the Marris, and the story of the tribes prior to British occupation was one of "raids and counter-raids".⁴⁰ When the British occupied Thal Chotiali in the early 1880s, a cavalry detachment was placed between Marri and Luni tribal territories to prevent the feud being activated. In 1888 the Political Agent even drew a line across the grazing grounds, demarcating respective pastoral spheres for the tribes. But it proved to be a paper line, as the Marris repeatedly crossed it, to graze their flocks on the Luni side of the border. This aggression bred new rows between the tribes, as a result of which two Lunis were killed in 1895.⁴¹ The Marris were again ordered behind the boundary line, which hugged the south eastern rim of the Chamalang valley, virtually excluding

the Marris from using the resources of the valley. A section of the Marris, however, requested permission to enter the Chamalang valley as they were reluctant to return to their own tribal country owing to depleted resources and other unresolved feuds with neighbouring tribes. But the Luni chief refused permission, and the British authorities did not interfere with his decision.⁴² Unused to respecting artificial boundaries the Marris soon crossed the line of separation and re-entered Luni country. The Lunis reacted swiftly and killed two Marris. The Marris retaliated with greater force, raiding their country and killing fourteen Lunis. In turn the Lunis killed another five Marris.⁴³

The Marri-Luni feud was particularly significant for showing the progression of an old tribal feud in the new political context of colonial rule. From the tribal point of view imperial control had brought in its train closed frontiers and excluded zones - to the Marris the Chamalang line would have appeared as yet another restriction, contracting their economic options still further. In the case of the Marris for whom a raid was often an economic safety valve, and feud a language to keep open the struggle for resources, restrictive boundaries were a threat to old survival techniques perfected through decades of conflict. To them Chamalang was a line of surrender, the loss of grazing

rights in a valley where they had enjoyed such privileges by right of force - hence the repeated acts of boundary violation to signify dissent. Conceived as a mechanism to impose separation and control, the line divorced itself from the true reality of the Marri blueprint to survive in adversity, and therefore served as a flashpoint for renewed violence.

The close linkage between territorial feuds and a poor economic base was also pivotal to the violent and unstable social scene in west Baluchistan. In the bleak semi-desert environment of Nushki and Chagai, described as the haunt of "broken clans and wild robbers",⁴⁴ and numerous Baluch and Brahui nomads "who ...scratched the barest existence from the soil",⁴⁵ land ownership depended on the precarious sanction of force. The ebb and flow of tribal conflict dictated territorial holdings and social status. Fortunes were made and unmade through the feuding process, as the relationship between the Mandai Baluch and Rakhshani Baluch illustrates. The Mandais were the original landholders of Nushki, but generations of inter-tribal quarrels had decimated their numbers, and ultimately they were unable to hold their own against the raiding incursions of the Barech Afghans from neighbouring Shorawak. To improve their own defences they enlisted the assistance of the Rakhshani

who lived nearby in Kharan. The Mandai-Rakhshani pact served the purpose of keeping the Barech out of Nushki.⁴⁶ But in the aftermath the Rakhshanis proceeded on a course of land appropriation, "regardless of the feelings of their host".⁴⁷ This usurpation of land caused feuding violence between the two tribes, in the course of which the Mandais lost increasing ground to the Rakhshanis. Thus when the British acquired the administration of Nushki in 1899 they found the Rakhshanis as the principal landholders of the district. Coupled with the loss of land, the Mandais also lost their political identity, as they were forced to merge with another branch of the Rakhshanis - the Jamaldanis - in order to survive.⁴⁸ Thus the verdict of violence had installed a new landowning group in Nushki on the political ruins of the old Mandai proprietors.

In the fluid tribal scene of west Baluchistan, however, the Rakhshanis soon had to defend their new lands against the influx of the nomadic Zagar Mengal tribesmen into Nushki. The Zagar Mengal chief originally held land in Kalat. But Mehrab Khan of Kalat had given him a few shares in the waters of the Kaiser stream in Nushki. Subsequently the Mengal chief decided to concentrate his holdings in Nushki, and surrendered his property in Kalat in return for additional shares in the Kaiser stream.⁴⁹ This was

followed by largescale Mengal migrations into Nushki, where they met resistance from the Rakhshanis. But the Mengals outnumbered the Rakhshanis seven to one, and ultimately secured valuable water-rights in the Kaiser stream, and also took possession of the clear alluvial plain lands known as the dak country, extending from Shorawak to Nushki. Tracing the linkage between Mengal landed power and the feuding process, Webb Ware, the British Political Agent for west Baluchistan, wrote in 1899: "The Mengals from time to time added to their possessions... largely by forcibly exacting compensation for bloodshed in the frequent quarrels which followed their arrival. The dak which this tribe claims come under this category".⁵⁰ But there was scope for compromise, since the Mengals were a primarily pastoral tribe and it was not in their particular interest to dispossess the Rakhshanis completely. The nomadic Mengals preferred to barter their surplus livestock for grain rather than engage in cultivation themselves; it therefore served their purpose to allow the Rakhshanis to survive as cultivators in lands which they had not taken for their own use. The differing needs of the pastoral Mengals and the agrarian Rakhshanis allowed for co-operation on the basis of resource sharing, thus muting the friction and breaking the flow of violence in inter-tribal relations.

Further west from Nushki, in the more arid lands of Chagai and Sinjerani country the scarcity of resources encouraged competition rather than co-operation in tribal relations. In Chagai for instance, migrating Sinjerani tribesmen took possession of the land south of the Lora Hamun by forcefully dispossessing the original Sayid owners.⁵¹ The critical linkage between the exercise of force and group survival, also set in motion destructive feuding currents in neighbouring Western Sinjerani country. In this semi-desert tract, Reki tribesmen eked a living from camel breeding, date groves, and patchy cultivation. Traditionally the Rekis protected these assets by evolving conflict and co-operation strategies with neighbouring tribes. Wedged between the marauding Damanis of Sarhad and the aggressive Nausherwanis of Kharan, the Rekis survived by contracting defensive alliances with the Rakhshanis of Nushki and the Sinjeranis of Chagai.⁵² With the Damanis the Rekis had a competitive relationship which turned on the possession of date groves along the Perso-Baluch frontier. The date harvest was a critical survival factor in the nomadic economy of both tribes. The Damanis with a predatory reputation like the Marris not only raided date groves in Reki territory, but also captured some of them located in Maksotag, Gazai, and Gorani.⁵³ These losses provided the raw material

for a long drawn blood feud between the tribes, for the Rekis viewed the groves as economic and cultural territory, providing income and bearing imprints of their way of life. As one of the Reki chiefs regretted that with the date groves also disappeared "old graveyards, forts, and... karezes, belonging to the Rekis, situated close to the date groves. The two tribes have a standing blood feud on account of this property".⁵⁴

Already hard-pressed by the Damanis, the Rekis also had to fight on the political front against the Nausherwanis of Kharan. In his bid to win political control over Mashkel, which was part of Reki tribal territory near Kharan, the Nausherwani chief regularly sought to impose dayak or tax on the Rekis, which the latter always refused to pay. This led to permanent friction between the tribes, and in 1886 the conflict took a more serious turn, when the Reki chief Mir Sabik was killed by the Nausherwani chief's brother. This converted the struggle into a blood feud, and left the Rekis permanently embittered against the Nausherwanis. Even in 1902, the memory of this injury was sufficiently fresh to induce a subsequent Reki leader to assume an "irreconcilable attitude", towards the Nausherwani chief.⁵⁵

While material insufficiencies fuelled fundamental conflicts for survival on the economic plane, there were also areas of political strife in tribal life, where chiefs and section leaders competed for power and privilege in the system. The structure of graded sections and ranked leaders in the tribal scheme⁵⁶ of Baluchistan encouraged competition for high office which was the key to status, power, and wealth in the system.

Rank and Rivalry - the Idiom of Political Feud

The politics of power usually turned on the rivalry to acquire central control of the tribal apparatus. Such a struggle could be expressed informally through the section leader expanding his own political role within the tribe at the expense of the chief, or as a formal bid for the position of chiefship itself. The first model is borne out by the internal conflict pattern which destabilized the Marri tribe from 1876-1900.

In the hierarchic form of the Marri tribe, the chief was dominant, but the second tier leadership, comprising influential section leaders and in particular the wazir or prime minister⁵⁷, zealously guarded its powers, and exploited any signs of weakness at the centre to increase its share in tribal management. Until 1876, the chiefship of the Marri tribe, under

Ghazzan Khan, a recluse and a fakir, had encouraged the wazir Sher Muhammad and other group leaders to exercise increasing influence in the tribe. But in 1876, Ghazzan Khan made way for a new chief Meherulla Khan, who reversed the old trend by assuming the active management of the tribe and curtailing the influence of ambitious headmen. In particular he discontinued the office of wazir,⁵⁸ and made a permanent enemy of Sher Muhammad. Deprived of his position of power and status, Sher Muhammad retaliated by intriguing against Meherulla Khan to discredit his function as an effective chief. Meherulla Khan replied in a similar manner against Sher Muhammad and the Langav subsection to which he belonged. In 1880 when the telegraph wire was cut in Thal Chotiali, at the instigation of the Marri chief,, it was ostensibly made to appear as an offence committed by the Langavs. Subsequently Sher Muhammad staged cattle thefts along the borders of Sibi and blamed it on the Marri chief.⁵⁹

But as the conflict settled into the cycle of retaliatory violence, it soon impinged on British interests. The Marri tribe was strategically situated to command the main lines of communication between Sind and the Bolan Pass, the Thal Chotiali route from the Punjab, and the Nari route to Harnai. Cutting the wire in Thal Chotiali therefore, threatened British

lines of communication as much as it served the political purpose of the chief in the conduct of his internal feud. Similarly the *incidence* of cattle thefts evoked old memories of the bruising pattern of Marri raids along the Dera Ghazi Khan borders. Thus Sandeman wrote with some concern to Alfred Lyall:

"The Marri clan especially will require a firm controlling hand if we desire to avoid coming to an open rupture with them. Even before the Kandahar defeat they were giving trouble on the Sibi frontier and lately carried off 400 plough bullock grazing between Sibi and Thullie".⁶⁰

Thus the politics of feud interlocked with the problem of structuring imperial control in Baluchistan.

In 1883 when Sher Muhammad passed away, his brother Mir Hazar Khan assumed the feuding mantle, and pursued the conflict with renewed vigour. But some of the violence in this later period was internalised, possibly to avoid open confrontation with the British; it was a form of tribal concession perhaps to imperial supremacy, without surrendering the political rituals which shaped their identity and history. Mir Hazar Khan's aim to subvert the authority of the chief, was helped by the fact that Meherulla Khan's health started to decline towards the close of 1885, and he became less active in the management of the tribe. By 1891-1892 as the authority of the chief started to slip at the centre, feuds between families and groups went unchecked, while the tribal jirga seemed unable to

impose decisions.⁶¹ As the chief's authority looked increasingly frail, Mir Hazar Khan successfully increased his own following in the tribe. In 1892 the Deputy Commissioner for Thal Chotiali reported:

"Matters recently reached the stage when Mir Hazar and all the headmen of the tribe were on one side with the actual control of the tribe in their hands, while on the other hand Nawab Meherulla Khan stood practically alone and unsupported. He held merely nominal control of the tribe and was rapidly losing the influence with which old feudal feeling had invested the Ghazni chiefship".⁶²

Fuelled by ambition and revenge, the feud had festered long enough to fracture the internal cohesion of the tribe. By devaluing the chiefship, Mir Hazar Khan had virtually avenged the original dismissal of his brother from the position of wazir,⁶³ and skilfully usurped a position of dominance in the tribe. The internal paralysis of tribal functions was also intended to ensure that there could be no settlement of the Marri problem without accommodating the political ambitions of Mir Hazar Khan. In this way he left no option open for the Marri chief, and the British, but to reinstate him as wazir if they wished to terminate the corrosive rivalry weakening the political system. H. Wylie, Officiating Agent to the Governor-General in 1898, judged Mir Hazar Khan as "an ambitious and clever man; he does not want the chiefship, but he does want power, honour and rewards, and the chief is very suspicious of him".⁶⁴ For Wylie, the only course seemed

appeasement if political equilibrium was to be restored in the tribe. On 20 June 1898 he settled the dispute, on terms which allowed Mir Hazar to function as wazir. But the truce was short-lived. In August 1898, the Marri chief reopened the confrontation, by accusing Mir Hazar of poisoning his son. As the political conflict now seemed set to enter a blood feud course, the Baluchistan Government judged that the Marri tribe could not serve as a common platform for two antagonistic leaders, and still survive as a unit. Since a chief was the historical figure of authority in the tribe, Wylie preferred to invest British support on behalf of the Marri chief. Mir Hazar was deemed expendable, removed from the position of wazir, and barred from interfering in the Marri tribe.⁶⁵ Thus the Marri chief's bid to emasculate secondary leaders in the tribe, and expand the role of the chieftaincy, was endorsed by colonial strategy; the chief was now poised to turn dictator.

The drive for sectional autonomy and repudiation of central control was often a prescription for feuding violence, as in the case of the Rustomzai-Sarazzai conflict. The Rustomzais and Sarazzais were sections of the Raisani Brahui tribe. The chief of the Sarazzai section was traditionally chief of the Raisani tribe. But the Rustomzai leaders were also able and determined figures who exercised influence in the Khan of Kalat's state councils.⁶⁶ For a brief spell in the

troubled period between 1857-1876, the Rustomzai chief had even controlled the Raisani tribe as a whole. Perhaps this taste of political power, coupled with the location of the Rustomzais in Quetta, far from the main locus of Raisani power in Kachhi, fuelled separatist aspirations in the leadership to redefine its tribal identity on more independent lines. In 1876 the Rustomzai leader, Mir Habib Khan made a formal bid for separation by claiming the title of sardar in relation to the Rustomzais, asserting his exclusive control over the section, and rejecting the authority of the Raisani chief over the Rustomzais in Quetta.⁶⁷

The Raisani chief reacted with violence to the Rustomzai threat to narrow his jurisdiction in the tribe. In 1877 when Mir Allyar Khan inherited the leadership of the Rustomzais from his uncle Mir Habib, the Raisanis pursued an aggressive policy of usurping Rustomzai rights in lands near Quetta, which constituted part of the late Mir Habib's legacy to his section. Subsequently in 1886, the Raisani chief demolished Allyar Khan's fort in Kanak, with support from Oliver St. John then acting Agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan. One Rustomzai tribesman even shot a Raisani near Quetta.⁶⁸ In the meantime the tribal jirga decided that Allyar's claim to the title of sardar was illegal for one tribe could not have two chiefs. Sandeman

endorsed the decision, but Allyar Khan refused to accept the verdict and he was imprisoned.⁶⁹ But he was subsequently released, and in 1895 when some old unresolved land cases came up for settlement between the groups, violence flared again. Rustomzai lands suffered damage and encroachment and Allyar Khan fled to Afghanistan. But in 1897 he decided to return, and take revenge for the damages suffered by the Rustomzais. Local British officials took the threat seriously enough to send a cavalry and infantry detachment to the border fourteen miles from Quetta.⁷⁰

An unresolved feud therefore served as a mainspring for violence in society, and imposed an expensive burden on limited local resources. Hugh Barnes, Agent to the Governor-General in 1897, judged that it was in the British interest to force a settlement of the feud. Therefore moving away from the earlier British position of providing unequivocal support for the Raisani chief, in order to keep the tribe from developing fissive strains, he offered Allyar Khan the restoration of his lands, and the title of sardar of the Rustomzais, provided he made a formal submission acknowledging the Raisani chief's overall title to the headship of the Raisani tribe.⁷¹ Thus Allyar Khan was given the substance of power, while providing a face saving formula for the Raisani chief to preserve his own status

in the tribe. The end result balanced sectional autonomy with the principle of political centralisation, to redefine the Raisani tribe, as a broad arena where competing interests and ambitions could be accommodated, without destroying the holistic framework of the tribe.

Leadership as a competitive commodity also stimulated feuding rivalries in Pathan tribes. The main function of feud in the political context of the Pathan tribe was to impose a form of tactical stratification on a relatively fluid power structure. Since the chiefship was not hereditary, the object of political rivalries was usually to capture the central leadership of the tribe. The feuding history of the Jogezais of Zhob mirrored this type of rivalry for internal power.

The Jogezais were a subsection of the Sanzar Khel Kakar tribe. In the time of Ahmad Shah Abdali they acquired a special status, when the Afghan monarch started the custom of appointing one of their members as chief or 'Badshah of Zhob'. It was also customary for Kakar tribes outside Zhob to offer allegiance to the Jogezai chief, "to join his standard at his bidding".⁷² As a title to power in the Kakar world, the headship of the Jogezais invited keen competition and was the mainspring of feuding divisions among the Jogezai

sardar-khel (ruling family group). The most destructive of these feuds started in 1854 when Rashid Khan, the existing chief passed away, and his son Shahbaz Khan was ousted from the succession by an older cousin Shah Jahan. This usurpation of power by Shah Jahan split the sardar-khel into two rival factions - Nawab Kahol to which the new leader belonged, and Ishak Kahol to which his dispossessed rival belonged.⁷³ In the years which followed, Shah Jahan proceeded to consolidate his position by courting Afghan support and joining the Amir's war against the British in 1879-1880. He also manipulated tribal support by establishing a reputation as a fakir or holy miracle worker, and became a cult figure combining the roles of "prophet, priest, and kingmaker of the Zhubwals".⁷⁴

In 1874 the factional rivalry entered a more active cycle, when Shah Jahan quarrelled with the Luni chief over the possession of livestock. Attempting to embroil Shah Jahan in deeper conflict, Dost Muhammad a member of the Ishak Kahol faction supported the Lunis against Shah Jahan. When violence broke out between the groups, Dost Muhammad suffered the loss of an eye. In revenge for his injury he murdered Jullundar, Shah Jahan's eldest son.⁷⁵ A political feud was now transformed into a blood feud, invoking the operation of badal, the Pathan ideology of counter-revenge. In 1906, the Nawab Kahol took its due revenge by murdering Bangal Khan, the

Ishhak Kahol leader in order to avenge the murder of 1874, and a later attack (in 1906) which had wounded Muhammad Akbar, leader of the Nawab Kahol group. But this did not terminate the destructive history of the feud. As an official source noted in 1916: "During this time the feud between these two branches, the Ishak Kahol and Nawab Kahol, continues, and is not dead up to the present". 76

Feuding rivalries, however, left an embattled tribal structure, essentially more vulnerable to external pressure. Thus in 1884, when Sandeman needed to structure British influence in Zhob, he could split Kakar opposition by supporting Shahbaz Khan to regain the position of chiefship from his old adversary Shah Jahan. The success of this strategy was apparent in the elimination of Shah Jahan from Kakar politics, the institution of Shahbaz Khan as the new chief loyal to Sandeman, and the collapse of Kakar opposition to the redefinition of Zhob as a British sphere of influence. 77 But Shahbaz's artificially constructed leadership was challenged by his cousin Dost Muhammad, who mobilized neighbouring Kakar tribes in 1887 to embark on a violent crusade to capture the chieftaincy. This encouraged Sandeman to intervene again in Zhob politics in 1889, on behalf of Shahbaz Khan, and thereby to sustain the model of chieftaincy he had instituted in 1884.

In a colonial context, therefore, the process of feud corroded tribal cohesion, and unlocked the door to external domination. As each feud stimulated a new niche of violence in society, it invited imperial censure, and an external political solution to the problems of leadership. This in turn forced a change in the quality of the leadership. In a purely tribal milieu, a feud would function as a competitive medium to test the mettle of aspiring leaders. A victorious chief would be an ideal type tribal figure, combining superior physical prowess with the tactical skills needed to survive in a hard environment. But intervention by a foreign power, like the British, usually blunted the edges of competition, and imposed a type of leader, not necessarily the most able in tribal management, but one who would be amenable to external dictation. Even where the operation of the hereditary principle ensured the life of the traditional chief, the resolution of political feuds according to British formulas whittled^{away} the independent function of the tribe, and its capacity for self-determination.

While feuds dominated the centre stage of the tribal scene, there were other more limited forms of violent exchange like raids. The politically motivated raid was usually an appendage of power struggles within a particular tribe. As the history of internal feuds in

the Marri and Kakar tribes,⁷⁸ have shown that raids were undertaken to externalise the conflict, with the specific purpose of discrediting the leadership of existing chiefs. The loot from a successful raid was also calculated to appeal to the avarice of tribal members, and buy additional political support for the particular section leader engaged in feuding conflict with the tribal chief.

Apart from their political use, raids also constituted a mechanism for balancing the tribal economy. The tribes largely engaged in raiding activity, such as the Marris, Bugtis, and Achakzais also occupied the most barren areas in Baluchistan. Confined to settlements in unproductive arid mountain valleys, such tribes found it convenient to augment the income of the tribal economy by raiding the territories of more prosperous tribes, like the sedentary Tarins and Shadozais. In the choice of booty the high incidence of cattle lifting pointed to the primacy of the economic motive in raiding violence.⁷⁹ The semi-nomadic lifestyle of the raiding tribes also gave them an edge in terms of mobility over their sedentary victims. In times of drought the scale of raiding activity increased as a measure to level the effects of loss through natural causes. For instance the Marri tribe registered a low crime rate for 1901-1902, while the following year,

owing to drought and the influx of Afghan herders into Baluchistan, which further strained local pastoral resources, the Marris under pressure rapidly increased the scale of cattle lifting.¹⁰ Tribal raids therefore underlined the dependence of many marginal communities on breeding and pasturage as their main source of livelihood, and lifting livestock was a means of ensuring the continuous circulation of wealth in the specific currency of the pastoral community.

For tribesmen therefore, feuds and raids typified a spectrum of strategic choices on the political and economic front, pursued through the rituals of retaliatory violence. The adhesion to social violence dictated in turn a culture code, which paid particular homage to the exercise of force as an expression of high and heroic masculine courage.

The Ideology of Violence

Superimposed on the social struggle of feuds and raids was a symbolic struggle for the non-realistic prize of honour as conceived in tribal culture. Izzat (honour) and sharm (shame) conceptualised the two polarities in this system of thought. Honour represented a positive male attribute synonymous with male prowess, aggression, and physical force. The archetypal warrior hero praised in Baluch heroic ballads made explicit the

linkage between violence, force, and the folk model of honour. Eulogising a particularly militant leader of the Bijarani Marris *of* the nineteenth century named Karam Khan, a Baluch ballad *stated* :

"The Marris are stronger than any other men. Karam Khan is fierce, and untiring, he rains blows on his enemies, and brings them down in one shot like a wild sheep."^{e1}

The two main sources of defilement of honour were male cowardice and female sharm. Male cowardice was linked with the inability to perform feats of physical prowess. As a British observer noted: "The Baluchis have the utmost contempt for... anyone who cannot ride a horse properly or use a sword".^{e2} Desertions in the battlefield also earned the stigma of social shame and moral censure. Predicting a shameful end for some warriors who had deserted their leader in a battle, a Baluch ballad prophesied:

"The cursed cowards fled, abandoned their friends and companions. They shall sit with shame in the assembly and feed on carrion and unlawful meats, because they remained alive after their leader was slain."^{e3}

The second source of threat to male honour was synonymous with female sharm, which was activated in the adultery syndrome, when a woman's infidelity required the husband/father/brother to take drastic blood revenge to restore the honour and status of his agnatic group.^{e4}

Within this concept of honour therefore, violence operated as a socially legitimised medium for the

acquisition of status and merit. Social credit was acquired through the successful deployment of force, which formed the basis of an honourable reputation. Equally the failure to undertake reprisals demonstrated weakness, and involved the loss of honour and status. A social code which enshrined the values of izzat and sharm inevitably fostered a mental commitment to violence and reprisals. In effect, the dialectic of honour constituted the nexus between violence as a system of thought and as a system of action.

