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# Investment and Translocality

## Recontextualizing the Baloch in Islamic and Global History

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# Investment and Translocality

## Recontextualizing the Baloch in Islamic and Global History

Brian Spooner<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The Baloch are one of the best documented ethnic communities in the modern Islamic world. But the information comes from non-Baloch, who saw them as a tribal population, with their own history and culture, separate from the people around them. This conventional approach masks the continuities in their history, from their raiding of urban populations over a thousand years ago to their current national opposition movements in Iran and Pakistan and their recent association with international terrorism. But if studied in a larger context, both historical and geographical, the available information illustrates the continuities, through qualitative changes, from the earliest available sources down to the present. Enlarging the context in this way has an additional advantage: it enhances our understanding of other world-historical processes that are currently playing out under globalization.

An important variable in this history is locality, the cultural evaluation of location, and translocality, the way locality changes as the social context becomes more complex—variables that have received little attention from either historians or ethnographers. Locality is determined mainly by investment and the social interests resulting from investment. Where there was sufficient soil and water to support investment in irrigation engineering and agricultural development, small communities settled and grew into cities. As the cities grew, they developed trade networks, which further increased their investment potential. The Baloch, like other ‘tribal’ peoples in the arid zone of the northern hemisphere, formed from people who did not find a place in this urban social dynamic. They are people without investment, who remained historically independent of the cities, but were always there to replenish the cities demographically in times of economic growth, and to take in their economic refugees in times of decline. This history of demographic interdependence, between the cities which could increase their productivity by means of investment and the tribal people who could not, generated a culturally distinctive sense of locality throughout the arid zone, which was different from the temperate and subtropical zones to the north and south.

More recently, as translocality has accelerated with the increasing social complexity of globalization, the people without investment have been forced into political and economic dependence on the cities, but the new city-based nation-state governments responsible for them have so far largely continued to leave them without investment. In the new political framework of the information age the tribes rebel. Similar developments are evident among tribal populations in other parts of the modern Islamic world, and make interesting comparison with similar populations elsewhere.

# 1. Recontextualizing the Baloch

The Baloch, who form the majority population in southwest Afghanistan, southeast Iran and the west of Pakistan, may be the best documented tribal population in the Islamic world. But our knowledge of them comes from several different types of research, carried out at different times over the past century and a half. Each comes with its own assumptions and presents the Baloch in a particular way, with little or no reference to other sources, or to a larger historical context that would accommodate all the available information. In order to make the best use of all the available sources, it is necessary to consider them more holistically and historically as part of a geographically larger social process, rather than simply an isolated 'tribal' population. We are inhibited in this effort by the peculiar history of Baloch studies, and the fact that all our information is from non-Baloch sources. Each source has been culturally flavored by the particular Western academic context in which it was produced. Although the data have been strung together in a comprehensive encyclopedia article (Spooner 1988), there has been no attempt to integrate it into a larger picture either of Islamic civilization or of modern society. Before we can do this, however, two theoretical issues must be addressed: the problem of change, and the use of the term 'tribe.'

Change has always been inherent in all human situations. But in most cases until recently it has not been fast enough to be appreciable in the course of a field research project. Where historians have mainly looked for political or other narratives in literate societies, or sometimes for memory of the past in non-literate societies, anthropologists have looked for the functional interdependence of various social institutions among the non-literate. Neither has been sensitive to the underlying dynamics of longer-term qualitative socio-cultural change. Even political scientists who study the contemporary Baloch in terms of modern Pakistani politics do not ask how or why Baloch activities have changed since their Pakistani province was first formed in 1948<sup>2</sup>. In fact, change has received relatively little theoretical or methodological attention in social science in general. As an ethnographer of the Baloch in the 1960s, I confess that, although I knew the Baloch had not always been the same and that some of them were currently attempting to change their situation, I focused only on the day-to-day life in which I was participating among them. Even though this was the end of the colonial period, I had not been trained to expect change or to seek to explain it. I was there to collect data that would contribute to the major anthropological discussions of the time, which concerned the social and economic organization of small pre-industrial communities and their ecological viability, not their past (which was generally assumed to be unknowable) or their political future. Furthermore, no social scientist at that time (and few since then) focused on the explanation of how people arrived at the condition in which they were observed, or what sort of trajectory of change they were on and where they were heading. We were working in the theoretical age of structural-functionalism. We wanted to understand how the system worked, not how it was changing.