Despite the ideological and social bias towards retaliatory violence, the tribes held in reserve a system of material compensations to terminate conflict, which became operative at specific junctures of numerical depletion, intra-group weakness and mutual exhaustion among feuding combatants.

Systems of Compensation

The award of compensation to end hostilities was acceptable, if the victim's group was too weak in terms of man power to continue the struggle. As a Gazetteer noted:

"In pre-British days if the parties were of equal position and influence, blood had to be avenged by blood; but if the relations of the deceased were weak, the matter could be compromised by the payment of compensation."¹⁰

Another situation in which compensation could resolve a conflict was mutual exhaustion of the contesting individuals. As the Biluchi-nama described:

"As long as they don't get tired of fighting they won't regard what any one says to them... peace is effected when both parties have it out with one another and then arrange a peace; when peace is arranged by compulsion it will not be long lasting."⁶⁶

The translation of revenge into a scale of material ~~compensat~~ions would give an intrinsically weaker victim's group immunity from counter reprisals, while the material items of compensation would bolster the group economy. Compensation was paid in kind, which included land, livestock, and a few girls for the injured group; or an equivalent was paid in cash and kind, the amounts varying from Rs.200 to Rs.2500.,⁶⁷ among ordinary Baluch and Pathan tribesmen, in the Sibi area of Baluchistan. By way of contrast, compensation rates for the life of a religious leader or a member of the sardar-khel were double the amount payable for an ordinary tribesman⁶⁸, reflecting the grip of status and hierarchy in social relations.

The right of arbitration lay with tribal chiefs and section leaders, for which they received a fee calculated on a percentage share of the object in dispute.⁶⁹ Religious leaders also played the role of

mediators for which they would be given a sheep or goat as fees.⁹⁰

The system of compensation therefore worked as a protective principle to prevent the extinction of weaker groups. It balanced the negative logic of revenge envisaged in the feuding principle, and gave the contestants a chance to survive their hostilities. The co-existence of peaceful compensation with feuding violence mirrored the imperatives of survival and destruction in a tribal society imprisoned in a marginal existence, where material deprivation was the norm, and even the loss of a human life could be mitigated by a cash sum.

While conflict among tribal groups was rooted in a particular social environment, there was a more enigmatic expression of violence typified by fanatical killings of non-Islamic individuals. A complex of religious and psychological motives dictated such acts, known as ghaza, which seemed to elude any rational logic.

Ghaza and the Violence of Martyrdom.

During an act of ghaza, a fanatic, driven by spiritual frenzy, would select a non-Islamic human target and kill him, in order to ensure his own death as

a shahid or martyr in the cause of Islam. The concept of shahadat (martyrdom) related to the Islamic precept, which allowed a Muslim to take up arms against the unbeliever, purely for the sake of religion, and surrender his life in the fight. Tribal behaviour in this field was based on the Khulsa, a text book described in a Punjab report, as being of "unknown origin, repudiated by real Muhammadan doctrine but summing up unfortunately all the theology known to the talib or border mulla".⁹¹ The book confirmed the attainment of shahadat for any misguided tribesman who lost his own life in return for the murder of an infidel.

The history of ghaza in Baluchistan shows the chilling popularity of Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs as the targets of fanatical attacks. In 1879, a small Pathan boy of eleven stabbed a Sikh soldier with a chopper, and displayed a white Arum lily, emblematic of Muslim martyrdom. In 1892, a girl in Thal Chotiali nearly killed a Sikh sentry, and gloried in the act.⁹² Later in 1899 a Marri fanatic killed a European guard. In 1901, a Hamzazi fanatic named Doulat murdered Captain Johnstone, Civil Surgeon, Loralai.⁹³ The fanatics confessed to "having seen blood" and being led by the compulsive ritual violence dictated by the cult of ghaza.⁹⁴

In a tribal cultural environment, ghazism also appealed to the heroic element in popular imagination. As a soldier of Islam, a fanatic was not only assured of a passage to paradise, but also gained immortality in tribal history as a saintly warrior hero. From Loralai, in 1904, the British Political Agent wrote:

"There is a good deal of latent fanaticism in the valley. Persons who have committed fanatical outrages are still looked upon as heroes and their crimes form the subject of songs on festive occasions".⁹⁵

The religious and heroic connotations of ghaza made such an act of violence useful to those harbouring a sense of material injury or suffering deprivation, as it provided a spiritual sanction to a negative act against society. Thus the Marri and Kakar outrages⁹⁶ occurred during the period of famine and drought between 1899-1900.⁹⁷ Most of the fanatics also came from the poorest section of tribal society. As James Browne, Agent to the Governor-General, recorded in 1896: "The army of solitary qahazas is almost solely recruited from the poorest and most ignorant class".⁹⁸ Starving tribesmen could have found ghaza an attractive solution to the burden of living. They were also more vulnerable to manipulation by the religious exhortations of mullahe nursing grievances against the government, or essentially hostile to the ruling Anglo-Christian coterie in Baluchistan.⁹⁹ The pure destruction envisaged in ghaza led Hughes Buller to conclude in the Census of 1901

"A fanatic's mind attitude appears to resemble that of the anarchist in Europe".¹⁰⁰

Border Conflicts

In a society where violence was only an impulse away, the problem of raids and feuds along the border areas skirting Afghanistan and Persia assumed additional external overtones through the involvement of foreign powers in the politics of tribal conflict, for the promotion of national interests. Contact with British India, Afghanistan, and Persia, gave Baluchistan a frontier ringed with political disputes and rivalries, which was a natural breeding ground for friction and exercises in political subversion.

Trapped against the expanding margins of British India, the Amir of Afghanistan, for instance, could not risk direct confrontation with Britain; instead he preferred to destabilize British power locally on the frontier, by spinning a web of tribal tension, in which he hoped to entangle British border authorities. Between 1889-1890, the Amir pursued a subversive strategy of deploying Afghan irregular troops in areas bordering on Chaman, Zhob, and Fishin, with the purpose of harassing officials and tribes living in the neighbourhood.¹⁰¹ In Afghanistan he kept up anti-British feelings by preaching Jihad . In this way the Amir hoped

to keep the Afghan tribes poised for aggressive action; he also calculated that without a real war to release the mounting tension, some of the pent-up energy would expend itself in tribal raids across the Quetta-Pishin frontier. The Amir's main allies in this war of nerves were the poor nomadic Achakzai tribesmen who lived on both sides of the Afghan-Baluch borderland. Trapped in poverty, the tribe could be induced to raid for material gains, and the Afghan Governor of Shorawak took up the option of encouraging Achakzai raids along the Quetta frontier, through 1891-1892.¹⁰² The Achakzais duly looted mail carriers, trading caravans, and merchant shops, thereby opening a new artery of violence on the far edge of the Quetta-Pishin frontier. The raiders had the advantage of melting away with their loot in Afghan territory, outside the limits of Baluchistan jurisdiction. As long as Kabul remained hostile, such raids would continue to feed violence in the system. As the Political Agent for Quetta-Pishin wrote in 1904, "the administration of the District was difficult as it marched "for a considerable distance with the territories of a semi-civilised state, whose subjects cannot be dealt with directly," and with whom no "satisfactory arrangements for the settlement of.... disputes are possible".¹⁰³

The Perso-Baluch borderland in the west was also

prey to the cross currents of border violence. In the labyrinth of sand hills which covered this part of the frontier, marauding tribes found easy hideouts far from the reach of central governments. Persia's traditional writ over the borderland had all but faded, leaving the region free for tribal exploits, making it a "veritable Alsatia for the border outlaw".¹⁰⁴

The Damanis of Persian Sarhad typified the case of a problem tribe operating outside the circle of central control. From their mountain base in the Safed-Koh, the Damanis descended with annual regularity to the plains of the River Mashkel on the British Baluchistan side of the border, to lift livestock from the local Reki tribesmen.¹⁰⁵ Persian authorities did little to curb Damani raids. After 1896, the opening of the Nushki-Seistan trade route uncovered new targets for Damani raiders. In 1901 the Damanis entered Chagai, attacked the trade route, injured people, and carried away merchandise. They also made common cause with political malcontents from Baluchistan, in order to make bigger joint raids across the border. For six months in 1900 they continually raided western Baluchistan, killing twenty-four persons, wounding nineteen, and plundered property to the extent of Rs. 83,832.¹⁰⁶

Behind the picture of Damani violence lay the

larger problem of Persian attitudes. On Persia's part, leaving the border as a desolate haunt for robber tribes, was dictated by the lack of resources to crush them, and the need to keep the British embroiled in border conflicts. As C.E. Yate, Agent to the Governor-General, pointed out in 1901, the laissez faire attitude of the Persian Government encouraged the notion of asylum on the Persian side of the border, and was an open invitation for tribesmen dissatisfied in Baluchistan to turn into "rebels on every little provocation, defy local authorities, and take refuge in Persia".¹⁰⁷ Moreover the problem, he felt, had progressed beyond that of mere asylum:

"So far the border district of Persia has served only as an 'asylum' to... outlaws, but now the immunity from punishment which the country offers, owing to the connivance of the local Persian authorities, has emboldened the inhabitants to proceed to actual aggression against Baluchistan".¹⁰⁸

Persia's attitude suggests she was trying to contain British power in Baluchistan behind a prickly border of tribal dissent. A barrier of desert and fighting tribes was Persia's political answer to the inexorable British drive westwards, in the form of trade routes, railways and new political districts.

The volatility of the Baluchistan borderland was also stoked by the anomaly, that the political frontier did not coincide with the ethnic one, and the

same tribal group often lived on both sides of the border. The ethnic reality of tribal patterns and movements constrained the social map of the borderland, despite formal lines of political separation. Typical of the tribes who traditionally pursued lifestyles exploiting resources on either side of the border, were the nomadic powindahs (one who travels on foot)¹⁰⁹, from upper Afghanistan who spent part of the year on the Indian plains. The need to find alternate winter pasture for the flocks and additional markets for their products meant that every autumn about "30,000 of these hardy warriors, merchants and graziers [i.e. the powindahs] with about 60,000 camels laden with the produce of Khorasan fight their way down to Dera Ismail Khan and scatter throughout India, reconvening in spring for the winter journey."¹¹⁰ But the route of the migration across the Gomal strained local resources. In particular, the extra pressure of humans and livestock on the slender resources of Zhob was a source of endemic conflict between the powindahs, and the local Mando Khel tribesmen of Zhob, competing for access to pasture and water. Such competition intensified during periods of drought, as in 1905-1906, leading to increased conflicts between rival groups. ¹¹¹ Powindahs also had to combat raiding attacks by Waziri tribes whose country fringed the Gomal route, and for whom passing caravans were compulsive

targets.¹¹² The armed pageantry of the powindahs' hard-pressed passage across the Gomal stairway, led A.H.McMahon to leave a pen picture :

"First of all came their advance party of fighting men, armed to the teeth with guns, pistols, swords, and shields, those on horseback often armed with a long lance in addition to their other martial equipment".¹¹³

Behind this armed escort would follow strings of camel, cattle, women and children.

Politically the migrations mirrored the strategic exploitation of the powindah status as nomads on the frontier, marginal to the control exercised by the Baluchistan Government. This comparative freedom from state jurisdiction was the powindahs' opportunity to prosecute old feuding rivalries with impunity. For example, opposition between the Nasirs and Suleiman Khels (two powindah groups), was acute. The rivalry was rooted in Afghan politics, and Amir Abdur Rahman's coercive policy of confiscating the lands of the Nasirs, in retaliation for their policy of dissent towards political authority in Kabul, support of the British forces during the second Afghan War, and refusal to pay revenue. Subsequently the Amir redistributed the confiscated lands among the Suleiman Khel Ghilzais, who agreed to pay revenue. The lost lands became the source of permanent feuding tension between the tribes, and

in 1882 the Nasirs took revenge by killing forty-five Suleiman Khel tribesmen on the Baluchistan frontier during the course of their annual migration.¹¹⁴ Here the Nasirs were using frontier territory, outside the Amir's control, and their own migrant status, to settle old scores by the application of force. In effect tribal migrations blurred the line of political separation on the frontier, negated state authority, and exposed the zone as a testing ground for conflicting claims and feuding justice.

Conclusion

As a tribal society existing deep in the heart of a strategic frontier, Baluchistan was a catchment area for various strains of political tension. Tribes and governments staked territories and pursued interests often at variance with each other, which created the ingredients for competition and conflict. The frontier was ringed by fighting tribesmen, ready to plunder for politics or profit, at the instigation of Persia or Afghanistan, fencing to keep at bay the expanding tribal and territorial margins of British India. To the border nomad the new environment of colonial rule defined by the cultivator, merchant trader, and government official, offered a world of instant spoils, ready for picking; this made endemic friction the reality of political expansion in the outer reaches of Baluchistan.

In the internal social scheme, the tribal structure of Baluchistan was captive to the feuding and raiding principles which dictated the acquisition of power in the political process, and the distribution of material resources. Politically motivated segmentary opposition, and the economics of scarcity, sustained a web of competing and conflicting group relations, in which force was the touchstone for success or defeat. A synchronous cultural indoctrination in violence was perfected by the compulsive rituals of izzat and sharm.

The violent contours of tribal society held disturbing implications. One direct consequence was a highly armed population. As a British official report described:

"The Baluchis...always move about armed with a various assortment of cutlery in their waistbands, and a matchlock, whose effective range is about 100 yards, slung over the shoulder. From youth up the Baluchis are accustomed to bear the burden of a formidable and weighty armament, so that they are inured to it. Their lives are spent in petty skirmishes; their only amusement is quarrelling with the neighbours".¹¹⁵

In this militant social milieu the intrusion of the imperial factor occasionally sharpened the competitive basis in tribal survival patterns. Thus the restriction of new imperial boundaries pressed hard on the domestic economy of certain tribes by excluding them from old raiding haunts, and forcing them to lose the additional income from plundered loot. This mounting

pressure forced the Marris into violent conflict with the Lunis¹¹⁶ as they prospected for additional resources in the neighbouring lands of weaker Pathan tribes. British interference in tribal feuds for imperial ends, as in the case of Zhob,¹¹⁷ tended to destabilize tribal politics by causing recurrent leadership struggles, which often embroiled neighbouring tribes, thereby extending the area of conflict, multiplying tensions, and engendering a local crisis. The maturing of a crisis in turn legitimized further intervention by the imperial power, so that in conclusion the issue was no longer just one of resolving the leadership question, but the wider one of the survival of tribal independence in an imperial matrix.

More fundamentally the feuding and raiding structures of tribal society articulated confrontation with imperial order, every time the violence of group struggles was externalised and aimed at wider social and political targets. Such patterns of competition and conflict also mirrored a way of life, specific to the tribal norms of honour and free choice unhampered by the fetters of political control from central authority; as a sovereign unit each tribe determined its own political and economic strategy for survival. The political culture of tribal society therefore spelled a special

problem for any external power attempting to structure the apparatus of government control. As Alfred Lyall recognised:

"We have to realise the fact that the conquest of these wild highlands is a new sort of undertaking, materially different from our previous conquests in India. Hitherto we have only had to contend on the Indian plains with ... disorganised rulerships; we have overturned them ... with the passive acquiescence...of a majority of the people...most of whom welcomed the advent of peace and orderly government... But the highland tribes do not wish for orderly government; they desire above all things freedom, and it is most improbable that for many years to come they will be content to be ruled by foreigners".¹¹⁸

The political distance between imperial order and tribal society was magnified by incompatible cultural perspectives. While a tribesman gloried that the "Baluch who steals and murders secures heaven for seven generations of his forefathers"¹¹⁹, a British official reflected, "Such a code of right and wrong cannot but seem full of moral anomalies to the European mind, and for the most part entirely incomprehensible".¹²⁰

The arabesque of violence created by custom and conflict in tribal Baluchistan therefore set the parameters of the problem of internal control. Tribal models articulated norms, at odds with the imperial ideology of subjection, order, and discipline. The script for rewriting this culture of conflict in the language of compliance became the 'civilising mission'

in Baluchistan. Here in tribal terrain, where violence was the social norm, the imperial venture was construed as a moral safari into an underworld of lapsed values. As John Malcolm explained to a young Political officer in nineteenth century India :

"If rousing yourself to what belongs to your qualities and pretensions, you take a view of the large tracts and the wild tribes assigned as a noble field for mental and bodily exertion, as one in which you can do yourself credit, your country good, and bring blessings on your name by converting to order and civilisation thousands of miserable robbers, who, while they are wretched themselves, are a bane to society, you will elevate your own character and promote the views and interests of Government."¹²¹

Implicit in such advice was the ethno-centrism of the nineteenth century empire builder and the ideological temper of his time, which encouraged the reconstruction of the non-west on western terms, and the conscious cultivation of artificial models of order and discipline to 'civilise' the 'primitive'. In Baluchistan, the tribal paradigm of compulsive violence provided the pretext for an imperial experiment in social control, designed to neutralise the dangers articulated by the tribal system.

Chapter IVCoercion or Persuasion: the Sandeman System
And Tribal Society, 1876-1905.Concept and Initiation

As a "land of the vendetta and blood feud"¹, Baluchistan was a volatile area for testing theories of imperial control. Here the wild tribes and bleak landscape seemed to fuse into a menacing socialscape, captive to the dictates of ritual violence. As one nineteenth century British account described:

"Beyond [the administered frontier] lies a country inaccessible, inhospitable, barren, rugged, savage in the highest degree, and the inhabitants seem to partake of the nature of the soil. They are the only things it can well support. They have their wild virtues; but their hand is against every man and every man's hand is against them. They have no government other than a tribal one, and that too, most imperfectly obeyed... They are hardy, brave, merciless and revengeful".²

This anarchic definition of tribal society bred the axiom that the mission of imperial control was a reformist one, to divorce the tribesman from his primitivism. As Lord Salisbury put it: "We must gradually convert to our way of thinking in matters of civilisation these splendid tribes".³ Such perceptions which rested on the ideological supposition, that the imperial-tribal encounter was a struggle between civilisation and barbarism,⁴ envisaged the issue of

control as a series of restrictions on the behavioural mandates of tribal society. The censure of tribal standards which was implicit in any text of imperial control made its application a surgical exercise, cutting out those anarchic parts of the tribal anatomy, which did not fit the physical structure of imperial discipline. As one Member of Parliament pointed out to his Forward minded peers:

"Their [the tribes] internal affairs...are murder and robbery, and if you attempt to effectively control them you must interfere with their internal affairs to the extent of destroying their internal affairs altogether. Your sole mission would be to put an end to their national industries - blood letting and loot."⁵

The structure of political control in Baluchistan evolved within the general matrix of imperial values, but its specific style and content were inspired by Robert Sandeman's perception of the imperial-tribal relationship. Sandeman's early career in the Indian army from 1856-1866 bred a military minded approach to the tribal problem. One of his contemporaries remarked: "His [Sandeman's] instincts were always those of a soldier, rather than a civilian; his methods were of the 'rough and ready order', and as such, commended themselves to the people who were not yet prepared for a full draught of civilisation".⁶ Like his military peers, Sandeman believed that the key to the pacification of the tribal frontier was the institution of a strong dictatorial form of government, capable of enforcing

order while being sensitive to tribal needs. The apparatus of government control was to be buttressed by military force. Sandeman was particularly aware of the efficacy of a state system which operated by force or the threat of force, in an area like Baluchistan, where violence flourished in the hot house environment of tribal society. As he wrote to Alfred Lyall, Secretary to the Foreign Department, 1880, "I need not say that the troops are the backbone of all political arrangements and that without their moral support I am badly off".⁷

The coercive basis of state authority was intended "to induce tribes... to behave well and settle down to peaceful pursuits", and make them "feel that we are in the position of their masters, and able to punish them, should the necessity arise. The headmen will then be our willing adjutors and work for themselves and us".⁸ The master-subject relationship implicit in this scheme of imperial-tribal relations reverted to the paternalist tradition in Indian administration, upheld by Munroe, Malcolm, Elphinstone, and Metcalfe who saw "...the division of society into rulers and ruled as a natural ordering... which envisaged submission to authority as necessary to the anarchic nature of man. Power to them was not a delegation of natural rights from the people, but rather a trust imposed by an

inscrutable Providence".⁹ The Paternalist concept of government as a simple unitary structure, combining executive and judicial power in the same official, was also Sandeman's blueprint for the government of Baluchistan; here the problem of tribal militancy outlined the need to structure an administrative apparatus, which would function as an efficient command structure to police society, unhampered by the bureaucratic delays which characterised more complex government systems. This consideration was at the heart of the simple executive style government developed in Baluchistan, with the Agent to the Governor-General functioning as ^{both the} head of the government and the highest judicial authority in the province. Below him the Political Agents and tribal chiefs acted as intermediaries to implement central control at the mass level in tribal society.

While the authoritarian bias in government was intended to coerce tribesmen into physical submission, Sandeman was perceptive enough to realise that to ensure a long life for imperialism in Baluchistan, he needed to tutor the tribal mind to accept dependence. In support of this view he always maintained: "You cannot tame a Pathan or Baluch by 'zor', that is to say, merely by coercion and threats... you may 'hammer' them as much as you please, but though you may cow them for a time,

the men to whom a blood feud is a cherished hereditary possession will be even with you when an opportunity occurs".¹⁰ To tame the tribal mind and turn the instinct for opposition into collaboration, Sandeman opted for monetary inducements. He believed that by giving the tribes government service and allowances, he would weave tribal interests into the imperial fabric, making a separatist tribal motif unattractive and unrewarding. Advocating that the empire should turn employer he wrote: "The system I would urge of giving employment to the tribesmen and enlisting their interests in our side, has been the guiding principle, by following which a way has been discovered out of the many difficulties by which I have been surrounded".¹¹

The use of employment to domesticate the tribal fringe of India was not new. Herbert Edwardes, Commissioner of Peshawar, 1853, had advocated it strongly in the Punjab after the Sikh wars.¹² Sandeman himself claimed to be the only true disciple of Edwardes, Nicholson, Abbot, James, who were men of the first generation of the Punjab school, involved in the early phases of frontier settlement.¹³ In Sind as well, Eastwick, Political Agent, Upper Sind, introduced tribal service in 1839, and John Jacob, who supervised the Upper Sind Frontier from 1847-1858, expanded the system to involve more tribes.¹⁴ But while the idea of

employment had floated in frontier politics, before Sandeman's time, its application was restricted to the correction of deviant behaviour on the part of individual tribes. It was not systematically exploited to complete the encapsulation of trans-frontier tribal society within the imperial matrix. Sandeman retrieved the principle of tribal service from erratic use, stretched its potential, and turned it from an occasional instrument of tribal control into the corner stone of his administrative structure for Baluchistan.