Change had begun to appear in the curriculum in the 1950s, when the rate of change in the world at large began to accelerate, as the comparative study of a particular community at two different times, or later as the investigation of a 'prime-mover' such as population growth. But it did

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<sup>2</sup> See Boedeker 2012 for an anthropological discussion of the change.

not appear in research design until much later, and has still not become a major focus. Even now, when the rate of social change everywhere, especially in the post-colonial world, has increased to the point where it cannot be ignored, social science has not worked out how to deal with it methodologically, except perhaps in quantitative, statistical terms, which while they provide handy analytical descriptions, do not explain. This paper selects from all the available data with the purpose of showing inter-related processes and themes over time, continuities from the earliest data down to the present, rather than a succession of discrete situations. The basic assumption is that culture grows from experience, and in order to understand the cultural factors in day-to-day life we need to investigate the historical experience that conditioned it.

The term 'tribe' has a long history, starting as a section of the population of ancient Rome. We adopted the term in the 17<sup>th</sup> century for all small-scale, non-literate communities outside the world's historical civilizations, communities organized around the group experience of kinship and descent, in (for example) Siberia, Sub-Saharan Africa or the pre-Columbian Americas. Then we easily extended the term to non-literate peoples like the Baloch who, although their lives were organized in similar terms of kinship and descent, were encapsulated within a literate civilization, such as Islam, because we studied them in the same way, as isolates. We were interested in them not because they were part of Islamic civilization, but as examples of small-scale, non-literate society. But as a translation of (Ar.-Pers.) *`ashira*, *qabila*, *tā'ifa*, or (Pers.-Turk.) *il* in the Islamic world, 'tribe' is not the same social formation as the other non-literate peoples we call tribes outside the world's historical civilizations, who (unlike the Baloch) before the colonial period had no dealings with markets or administrations based on literacy, that maintain a written record of the past, providing a control for living memory and extending the cultural sense of time. That extension of the same analytical term for non-literate communities into the Islamic situation, where people who do not read or write are nevertheless aware of the larger society which is governed by literacy, has misled us into ignoring the larger social history of the Baloch. The Baloch may have written no history of their own (at least until the 1950s), but they know they have a place in other people's history, if only because of their awareness of Islam. They are not the same category of social formation as those who were recently given a place in the literature as "The People without History" (Wolf 1982). Most research on the Baloch has ignored this, and focused on nomadism, pastoralism and tribalism alone, because of the academic interests and assumptions of the investigators.

The Baloch are known outside their own territory from four major sets of external sources: early Arabic and Persian sources from over a thousand years ago; the Imperial Gazetteers of British India, which are based on data collected by missionaries and administrators in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup>; anthropological studies based on ethnographic research that was carried out between 1958 and 1978, and investigative journalism of the past three decades or so (such as Harrison 1981 and Wirsing 2008). Baloch studies began in the 1850s, following the extension of British Indian administration northwestwards through Sindh and Punjab to secure the only vulnerable land frontier of the Subcontinent by including areas inhabited by Baloch and Pashtuns. Geographical, linguistic and ethnographic studies that served British administrative interests were carried out in the following decades mainly under British government auspices, but also to some extent by missionaries, and brought together in 1908 in the publication of the eight-

volume Baluchistan District Gazetteer Series<sup>3</sup>. The study of the Balochi language began to be included in Iranistics in the 1930s (cf. Morgenstierne 1932, 1948). In the 1950s anthropologists were attracted to the area. First Pehrson (1966), then Nina and Warren Swidler (1973 and 1968), followed by several others (listed in Spooner 1985 and 1998), carried out ethnographic research in Baloch communities in Iran and Pakistan in the 1960s and early 1970s. These writers were pursuing questions of social organization, economy and ecology that had been posed by Fredrik Barth (1961), and were generally ahistorical. Starting at about the same time textual scholars began to pay attention to earlier information on the Baloch from pre-Islamic Persian sources and from the Arab geographers of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. All this information has been analytically reviewed (Bosworth 1976), and presents a very different picture of the Baloch from the Gazetteers and ethnographies. Finally, starting in the 1980s, and especially since 2001, a new genre has emerged, of journalistic political science, concerned with Pakistani national development, relations with Afghanistan, and terrorism (cf. e.g. Kaplan 2009).

Meanwhile, studies of the Baloch by Baloch authors began to appear in Pakistan, in Balochi, Urdu and English in the 1950s. The Balochi Academy was established in Quetta by the Federal Government of Pakistan in 1961, and the Balochistan Study Centre was formed in the University of Balochistan in Quetta in 1997. An increasing number of books have been published about the Baloch by Baloch authors in recent decades (of which the most notable is Baloch, 1987), which are mainly vehicles for modern nationalist ambitions<sup>4</sup>. Still relatively little attention has been given to this field beyond the Baloch themselves and the small number of European and American scholars who have studied them. The furthest they have moved towards international recognition has been in the international meetings organized by the Newsletter of Baluchistan Studies (IsMEO, Rome), and the History of Baluch Studies meetings that have been organized at Uppsala University by Dr. Carina Jahani (see especially Jahani and Korn 2003, and Jahani, Korn and Titus 2008). Perhaps the recent UNESCO-sponsored Workshop on Baluch Identity and Culture (Brock University, Sept. 8-9, 2012) presages an upswing in international attention to the Baloch. But the focus is still on the cultural interest of the Baloch and what they can tell us about human cultural diversity, rather than the part they have played in the history of the region and in world history in general.

The early Arabic and Persian writers see the Baloch very differently from the later sources, from the perspective of what Hodgson (1974, Vol. 1, pp. 107-109) called an agrarianate citted civilization: as people who challenged the economic and political order of the city, as outlaws to be controlled or eliminated<sup>5</sup>. The Gazetteers, on the other hand, were compiled a century ago in order to facilitate efficient colonial administration. Half a century later, in the 1950s, the anthropologists were seeking answers to contemporary anthropological questions about surviving pre-industrial economies and their ecological viability. Finally, the journalists studying them more recently have

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<sup>3</sup> 'Baluch' is a transliteration from Persian [*fārsī*]; 'Baloch' is the transliteration from Balochi and Urdu. Hence 'Baluch' was the standard English spelling through the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the 20<sup>th</sup>, but 'Baloch' has now become more common outside Iran.

<sup>4</sup> The folkloristic publications of Dr. Sabir Badalkhan are an exception.

<sup>5</sup> In Hodgson's words: "Even the pastoralists, including the desert nomads, who depended on the agriculturists for much of their food and goods, were part of the same social complex. Accordingly, the type of social order which was introduced into the agricultural regions (and the areas dependent on them) with the rise of cities may be called agrarian-based or (to be more comprehensive) agrarianate citted society. (I say 'citted', not 'urban', because the society included the peasants, who were not urban though their life reflected the presence of cities.)"

been concerned with Pakistan's current problems of national integration and international relations. In each set of sources each author type-casts the Baloch according to his/her particular research interests. None of them appears to have studied the other sets of publications. Few recent commentators have read even selectively from all four sets. Each set, therefore, presents a synchronic view of Baloch culture and society, and fails to see them in historical perspective. Since the Baloch left no contemporary record of their own before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, there is no reliable guide for understanding all four sets in relation to each other. Since literacy and the literate record were organized by the urban elites, we know the Baloch historically only from the work of urban historians who were ideologically opposed to them. But since the sources cover a period of fifteen hundred years, they may be used for a historical reconstruction that will allow us to see the Baloch today in terms of a historical trajectory. Here, therefore, we attempt to develop this trajectory by setting out what seems to be the more significant data from each source. This is a historical summary only. More detail is available in Bosworth 1976 and Spooner 1988.