Sandeman's main point of departure with past versions of tribal service lay in his exclusive choice of the tribal chief as the recipient of government allowances; the distribution of employment and money through the tribal ranks was to be left to the chiefs' discretion. This view was probably prompted by the unsatisfactory balance sheet of past payments by Sind and Punjab officials to predatory minded individuals in a tribe who often master-minded destructive raids, but were not themselves traditional figures of authority in the tribal system, on the assumption that this would buy peace for the frontier against tribal incursions. Between 1848-1853, as Bugti raids battered the frontier, Punjab and Sind officials had bought off the most notorious of the gang leaders with service allowances and jagirs (land grants). But such payments had a

spiral effect in breeding tension, for they encouraged other ambitious individuals to take up raiding in the belief that the British would be forced to pay to buy them out as well.¹⁵ The sequel to this cycle of events was unsatisfactory. First, there was a renewed spate of raids on the frontier; and secondly cash handouts to individual tribesmen led them to rival the wealth and status of the traditional chief, leading to the erosion of his authority in the tribe.¹⁶ The Bugti chief, even made a personal admission to the British that the wealth which the turbulent spirits of the tribe had accumulated had turned their heads, leaving him powerless to check their plundering. "I did all I could", he said, "and when I found myself helpless I sat in my house and let things take their course".¹⁷

Sandeman attempted to break free from such counter-productive payments by negotiating always with the chief, so that a government subsidy would work towards strengthening the traditional structure of authority in tribal society. In 1867 when Sandeman first started his system of tribal service on the Dera Ghazi Khan frontier,¹⁸ he deliberately distributed money and service to the Marri tribe through their traditional chief Ghazzan Khan. About forty Marri tribesmen were taken into service, and paid Rs.600 annually to keep open communications between Marri headquarters in Kahan,

Baluchistan, and Punjab outposts. In return for the payments the Marri were to abstain from raiding the south Punjab frontier. The success of the scheme protected this part of the Punjab frontier, and in 1872 the Government of India was encouraged enough to increase the subsidy for employing Marri and Bugti tribes to Rs 32,040, under Sandeman's management.¹⁹ Tribal duties involved police and intelligence work in the frontier area between Baluchistan, Punjab, and Sind. Analysts of the Sandeman system attributed its success to the strategic support it extended to tribal chiefs, which enlisted them on the side of the imperial drive against frontier violence. As one observer of frontier politics noted: "The keystone of the radical change which was introduced by Sandeman was the recognition of the hereditary chiefs, and headmen, and exacting their responsibilities...and allowing no crime to go unpunished".²⁰ Sandeman remained committed to this principle in his career, believing in the concept that tribes internally unified under one central command would provide the raw material for an ordered society, while intra-tribal fragmentation would only lead to rabid competition and disorder.

Sandeman's support for the tribal chiefs was part of a wider blueprint to use the traditional framework of the tribal structure in designing a model of political

control for Baluchistan. The internal scheme of section leaders commanding the allegiance of section members, seemed ideal for Sandeman's purpose of using an indigenous leadership structure to police the tribal scene. In this way tribal resources could be invested in the interests of imperial order. As Sandeman would say, "Accord the local chiefs respect and honour, and let tribal disputes and complaints be settled as far as possible by... committees of leading men. This is a vital point in tribal management".²¹ Sandeman also valued tradition as a useful screen to mask the hard reality of foreign rule. He urged: "Work as far as possible, through existing institutions and in conformity with existing usage... Be as ubiquitous as you can, and influence as much as you can but interfere in detail as little as possible".²²

Sandeman's traditionalist approach in Baluchistan, which sought political control without the expense of social change, was in keeping with the restoration of what Lewis D. Wurgaft has described as the 'Oriental' approach to Indian policy, and the conservative treatment of Indian administration in the post-Mutiny period. "As initiated by Lord Canning in the immediate aftermath of the Mutiny", Wurgaft points out, "such a policy assumed that only a loyal landholding class could anchor Indian society in its sustaining

traditions and forestall the anarchy and revolt engendered by the liberal approach to imperial administration".²³ Sandeman's vision of harnessing the traditional powers and privileges of tribal chiefs to the yoke of British rule in Baluchistan suggested a similar concern for political survival rather than social experiment.

The political conservatism which informed late nineteenth century imperialism, was consciously responsive to current evolutionary argument. In particular the theory of Social Darwinism with its vision of a world defined by polarities like the civilised and primitive, progressive and backward, leaders and led, encouraged the view that western imperialism was the fruit of a superior civilisation, whose members were destined to dominate the less developed races in the colonies. Based on Charles Darwin's principles of natural selection and survival of the fittest, Social Darwinism sought to structure human development in a biological framework, stressing the inherent linkage between race, civilisation, and social progress.²⁴ Within this orbit of ideas, the empire was symbolic of racial and cultural superiority, and its ultimate mission the improvement of the subject people in the colonised tracts of Asia and Africa. Thus the language of the colonial administrator was usually

charged with moral overtones. In 1887, Rivers Thompson, then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, referred to the advent of a higher civilisation taking over in India through the peaceful coercion and moral ascendancy of the British.²⁵ T.H. Holdich, the British traveller and explorer in the late nineteenth century, articulated the cultural bias in imperial dominance:

"The right of the White man to fill the earth and subdue it has always been unquestioned because it is based on the principle that his dominance and lordship tends to the betterment of the world and straightens out the highways for peace and the blessings of peace and civilisation to follow."²⁶

Sandeman himself was a creature of the ethnocentric attitudes which shaped the concept of western imperialism. His attitude towards tribal society was predictably patronising: "What are my views" he conjectured, "but simply those which every Christian man or woman ought to feel towards their less fortunate neighbours".²⁷ Trapped in its tribal image, Baluchistan was 'primitive' in the Social Darwinian sense; a culture defined by feuds and raids seemed to constitute its own argument in favour of imperial reform. In particular, Sandeman exploited the nexus between violence and tribalism to give imperialism a civilising and humanitarian role on the frontier. He commonly described tribesmen as "predatory by training, usually at feud with one another, capable of combining against a common enemy, [who] have not been thoroughly

subdued by force in the field".²⁸ In this turbulent arena, Sandeman conceived his mission as one of creating a "peaceful province in place of a congeries of fighting tribes".²⁹ The confiscation of tribal independence, he believed, would be compensated by the British moral obligation to give them a better form of government and guide them towards social salvation.³⁰ He felt that a policy which did not aim at civilising the tribes could never be successful. In Sandeman's concept, therefore, the images of empire and tribe mirrored the opposition between order and anarchy. The enforcement of stability and order in a tribal milieu was vital for the structure of physical discipline it enforced, and also as a cultural medium for transmitting 'civilising influences' to a primitive society.

The Sandeman System: Structure and Form.

The model of political government in Baluchistan merged the Political Agency system, operational in the Indian States, with an assortment of tribal service cadres designed to re-educate society in the norms of imperial order. The king-pin of this hybrid structure was the Agent to the Governor-General. In the official scale, he was ranked as a second class resident; but his inferior status was compensated by a wide range of executive powers, free from the bureaucratic restrictions which hemmed in provincial governments in British India.

Both the limited nature of the tribal experience with centralised government, and Baluchistan's location in the militarily vital northwest frontier of India, dictated the need for a strong but simple government apparatus, allowing for the concentration of political, civil, and military powers in the office of the Agent to the Governor-General.³¹ The Agent to the Governor-General therefore not only dictated political strategy, and directed provincial government, but he also functioned as the highest court of appeal. Savouring the taste of unfettered power at his disposal Jim Biddulph, while officiating as Agent to the Governor-General in 1882, wrote that his work involved political, administrative, and judicial work of all kinds:

"We have no codes or regulations in our judicial proceedings, though we stick to Indian rules where Indians are concerned. Each case in which the people of the country are concerned is dealt with on its merits, and our decisions would horrify the Lord Chancellor at times. Sometimes we hang a man for murder, and sometimes we fine him . . . Rs 500. We are in fact the arbiters and enforcers of the local laws and customs, and the result is eminently satisfactory".³²

To the institutional powers of the Agent to the Governor-General, Sandeman added his own informal influence over tribesmen. His contemporaries like Charles Aitchison, Foreign Department Secretary until 1878 and then Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab (1879-1884), observed his work at close quarters, and wrote: "He knows personally all the leading men, and has great influence

over them . The people are...learning respect for law and order... For this we have mainly to thank Sir Robert Sandeman whose personal influence is something marvellous".³³ Sandeman's intimacy with the tribes stemmed from his preference for "seeing with his own eyes" a majority of the disputed tribal cases.³⁴ This gave him a clear insight into tribal society, and also left the tribes with an understanding that their conduct was under constant scrutiny by the Agent to the Governor-General. "There was no use in fighting Senaman Sahib", was a common tribal saying, "he knew everything and turned up everywhere".³⁵ With a finger always on the tribal pulse, Sandeman soon acquired a legendary reputation for tribal management. Reviewing Sandeman's tribal strategy in 1898, Curzon reflected that it had been one of "mingled courage and conciliation, ...of confidence ...and acquiring the friendship of the tribes...Sir Robert Sandeman was one man in a generation...".³⁶ Politically such a reputation allowed Sandeman to take the initiative in tribal management, at times: without prior sanction from the Government of India, or even stretch a directive from Calcutta beyond its intended limits. As the Viceroy Lord Lansdowne wrote in 1891 about Sandeman: "He is sometimes a little difficult to manage and inclined to take an ell when he is given an inch, but I have no doubt that his system of managing the frontier tribes is a sound one".³⁷ But there were

others who were less generous about Sandeman's new power in Baluchistan and his place in the political limelight. Accusing Sandeman of usurping the centre stage in tribal politics, Oliver St. John, Officiating Agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan, 1886-1887, contended that Sandeman had practically taken "the place of the Khan as head of the Baluch or Brahui Confederacy".³⁸

The Agent to the Governor-General had under him five Political Agents to carry on the work of local government in the British administered section of Baluchistan. Drawn from the Indian Political Service, these Agents combined administrative functions with political duties, and their official ranking was comparable to that of Deputy Commissioners in India. In order to induce men of a suitable calibre to make a frontier life their career, the Government of India made special allowances of Rs.400 and Rs.300, for the Political Agents of Quetta-Pishin and Sibi respectively.³⁹ Great stress was laid on the character and motivation of the Political Agents. As Sandeman put it: "...the success of the administration of this frontier depends on the individuality of the officers under me, and their special fitness for their work".⁴⁰ As the style of government was personal, transfers were infrequent in the Service, in order to encourage the Political Agent to become familiar with the tribes and

and their special problems, in the district under his charge.⁴¹

There were fifteen Native Assistants or Extra-Assistant Commissioners to support the work of government in Baluchistan. The most powerful of these officials was the Assistant in charge of the Marri-Bugti tribes, who was a member of the Baluchistan Provincial Service, and administered these two tribes on behalf of the Political Agent Sibi.⁴² Since service above the Passes was unpopular with Indians, the Government of India was careful to grade the Extra Assistant Commissioners on the Punjab scale, with salaries starting from Rs.300 and rising to Rs.650 per month.⁴³

The tribal tier in the administrative apparatus was structured over a period of time in the context of specific political and social problems. Sandeman's primary strategy here was to use tribal resources to fight the government's battle against feuds and raids. The incorporation of tribesmen into government service was therefore as much an administrative measure as a social experiment; at stake was the future of imperial control and the re-ordering of tribal society.

An early blueprint for the system of tribal service evolved in response to pressure from the

Military Department, which wished to reduce its annual budget and troop commitments in Baluchistan. In 1882 E.F.Chapman, Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief in India, ~~is~~ **told** the Baluchistan Government that the Military Department wished to withdraw from the numerous minor military posts dotted about the country, from the Khojak Pass to Thal Chotiali, and from the Sind-Kalat frontier to Sibi, which should be handed over to local levies.⁴⁴ But the equation between a reduced military presence, an experimental system of levies, and stability on the tribal front was not easily resolved. Waterfield, officiating for Sandeman in the early part of 1882, agreed in principle that troops should be withdrawn from minor posts, which were too weak for purposes of offence, and only served as irritants and symbols of foreign rule to the population.⁴⁵ But an examination of the scheme under the microscope of local tribal politics revealed essential flaws. As early as 1880 Sandeman had alerted Alfred Lyall, Secretary to the Foreign Department, that troops were essential for the management of the Achakzai and Kakar tribes who dominated the Pishin frontier and the Khojak Pass.⁴⁶ Historically sensitive to external control, such tribes were always poised to exploit any indication of weakness on the part of alien rulers. Thus in 1879-1880, when British reverses in Afghanistan led to withdrawal of British troops on the Pishin frontier, the Panezai Kakars rose in revolt and

murdered the local British officer Captain Showers. Sandeman had no hesitation in linking this instance of tribal militancy to the erosion of the military presence in Pishin.⁴⁷

An additional trouble spot for a future levy scheme was Thal Chotiali, where the tribal social pattern mirrored victim-predator relationships. Here sedentary Shadozai and Tarin tribes lived under the constant threat of violence from neighbouring marauding tribes like the Marris, Bugtis and Kakars. Sandeman had already communicated to Donald Stewart, the Commander-in-Chief, that the military garrison in Thal Chotiali was essential for keeping the Marris under control, and vital for preserving the peace in eastern Baluchistan.⁴⁸ Levies drawn from the Shadozais and Tarins would prove ineffective against the superior fighting strength of the Marris, Bugtis, and Kakars; alternatively to use the latter as levies in Thal, without military supervision, would be like "setting the wolf to guard the sheepfold".⁴⁹ This view was endorsed by Brigadier General S. Edwardes, Commanding Quetta District, who feared that entrusting local posts to levies would be like "baiting the jungle for tigers".⁵⁰

The dialogue between the Military Department and

the Baluchistan Government, ended on a note of compromise in December 1882, when Sandeman returned to office. Working out the balance between troops and levies, Donald Stewart and Sandeman agreed that military detachments would be maintained in Thal Chotiali, Pishin, Shahrig, Sibi, Quat, and Quetta;⁵¹ at the same time troops would be withdrawn from a string of minor posts - viz, Shahpur, Pulaji, Lehri, Hannam, Gulistan, Khushdil Khan, Kach, Ziarat, Harnai, Nari, Chaman - which would be taken over by levies.⁵² Thus Sandeman saved the 'military backbone' of his future political arrangements in Baluchistan.

Sandeman's agreement with the Military effectively cleared the groundwork for a regional levy scheme to materialize, and in March 1883, the Government of India directed him to submit formal proposals for the necessary tribal arrangements. A committee drawn from local Baluchistan officials was appointed under Sandeman's direction to draw up the new scheme. The committee submitted its report in August 1883, which recommended the disbanding of the Baluch Guides (formed on the Sind frontier in 1838, mainly to act as scouting parties for troops, and later in 1876 transferred to the Baluchistan Government), in order to raise money for the new scheme.⁵³

The scheme outlined by the committee essentially sought to structure levy service in the framework of the traditional tribal system. The tribal unit in Baluchistan, with its combination of sections and leaders, provided an internal chain of vertical command, based on the unilinear delegation of authority. Sandeman used this hierarchical structure of leadership within the tribe, to institute a chain of responsibility extending from the chief through the headmen of different sections, in order to create a graded service system, with well defined figures of authority to co-ordinate the work of tribesmen in policing themselves. The king-pin of the system was the tribal chief, highly valued by Sandeman for guiding him through the intricacies of tribal society. As he put it: "Just as in any difficult country the inhabitants of the locality can serve as a guide, so among the tribesmen the only men I have found able to point out the most practicable solution of any involved local question are the tribal leaders".⁵⁴

In order to give the tribal chief a material stake in political collaboration with the British Government, Sandeman appointed him as head of the tribal levy, with a personal allowance, in return for which he had to maintain and equip a certain number of tribesmen for police and administrative duties.⁵⁵ Appointment of

tribesmen to subordinate tiers of leadership in the service, bearing the ranks of ressaldar, jemadar, and duffadar, was controlled by the tribal chief, acting in concert with the mukaddam or section head. The guiding rule for such appointments was that the ressaldars were to be selected from the family of the chief; the jemadars from the families of the mukaddams of the more important sections; and the duffadars from the families of the less important section heads.⁵⁶ In this way Sandeman ensured that tribal hierarchies would be entrenched in the political constitution of the service, and the tribal leadership would be the chief beneficiary of government money and patronage, thereby tilting the social balance in favour of aristocratic privilege and authority.

The new service scheme operated on the principle of tribal responsibility, which was really a formula for rewarding conformist behaviour on the part of tribes, subscribing to the norms of colonial government, while penalising dissent and recalcitrance. Money invested in the tribes was intended to give them a "direct interest in behaving in an orderly manner, for tribal service must depend primarily on the good conduct of the tribe".⁵⁷ It was impressed on tribal chiefs that service had been granted on condition that "the peace of the country and ...freedom... from raiding is

strictly maintained... in the event of any serious raiding, the whole will be liable to be stopped".⁵⁸ In cases of theft, robbery, and murder, headmen were required to provide information on the offender, surrender him to the government if possible, or pay the cost of the damage done. But if chiefs or headmen themselves were involved in injurious acts, they would forfeit their service.⁵⁹ The assumption that loss of service would prove a sufficient deterrent against social disruption, rested on an unflattering estimate of tribal character: "The Baluch is eminently an avaricious savage", wrote Theodore Hope in the Foreign Department, "and his pocket when you can get at it is I believe, the most vulnerable point he possesses".⁶⁰

In outlining the levy system, there was a conscious attempt on the part of its authors, to express the service structure in a tribal idiom. Tribal responsibility was interpreted as a derivative of earlier forms of collective service associated with the political/military function of the tribe as a corporate unit of social survival. The collective nature of tribal responsibility was duly stressed through the assertion that the distribution of service was to be regarded as securing the services of the whole tribe, and not merely those whose names were entered in the service roll. Levy posts were to serve as "rallying points for the

tribe as a whole",⁶¹ while service in the system would give vigorous life to the traditional concept of the tribe as a collective entity, since service in the system would act as a useful reminder of the active service duties tribal responsibility entailed.⁶²

Tribesmen were also assigned to serve in their own tribal areas in order to preserve the territorial identity of a particular tribe. By adding a tribal dimension to local government, Sandeman claimed that his system of service had given Baluchistan "local self-government in a far higher degree than it exists in India".⁶³

In reality however, Sandeman's administrative patent did not mirror an even exchange of power between officialdom and tribesmen. The tribal niche created in local administration was hemmed in by powers exercised by the Political Agent over the levies. While tribal leaders could nominate men to the service, their appointment was subject to confirmation by the Political Agent. The Political Agent also supervised the work, pay, and maintenance of the levies. The relationship between the Political Agent and the levies therefore turned on official dominance and tribal subordination. As the Foreign Department explained:

"Levies are tribal bodies under tribal authority, and not commanded by British officers...Such bodies, have however a tendency to pass insensibly

under the control of Government officers, especially when such officers are appointed to 'inspect them' and the basis of tribal responsibility remains in theory, after it has ceased in practice".⁴⁴

Tribal service was broadly divided into three categories - Political, Telegraph, and Postal, with an ancillary Revenue establishment. Political service covered the law and order duties associated with the operation of tribal responsibility; it was the bedrock of the service system and absorbed the largest share of the funds allotted for tribal payments. Political payments were made to "tribes of importance in the Baluchistan Agency".⁴⁵ The importance of a tribe was usually determined by its record for militancy, and the strategic value of the territory it inhabited, particularly its proximity to lines of communication. Thus semi-nomadic raiding tribes like the Marris, Bugtis and Kakars were subsidized at higher rates than sedentary groups like the Kasis and Durranis.

The militant image of the Marri tribe, gleaned from its savage reputation on the Sind-Punjab frontier, and the exposure of the Harnai-Qandhar trade route to its depredations, led Sandeman to observe: "The Marri clan are to this frontier, what the Afridis are to the Peshawar frontier. If the Marris are well in hand, the peace of the Bolan Pass and other trade routes is secured, as also is the safety to the Punjab and Sind

frontiers".⁶⁶ The strategic profile of the Marri tribe qualified them to earn Rs.5,490 per month, in return for which they maintained twelve posts, manned by 163 tribesmen, for safeguarding communications between Sibi, Harnai, and Thal Chotiali.⁶⁷ Sporting similiar traditions of violence, with strategic price tags on their lands, other tribes like the Bugtis received Rs.1,390 per month for guarding the Dera Bugti road; the Panezai Kakars who dominated the Chappar Pass at the entrance of the Harnai valley, were paid Rs.500 per month to maintain twenty horsemen on guard duty; and the Dumar Kakars wedged between the Bolan and Harnai routes, conveniently located for raiding caravans on the upper Bolan, were paid Rs. 430 per month to curb their own raiding preoccupations.⁶⁸

Among the Kakars the Achakzais of Quetta-Pishin absorbed the largest share of political payments. The poorer landholding sections of Achakzai tribesmen were chronically implicated in raiding activities along the Khojak route. The problem was particularly acute for the Baluchistan Government, as the trade from Shikarpur to Gandhar passed along the Khojak route, through the centre of Achakzai country. As Sandeman arguing for the sanction of the Achakzai service in 1884 observed, "they were "not only a powerful tribe but also a notoriously troublesome one".⁶⁹ To neutralise

the Achakzai threat, the tribe was given Rs.2004 per month and held responsible for the safety of passes leading from the Khojak Amran Range to Pishin. One hundred and ten Achakzais were employed in the service, entrusted with safeguarding the Baluchistan -Qandhar frontier.⁷⁰

The service allotted to the Marris, Bugtis, and Kakars was recommended by the Levy Committee and sanctioned by the Government of India in 1884. Later in 1887 Sandeman extended the system to the Khetran Baluch who were assigned Rs.975 per month for safeguarding the Dera Ghazi Khan-Pishin Road.⁷¹ Between 1886-1889, Sandeman introduced tribal service informally among the Zhob Kakars, who received Rs.910 per month to abstain from raiding the Thal Chotiali border, and also as part of a wider strategy to forge new links between Zhob and British Baluchistan.⁷²

While tribal militancy commanded a high price on imperial scales, corresponding financial ratings for sedentary tribes like the Kasis, Durranis, Yasinzais, and the Pishin Sayids, were contrastingly low; their allowances ranged from Rs.145 to Rs.263 per month.⁷³ Their relative prosperity and pacifism ruled them out from posing any violent threat to the political order, and the Baluchistan Government was therefore

under no pressure to pay them high sums of money.⁷⁴

The Sandeman system also invested in personal payments to tribal chiefs, to give them a vested interest in political collaboration with the Baluchistan Government, and help remould the tribal environment in the image of colonial order. Thus the Marri chief, Meherulla Khan, received Rs.730 per month, and his son Rs. 320 per month. The object of such payments, as the Foreign Department remarked was:

"...to train up the son of the Marri Sirdar to habits of command and a position of importance in his own tribe...and a knowledge that it is in his interest to prevent plunder and to act in accordance with the wishes of the government".⁷⁵

The intended aim here was to make the traditional figure of chiefly authority more powerful in the internal context of the tribe, and increase his ability to enforce order among common tribesmen. At the same time such payments instituted external monetary clamps on the tribal leadership, underscoring their new economic bondage to the colonial order.

Among other important chiefs who received personal allowances, were the Bugti chief who was paid Rs.965 per month; the Achakzai chief received Rs. 550 per month; and where the sardar-khel was fragmented as among the Jogezais of Zhob, the money was divided among leading men - Shahbaz Khan, Shingul, and Saifulla Khan - each of whom

received Rs.300, Rs. 315, and Rs.100 respectively.⁷⁴

While the political basis of tribal service constituted the fulcrum of the Sandeman system, the latter also provided employment for tribesmen in the more routine administrative work of the Telegraph and Postal Service and Revenue Service. The former employed six hundred and five men at a cost of Rs.9,457-13-4 per month;⁷⁷ and the latter engaged sixteen mounted horsemen, at a cost of Rs.370 per month, to assist in revenue collection, to communicate with headmen and summon parties to dispute or tribal quarrels, and perform escort duties for officials when required.⁷⁸ The Panezai Kakars, Marris, and Achakzais were mainly recruited in the Telegraph Service, as the telegraph wire passed through their country from Thal Chotiali to Quetta. And while the payments were intended to secure purely routine tasks like carrying the post or protecting the wire, they were not without political significance, for the Baluchistan Government viewed them as an additional financial hold on the "predatory habits of tribes", designed to secure "the safety of life and property on the roads through the district".⁷⁹

In addition to the main corpus of local levies employed in the task of internal control, a semi-military model of the system was developed along the

the Baluchistan borderlands with Afghanistan, the North West Frontier Province, and Persia. This branch of tribal service, known as the Levy Corps, was intended to function as a border patrol unit to guard the main points of entry into Baluchistan. The Military Department viewed it as an armed screen to seal the frontier against raids, and also as a possible way to exercise a measure of control over very remote border outposts. As E.F. Chapman, Quarter-Master General in the Indian Army, 1887, pointed out, "the Levy Corps was to be part of a defence structure which "...rests upon a system under which we look forward at an early date to identifying the tribal inhabitants of the border region with ourselves in closing it to an enemy's advance, while the avenues leading directly through it to points, which to us may become of great importance, are opened out for forward movement whenever this becomes necessary".⁶⁰ In British Baluchistan there were two organisations of Levy Corps. The first of these the Zhob Levy Corps, was instituted by Sandeman in 1890, to protect Baluchistan from Waziri raids across the Gomal, and hostile action from Afghan tribes, east of the Durand line.⁶¹ The second one was the Chagai Levy Corps, which started operating in southwest Baluchistan from 1897, mainly to hold the frontier against the destructive raids of the Persian Baluch tribes, and also to protect the newly opened Quetta-

Seistan trade route.⁸²

The composition of the Levy Corps mirrored the same political and social priorities which had dictated the structure of the District Levies. According to a directive from Sandeman in 1890, tribal chiefs were to nominate men for the service, and also appoint a member of the sardar-khel to undertake the leadership of the corps.⁸³ Tribesmen in service wore uniform, carried arms, and served under a British commanding officer. Although primarily intended for para-military border duties, the Political Agent was allowed to use the Levy Corps, to enforce internal order if necessary.⁸⁴ The political use of the Corps aimed at providing strategic support for the chiefs in the work of tribal government. The Levy Corps was therefore another measure to inflate the tribal chief's power in society, which was the sheet anchor of the Sandeman system of social control.

Synchronous with tribal service, Sandeman provided a judicial platform for conflict resolution by reconvening the tribal jirga, which was a council of tribesmen dispensing justice according to tribal customs.⁸⁵ In the political context of British rule, the jirga became an institutional forum for justice, blending custom with colonial legal form. The primary unit in the Baluchistan jirga was an ad-hoc Council of

Elders selected from headmen and sayids; two or more such men were appointed to the jirga tribunal, with the disputant parties nominating equal numbers of their own representatives to achieve a rough parity of representation on the adjudicating body; and all nominations had to be approved by the Political Agent.⁶⁶ The ad-hoc jirga functioned at a local level, and tried to settle family and subsectional disputes, related to murder or adultery, in an attempt to contain violence at the initial stages of a quarrel.

The Standing District and Joint Jirgas constituted the second stratum in the judicial hierarchy. Operating at the inter-tribal level, they represented permanent tribunals, composed of chiefs and section leaders. A case was usually referred to a Joint Jirga, if the judgement on it seemed likely to affect the administration of two agencies or districts, or relations between two major tribes. Official representation at this level of jirga decision making was mandatory.⁶⁷

The residue of unresolved local and district cases, in particular politically destabilizing blood feuds between tribes, was referred for arbitration to the Shahi Jirga, which met twice annually at Sibi and Quetta. Composed exclusively of tribal chiefs, it

functioned as the high court of the jirga system from which an appeal against an award could only be lodged with the Agent to the Governor-General.⁸⁸ One official served as President of the tribunal, thus completing the sequence of government representations at each successive level in the jirga hierarchy.

Sandeman believed that the high tribal profile of the jirga would make it a particularly successful instrument for conflict resolution. He wrote:

"A tribal jirga ...possesses many advantages. It commands the confidence of the tribes themselves, and the decisions thus given are therefore treated with great respect. Each case is thoroughly sifted...The investigation gives us an insight into the condition... of the tribe, and is a guide in fixing such fines and conditions as circumstances demand."⁸⁹

In a more practical vein however, the effectiveness of the jirga in regulating social conflict was secured through its financial link with the levy service. As the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, stressed at a later date in 1911, to a gathering of tribal chiefs in Quetta, "... they could not expect to enjoy the privileges of self-regulation through the jirga without fulfilling their obligations, the most important of which was tribal responsibility for detecting and preventing crimes."⁹⁰ Thus if a tribe refused to surrender a convicted tribesman, or opposed the execution of a jirga settlement, they could be coerced by withholding their services and payments. The

same sanction of confiscating service money was applicable to a tribal chief if he refused to implement a jirga verdict. As Sandeman maintained, "It is always possible to inflict a severe punishment by the temporary or permanent withdrawal of the Service enjoyed by the Sirdar or tribe".⁹¹

Economic coercion and the text of tribal custom were not the only determinants of the jirga system, for it also operated within the legal framework of the Frontier Crimes Regulation. This Regulation allowed the Political Agent, in his capacity as Deputy Commissioner, to withdraw any civil or criminal case from a civil court and refer it for decision to a jirga. In a criminal case the Deputy Commissioner in concert with the jirga could impose sentences of up to fourteen years rigorous imprisonment.⁹² The Deputy Commissioner could also banish from the district any tribesman suspected of being a fanatic, or involved in quarrels which could lead to a blood feud. However the most punitive clauses of the Regulation allowed the Deputy Commissioner and the jirga to take securities for keeping the peace, from families and factions likely to be involved in blood feuds. If a life was taken, while such a bond was in force, the group forfeited its sureties. If tribesmen ordered to give sureties for the good behaviour of a kinsman were unable to do so,

they were sent to prison for a time.⁹³ Such a Draconian code, which put maximum pressure on tribesmen not actually guilty of crimes, but only related on the basis of family or tribe to someone guilty of misdemeanour, was the 'Bible of Baluchistan', and condoned by those who applied it, as a means which "saved thousands of lives and often stopped blood feuds starting".⁹⁴

The jirga was therefore not just a forum for regulating social conflict on the basis of customary law. Its underlying link with the levy service, and articulation of the legal mandates of the Frontier Crimes Regulation, gave it a new punitive dimension, far removed from traditional dispute settlement procedures. According to custom a ruling chief or sayid could order the cessation of hostilities, but the act of settlement was always voluntary, resting on the willingness of the parties to reach an agreement.⁹⁵ And such agreements did not preclude the aggrieved party from taking revenge at a later date. In place of this occasional and consensual style of dispute settlement, the new jirgas dispensed rigid sentences which had to be enforced. As a later Agent to the Governor-General noted:

"Our machinery for settlement [of disputes] by a Council of Elders ... is an extraneous imposition ... among the Pathan tribes, no machinery existed for ... obtaining a settlement ... the act of settlement was a purely voluntary one... Under our system settlements

are now enforced in every case either by customary compensation, fine or imprisonment".⁹⁶

From the rulers' point of view the jirqa was therefore a particularly useful apparatus for implementing a coercive and unpopular conflict resolution policy, through the medium of a primarily tribal adjudicating body. As Sandeman wrote in 1888: "Under the jirqa system the primary responsibility for, and the odium necessarily attendant upon, the decision of civil and criminal cases is thrown upon the individual sirdars and the tribes, who highly prize the privilege of deciding cases by jirqa".⁹⁷

The jirqa system and tribal service gave structural form to Sandeman's vision of political and social control in Baluchistan. Converts to the Sandeman creed were inspired to claim: "In Baluchistan the main principle underlying the whole of the administrative methods is to maintain the tribal system and administer justice according to tribal custom and usage".⁹⁸ But the idea of the Sandeman system, preserving the anthropological purity of tribal form, disguised the measure of self-interest which patterned the imperial-tribal relationship. Despite the concession to tribal custom, the Sandeman system was essentially a form of external pressure, ensuring the encapsulation of tribal society through strategies of political and economic

penetration. But the reality of alien rule forced the tribes in turn to make certain choices, which ranged from alliance with the ruling power, to manipulation of its material resources, and limited dissent. The imperial-tribal connection therefore unlocked its own impetus for change, realigning and modifying the structural and normative contours of tribal society.

The Sandeman System and Tribal Order.

The Sandeman system unlocked an experimental period for the exercise of leadership and authority in tribal society. Sandeman's golden rule of using tribal chiefs to control society, led him to perceive the archetypal Baluch chieftain, functioning like a powerful figure of central authority, as the ideal model of tribal leadership. This consideration led him to impose figures of central authority even in tribal systems, where such centralisation of power was customarily absent.

The process of centralising power in the context of a Pathan tribe like the Achakzais yielded particularly ambiguous results. In the fluid political world of the Achakzai Pathans, the khan-khel or family of ruling chiefs was internally divided and exercised power commensurate with a particular chief's personal influence. The elder branch of the khan-khel - the

the Barkhurdar Kahol- which exercised power in Afghanistan, and a younger branch- the Arzbegi Kahol- located in Pishin.⁹⁹ In 1879 Sandeman, in need of a representative figure to institute tribal service in Pishin, negotiated with Aslam Khan Arzbegi, and gave him responsibility for operating guard duties in Pishin. Writing about this appointment, Oliver St. John, (later Agent to the Governor-General), pointed out: "The post was understood to give him the headship of the tribe in Pishin, and business with them was managed through him".¹⁰⁰ But by 1883, it was clear that the newly constituted chief of the Achakzais had no real influence in the tribe. He had no authority over Achakzais on the Afghan side of the border who were organised under their own headmen; even internally in Pishin, St. John found him politically ineffective in controlling the tribe.¹⁰¹ The frequency of Achakzai raids in Pishin and the Khojak underscored the inability of the chief to control the tribe.¹⁰² The Baluchistan Government therefore dismissed him from his position, and installed a more senior member of the Arzbegi Kahol, Haji Sarbuland Khan, as head of the tribe. But his management of the tribe and service was short-lived, for he retired in favour of his nephew, Abdul Hamid Khan, in 1883.¹⁰³

In recognising Abdul Hamid Khan as the new chief,

and head of the levy service, the British believed they were acquiring another pliant intermediary between government and tribe. But Abdul Hamid Khan embarked on a controversial course, when he attempted to use his new position of power to subvert British administrative control. He courted tribal support by refusing to arrest Achakzai offenders, and leaving tribal levies unsupervised in their routine police work, and rejecting any form of control by district authorities in tribal affairs.¹⁰⁴ In opting to defy the British, Abdul Hamid Khan probably hoped to graft a real tribal power base to his leadership, by appealing to the matrix of Pathan values, which stressed the independence of the tribe, political loyalty to the clan, and rejection of external control, rooted in Pathan traditions of dissent against foreign domination.

The British were now left with the unedifying truth that the experiment of subsidizing the political authority of one leader in the Achakzai context, had led to the tribal rejection of imposed authority as in the case of the ineffective Aslam Khan who was unable to control the tribe, or the manipulation of such authority to negate British control, as exemplified by Abdul Hamid Khan. In the circumstances the policy of controlling the Achakzais through a central chief was abandoned, in favour of dealing with the tribe through the maliks or

heads of sections who were the customary power brokers in the tribe. The Achakzai levy service was accordingly redistributed. Abdul Hamid Khan lost his central position in the tribe, and only retained control of the levies serving in the Gulistan area of Quetta-Pishin; his cousin Ghulam Haidar was given charge of the Toba levies; and the Achakzai levies in Pishin passed under the direct supervision of the local officials.¹⁰⁵ This epilogue to the attempted Sandemanisation of the Achakzai group proved that the standard patent of a powerful chief underwriting social order could not be applied uniformly across the tribal board in Baluchistan, and was essentially flawed in relation to political systems structured on segmental division, and the plural leadership of petty chiefs or headmen.

In west Baluchistan, however, the Sandeman system had a more favourable trial. The variable here, was the Baluch tribal model, with a central chief dominating the power structure. But the strength of this leadership had waned under long term feuding conflicts, which left the chiefs with an ever decreasing margin of power to exercise within the system. In Nushki the feuding conflict turned on the struggle between the Rakhshanis and Mengals to acquire land rights and political power, which was covertly encouraged by the Khan of Kalat to keep the rival chiefs weak and divided.¹⁰⁶ In 1896,

A.H.McMahon, the British Boundary Commissioner, observed that constant tribal feuds had eroded the position and local standing of the chiefs considerably; he wrote: "...the authority of the tribal chiefs...has been reduced to almost nil".¹⁰⁷ He also pointed out that the most critical index of the chiefs losing power in the tribes was the increasing trend among headmen and ordinary tribesmen to refer disputes for settlement across the border to Afghanistan.¹⁰⁸ In neighbouring Chagai, the Sinjerani chief reinstated to power by the British in 1896,¹⁰⁹ had little influence, partly due to the long Afghan occupation of the district, when he was forced to live as a powerless refugee in British Baluchistan, and also due to his own weakness of character. As McMahon wrote: "The Chief, naturally a weak man, has been a refugee from his country for many years and is wanting in personal influence over his tribe. To leave him alone to look after this large tract of country would be to abandon it to anarchy".¹¹⁰

To arrest the decline of chiefly power in west Baluchistan, Hugh Barnes, then Agent to the Governor-General, and reputed to be a "devoted disciple of Sandeman",¹¹¹ extended the system of tribal allowances to Nushki and Chagai. But the grant of personal allowances to the Mengal and Sinjerani chiefs was tied to the abolition of certain customary economic

privileges. The Mengal chief traditionally levied tolls on merchandise passing through Nushki. This taxation was unpopular with the British for it discouraged merchants from using the newly opened Nushki-Seistan trade route. Consequently the Baluchistan Government abolished the Mengal chief's right to levy customs dues, and he was given in exchange a compensating allowance of Rs.7000 per year.¹¹² Similarly, the Sinjerani chief was divested of his traditional sardari right to take revenue at one-sixth, which Webb Ware the local British Agent believed pressed too heavily on the tribesmen; in return he was compensated by a personal allowance of Rs.320 per year.¹¹³

Monetary allowances gave the chiefs new financial support, while tying them to the self-interest of their imperial patrons. Essentially such payments altered the texture of tribal leadership, by partly divorcing the status of headship from its traditional economic base, resting on tribal taxes and revenues. This forced a qualitative change, which made the tribal leader, in the words of Webb Ware, "a paid Government servant".¹¹⁴ He described how the Mengal chief had now "enlisted himself unreservedly" on the British side, with the result that not a single caravan was attacked on the trade route.¹¹⁵ In the Sinjerani case, McMahon was equally optimistic, that the remantling of the

chief's authority in the supportive framework of British power, would allow him "to regain influence over his tribe".¹¹⁴ The main thrust of British policy in west Baluchistan was therefore to extend the Sandeman system to shore up chiefly authority, even while it trimmed the sources of tribal income, on which the independence of such authority traditionally depended. The exchange of customary dues for good behaviour money implied that the leadership was now partially captive to the colonial order, and typecast as a convenient instrument for assisting the peaceful penetration of western Baluchistan by the British imperial process. Thus by rolling back the boundaries of traditional chiefly privilege, and instituting new controls of service and allowance in the tribal scheme, the application of the Sandeman system mirrored more effectively the encapsulation of tribal society by a superior colonising power, rather than an exercise in the preservation of original tribal tradition and form.

The strategy of providing a traditional chief with an extra-tribal platform of support was also a recipe for promoting discord and dysjunction in intra-tribal relations. Alliance with the British invested a chief with new sources of income and wealth. His headship of the levy service defined his role as a power broker between government and tribesmen, and made him a

patron of tribal service, which further increased the existing margins of privilege that set the tribal chief apart from ordinary tribesmen. The influx of power at the leadership level in the tribal scheme could encourage a chief to isolate himself from popular support, on the conviction that he could rely on external material resources to sustain his position of dominance. Evidence of such a contradiction developing between the leadership and the tribal mass may be observed in the pattern of conflict and crisis which came to a head in the Marri tribe in 1898.

Traditionally the Marris allowed their chief to levy a sheep and goat tax from flockowners, as well as penalties and fines in the case of adulteries, murders, and thefts, calculated on a percentage share of the compensation awards. But in the climate of colonial collaboration, with its artificial props for chiefly authority, the Marri chief flouted custom by converting personal dues from tribesmen into a collective right, which was exercised by all the members of the sardar-khel, or the ruling chief's family. As the sardar-khel implemented this coercive policy, popular unrest mounted, and a tribal petition to the British authorities in 1898 demanded redress against the extortionate practices of the Marri leadership, which were itemized as the forcible levy of fines,

the exaction of penalties, and the seizure of sheep by force.¹¹⁷ Such acts inevitably increased the economic burden on tribesmen subsisting in marginal conditions, and additionally hard-pressed by the poor harvest of 1897-1898.

Seeking relief from their hardships, the Marris started to desert their settlements by the close of 1898, and migrated to Afghanistan in search of alternative land and pasture. The choice of migration rather than rebellion to express discontent stemmed from the tribe's semi-religious veneration for the chief. As one official explained:

"The Chief is too weak and indolent to do his work properly, but he is considered a holy man and though his people are frequently disgusted by the avarice of his family and the ill treatment they receive from him, they are still attached to him personally".¹¹⁸

The migrations were a form of tribal censure of their leadership, but they also touched off an administrative crisis through the desertion of levy posts. Under pressure the Marri chief admitted his inability to stop the exodus, and it appeared as though the political structure on which Sandeman's apparatus of control rested was on the verge of collapse. H.Wylie, officiating as Agent to the Governor-General in 1898, warned that the Marris were regressing into anarchy; he wrote:

"The Baluch tribes are united under one chief whose

orders they obey...If therefore a body of Baluchis...quits the country under the leadership of discontented persons...the entire clan feels the Chief's authority has been set at defiance, and the deserters have scored a point... If nothing is done... a general spirit of lawlessness and independence of all authority will be engendered".¹¹⁹

Self-interest now forced the Baluchistan Government to intervene, and redraw the line between privilege and protection, by defining the exaction of tribal dues as a personal prerogative of the ruling chief and not the collective right of the members of the sardar-khel.¹²⁰ But the history of power, oppression and desertion in the Marri tribal context had highlighted the problem of over inflating the chief's dominance in society. It laid bare the negative function of the Sandeman system in giving the chief extra-tribal resources, which encouraged him to ignore and later exploit mass tribal interests. By feeding new powers at one end of the tribal scheme, the Sandeman system in effect destabilized the internal balance between successful leadership and voluntary contractual following on which the political system of the Baluch essentially rested.

Among some Pathan tribes, such as the Panis and Khajaks of Sibi, the chiefs confined service nominations entirely to their own relations and personal dependants, which caused dissatisfaction among the rest of the tribesmen and headmen unrepresented in the service.¹²¹

Another weakness in the system derived from the overlap between the organisational principles of tribal responsibility and tribal service. The levy scheme of 1884 had attempted to compartmentalise the two areas, by distinguishing tribal/political payments which rested on a collective commitment to law and order, from definite service payments for carrying the post or collecting revenue.¹²² But in practice such distinctions proved to be paper exercises, for service men were freely interchangeable between political, postal, railway, and revenue duties. To the tribes there was only one service with different duties, and men could move from one branch to another with the chiefs' consent.¹²³ As the boundaries between different service areas became blurred through the free exchange of work men, the vital area of tribal responsibility inevitably locked into the wider system of routine administrative work. This gave the tribes valuable leverage against any future attempt by the government to shrink their area of employment, as they could threaten to stand aloof on the political front, involving tribal responsibility and law and order commitments. Thus in 1886, when the completion of the Sind-Pishin railway made Marri and Kakar postal sowars redundant, for the post could be carried more efficiently by the railway, Sandeman was afraid to discharge them because he feared they would resort to raiding.¹²⁴ In the circumstances they were

re-employed as railway guards. But as the Foreign Department noted:

"The natural inference which the tribe will draw from this matter is that we are afraid to discharge men once employed or to reduce service once given, and that we cannot put up a telegraph or lay a rail without paying them in some form to do so".¹²³

Tribesmen could therefore manipulate the system by playing on old fears of violence and aggression.

Ambiguities in the system also allowed tribesmen to evade service duties, and permitted irregularities in enlistment procedures. From the start in 1884 the tribal chiefs did not keep records of the men who actually enlisted. The pay bills for levies therefore did not show the names of the men who enrolled for duty. While the chiefs drew money for men they were theoretically required to employ for services, there was no paper evidence to corroborate the procedure. As W.Lee Warner, Officiating Under Secretary in the Foreign Department, pointed out:

"The objection to the system is that ...blackmail is paid to Chiefs who supply men. No one knows who the men are, and therefore no names can be given...Under the Baluch system there is no guarantee that the men are fit or that they exist".¹²⁴

A few years later in 1888, St. John noted that it was the exception to find even half the appointed number of men on guard duty in some levy posts. The tribal chiefs only presented the full complement of men when a

political officer visited the district, yet they drew full allowances all the year around.¹²⁷ Nearly two decades later in 1905, the Political Agent in Quetta-Pishin wrote that the system now harboured khana nasheens (i.e. men who stayed at home), who were tribesmen "in receipt of pay and do nothing... some of these recipients of pay have grown to look upon themselves as pensioners with family rights of inheritance".¹²⁸

The Sandeman system tolerated this margin of manipulation, since the main concern of government in Baluchistan was to "keep the Pathan and Baluch tribes in a contented frame of mind".¹²⁹ But this gave substance to the arguments of critics like St. John, who claimed that the system stood suspended, "halfway between the payment of blackmail pure and simple to the tribes, in consideration of their refraining from robbing and murder, and the [employment] of certain tribesmen as government servants to perform fixed duties for regular service."¹³⁰ The Viceroy Lord Dufferin was also sceptical; he observed:

"Our present position in Baluchistan is the result of a system of wholesale bribery...nor is it... certain... in Baluchistan that the foundations of local popularity which we have laid would stand the pressure of adversity".¹³¹

In defence of his system Sandeman stressed that concessions were always balanced by tribal commitments

to the law and order requirements of empire. As he explained to Lord Salisbury, "his blueprint for political control in Baluchistan rested on "peace and good will as opposed to ... one of coercion pure and simple".¹³² But balancing the scheme on a tribal consensus, as the critics pointed out, inevitably exposed the system to the caprice of tribal intention. It left a margin of control in tribal hands, which individuals could exploit to some degree with tacit official consent, based on the assumption that it was a small price to pay for the larger reward of pacifying tribal society as a whole in Baluchistan.

Sandemanism and the Tribal Economic Order.

As the Sandeman system chased the image of a tribal society devoted to peaceful pursuits, it altered traditional economic strategies, and the corpus of values linked to such lifestyles. For tribesmen the Sandeman system of control underscored the opposition between feuding/raiding activity and their new political commitment to government. In particular the principle of tribal responsibility was designed to strike at the heart of the feuding and raiding network by making the tribes collectively responsible for a non-violent social order. But poor tribes like the Marris and Bugtis, who had traditionally relied on the raid as an economic safety valve, were now forced to find a compensating source

of income. Under pressure the Marris turned increasingly to agriculture. New areas were opened up for cultivation in Marri-Bugti country, at Kahan, Mand, Philawar, Kohlu, Gambol, Badra and Quat Mandai. In Quat Mandai in Marri country, grain production reached an annual high of 8000 maunds, one-twelfth of which was remitted in revenue to the British Government. Bruce, Political Agent for Thal Chotiali wrote in 1889: "The Marris and Bugtis are rapidly expanding their cultivation, and consequently depending less on their flocks, and the precarious livelihood obtained by plunder".¹³³ There were also reports of different sections of the Marris trying to establish proprietary rights to the lands being newly developed.¹³⁴

The increasing sedentarization of the Marris and Bugtis in turn encouraged new agrarian trends in neighbouring Sibi. There was an influx of tribesmen into Sibi from the surrounding country, including those who had fled in the past to escape from raids. As a result of re-population the area under cultivation increased from 4,556 acres in 1880 to 12,000 acres by 1885. As grain production mounted the value of the land revenue yield rose from Rs.73,000 in 1885 to over a lakh in 1890.¹³⁵ A similar picture of increasing land revenue in Thal Chotiali, mounting from Rs.20,480-8-10 in 1882 to Rs.48,967-12-3, in 1889 ¹³⁶ attested to the new

agrarian turn in tribal society. From Thal Chotiali, Bruce was quick to link the changing tribal scene to the success of Sandemanism: "Feuds and raids are suppressed and the people are able to cultivate their lands in peace mainly through the instrumentality of our tribal service".¹³⁷ In western Baluchistan as well, the trial of the Sandeman system encouraged recolonisation. In 1899 Wylie reported that the plains of Chagai were attracting a steady stream of tribal migrants from the neighbouring upland regions.¹³⁸ Official reports also claimed that in Nushki, where two-thirds of the arable land had remained idle due to feuds and ownership disputes, there were signs of an agrarian recovery,¹³⁹ as the system of tribal control forced chiefs and tribes to abstain from violence through the promise and threat of subsidies and fines.