The people who originally brought the Balochi language to the area that after 1839 became known as Balochistan (or Baluchistan) first in British India (now Pakistan) west of the Indus valley and later in southeastern Iran, also brought with them the oral tradition of Balochi epic poetry (cf. Dames 1904, Elfenbein 2008). They appear to have arrived as one or more of a series of waves of migrants that entered the area from the northwest between roughly 1000 and 1600 CE. This immediately raises questions: what was causing them to move? Where were they coming from, and why were people moving into this area in particular? Were they displacing others or taking them over? Did their arrival change the geo-political or geo-economic relationship of this area with surrounding areas? Since it is a large area, some 500,000 square kilometers, bordering on the Persian Gulf which has been a major seaway between Mesopotamia and India since the earliest times, the questions carry some larger historical significance.

The earliest (pre-Islamic) references to the Baloch pair them with the Kuch (from Kufich or Qufs, 'mountain people'). These sources were used in the *Shahnama*, the classical Persian epic, which was composed in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. Several 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic geographical writers mention them in the Kerman area south of the central desert of the Iranian Plateau. Linguistic evidence has been used to suggest that they had come from the northern side of the Iranian Plateau, and their language has been classified as Northwest Iranian (a category that includes Kurdish). But no one has explained why they moved south, or why they later moved east.

In most of these sources the Baloch are mentioned as fighters and outlaws, more than as pastoralists, and they appear never to be identified with any particular location or territory. For example:

"They appear above all as a bellicose and rapacious race of bandits, and this not only in the historical and geographical sources, but also in the *Shah-nama* of Firdausi, where the Kuch u Baluch are mentioned more than once for their hardihood and prowess in battle, e.g. as part of Kai Khusrau's forces, and for their skill in fighting with the dagger" (Bosworth 1976: 12).

Again, Maqdisi (in the *Ahsan at-taqāsim fi ma'rifat al-aqālim*, in ca. 375/985) has a classic description of the barbarism of the Kufichis and Baluch, who in his time were terrorizing the caravan routes across the great central deserts of the Lut and the Kavir. Ibn Hauqal's information of a decade or two earlier that the Baluch were a pacific, pastoralist people who helped travelers rather than preyed upon them does not accord with that of Maqdisi. The latter states, in his section on the Great Desert, which he himself had crossed:

“The whole of it [sc. the Great Desert] is a fearful place, because of a people called the Qufs, who inhabit some mountains in Kirman which adjoin the region of Jiruft. From these mountains, they sweep down to the Desert just like locusts. They are a race with no propensity whatsoever towards goodness; they have savage faces, stony hearts, fierceness and hardness. They never spare anyone, and are not satisfied with just taking money. Nor do they put to death with their weapons anyone they get hold of; on the contrary, they pound their heads with a stone, just as one kills snakes; you see them hold a man's head down on a flat stone and pound it with a stone until it is split open. I asked them why they did this, and they replied, 'In this way, we don't damage our sword blades!' Only rarely does anyone manage to escape from them. They possess places of concealment and impregnable mountains, and whenever they are cornered in one administrative region, they merely flee to another. They fight with [bows and] arrows and carry swords. The Balus used to be even worse than the Qufs, until 'Adud ad-Daula destroyed them, and wrought damage amongst the Qufs also. He carried off as hostages 80 of their youths, and up to this present time, they are kept in imprisonment at Shiraz; every so often these are sent back home, and another 80 taken in their place. The regions of Dailam adjoining the Great Desert are safe from them, but the fringes of Khurasan are liable to their depredations. However, provided that a caravan has an armed escort from the ruler of Fars, they do not molest it. Amongst the whole of God's creation, they have the most tenacious qualities of endurance of hunger and thirst. Their staple food is only a modicum, such as nuts from the lotus tree, from which they derive nourishment. They profess Islam, but are more savage against the Muslims than the Byzantines or Turks. When they take a man captive, they make him run with them 20 farsakhs or so, with bare feet and no food. They have no inclination for riding horses, and do not employ mounts at all; they go on foot essentially, except that sometimes they ride on swift camels” (Bosworth 1976: 14).

The fact that ibn Hauqal's account differs from Maqdisi's I would understand not as invalidating the former, but as validating the hypothesis that they were ready to take advantage of whatever opportunities they saw and their activities varied.

We know very little about the history of Balochistan before their arrival. What information does exist suggests that before the 17<sup>th</sup> century it figured very differently in the geo-politics of the region. During the Achaemenian Empire (650-330 BCE), and later when Alexander the Great moved his army from India through Makran in 324 BCE on the way back to Mesopotamia, the area was an administrative province known as Gedrosia (though this name is not known from Achaemenian sources), which suggests that it was at least primarily agricultural (since there is no pre-modern

historical example of nomads under an imperial administration). Arrian's account of the passage of Alexander's army suggests that the region was not prosperous, but the fact that it is named as a province under Achaemenian rule implies that its administration had been worthwhile, and it is noteworthy that both Iranian and Pakistani Balochistan today contain many small agricultural settlements which have names with apparently pre-Baloch etymologies, such as Bampur, Dezak, and Qasr-e Qand in Iran and Khārān, Panjgur and Torbat in Pakistan, and Qal`a-i Fatḥ in Afghanistan (cf. Spooner 1988). But when the Arabs arrived in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, they (like Alexander) found it generally unattractive and apparently without any local ruler, though Sasanian sources (224-651 CE) name four administrative entities within it, each with "kings" (cf. Bosworth 1968: 1-25).

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Marco Polo mentions Kesmacoran (i.e. Kech-Makran), suggesting that the agricultural settlements along the Kech river (now in the Makran district of the Pakistan province) were the most flourishing part of the area. Food is mentioned as abundant and good, with the full range of staples (rice, wheat, meat and milk). Again, Kech had its own king [*malek*], and the people, who included non-Muslims, apparently traded both overland and by sea in all directions, and spoke a language Polo did not recognize. He also makes it appear that the area is more closely connected to India than to the political centers on the Iranian Plateau to the north or northwest.

It is not surprising then that when the Baloch arrived in their current location they did not name it<sup>6</sup>. It would appear that when the area ceased to be administered from one of the major imperial centers to the northwest, the north or the east (e.g. Kerman, Qandahar, Delhi), there was nothing to give it a unitary identity, and it became a refuge area for people who lost their place under those cited administrations. People who could not find a place in those city-centered economies did not pursue tribally organized nomadic pastoral life by preference, but by default. So long as they could not find a place in the city-centered investment<sup>7</sup> economies, they went off with their animals and took advantage of whatever resources became available to them, including raiding the cities, when feasible. Nomads in general historical terms have been people who were unable to build an economic base to support themselves in larger clustered numbers that would enable them to marshal the labor necessary for investment and engineering that would increase agricultural productivity and generate inter-urban trade. Since their society did not become large enough to develop urban institutions, it operated on the basis of their own cultural version of the relationships that come with the life-cycle processes of reproduction and socialization, which we recognize as the tribal criteria of kinship and descent. They move from one resource to another, taking with them the only assets that are mobile, their flocks. They are not so much pastoral nomads as multiple-resource freebooters with sheep and goats and no irrigable land (cf. Salzman 1972). When agricultural centers were available, they took them over. But control of land changed their social organization. Pastoralism depends on cooperation and collective responsibility; agriculture depends on management and labor. Management becomes land-ownership and class differentiation.

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<sup>6</sup> The territory as a whole (in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, and even beyond) has been called Baluchistan only by modern nationalists, beginning some fifty years ago. The part within India was named by the British in the 1840s. The part in Iran was named as part of the new province of Sistan and Baluchistan only in 1928 (see below). The name is not used in Afghanistan and there is no single Afghan province with a majority Baloch population.