The Baluchistan Census Report of 1901 also indicated an expansion in the agricultural sector, and linked an upward trend in population growth to changing subsistence patterns. Between 1899 and 1901, the population figures increased from 115,362 to 167,804, showing a percentage increase of 45%. Explaining this increase the Report contended that earlier checks on population, such as exclusive dependence on erratic rainfall and cattle breeding, and the constant losses through violent death, were considerably

mitigated in the post-1876 period by the greatly extended agricultural sector and the prosperity it engendered.¹⁴⁰

The expansion of the agricultural base in tribal society was socially significant, since it implied a corresponding contraction of the pastoral lifestyle, so integral to the sub-culture of feuds and raids which defined the traditional tribal identity. In choosing to become agriculturists, tribesmen were also moving closer towards a peasant identity, in the form of the small cultivator tied to the soil, and dependent on a fixed agricultural income. Essentially the sedentarization of tribes through increased dependence on agriculture harboured the seeds of detribalization. An early indication of this social mutation was evident in the changing text of tribal values, steadily retreating from the old cultural norms of the rewards and reprisals ideology, towards the new materialism of the Sandeman era.

The Sandeman System and Attenuation of Tribal Norms

The corrosive impact of the Sandeman system on tribal norms was overtly manifest in jirga awards, which reflected new attitudes towards blood feuds, vengeance, status, and honour, themes which touched the ideological core of the tribal system. Perhaps the most radical

instance of an altered tribal perception, was the verdict of the Shahi Jirga on the Marri-Luni conflict of 1896.¹⁴¹ James Browne, then Agent to the Governor-General, believed that the high margin of human victims claimed by the feud, required the main offenders to serve more than the customary seven years that a jirga sentence would impose. He favoured fourteen years imprisonment under the Code of Criminal Procedure, and wanted the jirga to endorse his decision. The jirga duly approved his recommendation, and James Browne now observed:

"In my opinion the National Parliament [the jirga] has now by its replies...shown that it has advanced with the times, by recognizing and recommending that the British Government should and must, in such cases, inflict heavier punishments than any jirga could award. The Sardars have wisely recognised that it was essential to place such powers in British hands for the good of the country, and the repression of national failings inconsistent with the better social conditions which time is gradually developing in Baluchistan".¹⁴²

In consenting to Browne's definition of feuding violence as a national failing, the chiefs were at least theoretically discarding the old social mould of conflict and opposition, which was also a symbolic battleground for winning prestige, honour, and status, the valued trophies of tribal culture.

The attrition of tribal norms relating to honour and status was also evident in the new commercial outlook which matured in the wake of Sandeman's drive to

purge violence from the tribal system by cash incentives. At the sharp end of this strategy was the tribal blood feud ritual which turned on retaliatory killing as the most respected way of salvaging the honour of the victim's group. Honour distilled from violence was the old cultural standard of the tribal group, which the Sandeman system sought to negate, by popularizing monetary compensations, as the new and more civilized way of retrieving social prestige in a feuding situation. Thus as a matter of policy, jirga awards encouraged iwazana (compensation) or sharmana (dishonour) money, for the aggrieved party in the case of blood feuds. That the practice of commuting blood vengeance obligation to blood money soon gained popularity, was attested by the insistence on cash payment for the loss of a life rather than any other form of compensation.¹⁴³ The usual rate of such compensation was Rs.1,500 per victim; but among some tribes, like the Sanzar Khels, blood price escalated to Rs.3000,¹⁴⁴ which poorer tribesmen could not afford to pay. This suggests that monetary gain and a commodity mentality were replacing old tribal perceptions which equated one life with another, rather than a lucrative cash sum. Also the Frontier Crimes Regulation laid particular stress on gaining cash securities from families and factions for preventing outbreaks of feuding violence.¹⁴⁵ In practice this led to a surfeit of inflated cash securities

which emerged as the new monetary index of social position, with the tribesmen viewing the bonds as status symbols of prestige and honour.¹⁴⁶

In the area of adultery based violence as well, the new social accent was on cash compensation rather than the traditional vengeance killing in vindication of honour. The compensation claimed and awarded by the jirga was usually higher than the amount of bride-price originally paid by the aggrieved man for the wife now charged with adultery. The compensation sum varied from Rs.600 to Rs.1,500, among different tribes, based on local custom, the age and circumstances of the guilty woman. The lure of this material sum encouraged tribesmen to accuse their wives of adultery even if they were not guilty. In 1917 a Brahui jirga in Quetta, alluded to the practice of men accusing their wives of adultery in order to gain compensation.¹⁴⁷ Such accusations were further assisted by tribal custom which did not require legal proof of the wife's guilt. Here tribesmen were exploiting custom and the jirga system in pursuit of monetary gain. A commercial outlook was thus taking root in tribal society, as the symbolic compulsions of izzat and sharm receded from the traditional constructs of social life.

Concluding Perspective

The encapsulation of social conflict through the Sandeman system essentially mirrored the compression of tribal norms to fit the colonial framework in Baluchistan. As an intrusive model of state power, it was consciously designed to intervene in strategic areas of tribal politics. The text of intervention hinged on the supposition that the tribal chiefs were "a nucleus of law and order in the midst of general lawlessness," who "must in order to hold their own, enjoy ... constant political and occasional military support. This means that we [the British] must mix ourselves in internal tribal politics and be ready to intervene by force at critical moments when the party which leans upon us requires our assistance".¹⁴⁰

Intervention in the tribal political process involved the constant shoring up of the chiefly model, and the recycling of tribal material to breathe new life into existing forms of leadership and authority. Internally, the coupling of new colonial privileges with chiefly authority exacerbated conflict and opposition in the tribal system, as in the case of the Marris and Achakzais, or conversely it led to the greater centralisation of authority and suppression of feuds as in the case of the western Baluch tribes. Therefore, whether the Sandeman system was a formula for political

cohesion or fissive opposition depended to some extent on the tribal variables within which it had to operate.

At the political heart of Sandeman's model, however, was the strategic design to realign the balance of power between the colonising power and the tribal leadership. To ensure the hegemony of the Political Agent without alienating the chiefs, Sandeman needed a dependent leadership, strapped into the material benefits of patronage and allowances, but with a compensating freedom to exercise control in the internal tribal scheme. Such a system allowed imperial authority to dominate a tribalscape managed on its behalf by semi-autonomous tribal chieftains. In particular, the conscious cultivation of aristocratic privilege in the tribal system helped to marginalise political dissent, by preventing the chiefs from becoming serious centres of disaffection. Sandeman's vision to conquer with as little bloodshed and leaving as few scars as possible, in fact left the history of colonial Baluchistan blandly free from the turmoil of conflict and confrontation, which coloured the imperial-tribal experience in other parts of the frontier. As Olaf Caroe observed:

"If there is to be a criticism of the Sandeman system, it must be that it has proved too static; in the village the pace of life and thought was scarcely quickened by seventy years of British rule. Elsewhere the Englishman can claim that in his dealings with the Pathans he has kindled a flame and posed a challenge. The

spark more often than not has burnt into a fire, but what of that? The fire gives light and heat, and is not dead".¹⁴⁹

But there were others who interpreted the absence of conflict and challenge in Sandeman's Baluchistan as the real measure of his success. In their opinion the tranquility of Baluchistan was a testament to the flowering of the civilising mission on tribal soil. As Denys Bray put it:

"Sandeman's mission was to bring peace where there was chaos, and thus to uphold the King's peace throughout the land, and to foster its development through indigenous agency on indigenous lines".¹⁵⁰

R.I. Bruce, Sandeman's close political associate in Dera Ghazi Khan and later Baluchistan, also testified to the pacification and civilisation of the Baluch border tribes, as the real contribution of the Sandeman system.¹⁵¹ Evidence of increased sedentarization among tribes, re-population of villages, and increased cultivation seemed to corroborate the reformist vein in Sandemanism, intent on reclaiming tribal society from its primeval pursuits of "anarchy, murder, and robbery".¹⁵² As Frederick Roberts put it, the experience of imperial subjugation worked to impress the tribal mind with "the wonders of civilisation".¹⁵³

Sceptics, however, preferred to believe that the miracle of peace in Baluchistan was achieved by money. It was pointed out that subsidies and allowances

shackled tribesmen to imperial resources, allowing the seduction of money to stifle any real tribal opposition to a foreign regime. The Foreign Department observed that it had heard from officials serving in Baluchistan, "the same story of liberal expenditure on tribes", and that "Sir Robert rules by money".¹⁵⁴ In defence of his system Sandeman would point out that it was "unfair to expect tribes... to do your work...unless you make it worth their while, and having given the quid be careful to exact the quo".¹⁵⁵ But even if there was an even exchange between work and payment, the Sandeman system was more expensive than tribal service in other areas, and Baluchistan was a heavily deficit province. T.C.Coen points out that the levy system in neighbouring Dera Ghazi Khan worked more inexpensively and efficiently than the Baluchistan system, because it was implemented through maliks or minor headmen rather than tumandars or chiefs.¹⁵⁶ But such a comparison seems to ignore the variable, that Baluchistan had an inbuilt structure of politically powerful chiefs, whom it would have been unwise to leave unsubsidized in the interests of economy.

Sandeman's structural approach of using tribal hierarchies to institute leadership, rank, and authority in the internal management of the levy service, was also criticised for being of only limited use to control

societies organised on the Baluch tribal model. It was urged that such a system would not work in the context of Pathan societies, where the tribes had no rigid hierarchies. As A.Singer put it: "Sandeman's successors ignored the huge differences in tribal organisation. Baluch tribes had a tradition of leadership and could be approached through the structural hierarchy. The eastern Pushtuns would accept no such intermediaries".¹⁵⁷ At the heart of this criticism was the belief that the consent of a Baluch chief to any proposal implied a seal of approval by his tribe; but among Pathans where leadership was more diffused, consent on the part of a few headmen would not necessarily mean approval by the tribe.¹⁵⁸

In his time, Sandeman did not accept such ethnic limitations to his scheme, which he felt had succeeded among the Pathans of Quetta-Pishin, Sibi, and Zhob, and had been extended to the Gomal Waziris and Shiranis. Asserting the universality of his tribal system he wrote:

"It is no mere theory. It is born of the calm confidence which arises from experience and leads to success. We have made a commencement with the Waziris... let us avoid nerveless vacillation and maintain a firm continuity of action".¹⁵⁹

But the Waziri uprisings in 1894 and 1898 seemed to confirm the suspicions of those who did not believe that the Sandeman system could be applied with success among

the Pathans of the northwest frontier. The Waziri verdict however was not accepted as a final judgement by those who still favoured the Sandeman system. They could still argue that the system only needed another Sandeman to make it work and produce more compliance than contradiction.¹⁴⁰ But such assumptions in turn fostered a new negative, by suggesting that the Sandeman system rested more on personality than principle.

In the final stocktaking the Sandeman system hinged on political and economic compulsions, leavened by personal charisma, and sustained always by the threat of military force in the background. The tribal chief was recast as the policeman of the new social order, enforcing submission through the powers of patronage and punishment, conferred on him by imperial rule. Hemmed in by such constructs, the tribal commitment to the Sandeman system was perhaps dictated more by compulsion than consent. Summing up Sandeman's tribal solution, D. Caroe observed dismissively: "Without penetration, concentration of force, and support of the maliks the Sandeman system is the merest junk".¹⁴¹

But a deconstruction of the model does less than justice to the fact that the basic guiding principles of Sandeman's experiment at least created a truce between tribes and empire in Baluchistan.

Sandeman ascribed this fledgling compromise to a political prescription which mixed coercion with concession. As he stressed:

"My object is, and always has been to establish a policy of conciliatory intervention, as opposed to either coercion or inactivity, but conciliation alone without an outward exhibition of strength to enforce obedience, should occasion arise, will never be sufficient to enforce obedience... on the frontier".¹⁶²

And the fact that imperialism had a less stormy passage in Sandeman's Baluchistan than any where else on the frontier seemed to prove the empirical validity of the model for at least one tribal corner of the Indian Empire.

But Sandeman's tribal solution worked primarily in the imperial interest to create a stable frontier zone untroubled by social change and political dissent. The preoccupation of expressing government control in a tribal idiom was part of a conscious drive to keep Baluch society locked in an antique tribalism, forestalling its transition to what D. Bray deprecated as another "law ridden province...with its political institutions westernizing more and more into English moulds".¹⁶³ Serving the classic imperial concern for law and order, the Sandeman system aspired at most for "social amelioration, not social change".¹⁶⁴ Sandeman's vision was therefore a limited one, which pioneered no new cultural

frontiers in Baluchistan, and seemingly left the tribes out of step with the new political consciousness maturing in British India. The social re-modelling which accompanied Sandemanism stimulated changes within the tribal system, without revolutionising the system itself. Wrapped in the ideology of empire, the Sandeman system was essentially a medium for grafting alien control in an uncertain tribal environment. It manipulated tribal consent to create an image of political consensus, which underpinned colonial rule in Baluchistan, and became part of the Sandeman mystique that coloured the annals of empire. Musing on the political passivity of Baluchistan in 1911, Lord Hardinge then Viceroy, could therefore observe with satisfaction:

"It was curious to see English ladies, wives of officers etc., living in bungalows, quite unprotected within two miles of the Afghan frontier stones. This state of peace is I believe largely due to good management, and I only wish I could say the same of the North West Frontier".¹⁴⁵

Chapter VTribal Land Structures and British Revenue Policy

In the material context of British Baluchistan, the imperial demand on tribal revenues was intended to underscore political authority in a poor but volatile frontier zone, without adventuring into the controversial ground of wringing an economic surplus from the land. Such a demand was perceived more in the nature of a material tribute levied on a subject territory, to serve as a symbol of mastery in a captive society. As a Member of Parliament stated: "It is of the utmost importance to exact tribute however small. That is a tangible sign of superiority which has a great moral force on the Asiatic".¹ A revenue model which would serve as a metaphor for political power did not aspire towards radical change. Its main purpose was utilitarian; to simplify and unify, in the interest of economy, the myriad of landholding patterns traced by ecological variables, the political imperatives of Afghan imperialism, Kalat State power, and the tribal structure. An analysis of this revenue strategy, however requires a preliminary examination of the tribal land structures, which defined the social matrix of its operation.

Ecology and the Dynamics of Rural Proprietorship

The semi-arid environment of Baluchistan with its mixture of abundant land and scarce water, exerted a critical impact in determining the social ownership of rural resources. As the scanty rainfall made water a scarce commodity, the ownership of land without access to a karez (underground water channel), spring or stream was economically less viable for tribesmen. Land appreciated in value according to its proximity to permanent sources of water. While irrigated and non-irrigated land was permanently divided among owners, the critical point for the owner in irrigated lands was the share he possessed in the water-supply, making proprietorship in irrigated tracts synonymous with the possession of water shares. Rights in the use of water formed the basis of pattidari holdings in Baluchistan, which constituted the most common tenurial form in the region. The accretion of pattidari water shares devolved on a system, whereby a karez or stream was divided into so many shabana-roz or days and nights of irrigation, and a man would possess one, or two or half, or quarter of a shabana-roz as the case may be. Each shabana-roz was again subdivided into parts, the usual division being into sixteen namaz-i-diqar (further subdivision of a share), each namaz-i-diqar representing one and a half hours of water.² The number of proprietors in a karez, spring or stream was usually

small, the quantity of water being limited. In this manner private rights came to exist in water, and the sale of land usually related to the purchase of shares in water. Proprietorship in any specific group of tribal villages also varied on the basis of karez lands and rain crop lands. Thus karez land would be held by one body of proprietors and rain cultivated land by another. This separation arose from the practice whereby the whole or part of the landholding community possessing cultivable land called in outsiders to assist in making a karez. Consequently these outsiders shared only in the land irrigated from the karez so made, and had no rights on the rain crop lands, which continued to be divided among the original proprietary body.³

The critical impact of water shares in dissolving old and creating new proprietary rights in the land was evident in the status changes which affected the Shadozai and Tarin Kakars in Thal Chotiali, linked to the alienation of irrigation rights. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the Tarins, the original proprietors of land and water in Thal, were unable to meet their revenue payments to Qandhar, mainly due to contracting cultivation induced by the frequent Marri raids which laid waste the grain fields.⁴ Under pressure the Tarins sold their shares in the Thal and Hanambar streams, and

lands irrigated by them to Shado, a wealthy Kakar from Bori, on condition that he would pay the revenue demand to Qandhar. By acquiring these water shares, the Shadozais gained a monopoly over the only sources of permanent water in Thal. By contrast the dispossessed Tarins were now confined to rain crop cultivation which was insufficient for subsistence, and they were forced to supplement their income by working as tenant cultivators on Shadozai lands. At the start of 1880 the Tarins were paying half their produce as rent to Shadozai landlords. The Shadozais also took one-sixth of the produce of the Hassani tribe for allowing them to use the waters of the Hanambar stream, and one-sixth as well from the Lunis for their use of the hill torrents.⁹ Ownership of water sources therefore allowed the Shadozais to dominate the local economy, consolidate their position as landlords, and manipulate the Tarins, Hassanis, and Lunis, as subordinate tenant/rentier groups.

While ecological constraints elevated the significance of water rights in the ownership scheme, systems of land tenure were consciously designed to meet the requirements of imperial and tribal structures, in the political field. The start of Afghan imperialism in the mid-eighteenth century forced an early accommodation between intrusive models of rural elitism

fostered by imperial patronage, and tribal systems of landholding based on ties of sectional and lineage membership. Set in this dual framework, land structures in Baluchistan carried the mark of imperial restructuring and traces of customary tribal forms of land ownership.

Political Systems and Landholding

Afghan policy encouraged three broad categories of landed privilege to develop in Baluchistan - namely zamindari, jaqir, and muafi estates. The key to such privileges turned on ethnic/familial ties with the Afghan ruling dynasty, service to the state, and religious sanctity of particular Islamic groups. As economic privilege bought political loyalty, the favoured groups were essential props for the Afghan imperial structure in Baluchistan. The Afghans could only keep alive the thread of dominance in Baluchistan, an outlying region of their empire, by creating a local power structure with vested interests in the continuance of Afghan rule. The Afghan process of instituting new hierarchies in tribal society may be viewed through a brief resume of how selected tribal groups acquired zamindari, jaqir, and muafi rights in the land.

The term zamindari in Baluchistan defined a privileged landholder with hereditary proprietary

rights in the land. He was in fact the primary zamindar, defined by E. Stokes as "the landholder having immediate 'proprietary' dominion over the soil".⁶ The progression of Kasi Pathans, near Quetta, to prosperous zamindari status started in the mid-eighteenth century, when they acquired proprietary rights in fifteen villages near Quetta, from the Emperor Ahmad Shah Durrani, on the basis of familial links with the ruler. The Kasis also obtained privileged rates of revenue assessment on their lands, viz. one-sixth of the produce in stream irrigated lands and one-tenth on karez lands, as opposed to standard Afghan rates of one-third and one-sixth in stream and karez lands respectively.⁷ When Durrani power started to ebb at the close of the eighteenth century, and Quetta reverted to the control of the Kalat State, the existing batai arrangements were commuted to a fixed payment known as zari kalang, to be remitted in cash and kind, and assessed at the lower rate of one-twelfth.⁸

The Kasis paid the new demand by dividing the sum among the seven major sections of the tribe. According to tribal custom, Kasi lands were divided in equal shares among the seven major sections. Each share was then subdivided among constituent sub-groups and major families, who allocated individual plots to adult males, which descended in equal shares to the owners⁹

sons.⁹ In this way individual proprietary rights crystallised in original communal holdings. Kasi landholders used tenant cultivators to work their plots, from whom they collected rent at two-thirds of the produce. From the two-thirds taken as rent, the Kasis paid the one-twelfth required to the Kalat State, and the balance constituted their proprietary share.¹⁰ As the state demand was fixed, and batai was levied on old and new cultivation alike, the Kasi zamindars prospered by appropriating increases in the agricultural surplus. The constraints of a light fixed revenue demand, and an elastic rent structure, weighted the zari kalang system in favour of zamindari profit at the expense of tenant cultivators.

The strength of landed privilege in rural society was reinforced by the prevalence of jaqir estates, which were revenue-free tracts of land granted by Afghan and Kalat rulers to certain chiefs and their tribes for political and military services rendered to the state. Principal jaqirdars in the Quetta area were the chiefs of the Raisani and Shahwani Brahui tribes, who acquired sixteen and fifteen karezes respectively, as revenue-free grants from Nasir Khan of Kalat in the eighteenth century. These revenue-free grants also confirmed hereditary proprietary titles in land and water for the recipients. In exchange for these privileges, the

Shahwani and Raisani chiefs had to maintain a contingent of fighting tribesmen, ready to render military assistance to the Kalat State when necessary.¹¹

As revenue takers and proprietary owners the Shahwani and Raisani chiefs levied revenue on their estates, at the rate of one-sixth of the produce on irrigated lands and one-tenth on rain crop cultivation, on tenant cultivators drawn from the ranks of Bazai Kakars.¹² But the cultivators were subjected to other extortionate impositions. Thus the Raisani chief levied a cess called lawazima, at the rate of thirty seers of wheat on one karez, and eighty seers on another at the spring harvest for personal use.¹³ The Brahui chiefs also exercised certain quasi-sovereign rights on the cultivators, which involved sursat (forced supplies) and begar (forced labour).¹⁴ Such forms of extra-economic coercion mirrored Brahui dominance in the political system of the Kalat State, and the elitist status of the Brahui chiefs as the ruling caucus in the post-Afghan period, which allowed them to exploit at will, the poorer and more vulnerable sections of the Pathan tenant cultivators.

Jagirdari rights in the land also originated as remuneration for government service. Three families of Durrani Afghans - Kila Durranis, Kotwas, and Ismalzai

Populzais - held twenty-two estates in Quetta revenue-free as jagirdars and in proprietary right as well. The grant of these concessions dated back to the reign of Ahmad Shah Durrani, who conceded revenue-free estates on the Hanna stream to his wazir (minister) Shahwali Khan Durrani, the ancestor of the Durrani families in Quetta.¹⁵ The linkage between jagirs and government service reappeared in the case of the Barozai sardar-khel of Sibi. A sanad from Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1753, assigned the task of local government in Sibi to Ismail Khan the Barozai chief, and his brother Mohammad Khan.¹⁶ The Barozai chief was also empowered to remit the land revenue of Sibi to Qandhar. As the Afghan demand was fixed at Rs.10,000 per annum, and the Barozai chief collected by batai at the rate of one-fourth of the produce,¹⁷ he was in a position to appropriate for personal use any surplus accruing in revenue collection. Additionally, the Afghan Government chose to pay the Barozai chief for the lucrative task of revenue collection, by awarding him jagir concessions in the land. Thus in the Sangar area of the Sibi District, the Barozai sardar-khel was allowed to retain for personal use one-eighth of the local crop yield. Additionally the sardar-khel was granted 13,464 acres of land revenue-free in the Kurk region of the Sibi District.¹⁸ Thus the examples of the Quetta Durranis and the Barozai sardar-khel in Sibi illustrate how ministerial office

was the passport to landed privilege *in the period of Afghan dominance*.

Jagirdadari structures in Baluchistan therefore interlocked with Afghan and Kalat political systems. Situated at the geographical periphery of the Afghan Empire, Baluchistan was an area where Afghan rulers sought to exercise influence rather than direct control. Within this concept of imperial *rule*, the patronage of Pathan jagirdars in Baluchistan, with ethnic and political loyalties to Kabul, served as a reliable medium to channel Afghan dominance in the region, as a counterpoise to Baluch-Brahui political pretensions. Subsequently in the period of Brahui ascendancy, the principle of decentralisation, which marked the confederate structure of Kalat politics,¹⁹ allowed the accretion of magnate privileges in the land on a permanent basis. Raisani and Shahwani jaqirs essentially mirrored the economic basis of local autonomy in the Brahui confederacy. The imperatives of Afghan imperialism and Kalat State structure therefore encouraged the development of territorially defined permanent jaqirdari holdings, which were politically autonomous. In this respect the jaqirs in Baluchistan differed from the jaqirs assigned in Mughal India to imperial servants or mansabdars in lieu of their salaries. Describing the function of the Mughal jaqir or revenue-free land grant, I.Habib notes: "The governing

class of the Mughal Empire obtained its income mainly from these assignments. The jagirdars were usually mansabdars, holding ranks (mansabs) bestowed upon them by the Emperor".²⁰. The Mughal jagir was neither hereditary nor transferable; it was specifically designed to prevent jagirdars from developing local power bases which could threaten imperial authority. In the centralised scheme of the Mughal Empire jagirdars were required to function as imperial servants drawing fiscal emoluments from the land. By contrast, the historical underdevelopment of central government in Baluchistan permitted jagirdari holdings to emerge as focal points of local power, combining landed privilege with political autonomy.

Privileged landholdings in Baluchistan also included land held as muafi, or freehold, exempt from revenue payment, on the basis of specific religious and tribal criteria. The sayids were the main religious group, with a sacred ancestry from the Prophet, to enjoy such muafi lands, which included a special share of land and water, a portion of the agricultural produce, and revenue remissions on the lands in their possessions. The average cash value of such a muafi varied from Rs.20-Rs100 a year.²¹. The sayids of Pishin were the largest of such groups; they held one-third of the land and water in Pishin revenue-free, often acquiring through

purchase the lands of tribesmen who defaulted in their revenue payment. Subsequently the lands became revenue-free as they became part of sayid holdings.²² In this manner religion was linked to the economics of profitable landholding.

Tribal headmen or maliks also received economic concessions from the Afghan Government, for serving as revenue collectors or arbitrators in land disputes. For their work, headmen would either receive grain and cash payments, or revenue-free shares in land and water. Maliks in Pishin for instance, received payments amounting to Rs.399-13-3 in cash; 495 maunds and 15 seers of grain.²³ And in Quetta thirteen shabanaroz of water were held by the headmen revenue-free.²⁴

Revenue exemptions on a minor scale were often made by the ruling Afghan or Kalat State power to tribes with a history of militancy. The hill Achakzais of Quetta-Pishin for instance were never subjugated by the Afghans. As a result of their independent status, the Achkazais paid no taxes, except for the sardar-khel who made a token contribution of one-tenth on their karez holdings near Pishin.²⁵ In a similar manner the Marris and Bugtis, lying outside the effective political reach of the Kalat State, escaped the fetters of a state revenue structure.

The enclave of privileged landholdings in rural society contrasted sharply with the great mass of tribal proprietary holdings, which consisted of small plots of lands worked by owner cultivators. These small holdings dated back to the original occupation of the land by different tribes, first for grazing and then for cultivation, which subsequently led to the division of land among tribal sections in proportion to the number of families, followed by the parcelling of family holdings into individual shares for each male member of the group. Individual tribesmen also acquired land as compensation for losses incurred during blood feuds, as well as through purchase, and in lieu of bride-price.²⁶ The need to give every new male member a share in tribal lands meant that the size of such holdings tended to be small, ranging from four to sixteen acres per holding. Here the owner cultivators paid the usual Afghan rates of revenue - one-third on stream irrigated land, one-sixth on karez lands, and one-tenth on rain crop cultivation.²⁷ By the turn of the nineteenth century most tribal lands had subdivided into permanent individual holdings, with the exception of the Marri Baluch lands where the communal principle of ownership was the accepted norm.

According to traditional practice in Marri society, one-sixth of all lands acquired by the tribe

through battles and feuds was set apart as the chief's share or sardari-baksh. The cumulative effect of such accretions was the development of an entailed estate called pagi which became the inalienable heritage of the chieftaincy.²⁸ Apart from this single concession to private ownership, the rest of the Marri lands were held on a collectivist principle. Rights in pastoral land were collectively held by the tribe as the *largest* political unit. Lands for agricultural use were subdivided among the three major sections of the tribe. Within each section, land shares were further subdivided into five allotments, one or more going to the subsectional grouping according to the numerical strength of its constituent family groups. At the level of the family group, the allotted shares were split up into as many holdings^{that were} needed to give every male member a share in the land. The distribution of plots was determined by lots, and at the end of every ten years there was a new redistribution to adjust shares to any increase or decrease in the tribe's male population.²⁹ In the Marri scheme therefore, individual tribesmen were allowed to use a fraction of the communal land on a periodical basis, rather than acquiring permanent possession of any particular section of the land. The inheritance from father to son entailed the transfer not of land rights in a particular area, but lineage and sectional membership, which carried the

accompanying right to utilise tribal lands.

The triple heritage of the Afghan, Kalat, and tribal land systems, therefore traced an uneven pattern of ownership and exchange in rural society. Collectively, this hybrid system of land control sustained three main areas of social contradiction, arising from the exploitative structure of landlord-tenant relations, the polarisation of society into landed magnates and an under-class of poor owner cultivators, and the economic disparity between lands paying fixed cash revenues and those trapped in produce payments.

The landlord-tenant contradiction was sharpest in the zamindar and jaqirdar estates of Quetta and Sibi, where relations of uneven exchange between landowner and cultivator were formalised in a variety of crop sharing agreements. Traditionally five elements were taken into account in dividing the crop: land, water, draught animals, seed and labour. Since most of the tenants only supplied manual labour, while the landlord supplied the other essentials, their share was evaluated at a mere one-fourth of the produce.³⁰ The status of these tenants bordered close to that of rural wage earners, as the small share of the produce they retained was more in the nature of payment for their labour by

the landlord. In some of the large estates near Quetta the landlord kept 13/18th. and the tenant only 5/18th., of the crop, with 1/18th. being further deducted from the tenant's share as his contribution towards government revenue.³¹ Criticising this system of rents, Sandeman wrote:

"In the Quetta valley itself there is no fair system of taxation... some of the large proprietors treat many of their cultivators... very unfairly. They take a very large share of the produce, and as the demand for grain is much larger than the supply, large sums of money are being realised by these men."³²

A marginally more secure group of lathband or conditional tenants were confined to rain crop lands. These tenants by their own expense and labour had broken up waste or rain crop land and converted them by embankments or dams into sailabha lands irrigated by flooding from torrents. In return for this investment, such tenants were given occupancy rights in the land, and were allowed to retain half the share of the produce. These tenants could mortgage or sell their occupancy rights, with the landlord reserving the right of pre-emption in cases of alienation.³³ But these privileges were neutralised to some extent by the erratic rainfall in Baluchistan, which made flood water cultivation a speculative and risky venture.

But the really vulnerable group of tenants were those who worked on the iqar estates of the Brahui

chiefs performing free of cost services such as the supply of fuel and transport of the landlords' grain, which amounted in practice to a form of labour rent. These workers were tenants-at-will or bazgars, who had no rights extending beyond the harvest, or at most the year, and could be ejected as soon as they had harvested the crop.³⁴ In the traditional economy therefore, tenancy conditions and rent structures trapped tenants in a subsistence level existence, providing a pool of cheap and captive labour for jaqirdars and zamindars to exploit, and perpetuate their monopolistic control of social resources.

The cleavage between privilege and underprivilege in landed society was further magnified by the economic depression of small owner cultivators. The restricted acreage of owner cultivator holdings precluded them from functioning with sufficient profit margins. The community was barely sufficient in grain production, and usually depended on supplementary pastoral sources of income to survive on the land. During periods of drought those without irrigable land had to migrate in search of work to Quetta, Pishin, and Harnai, swelling the ranks of rural wage earners. The problem of uneconomic holdings was further aggravated by the state system of conceding privileged revenue rates and remissions to zamindars and

jagirdars, which meant that small landholders paid higher rates of taxation. While the Kasi zamindars paid a mere one-twelfth in revenue, the small owner cultivator paid one-third. The uneven incidence of revenue rates which passed the main burden of state taxation to the small holder, was a recipe for structuring permanent inequalities in the land, by allowing one group to profit regularly from the agricultural surplus, while forcing the direct producers to eke a bare existence on minimal incomes. C.H. Masson, the English traveller who visited Baluchistan in 1827, noted that the people were "most beggarly dressed"³⁵, they lived in blanket tents made from goats' hair with a minimum of household items.³⁶

The dual system of taking revenue in kind by batai, in some areas, and levying a fixed cash assessment in others, also fostered disparate levels of prosperity among cultivators. This structural anomaly was most marked in the revenue arrangements of Pishin. Here revenue farming was a relic of an earlier system, known as gham-i-naukar, which had required landholders to supply men to the Persian and Afghan armies, instead of paying land tax. The Persian ruler Nadir Shah first imposed this system on the Tarins of Pishin in 1739, during the course of his raiding mission to India. After him Ahmad Shah Abdali continued the system.³⁷ But

subsequently, as the Afghan Empire started to disintegrate, the Qandhar Government had less use for men at arms, and in 1816, a tax of 28 Qandahari Rupees was imposed, per head of the 802 service men that the Tarins had customarily furnished. Between 1842 and 1863 a group of Tarins emigrated from Pishin, and the rest of the tribe had to make up the shortfall to the government, by paying entirely in cash for the 802 men or in kind at standard Afghan rates. The Tarins decided to pay in kind for 560 men, and for the remaining 242 revenue continued to be paid in cash.³⁸ This mixed arrangement set the pattern of revenue collection in Pishin; in irrigated tracts the Afghans imposed a fixed assessment, and in rain crop lands batai was collected at the usual Afghan rates. This duality fostered an economic imbalance between the two categories of revenue paying villages. Since batai was an elastic concept of taxation, which allowed the state to take a share from old and new cultivation alike, the batai villages were soon in the position of contributing a larger share of the revenue demand than those paying a fixed assessment. In fact when the British arrived in Pishin they found the batai sector paying two-thirds of the land revenue.³⁹ The rising curve of the state demand siphoned profits out of the batai sector, while fixed assessment areas prospered from accumulating untaxed surpluses. As Sandeman observed:

"Under the present system the batai villages which contribute the greater part of the Government revenues, are becoming continually weaker under their burdens and their produce is falling off; while cultivation in the villages paying a fixed assessment has extended and is extending without the least profit to Government".⁴⁰

British Revenue Policy

The traditional revenue scheme, marked by disparities in taxation and wealth accumulation, seemed ripe for reform to local British officials. In addition to the problem of structured inequalities, the system of collecting revenue by batai seemed untenable, since every threshing floor had to be watched at harvest time by poorly paid subordinates, which gave opportunities for fraud on the part of cultivators and speculation on the part of officials.⁴¹ Deprecating the contradictions it harboured, Sandeman concluded that the traditional system was "complicated, unequal in its incidence and productive of fraud, and often attended with hardship to the people".⁴²

Believing in the panacea of a light, uniform assessment to cure imbalances in the existing system, Sandeman favoured a low revenue rate, to be applied across the board on all categories of land, irrespective of their water-supply and differential levels of productivity. The proposed rate was based on the principle of the North Western Provinces Settlement, which fixed the government share at half the rent rate

at which land was lent to the tenant cultivator. As rents in Baluchistan varied from one-half, two-thirds, to a third of the gross produce, the new taxation could be fixed between one-fourth and one-sixth of the gross produce.⁴³ The lower rate of one-sixth was selected by Sandeman to make the change from the Afghan system easier for tribesmen. Bearing in mind the abuses of batai Sandeman also pressed for conversion to a cash settlement fixed for five years.⁴⁴

But Sandeman's experimental line ran counter to the curve of conservative opinion in the Foreign Department. In the context of a frontier, tribal zone like Baluchistan, it was axiomatic for the Government of India to stress that custom and convention should dictate the nature of economic policy.⁴⁵ Not everyone shared Sandeman's conviction that uniformity was the golden mean in revenue administration. As one official stressed, the inequalities which appeared unjust and arbitrary to Sandeman might prove economically defensible, in the sense that differential rates like one-tenth on karez lands, and one-fifth on stream irrigated lands, really reflected the higher capital and labour investment in karez lands as opposed to stream water cultivation, which called for a lower rate to keep incentive alive in the karez sector.⁴⁶ Sandeman's other idea of introducing a cash settlement was

dismissed as a monstrous suggestion which "rigidly imposed might ruin the people".⁴⁷ The consideration here was that the uncertain rainfall in Baluchistan made cultivation risky, so that a crop assessment which fluctuated with the outturn, thus spreading the risk more equally between the revenue payer and state, seemed more suitable than a fixed cash assessment. There was also fear that without plenty of currency in the market the imposition of cash payments would become a heavy tax on the people.⁴⁸

While the debate dragged inconclusively between continuity and change, a tentative move was made in 1881 for standardisation, on pragmatic grounds of economy and efficiency. The need to economise in provincial administration after the second Afghan war, meant that some simplification was needed of the existing revenue structure with its assortment of taxes, to reduce the establishment cost of working a laborious and complex system. Thus the medley of old taxes was swept away, in favour of a one-sixth rate to be levied on all batai lands of Quetta-Pishin, Sibi, and Thal Chotiali, in the hope that this would make revenue administration less time consuming, and therefore more cost effective for local government. But jagir, zari kalang, and muafi estates were exempted from the new rate, as the government had no wish to interfere with the privileged

holdings of tribal chiefs and headmen whose support they courted in the political field. The introduction of cash assessments was also postponed in the interests of caution.⁴⁹

The impact of one-sixth on batai lands between 1881-1883 was uneven in material terms. Paradoxically the new rate did not remove the inequalities ^{which} Sandeman had marked for elimination. One contrary effect was to raise the level of taxation for revenue payers, even on batai lands which were previously taxed at one-third. This anomaly resulted from the Afghan custom of setting a formal rate of one-third, but collecting a much lower amount in practice. In Sibi for instance the real value of the revenue yield at one-third was approximately Rs.36,845 per annum. But the Afghan Government was far away and too lax in its exercise of control to extract the full amount. In the event, it chose to farm out the revenue of Sibi to the Barozai chiefs for Rs.10,000.⁵⁰ By way of contrast in 1881 when Sandeman started to collect revenue, he realised the full amount of the state share; the value of the collection amounted to Rs.33,929, which was a considerable increase on what was paid in Afghan times. In Sibi the rising demand was off-set by an increase in the cultivable area from 4,556 acres in 1878 to 9031 acres in 1882⁵¹, mainly due to the cessation of Marri

raids as a result of British rule. But the picture was less promising in other areas. In Quetta-Pishin, rain crop land had never paid more than one-tenth to the Afghans. Here one-sixth was not only a steep rise, but it also coincided with a period of drought, which affected the district between 1879-1883, to become an oppressive burden for cultivators, so that revenue collection actually fell below the one-tenth enforced by the Afghans.⁵² In rain crop areas of Thal Chotiali as well, the new demand entailed hardship, by eroding the marginal surplus on which the small landholder depended for survival. In 1881 for instance the local agricultural yield was 52,264 maunds of grain, of which the government share estimated at one-sixth amounted to 7,992 maunds, leaving a balance of 44,272 maunds or about 11 maunds per head of population.⁵³ This was a minimal amount for a man to support his family and livestock for a year. One-sixth was in effect over taxing owner cultivators in rain crop lands.

In some irrigated tracts, the levelling effect of the new rate severed old economic ties between zamindars and the direct producers. When one-sixth was introduced in the stream irrigated areas of Thal Chotiali in 1880-1881, Luni and Hassani cultivators refused to pay their traditional rents to the Shadozai zamindars, on the ground that they should not have

to pay revenue twice. O.T.Duke, the Political Agent for Thal Chotiali effected a compromise, which forced the Hassanis and Lunis to pay one-tenth of the produce to the Shadozais (instead of the previous one-sixth), after contributing the government share of one-sixth. The net effect of the new demand was to increase the amount paid by the Lunis and Hassanis, while it reduced the rental income for Shadozai landlords.⁵⁴ As O.T.Duke observed, that the new demand had only seemed to damage "the general interests of the proprietors without any particular advantage to the cultivators".⁵⁵

Sandeman's drive to standardise payments, also sucked in tribes like the Kakars of Kach, Kowas, and Amadan, who had never paid land tax, into the circle of revenue paying subjects. Traditionally these Kakars would supply a number of men to the Qandhar court to be employed as falconers and grooms. This obligation was later commuted to the payment of a fixed annual sum, or naukri amounting in the case of Kowas to Rs. 240 and Amadan to Rs.60, while no demand was levied on Kach.⁵⁶ Kakar headmen usually collected this amount forcefully from Tarin cultivators and remitted the sum to Qandhar. In 1879, the Tarins took advantage of the change to British rule, to default in their customary payments to the Kakar headmen. Consequently there was a shortfall in the amount of revenue remitted by the Kakars to the

British authorities, for which Captain Wylie, the Revenue Collector, fined the Kakars and Tarins Rs.100 each, and made both groups equally responsible for paying half the amount of the traditional tax.⁵⁷ The pressure continued to mount on the Kakars, when Sandeman abolished the naukri tax in 1881, and imposed one-sixth in Kowas and Amadan. For Kakar tribesmen who had never paid anything more than a token tax to Qandhar, most of which they had collected from the Tarins, this enforced transition into full fledged revenue paying subjects of the British Government was a sharp and expensive break with the past. The simmering resentment took a violent turn, during the autumn of 1881 when the Kakars rose in rebellion, murdered the Collector, burnt several settlements, and disrupted revenue collection. Sandeman chose to punish the Kakars by fining them, and forcing all Kakar villages, even if they were revenue-free like Kach, to pay tax. But from the Kakar point of view, the confrontation proved that without tribal consent it would be impossible to collect one-sixth of the produce. Writing from the scene of the trouble, Duke emphasized that without the presence of troops, which would only fuel more resentment, the new demand could not be enforced.⁵⁸ The Government was therefore left with no option but to resort to a lump assessment of 1000 maunds of grain per year on the villages, an amount acceptable to the headmen.⁵⁹

The verdict of over-assessment and violence discredited Sandeman's first attempt to alter the traditional pattern of rents and revenues. In the Foreign Department, his application of one-sixth was criticised for subverting the Afghan system of rents, and for proving too rigid to accommodate the differences in produce yields based on irrigated/non-irrigated lands.⁶⁰ Tribesmen also clamoured for a reversion to the Afghan system. As J. Biddulph, Officiating Agent to the Governor-General in 1882, noted: "The people [tribesmen] often spoke to me of the heavy revenue paid ...and begged they might pay no more to us than to the Afghan rulers."⁶¹

But merely resetting revenue strategy in the old grooves of custom and convention was not an adequate solution. In 1884, Afghan revenue rates were reintroduced, but the old problem of over-assessment continued, since the British insisted on collecting the full amount of the rate in force, whereas the Afghans had been content with a fraction of the real value of the yield, and tolerated irregularities in payment.⁶² In Pishin for instance, the enforcement of the customary one-third on irrigated lands, between 1884-1885, more than doubled revenue payments, and made the exercise highly unpopular with tribesmen.⁶³ In fact the general discontent with the government's rigid enforcement of the

Afghan system, forced the authorities to employ cavalry soldiers to assist in watching the crops, and dividing the grain heap at the time of collection. Such a system which brought in its train guards, mud seals on the grain heaps, and restrictive supervision, appeared punitive to tribesmen, and friction ensued. Between April to May 1887 clashes occurred between tribesmen and sowars helping revenue collection in Thal Chotiali and Bori, and Loralai, as a result of which four soldiers were killed.⁴⁴ O. St. John, then Agent to the Governor-General, described this chapter of tribal militancy as a "sign of war against the tax gatherer".⁴⁵

The tensions which matured in the aftermath of the Afghan solution, proved the fallacy of attempting to insulate revenue policy in the shell of ambiguous custom. A reformist note was audible even in the Foreign Department, where batai and the recourse to military coercion was deplored: "From a civil point of view it does look very shocking ... that revenue should be collected out of a new country which we profess to treat gently by military aid".⁴⁶ Believing the moment had come for change, St. John proposed the substitution of a fixed cash assessment for irrigated lands of the batai villages, and complete exemption from taxation for areas of rain crop cultivation, where the yield was too speculative to burden the cultivators with taxes.⁴⁷

This would not only equalise the revenue burden between batai villages and those under a light fixed assessment, but would also do away with the cost and military coercion involved in batai collections. The Government of India accepted the proposal, but modified the tax exemption on rain crop lands which it viewed as over liberal, in favour of a fluctuating assessment based on annual crop yields. This revised version was to be applied first to Quetta-Pishin and later to other areas of Baluchistan.⁶⁸

But before the plan could be implemented, Sandeman returned to Baluchistan in 1888, and immediately disagreed with the reforms outlined by St. John, his arch critic. Once again he argued for standardisation and deprecated a piecemeal process of change involving one district at a time. He used the excuse of introducing revenue arrangements in the newly occupied area of Zhob, to suggest that there should be no inequalities in the taxation structure between tribes and districts, which might lead to resentment and friction. Since a thinly cultivated area like Zhob, with an insecure agricultural base, was unsuitable for a fixed cash settlement, it meant that batai would have to be imposed at the low rate of one-sixth.⁶⁹ But Sandeman added that the Zhob Kakars could not be taxed at one-sixth, if their Kakar kinsmen in Pishin continued to pay a fixed light cash

assessment, as this would fuel discontent and lead to violence. Sandeman was in effect saying that to make taxation acceptable in Zhob, he would have to impose one-sixth in Quetta-Pishin as well. As he argued:

"It is incumbent for us to have a uniform revenue system of a nature people will understand. If we treat all alike in this respect, no one will object. But it will cause great heartburning and jealousy if we take revenue in kind from one part of the country...and not from another".⁷⁰

Aware that his scheme contradicted the revenue strategy favoured in the Foreign Department, Sandeman presented the latter with a fait accompli, by ordering the revenue collection of 1890 to proceed on the basis of one-sixth by batai. The need to keep Sandeman's authority intact in Baluchistan averted any cancellation of the order, by the Foreign Department, but there was official concern that Sandeman's bid for uniformity entailed a levelling strategy which aimed to dismantle privileged tenures in Baluchistan.⁷¹

The most dramatic impact of Sandeman's initiative in 1890 occurred in the area of privileged holdings. In the zari kalang lands of Quetta for instance,⁷² Kasi landlords had prospered for a long time from the very low revenue demand they paid, so that "many were realizing yearly large sums over and above the revenue paid by them."⁷³ Sandeman argued that it could not be the object of government to "create a wealthy race of

maliks to the detriment of its own revenues and loss of the people".⁷⁴ Therefore, he was only correcting the situation by taking one-sixth from the cultivators, and allowing nothing more to be taken from them.⁷⁵ But as the Revenue Commissioner pointed out, such a proposition was "equivalent to a general dispossession of all the landlords and the transfer of their rights to the tenants".⁷⁶ The controversial implications of the measure soon surfaced in Kasi lands, where the landlords faced a kind of rent revolt, as tenant cultivators on karez lands refused to pay one-sixth to them as well as to the government. By investing money and labour for some time in karez cultivation these tenants had acquired occupancy rights in their lands. In 1890 they took advantage of the new ambiguity in their position, resulting from the dual claims of the state and Kasi zamindars on their cultivation, to reject Kasi titles to proprietorship in karez tracts. Insisting they were the real owners of the karezes, they maintained that that Kasi zamindars were only revenue engagers on behalf of the Kalat State. In turn the Kasi landlords stressed that part of the one-sixth they collected from the tenants was their proprietary share.⁷⁷ But the karez cultivators won the argument by insisting that they could not pay taxes twice without being pauperised; if the government wished to collect one-sixth from them, they could not continue as rent paying tenants of Kasi landlords. The Revenue

Commissioner therefore had no option but to reject Kasi titles to the karez holdings in dispute and conferred full proprietary status on the cultivators.⁷⁶ The ruling was formalised in 1894, so that the end result of the process of change which had started in 1890 left the Kasi landholders with the loss of status and income as a result of the new and higher demand.