<sup>7</sup> "Investment" is used in this paper in the sense of socially organized economic investment, designed to increase the productivity of resources, as distinct from the non-economic investment—in the knowledge of their environment—made by non-food-producing communities, enabling them make better use of resources.

So in Balochistan some families were able to take over the existing agricultural centers (irrigated from springs, without the need for investment in irrigation engineering), and establish their own independent political centers. The Baluchistan described by the British in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and by anthropologists in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> was one in which all the locations with some ten hectares or more of cultivable soil and surface water that could be used for irrigation had been taken over by one or another leading tribal family (khans) who managed the land with people who had been reduced to the status of peasants, helots or serfs (their status varied from place to place)<sup>8</sup>, while the remaining parts where there was insufficient surface water to irrigate crops were roamed by nomadic groups of varying sizes. Since the nomadic groups were small they looked for opportunities to serve the land-owning families, and cultivated various types of relationships with them.

This was a small-scale variant of the pattern suggested by ibn Khaldun in the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a model for the political history of most of the Islamic world up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ibn Khaldun saw ruling groups rising and falling

“according to the strength and weakness of their internal coherence, their ‘group feeling’ (*‘asabiya*); their progress from simplicity through power and wealth as necessary for civilization (*‘omran*) to wasteful luxury under the preeminent force of economic factors; and their inevitable replacement in endless cycles—a combination of psychological and material determinants of human society” (Rosenthal 1997; cf. Rosenthal 1967)

with the result that most power centers in Islamic civilization, both large (such as the Persianate empires of the Saljuqs, Timurids, Ottomans) and small (such as agricultural centers in Makran) have been headed by families with tribal origins, and have maintained their position on average only some three generations, before personal power and land ownership disturbed their *esprit de corps* [*‘asabiya*]; and they were supplanted by the next tribal group with stronger *‘asabiya*.

We can now expand ibn Khaldun’s model: the advantage of the more complex urban society is that although the morale of the ruling family decays (loses its *‘asabiya*) its investment potential still facilitates accelerated growth, which increases social complexity, whereas the population outside the cities is tribal, not because they have the *‘asabiya* of ‘noble savages’, but because they do not have the resources or the ability to increase productivity and develop the social complexity of cities. Before the industrial age, identity in complex societies was always in land. The overall geographical mobility of most of the world’s population has been restricted since the beginning of agriculture because the primary resource was agricultural land. When the opportunity of migration to the Americas opened up in the early modern period, the attraction was not only religious freedom, it was new land. When industrialization began to release people from land in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mobility began to increase, and has continued to increase as attachment to agricultural land has diminished. The groups we call tribal are groups that have no significant fixed assets such as land, but only mobile assets, or assets without investment that restricts mobility. Their identity is in their interdependence with each other, which develops in the course of the life cycle, forming a society based on kinship

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<sup>8</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the East African slave trade provided an additional source of agricultural labor, and “gulams” (slaves) of African origin continue to be a significant proportion of the population of Makran.

and descent—the social formation we call tribal. Although they develop a counter-culture outside the cities, they also emulate the activities of the cities wherever the opportunity arises. The tribal leaders who established themselves over the years in the various agricultural centers of Balochistan were following the model of tribal leaders who periodically took over the big cities of Islamic civilization. Since none of the larger cities to the immediate northwest (e.g. Kerman), north (e.g. Qandahar) or east (e.g. Lahore or Delhi) saw any advantage in investing in Balochistan and controlling it, it became identified with the Baloch from the outside, and was eventually formalized with that identity in the post-colonial era of nation-states. But because of its internal inability to generate investment, it has failed to achieve its own independent status as a nation-state.