While the levelling impact of one-sixth seemed to open the door to tenant ambitions, the pursuit of titles in the land was not new. In the revenue-free estates of the Durrani tribe near Quetta for instance, Yasinzai tenant cultivators had been consolidating their position for a long time. The Durranis themselves had helped the growth of tenant power, by allowing the Yasinzais freedom to make, sell and mortgage karezes as they wished.⁷⁷ The history of long possession coupled with the increasing exercise of physical dominion over the soil, whetted Yasinzai ambitions for proprietary titles in the lands they worked. Thus in 1879 when the British Government started to acquire and pay compensation for land required to build the Quetta cantonment, both Durranis and Yasinzais laid claim to compensation money on the basis of previous ownership. The British concluded that the Durranis held legal title to the lands, but in practice the land was held and worked by the Yasinzais. As a

result the Durrani received one-third of the compensation money, and the Yasinzais the remaining two-thirds.; an award which fanned Yasinzai aspirations, more than it protected Durrani rights.⁸⁰

The Yasinzais were therefore well poised to capture proprietary rights in the land, when Sandeman introduced his flat rate of revenue collection in 1890. Like the tenants on Kasi lands, the Yasinzais now had the opportunity to refuse paying rent to the Durrani landholders on the ground that they could not pay revenue twice to the state and to the Durrani. In support of their stand to withhold rents, the Yasinzais insisted that the Durrani were merely jaqirdars or assignees of revenue, without any proprietary status in the land.⁸¹ The Durrani objected to this subversion of titles, and as a result of the growing friction, the government had to suspend the collection of one-sixth. In its place, one-tenth was collected, and the rest left to be divided between the Durrani and Yasinzais on the basis of custom. But this proved unsatisfactory as it imposed a double demand on the cultivators, and in 1894 the Revenue Commissioner worked out a new settlement based on a resolution of the festering proprietorship dispute in the land. In order to reconcile Yasinzai claims with Durrani rights he used the principle of superior-inferior proprietors, to define status in the

land. In karez lands ala milkiyat (superior proprietorship) was granted to the Durranis, and adna milkiyat (inferior proprietorship) to the Yasinzais.⁹² Subordinate proprietors would pay the government revenue, half of which the government would return to the Durranis on account of their right of superior proprietorship - huquq-i-ala - milkiyat. Apart from this sum, the Durranis could make no further claims on the subordinate proprietors; the Durranis would have no powers to dispossess the Yasinzais or interfere with their water shares in the karezes. In irrigated lands equal shares in land and water were assigned to the Durranis and Yasinzais in proprietary right, and each party was held separately responsible for paying the government revenue fixed on his share.⁹³ This absolved the government from having to alienate a share of its revenue in irrigated lands as well.

The erosion of differentials continued in neighbouring Pishin, where the imposition of one-sixth dissolved the light fixed cash assessment associated with the gham-i-naukar system.⁹⁴ Half the Pishin Tarins and all the Barshore Kakars used to pay cash in lieu of military service, which did not amount to more than a tenth of the produce. As Barnes, the Revenue Commissioner, pointed out, the effect of one-sixth here would be "to treble and quadruple their

payments...People have a sentimental attachment to their old customs, and they must be terribly disgusted at the change." ^{es}

Between 1890-1894 therefore, British policy veered out of the *rigid constraints* of the custom and convention *priorities* in economic strategy. Differentials in rents and payments inherited from the past were swept away to reshape taxation in a standardised mould. In the process, *privileges* were trimmed and tenant rights encouraged, which left customary tenures of the region permanently subverted. The effect of concluding sub-settlements with under-proprietors deprived traditional landholding elites, like the Durrani, of their status and rental income from the land. It also formalised the upward mobility of tenant groups seeking new proprietary status in the land. For other tribes in poor hilly tracts like Zhob, who had never paid anything more than protection money to a locally powerful chieftain, one-sixth exposed them for the first time to the rigours of state taxation. The only groups which had reason to welcome the change were those tribesmen in Quetta and Fishin who used to pay batai previously at one-third, for their payments were now reduced ~~by~~ half, and tenant cultivators in karez tracts who now had a proprietary stake in the land.

The Government of India however did not view the revenue measures devised in the period between 1890-1894 as a permanent solution. Ideological hostility to batai "as a bad form of revenue demand"⁸⁶ still held ground in the Foreign Department. There was also apprehension that the increased demand on many of the tribes would make British rule unpopular. "It seems to me to be doubtful wisdom", the Revenue Commissioner deliberated, "to risk making them look back with regret to the time of the Afghans".⁸⁷ Fears of tribal discontent were well founded, for petitions soon flowed from the Tarins and Kakars of Pishin to cancel Sandeman's orders.⁸⁸ From Quetta Kasi zamindars even offered to double their old fixed payments to avoid paying batai.⁸⁹ Moreover when Sandeman passed away in 1892, the only influential voice in favour of the 1890 experiment was silenced.

The Revenue Commissioner gave an early indication of change, when he communicated to the Agent to the Governor-General in 1892, that batai would serve its purpose by functioning as a gauge or table to measure outturn of villages on which future fixed assessments for set periods would be based. Areas less vulnerable to crop fluctuation like Quetta, Pishin, and Sibi, would serve as trial grounds for the new measure.⁹⁰ In pursuit of his new objective, the Revenue Commissioner

had to establish a principle of assessment which would reconcile the imbalance between land and water resources in the agro-economy. Since water was the scarce commodity, he concluded, that for a tribesman:

"The ability to pay depends on the amount of water each possessed, and the only safe course is, in my opinion, to fix a lump assessment on the water, i.e., on each flowing karez or other source of irrigation"⁹¹

Thus the fixed cash assessment for Baluchistan was primarily distributed over individual holdings according to the shares in water they possessed for irrigation purposes. The standard taken for this new assessment was the estimated cash value of one-sixth of the gross produce. One-sixth corresponded to the rate of revenue already in force in Baluchistan ; it also approximated in many cases to the value of half the rental and net assets of the landholder, which was usually the basis of assessments in the Indian provinces. In a typical large karez holding in Quetta, after the costs of cultivation were deducted from the landlord's share of the rent (usually two-thirds of the gross produce), the value of half his net assets was roughly equivalent to the government revenue demand of one-sixth of the gross produce.⁹² The settlement therefore aimed to leave the landholder with a moderate surplus over and above the government demand.

The cash settlement of 1897 in Quetta, based on very low

market prices (the cost of grain was calculated at Rs.1-2 per maund, while the actual price was higher, usually Rs.3-4 per maund) worked out to Rs. 56,000. This was further reduced to Rs.51,875,⁹³ although batai collections in 1896 had yielded Rs.62,000 in revenues, because in official terms, the assessment was viewed as a:

"Political rather than a revenue settlement....All sorts of allowances will have to be made for tribal and political considerations ... The amount concerned is small, the term is short (ten years) and the settlement of the tract and the contentment of the people our first object".⁹⁴

The problem of crop fluctuation in khushkaba lands was resolved by foregoing the demand in years of negligible production, and collecting batai if there was a good harvest, which usually occurred once in five years.⁹⁵

Despite the intended moderation of the scheme, its internal distribution on individual holdings was not accurately linked to paying capacities. In particular the uniformity of incidence per irrigable acre made the demand more heavy for less productive tracts, in comparison to the richer agricultural belt around Quetta with better water and soil conditions. Besides, the distribution of demand on the basis of water shares weighted the system in favour of large landholders, as it ignored the differential in profits and productivity accruing from the actual extent of the area under

cultivation. Large landholders could hope to benefit from this system, where taxation did not increase in ratio to the larger cultivable area; by contrast it left the small proprietor relatively disadvantaged by not taking into account the small amount of land usually at his disposal for cultivation. As a result, the primary beneficiaries of the new settlement were the Kasi zamindars who possessed the most fertile lands near Quetta, making their assessment in real terms lighter than those subsisting in marginal conditions. Easy access to the Quetta markets also helped the Kasis to maximise their profits from cultivation.⁹⁶ At the same time the demand pressed heavily on small proprietors occupying less fertile tracts, at a distance from Quetta, increasing their hardship and indebtedness. C. Archer, the Settlement Officer, noted in 1909, that "debt was heaviest in Baleli and Kuchlak where the incidence seems very heavy".⁹⁷ The Baleli area suffered from poor soil conditions, while Kuchlak area was situated at a considerable distance from Quetta town, which meant that local cultivators could not ^{gain to} access ^{the} the only urban market of the District. This configuration of poor resources made the same incidence of revenue which was very light in the Kasi context, a weighty burden for cultivators in Kuchlak and Baleli.

The problem of indebtedness, however, was not just

linked to over-assessment. Significantly, the Quetta settlement coincided with a period of urban growth; as the Quetta town and cantonment expanded, the population doubled between 1895 to 1908, from 12,650 to 18,039.⁹⁸ Urbanisation created an expanding market for fruit and vegetables, in particular potatoes, which rose sharply in value from Rs.3-6-0 per maund in 1895 to Rs.5-4-6 in 1908. By contrast the price of wheat only climbed from Rs.2-6-6 to R.3-4-0 in the same period.⁹⁹ The lucrative nature of market gardening meant that land was diverted from grain production to fruit and potato cultivation. Between 1895-1896, the area under wheat crop decreased from 67 per cent. to 66 per cent; maize fell from 12 per cent to 7.9 per cent, while potatoes and fruit cultivation increased in acreage from three to five per cent.¹⁰⁰ While market gardening offered short term profits to landholders near Quetta, in the long term it diminished the water-supply of the region, since fruits and vegetables needed three times more water than grain production.¹⁰¹ In the local context this was particularly serious, for the practice of karez irrigation caused a progressive reduction of the underground water table. Inadequate snowfall during the winters between 1895-1902 also compounded the problem by not allowing enough ground water to accumulate. These factors forced a contraction in the irrigable area, which showed a net decrease of 416 acres by 1908, while another 899 acres which

formerly had an assured water-supply were now under precarious irrigation.¹⁰²

The drying up of water resources affected many areas, including the estates of the Durrani and Brahui jaqirdars, where landowners incurred considerable expenditure attempting to open new sources of irrigation without any real success. This wastage of capital forced many proprietors to live for some time before harvest on borrowed money, or run up accounts with the village bunnia, which were settled in grain at harvest time on terms exceedingly favourable to the lender.¹⁰³ By 1909 the total culturable land subject to sale in Quetta was 714 acres, worth two lakhs in value. Mortgage figures on agricultural land showed a debt of two and a half lakhs, covering 3,739 acres of abi and 167 of khuskaba land.¹⁰⁴ About Rs.1,79,000 was owed to local agriculturalists and Rs.46,000 to moneylenders or outsiders. The low land sale statistics, 714 acres out of a total cultivable area of 97732 acres, showed there was no rapid transfer of land from indigenous holders to outsiders.¹⁰⁵ This sluggish movement of land was artificially sustained by legal restrictions on alienation of land to non-agriculturalists.¹⁰⁶

Caught in the spiral of indebtedness and contracting cultivation, most landowners were unable to

extract maximum profit from an unvarying cash demand at a time of rising market prices. In Quetta for instance the average price of wheat was Rs.3 per maund as opposed to Rs.2 in Indian markets.¹⁰⁷ But reduction in the irrigable area and falling grain production left landholders with no surpluses to sell at high market rates. In fact between 1897-1908, the government was forced to grant revenue remissions amounting to Rs.7,894 to ease the burden on landholders.¹⁰⁸ In such conditions the main exploiters of the market were the middlemen or retailers in grain trade. They had the advantage of meeting market demand by selling cheap imported grain at the high retail prices current in Quetta, with good profit margins for themselves. The government was sufficiently concerned that the rise in prices had translated into profits for the middlemen, and felt there was strong ground for considering, "the imposition of an income tax on the mercantile classes in Baluchistan, who seem to absorb entirely to themselves the profits in which the landholders and the Government might legitimately expect to participate".¹⁰⁹

In neighbouring Pishin, the new cash settlement also pressed heavily on small owner cultivators, who held the bulk of the land. The new demand introduced in 1896 constituted a twelve percent increase on previous rates of payment, and coincided with a period of drought

which lasted from 1895 to 1897. Collection of revenue at a higher rate, ~~at~~ such a time led to serious hardship and many tribesmen emigrated to Afghanistan, lured by the Amir's promise of free land grants.¹¹⁰ The mounting hardship forced the government to reduce the existing settlement by fourteen percent in 1900. But in real terms this only adjusted the demand to what Pishin cultivators had paid prior to 1895. The adjustment was too fractional to allow landowners to benefit from sizeable surpluses, and grain production was barely sufficient for local consumption. The original optimism that British rule would rescue Pishin from being "a desolate waste",¹¹¹ and that the fine soil only needed some water "to make it laugh with a harvest",¹¹² proved an illusion by the end of the nineteenth century. Only two minor irrigation works, the Khushdil Khan reservoir, and the Shebo Canal were in operation, which between them hardly irrigated 6000 acres,¹¹³ and made the Agent to the Governor-General despair that even by 1904 he could not make these works pay, and [induce] the return of one percent per annum on the capital outlay of the project.¹¹⁴ While the scarcity of water reduced the cultivable area, the pressure of population growth led to lands being more minutely subdivided every year, which progressively reduced the size and profitability of holdings. As the Agent to the Governor-General noted: "The Pishin people are very poor and have much

difficulty in living on the produce of their lands".¹¹⁵

The drought of 1897 to 1901 also made the cash settlement uneconomic in Sibi. Traditionally under batai the assessment was made on the actual produce, allowing the landholder to share the risk of a bad harvest equally with the state. With the introduction of a fixed cash assessment, the small Tarin proprietors in Sibi, found they had no insurance against the climatic vagaries which affected cultivation. The drought underscored the oppressive nature of a rigid and fixed settlement, as cultivation contracted, while revenue payers were forced to pay a fixed demand. Increasingly tribesmen had to borrow to pay the demand, and by 1901 small holdings were heavily mortgaged.¹¹⁶ There was passive resistance to the cash settlement, and tribesmen demanded a return to batai. In 1900 the Revenue Commissioner attempted to calm the situation by reducing the settlement by 5.5 per cent, but it had no effect as tribesmen continued to press for a return to the traditional system of collection in kind.¹¹⁷ The strength of tribal feeling suggests that there was little spare cash in the local economy to support a cash settlement. Most tribal settlements were too far from any urban market, and the Sind-Pishin Railway which skirted the borders of Sibi, to develop into supply sources for urban or railway communities. The absence

of such developments inhibited the emergence of a sizeable money economy which would have eased the transition to a cash settlement.

The linked problems of a cash demand, the non-availability of water, and the impoverishment of landowners, were also starkly evident in the Nasirabad tahsil. Here cultivation depended on the waters of the Begari and Desert Canals of the Sind system. While the waters of the Desert Canal allowed cultivators in eastern Nasirabad to meet the state demand, assessed at Rs.1.2 lakhs, in the western sector the progressive drying up of the Begari Canal led to water shortages. In consequence some villages could only support patchy cultivation, others turned into wasteland, and by 1903 only fourteen villages had adequate water for cultivation.¹¹⁸ Reduced to extremities, some large landholders like chiefs of the Jamali and Umrani tribes, invested Rs.40,000 in excavating a branch course from the Begari Canal, which soon ran dry, and investors were unable to even recover the capital expended.¹¹⁹ Such landowners were now forced to borrow money to meet the state demand, and bear other expenses like advancing seed grain to tenants-at-will. By 1906 a majority of landowners were in debt. They usually contracted written agreements with moneylenders called mukhtarnamas, which allowed the possession of land with the mortgagor, but the

mortgagee was entitled to take half or more of the occupants' produce in repayment of his debt. Small landowners tended to borrow more informally on the basis of batai, whereby the moneylender retained half or more of the produce.¹²⁰ This system of lending favoured the rural creditor, as he could squeeze the maximum profit from the landowner, without incurring the problems of ownership and cultivation in Nasirabad. Thus moneylenders were slow to foreclose on debts. Between 1878 to 1903, only 280 acres of land were sold with possession to Hindu moneylenders, while 72,187 acres of land were under usufructory/batai mortgages. In 1903 the Baluchistan Government banned the execution of usufructory mortgages, but this only led to an increase in batai mortgages.¹²¹ Squeezed between an unvarying state demand and commitments to the moneylender, the landowner virtually had no choice but to survive on borrowed money, and perpetuate his economic bondage to the creditor. This unfortunate sequel showed that the imposition of a cash demand in a zone without sufficient water was virtually a recipe for impoverishment. Only the moneylenders extracted profit from a captive clientele of indebted landowners.

In more remote areas like Loralai and Zhob where irrigable land was very limited and tended to fluctuate annually, the government introduced ijaras or temporary

cash assessments, as opposed to a cash assessment fixed for definite periods or jamabast. In the Sinjawai tahsil of Loralai, a minimal cash demand of Rs.13,421 was imposed on an irrigable area of 7,280 acres.¹²² Such statistics however were deceptive, for within the irrigable area, a certain proportion of the land was cultivable once in five years which lowered productivity. At the same time the culturable area itself was static, but was forced to accommodate a rising population. The increased human pressure on the land inevitably led to fragmentation, creating a honeycomb of small proprietary holdings eking a marginal existence. This subsistence level existence meant there was no surplus to convert into profits and cash currency, to meet even the lightest of cash demands. Here as elsewhere in Baluchistan therefore, the proprietor had to borrow to meet the state cash demand, and the result was greater indebtedness. As the Settlement Report noted in 1901:

"The landed proprietors in Sinjawai...are generally in straitened circumstances as is evident by the fact that their mortgage liabilities are nearly equal to the yearly revenue demand of the whole tahsil, while the area under mortgage is about one-fourth of its total irrigable area."¹²³

The attempted monetarization of the economy through trial cash demands therefore stalemated in the depression of debt and poverty.

A similar experiment with a temporary cash

assessment in the Hindubagh area of Zhob was equally unsuccessful. Although demand was lowered from the value of the annual batai yield of Rs.20,000, to Rs.9,853-8-0 it was still burdensome for tribesmen.¹²⁴ The concept of a cash settlement was a new experience for tribesmen. And while the cash demand itself took account of the annual fluctuations in crop production, the tribesmen were not prudent enough to reserve the surpluses from good years to meet the shortfalls of a bad year. As one official noted:

"They do not fully appreciate their gains in good years and howl for remissions in bad years. Naturally thriftless they are apt to spend the proceeds of their harvests before paying their land revenue and thus gradually become involved with money lenders."¹²⁵

A cash demand was also bound to press heavily in an area where the average size of holdings was under twenty acres; production was meagre, there was little surplus to sell, and most cultivators supplemented their income from the proceeds of flockowning.¹²⁶ The Settlement Officer noted in 1906, that it was hard to find a man in the locality who possessed a thousand or five hundred rupees in cash.¹²⁷ Lack of markets and communications also led to a scarcity of ready cash in the local economy. In such circumstances the working of a cash demand only stimulated borrowing. As the Settlement Report of 1905 concluded:

"As the people possess little or no cash they are obliged to borrow money from the Hindu shopkeepers for payment of revenue, and in

satisfaction thereof to give them grain at lower rates when the time for harvest comes".¹²⁸

While the net impact of a cash demand on irrigated tracts was to drive landowners deeper into debt, in rain crop lands where revenue was still taken in kind - by batai which was a division of the produce, after harvesting, or tashkis involving appraisement of the standing crop to be divided in shares between the government and revenue payer - the material condition of the people was even more depressed. Theoretically it seemed that the collection of revenue in kind would mitigate the higher risk of cultivation in areas dependent on rain water, by spreading the risk of a bad yield more equally between the government and the revenue payer. But in reality, such calculations were completely upset by the severe drought which lasted from 1896 to 1900, and brought cultivators in rain crop areas to the brink of starvation and famine. In drought stricken areas of Sibi, whole villages were depopulated; while those cultivators still trapped in their homes starved for lack of food. As the Political Agent reported:

"I found ample evidence of scarcity approaching to famine...The grain bins were quite empty...the people were living on a sort of gruel ...made of wheat flour, which... most of them could only afford to touch every second day".¹²⁹

In central Zhob tribesmen emigrated in large numbers to Afghanistan on a scale "almost unknown in the past".¹³⁰

To the west, in Nushki, Chagai, and Western Sinjerani country the severity of the drought meant that the introduction of revenue measures had to be postponed.

The District Officer reported:

"Little or no rain has fallen west of Nushki for ... two years ...25 per cent of the livestock of the district have perished... wherever I went I... found the same scarcity prevailing...several tumans were reduced to sustaining life on the roots of the dwarf palm and on 'khamu' and 'labu'- roots indigenous to sandy deserts - and at two, at least, of my thanas I found colonies of starving children dependent on the charity of the sowars for their food".¹³¹

Scarcity was further sustained by the rising prices of essential commodities. Price rises were fuelled by the prohibition of grain exports from Afghanistan, and the freedom to export grain to India from Baluchistan. Middlemen and grain merchants perpetuated conditions of scarcity, not by holding back grain from the market, but sending it out of the country. By stoking the short supply, local prices were kept artificially high, and grain merchants could profit from selling cheap Indian wheat at the inflated Baluchistan market prices. Repeated requests from the Baluchistan officials to prohibit the export of grain were rejected by the Government of India, on the ground that the proposal was opposed to the accepted policy of non-interference with private trade.¹³² The priority here was economic theory and not people, while a society edged perilously close to famine.

Conclusion

The main point of British revenue policy, to restructure the traditional system through new rates of assessment, created no new margin of social prosperity for the rural poor. Initial attempts at uniformity and standardisation had only inflated the demand, left the tribal economy severely depressed, and even caused... armed clashes between tribesmen and revenue collectors. The subsequent experiment with fixed cash assessments proved equally negative, as the lack of money in the tribal economy forced both big landholders and small owner cultivators to borrow heavily to meet the cash demand, and the result was increasing indebtedness to the moneylender.

But the indebtedness of the large landholder or tribal chief could not be viewed as just an unwelcome economic statistic. Politically the Sandeman system was too deeply enmeshed in the intricacies of using the tribal chiefs as props to support British rule, to risk their impoverishment and hostility. This political commitment to sustain a landed aristocracy led to concessions on the economic front, to shore up jagirdari estates threatened with decline.

In 1879 the jagirs of the Barozai chiefs of Sangan and Kurk in the Sibi District had a joint cash value of

Rs.5,500. But by 1900, fragmentation of shares among members of the sardar-khel had reduced the value of the chief's share to half the 1879 valuation. To halt this depreciation, the Baluchistan Government altered the system of distributing revenue shares among members of the tribe. In the event of a tribesman dying without a son, the government decreed that his share would go absolutely to the head of the tribe. Even if a landholder died leaving sons, one-third of the inheritance would pass to the tribal chief, while if the share of any holder fell below the sum of Rs.30 per annum, it would be stopped and allowed to revert to the chief.¹³³ Such a strategy of making the chief richer at the expense of the tribe was clearly dictated by the political importance ascribed to the tribal head in the Sandeman system of government.

Chieftaincies were also cushioned by new economic privileges. In Zhob, for instance, the sardar-khel of the Jogezaïs was propped up by revenue-free land grants, grain allowances, and exemption from paying grazing tax; the total value of such concessions amounted to Rs,8,800.¹³⁴ Yet Bangal Khan, head of the sardar-khel and the main recipient of such concessions used to be the "scourge of Zhob and Thal Chotiali Districts."¹³⁵ He had been an ally of Dost Muhammad of Zhob, during the troubles of 1889, which had led to a

British punitive expedition against the Kakars.¹³⁶ The privileges extended to him were intended to dissuade him from reverting "to his former way of life",¹³⁷ and to meet the rising cost of his personal expenditure. It was really a bribe, masquerading as official policy, to buy out influential figures of dissent in tribal society.

The alienation of revenues in a poor tribal economy to sustain chiefly lifestyles was socially hardly defensible. The extortionate basis of chiefly authority was often tacitly condoned. For instance the chief of the Khetran tribe exacted certain dues, like taking the pick of the livestock from every flockowner, imposing burdensome duties on traders, and a political tax on Hindus, which even Sandeman condemned as being "notoriously unjust and extortionate".¹³⁸ But nothing was done to abolish the dues until 1888, when the decision to collect revenue from Khetran tribesmen made it necessary to reduce their traditional payments to the chief. And even then, abolition was cushioned by a cash allowance of Rs.1,800 per annum,¹³⁹ the cash equivalent of the old dues. As the chief was already in possession of revenue-free land grants and service allowances, the official unwillingness to revoke a source of exploitative fringe income without compensation, mirrored the priority of the government to reinforce the outline of

chiefly power with new colonial resources, to ensure the continuing subordination of common tribesmen to their hereditary leaders.

In western Baluchistan, where local chiefs virtually confined their activities to consuming tribal resources to further political rivalries and feuds, external support was critical in shoring up their crumbling powers. A typical example was Ali Khan, the chief of the Sinjerani Baluch, whom the British reinstated in Chagai in 1896.¹⁴⁰ Almost immediately Ali Khan Sinjerani claimed past privileges in the form of revenue-free titles to large areas of cultivable land in Chagai, and at the same time started taking sardari dues from tribesmen, which included one-sixth of the gross produce in land, and livestock from each family, as an annual contribution, and on ceremonial occasions. His coercive methods of collecting revenue led to frequent clashes with local tribesmen, who viewed a visit from his sowars "much in the same light as... that of a flight of locusts".¹⁴¹ In addition he exercised the old sardari practice of appropriating any rain crop land near Chagai for his own use, which deprived local nomads of their customary reliance on khushkaba cultivation to supplement their pastoral incomes.¹⁴² The chief's exploitation of local resources was matched by a callous indifference to the welfare of the area; as Webb

Ware pointed out:

"I cannot recall any instance when the sirdar has come forward voluntarily either to check raiding assist the Naib Tahsildar, or increase cultivation".¹⁴³

Despite the *unfavourable* profile of the chief, and the knowledge that he was a man "without any moral force of character and entirely in the hands of his numerous relatives, who play upon him in the manner which best suits their individual interest",¹⁴⁴ the Baluchistan Government confirmed his revenue-free status, and gave him a monthly cash allowance of Rs.350 to preserve him as a symbol of authority on the local scene.¹⁴⁵

In addition to the revenue-free status of tribal chiefs, smaller land grants and monetary allowances were made to headmen and maliks, and also to religious leaders like pirs and sayids. By 1901, the annual value of the revenue alienated in free land grants was Rs.88,783, while the total receipts for land revenue amounted to six lakhs.¹⁴⁶ Such a policy suited the interests of a government committed to the idea of achieving political control, through a captive leadership tied by material interests to the colonial order. Tranquilizing the chiefs through material benefits prevented them from developing into sources of disaffection, leaving any measure of popular discontent leaderless and powerless to engage in sustained

confrontation. Sporadic violence, passive resistance, petitions, and emigrations¹⁴⁷ articulated the hardship experienced by common tribesmen, but there were no large scale armed uprisings.

But while the propping up of tribal chiefs suited the political structure of colonial rule, such a policy also underwrote the economic dominance of tribal chiefs, and perpetuated old inequalities in the land structure. Thus even in 1905, the vast majority of tenants in irrigated lands were still bazgars or tenants-at-will, who had no vested rights in the land, and were employed seasonally, "likely to be ousted at any time" by the landowner.¹⁴⁸ The insecurity of traditional tenures was matched by a rent structure dictated by custom rather than by the amount of the government demand and the price of produce. The Settlement Officer for Quetta noted in 1907 that the commonest form of rent payment was still a two-thirds share of the produce, with the tenants providing bullocks, plough, and labour, and the landowner the seed.¹⁴⁹ Other extra-economic forms of coercion like sursat (forced supplies) and begar (forced labour) were not revoked. The combined pressures of insecure tenures, high rents, and oppressive dues imposed a crippling burden on tenants, who were enmeshed in permanent poverty. As The Baluchistan Administration Report for 1908-1909 described:

"Tenants- at- will are often deeply involved in debt and live a hand to mouth existence... the Hindu bunna keeps a running account with the cultivator on the security of the latter's crop and at each harvest receives a part of the grain heap as interest, with such amount as the cultivator can pay towards the reduction of the principal".¹⁵⁰

Most tenant lands were mortgaged with possession until both interest and principal were paid.

The other major consequence of sustaining elitist interests in the land was that nearly one percent of the revenue was locked up in maintaining adequate incomes for tribal chiefs, and that the main burden of revenue payment was shifted on small cultivators struggling to survive. In Sibi and Zhob, the majority of revenue payers were small owner cultivators, who also made up just under half the tax paying population in Quetta-Pishin.¹⁵¹ Confined to small proprietary holdings, without resources to employ under-tenants, for these owner cultivators the landlord role remained subordinate to their main function as agriculturalists. With slender cash resources, and virtually no surplus to sell, their exposure to fixed cash settlements in irrigated tracts, was premature and ill conceived. The Revenue Commissioner described their miserable condition in 1901:

"The material condition of the people is distinctly poor;... in some villages the land is heavily mortgaged ... The reason may be attributed in part to the fact that the assessment to which they have been subject for

a number of years has pressed hardly on them. During the year it became necessary to extend the cash assessment, and I was surprised to find how much passive resistance the extension excited...the people begged that they might be allowed to pay by batai ...the cash assessment was by no means a popular arrangement".¹⁵²

On rain crop lands material existence was perennially haunted by the spectres of starvation and scarcity. While drought, increasing population, and the morcellation of small holdings. led to underproduction and an endemic insufficiency of material products, the problem of scarcity was compounded by the official reluctance to invest in irrigation projects, which could have secured a higher proportion of cultivation and extended a safety net for tribesmen living on lands dependent exclusively on rain water . The annual sum of Rs.50,000, extended for agricultural loans in Baluchistan, was barely adequate for covering advances required for routine agricultural needs like seed and plough bullocks; there was no surplus left to undertake irrigation projects. This stringent attitude was dictated by official prejudice against the tribal ability to manage money. As one official put it:

"No outlay of capital could be more dangerous...the Biluch zamindars are a wild lot, and we require special guarantees that the money is properly expended... The Biluch administration will be a Sahara in which takavi [agricultural loans] will be lost forever".¹⁵³

In the circumstances, reliance on rain crop land as the sole source of income continued to mean impoverishment, and those unable to subsist on the land swelled the

ranks of landless tenants. As a tribal saying put it:

"Land no doubt ...is a flock that never dies;but rain crop cultivation... is mighty like hunting the wild ass. If rain crop land is all the family possesses, it is hopeless to rely on so precarious a source of livelihood".¹⁵⁴

In altering old patterns of assessment the British had strained the traditional system without modernising it sufficiently to benefit from the change. Exposure of underdeveloped tribal economies to cash settlements and market forces had only exacerbated the problems of debt and poverty. Except for a few landowners, notably the Kasis, near the town of Quetta, the vast majority either had little surplus produce or were too far from any market centre, to profit from a fixed cash demand and rising market prices. As most landholders had to borrow to meet the state demand, the only visible beneficiaries of the new economic order were the grain merchants and the moneylenders. While tribal chiefs and other privileged landholders had a political safety net in the form of government subsidies and revenue-free concessions in the land, for the majority of small proprietors there was no insurance against the lack of cash resources and ecological constraints, which eroded the real value of landed incomes as a source of survival. Migration and casual work as tenant cultivators on more prosperous estates were often the only alternatives for those unable to eke a living from their proprietary holdings. For tenant cultivators

without proprietary titles in the land, the economic prospect was even more bleak. The vast majority on irrigated lands had no security of tenure, while conditional tenants with heritable occupancy rights were confined to rain crop lands where they had to struggle against the odds of climate and environment. But even the relatively secure conditional tenants were under pressure from the rising value of land prices which threatened their traditional stake in the land. For instance, in earlier times an owner of rain crop land would often assign a proprietary share in the land embanked for purposes of cultivation, to the conditional tenant who had undertaken the task of embankment. But as the price of agricultural land rose from Rs.109 per acre in 1897 to Rs. 176 in 1907,¹⁵³ the landowner found it increasingly profitable to retain his property, and preferred not to alienate proprietary rights in the land to conditional tenants. As the Baluchistan Administration Report for 1908-1909 noted:

"The system is falling into disuse as the value of land appreciates, and the person making the embankment now ordinarily acquires heritable occupancy rights as 'lathband tenant', on a fixed rent consisting of a share of the produce".¹⁵⁴

The traditional malaise of privilege juxtaposed with poverty, indebtedness, underproduction, scarcity, and famine, therefore continued to linger on the economic scene under British rule. As one official noted, in the mainstream of tribal poverty, "Only the

men in receipt of cash and grain allowances from Government enjoy an established prosperity".¹⁵⁷ Under a politically inspired revenue management system, the economic view in Baluchistan at the end of 1905 still revealed the customary contours of a produce based material exchange system, controlled by landed hierarchies, preserved from the past, to sustain the elitist structure of power and privilege on which colonialism gambled for survival. As colonial economics reinforced tradition, the overarching power of custom contained change, and kept society moored in the inequalities of the past.

Conclusion: Imperialism and Tribalism

The juxtaposition of empire and tribe in Baluchistan, mirrored in microcosm the exploitative assertion of imperial power in the alien setting of a subject society. The idea of dominion in Baluchistan had matured in the official mind in proportion to the late Victorian obsession with the empire, its designs and dilemmas, dreams and distortions. An imperial solution for Baluchistan was premised on official interpretations of a political configuration, which confirmed the Russianization of central Asia, the fragility of the Afghan bastion, and the instability of the turbulent tribal belt on the strategic north western tip of India; factors which cumulatively seemed to spell a reducing margin of safety for the empire, as a section of official opinion had always feared. This pessimism was perhaps masked by the aggressive pursuit of outer frontiers and extended boundaries by the seers of the Forward school. In the chase for a scientific frontier, imperial self-confidence was perhaps as much as at stake, as a new military-strategic defence line for India.

In the text of imperial strategy, Baluchistan with its barren mountains and bleak deserts was a classic locus for structuring a frontier barrier, which

would act as a deterrent for invading armies, provide a protective shell for the kernel of empire in India, and serve as a forward platform to bear the weight of an aggressive external policy against neighbouring Persia and Afghanistan if required. Quetta was the keystone in this imperial scheme. As T.H. Holdich summarised:

"Quetta... controls the railway to Nushki and the road to Seistan. Seistan is dominated by Quetta... Quetta also dominates the head of the Pishin valley and the long lateral frontier line of the Zhob valley reaching northward to the Gomul gateway of the frontier".¹

The lease of Quetta from the Kalat State was followed by the acquisition of Pishin, Chaman, and Chagai from Afghanistan. Zhob, Sibi, and Marri-Bugti country, were cemented into the imperial structure, and detached from the influence of Kalat and Afghanistan. In the west, Nushki was absorbed, as a centre for promoting trade and covert political action, designed to foil Russian penetration in southeast Persia. As the logic of empire and the scientific frontier dismantled the old tribal state of Kalat, and shredded the residue of Afghan influence among the Baluch tribes, a new and politically fragmented Baluchistan took shape and form. The partition of Baluchistan into directly administered and Agency territories on the one hand, and a Native States sector on the other owing nominal allegiance to Kalat, completed the piecemeal dismemberment of a regional identity, leaving in its place a complex of tribal and temporal jurisdictions which could be warped more easily

to bend Baluchistan to the dictates of imperial strategy.

A reconstituted and militarised Baluchistan was also intended to circulate the message of a new balance of power on the frontier. With both Qandhar and Persian Seistan now within striking distance of British Indian forces as a result of the railheads at Chaman and Nushki, the Government of India gained a frontier designed more for aggression than defence. The ultimate aim of such a policy vis a vis Afghanistan and Persia, was perhaps as Curzon described to check the Russians who were "visibly nibbling at one and biting hard at the other".² But the immediate and intended effect was to ~~reorder~~ Baluchistan as a threat and warning to miscreant allies, or potential local enemies to desist from conspiring against the British Empire. The paranoia of imperial self-defence therefore surfaced as a predatory strategy of ambition and power, pursued at the expense of frontier tribes and the vulnerable neighbouring states of Afghanistan and Persia.

The imperial argument for re-negotiating the political identity of Baluchistan was matched by a local commitment to new, extended political margins, which were uncompromisingly "forward" in concept and execution. Sandeman set the new style, by manipulating

local politics, recruiting members of one tribe to lead punitive expeditions against another often its traditional enemy, and exploiting the notion of imperial crisis, conjured by the Great Game and the Russian challenge, to float annexationist schemes targeted on the acquisition of new strategic tribal lands. At stake was personal ambition and provincial power, and the eclipse of the conservative Punjab style of frontier government, in favour of the new Baluchistan system always searching for the far frontier and the distant tribe. This friction of personality and politics on the provincial scene, was summed up by the Viceroy Lord Lansdowne writing to Lord Connemara, Governor of Madras, in 1890:

"The two Administrations [Punjab and Baluchistan] are jealous of each other, and favour widely different policies. Lyall's [Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab] one idea is to build a wall which Sandeman will not be able to climb. Sandeman is for as little masonry as possible, and at least one foot beyond the boundary line".³

As tribal resources became the building material for imperial spheres of influence, protectorates, and leases, Sandeman's political adventurism turned into a graveyard for tribal independence.

If strategic gain was the talisman which drew imperial forces into Baluchistan, the primitivism of tribal society, unmediated by civilising influences, encouraged the reformist rhetoric of empire building. The invincibility of the West was strong

in imperial polemic; as Lytton candidly mused:

"And lastly, is not either war and conquest, or this system of agencies, interference, and ultimate control, the inevitable process of the advance of civilisation in contact with barbarism".⁴

Viewed through the prism of biological determinism, and perceived as primitive in the Darwinian sense, tribal Baluchistan was a natural victim for imperial censure. Pre-colonial Baluchistan was in imperial estimations, a lost land ruled by the primeval passions of vendetta and blood feuds; it was a place "of utter lawlessness; and bad and wild characters, and fanatics and would-be assassins, prowled about all over ...unchecked".⁵ The deconstruction of tribalism, was matched by a strong conviction in an imperial formula for human behaviour, based on western definitions of law and order, discipline, and the subjection of society to government control. Transplanting this vision on tribal soil was the crucial mission of Sandemanism in Baluchistan.

As the rule of law was considered the pillar of civilised society Sandeman's political solution for Baluchistan hinged on purging the tribal structure of its militant code, in order to reconstruct its social identity on imperial terms. Pax Britannica not only frowned on the traditional pursuit of feuds and raids, but it even conscripted tribesmen to police themselves.

A corpus of restrictive imperial directives replaced the informal and consensual operative rules of tribal life. Rewards and reprisals instituted a style of dissent management, which shackled tribal behaviour patterns, at odds with the imperial blueprint for a stable frontier society. In the interests of caution and continuity, ruling elites were deliberately preserved as convenient fronts for colonial administration. Money and privilege encouraged tribal chiefs to abandon traditional leadership roles associated with military prowess, combative skills, and the ability to rule on the basis of political consensus within the tribe. The new colonial props for chiefly authority sapped the need for ordinary tribal support, divorced the elites from common tribesmen, and blurred the line between authority and tyranny in the tribal structure. It also encouraged intra-tribal conflict between rival leaders competing for power and the new spoils of colonialism.

If fault lines were appearing on the political surface of tribal society, they did not seem particularly problematic to the British as the equilibrium between empire and tribe remained steady. The paternalist idiom of rule seemed safe in the contract between the Baluchistan Government and the tribal chief to exchange allegiance for local autonomy, subsidies and allowances for tribal order and

subservience to imperial direction. Functioning at the sensitive borderline between empire and tribe, the tribal chief became the recipient of imperial favours, as well as a conduit for transmitting the ideology of imperial authority and dominance in tribal society. In this seemingly reciprocal relationship, the terms of exchange were essentially unequal and hierarchical, for the tribal chief assumed a subordinate - client - status in the structure of the relationship. Captivated by the material incentives of collaboration, tribal leaders lost the compulsion to challenge imperial authority; instead there was more elite competition and violent scrambles for the new rewards of leadership in the colonial scheme. As violence was internalised within the tribal system, it fragmented the unity of the tribal structure bending it to the growing pressure of imperial authority; at the same time internal rifts gave the empire an opening to assume the role of arbiter in conflict situations, thereby allowing it to impose its jurisdictional boundary more intrusively upon tribal institutions. Political consensus in Baluchistan therefore mirrored the legitimation of empire, and the sterilisation of tribal elites to preserve the artificial symmetry of the imperial-tribal order.

Concern for stability and the status-quo narrowed the spectrum of social options pursued by the

Baluchistan Government. Sandeman's archaic vision of tribal society, as a timeless, contactless vacuum, endorsed a form of social existence quarantined from change and alternative social models. Images of loyal tribal chiefs and revitalized tribal institutions, serving as indigenous arteries of control, were carefully propagated to keep alive the notion of consensual government in Baluchistan based on tribal participation. Sandeman's apologists insisted without much substance, that the tribal tier in local government established in Baluchistan "... self-government in many ways in advance of that which existed... in India".⁶

In reality Sandeman's political model was only a guise for keeping tribesmen penned up behind static cultural boundaries. This suited imperial interests, as it effectively insulated Baluchistan from the nationalist politics current in India. But for Baluchistan, the social price was indefinite suspension in a hybrid tribal-colonial structure, which looked to the past to define its identity, indifferent to any timetable for future change. The logic of such a policy was to freeze society in its own cultural past, and imprison the tribal image in a museumized reconstruction of an older reality. Even when the Sandeman era had become history, Malcolm Darling, serving in the Punjab Government, could still write:

"...here in what was virtually a part of

Baluchistan , was the true Baluch - the Baluch in his native fastness untouched by the sophistications of modern life. With his almost Biblical appearance and customs he was an interesting study."⁷

Baluchistan was British India's last frontier in the west. It was acquired in the late afternoon of empire when autocracy and orthodoxy were the ruling passions of government, and the tradition of liberal reform a dim memory, buried in the dust of the Mutiny. Imperial priorities were dictated by the fear of losing power, ensuring the lifespan of the empire, and protecting the privileged view of the Raj from the political summit of the sub-continent. In this negative vision, law and order was a rational substitute for development, and modernisation discarded as a threat to the imperial structure. An uneconomic frontier zone like Baluchistan tasted the full measure of this defensive imperialism. Government investment was directed exclusively to securing political control and asserting strategic-military superiority. The dark side of this picture was the neglect of economic and educational developments. The only new source of income made available to tribesmen was employment in the Levy Service. But even here, static wage structures and rising commodity prices devalued incomes (Rs.10 and Rs.25 per month for sepoy and sowars respectively) sufficiently to induce resignations, and a corresponding lack of competition for service positions by 1905.⁸

At the same time the rigorous extraction of compensation money from the community for offences committed by an individual tribesman transformed collective responsibility into a punitive sentence for tribesmen chronically hard-pressed to survive. The harsh economics of late Sandemanism in Baluchistan led many tribesmen to view emigration as the only route to escape financial ruin. For the majority who remained the prospect was bleak. Raiding was no longer a legitimate option for supplementing the tribal income. Only the arid land remained as a source of subsistence, stalked by scarcity, drought, indebtedness and a rising revenue demand. Society was polarised between a privileged minority of tribal chiefs and headmen, cushioned by revenue-free land grants and allowances, and the vast majority of small owner cultivators and tenant workers, forced to bear the main brunt of the revenue demand on marginal resources. Exploitative rent structures derived from the past, types of serfdom, and the insecurity of the landless tenant cultivator, were passively tolerated. The most vulnerable section of tribesmen therefore remained trapped in the circle of coercive custom, while having to adjust to the new revenue demands of the Baluchistan Government. Social contradictions were compounded by underdevelopment. Little was done to improve productivity in the region by way of liberal agricultural loans to individual cultivators, or

government irrigation projects to increase the water-supply. Environmental risks to cultivation remained as high as always; the clue to survival lay in the tribesman's skill and patience in trapping the few drops of precious rainfall in bands or earth built dams in order to raise occasional crops. Seeing this evidence of the tribesman's unequal struggle against nature, Arnold Toynbee was moved to observe in the course of a journey across Baluchistan. "...a gabar band on the chance of a catch-crop; that is heroism indeed".⁹

While tribesmen remained stranded in poverty, there was conspicuous government expenditure on military-strategic requirements. In 1887, the Viceroy Lord Dufferin estimating the cost of the Forward Policy, just in terms of railway development in Baluchistan, observed that the military rail link to Chaman, pointing towards Kandhar, had "cost nearly four millions, and as many lives as a pitched battle used to do in early days".¹⁰ Even in imperial calculations such expenditure could only be rationalised from the perspective of the Russian threat to India. But as later shifts in global politics led to the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907, the old logic of the Forward Policy, seemed largely an anachronism. The cerebral arabesques of the prophets and pundits of the Forward Policy,

had after all conjured a phantom war fought exclusively on paper with pen and ink, documents, memoranda, and rhetoric. As the futility of the Forward Policy stood exposed, the axioms of the old Sandeman era gave way to the sceptical reappraisals of a later Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, who looked at the same Chaman rail link in 1911 and realised that it led nowhere ; he wrote:

"I visited Chaman, the outpost of our empire, and I looked with curiosity but without envy over the plains of Afghanistan to Candahar. I saw there a complete lot of railway stores for a line to Candahar and I thought to myself how mad anybody would be to want expansion in this direction when we have so much to do at home to develop what we have got".¹¹

Because its aims were primarily defensive and strategic, imperial expansion into Baluchistan was essentially superficial and empty. The bleak logic of military railways, fortified posts, and political ascendancy capped imperial policy. This vision of empire was essentially flawed, for it divorced the exercise of power from social need, and left the reality of imperial rule enmeshed in strands of self-interest and the seduction of continental dominion. The imprint of Sandeman's peace in Baluchistan was stained by the cultural stagnation of tribal society and the politics of dependence enforced by imperial ideology; it was brittle and negative, captive to the past. As one observer described in 1905:

"In the course of more than a quarter of a century this primitive condition, [of Baluchistan] though modified, has not disappeared, and barbarian prejudice and pugnacity are still factors which have to be constantly reckoned with".¹²

Sandeman's Baluchistan, upheld as a memorial to the imperial passion for substituting order and progress in place of anarchy and turbulence, commemorated an idealized view of the past. In reality, tribesmen were trapped in a desertscape of scarcity and struggle, poverty and deprivation; the options were few, and the canvas of tribal life offered a narrow forum to resolve old contradictions and unlock a new future.

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