Although the people who brought the Balochi language to Balochistan succeeded in ‘Balochizing’ this vast area, they did not draw all its inhabitants into a homogeneous Baloch identity. All Muslims who settled there came to identify as Baloch (i.e. all except some small groups of Hindu or Sikh traders), but they also claim diverse origins—as diverse as Arab, Indian, Iranian and Pashtun. Some identify with their local village and may be descended from the earlier inhabitants. All talk of the (relatively) few remaining nomads, who live away from the agricultural settlements, mainly in mountainous areas, as *baloch*, i.e. the real Baloch (i.e. descendants of the cultural and linguistic ancestors). Although all use Balochi as the lingua franca, many speak other languages among themselves. A form of Persian is spoken around Kalat, and in the Saravan district of western Baluchistan. A form of Sindhi (known as Jadgāli<sup>9</sup>) is the language of Dashtiāri (the extended coastal plain on the Iranian side of the modern border with Pakistan, and there are several groups of Brahui<sup>10</sup> speakers in the area known as Saravan south of Kalat, and also scattered along the Afghan border. What makes an inhabitant of Balochistan a Baloch is Islam, the use of the Balochi language for public purposes, and a political relationship with one of the leading families in the agricultural settlements (cf. Barth 1964).

There are also a significant number of Baloch outside Balochistan, who migrated from Balochistan in pursuit of opportunity before or during the colonial period, without retaining any attachment to the area or to other Baloch. Some moved north into the Turkic areas that became northern Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, where living among Turkmen communities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they took up carpet-weaving, developing a new genre, which has attracted the attention of collectors only in recent decades (cf. Spooner 1986). In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries many became involved with, and exploited the presence of, the Portuguese, and later the Dutch and the British in the Persian Gulf. Some were taken on as mercenaries by the Alam family in the Qaenat<sup>11</sup>. Some migrated to Oman and other parts of the Arab side of the Persian Gulf. In Oman the Sultan of Muscat recruited them to serve as a militia for his maritime empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many settled in Zanzibar and East Africa (Nicolini 2006 and 2007). Baloch traders were operating in western Congo in

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<sup>9</sup> In view of the phonemic importance of long vs. short /a/ in Persian and Balochi, I have added makrons where appropriate, except in place names which occur without them in the literature (e.g. Tehran).

<sup>10</sup> Brahui is a Dravidian language. Its existence in Baluchistan has been discussed by Elfenbein (1989) and Morgenstierne (1932).

<sup>11</sup> The Alams of the Qā'enāt in eastern Iran (in exile since 1979) are descended from one of the generals of Nader Shah (reg. 1736-1747), whose rivalry with fellow general, Ahmad Abdali, who became Ahmad Shah Durrani, the first Shah of Afghanistan, was the major factor defining the modern border between Iran and Afghanistan.

1958 (Kopytoff 1968). Many more moved into Punjab and Sindh. But their territorial identity did not spread with them. Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many have found employment in merchant shipping and other opportunities to move further afield into Europe and America.

When European ships began to arrive in the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they found the area occupied by Baloch, with little if any control from the Persian capital in Esfahan or the provincial center in Kerman. Moreover they found the Baloch to be dangerous, but also ready to be taken on as mercenaries. It was probably the arrival of the Europeans that awakened Safavid (Persian) interest in the coastal area, and the resulting activity of the Safavids that drew the attention of the Mughals in India. The city of Qandahar (in what was later to become southern Afghanistan), which had been the closest city to the area and the most influential, actually changed hands more than once between the Safavid and Mughal Empires during this period. But the interests of both began to wane later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1666 Ahmad Khan, a Baloch (from a Brahui-speaking family) managed to supplant the Hindu ruler of Kalat, and establish an independent Baloch political identity. Kalat was the largest agricultural center on the eastern side of the area, and it then became the major Baloch political center, a proto-city in the Islamic world, that would later become recognized as the political center of the Princely State of Baluchistan. But Ahmad Khan did not call it Baluchistan (or Balochistan). Throughout its history the political primacy of this center was under varying degrees of threat not only from Iran, India and (after 1747) Afghanistan, but also from tribal leaders in the lesser agricultural centers of the area (Kharan and Torbat). It maintained the same line of succession down to its inclusion into Pakistan in 1948. But its strongest period was the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, under Nasir Khan, and its identity might not have survived through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had the British not decided to use it for indirect rule.

It is interesting that the history of Balochistan down to this point is roughly parallel to the history of Afghanistan, though on a somewhat reduced scale. The 'Afghanization' of Afghanistan began only in 1747, when another Ahmad Khan, Ahmad Abdali (mentioned above in footnote 3) established a major empire from Qandahar in the area that had been known historically as Khorasan. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Russian and British encroachment reduced the territory of the Afghan empire to the present borders of Afghanistan, it was cut off from the inter-city trade of the Central Asian Silk Route and began to be named by outsiders (initially the British) as the separate territory of Afghanistan, and was treated by them in a way similar to the 'Princely States' that were directly subordinated to the British Government in Calcutta. Like Balochistan, its survival into the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the result of British support, in this case because the British wanted to maintain a buffer between themselves and the Russian Empire.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the beginning of the period for which information is more abundant, although there was some armed resistance to British control, Balochistan was generally peaceful, with a mixed agricultural-pastoral economy. British influence had also spread westwards from India up into the Persian Gulf, first with the laying of the telegraph line in the 1860s, and later in order to counteract German activity at the time of the First World War. The extension of British interests into Balochistan from the east was countered by the extension of Persian interests southeast from Kerman in the north west under Muhammad Shah Qajar in the 1840s. The border between India and Iran was eventually formalized in 1871, dividing Baluchistan between India and Iran, and later (in 1893) cutting off the northeastern fringe as part of Afghanistan. Although the criteria for this division

were somewhat unclear (cf. Goldschmid 1876), the line appears to have been drawn along the furthest extent of the historical influence of the Khan of Kalat.

In the following decades, on the western side of the border, as Persian attention faded again, local landowning families began to re-exert their independence. In 1907 Bahram Khan Baranzai in Dezak (in Saravan district on the Iranian side of the border) began a movement to establish a state parallel to Kalat. He was the leader of a Pashtun Barakzai group, related to the Afghan dynastic line that had migrated through Sistan into Western Baluchistan from Afghanistan in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, probably escaping from the internecine fighting in the Afghan ruling clans in Herat at the time of the change of dynasty in the early 1820s. They had assimilated to Baloch identity, and spoke only Balochi and Persian, but remembered their Afghan heritage. When Bahram died without male offspring in 1921, his nephew, Dost Muhammad Barakzai (namesake of the Afghan Shah of 1826 to 1839 and 1845 to 1863), took his place. After the change of dynasty in Tehran in 1925 the new shah of Iran, Reza Shah Pahlavi, who had a more modern (i.e. national and territorial) orientation towards Iran than his Qajar predecessors (who had continued to think in the traditional terms of empire rather than modern terms of nationalism), turned his attention to the tribal populations around the borders. As the furthest from Tehran, Baluchistan was the last on his list. When his army finally arrived there in 1928, Dost Muhammad Khan's forces dispersed and he was captured. Western (Iranian) Baluchistan was separated from Kerman, and became the southern part of Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchistan, centered on Zahedan. The Barakzai family that had led the resistance took refuge on the British side of the border for a decade before arranging a peaceful return. From then until the British withdrawal from India in 1947, Baluchistan remained calm under the Persian and British Indian administrations. On the British side the northern strip along the border with Afghanistan was administered directly from Calcutta (later New Delhi) as British Baluchistan, with a major administrative center in Quetta, while the core areas of Baloch khans in Kalat, Kharan, and Makran were ruled indirectly as a Princely State with Kalat as the main center. But the price of this calm was the subsidies that the British were paying down to their departure to several of the Khans not only on the Indian side of the border but also from time to time on the Iranian side. Baluchistan was still peripheral territory with sparse population and no investment (even in the agricultural centers), but the Baloch were becoming increasingly aware of opportunities in the cities beyond their territory.

The imposition of nation-state frameworks on the Baloch, starting in Iran in 1928, changed not only the formalities of administrative relationships with two modernizing countries, Iran and later Pakistan, but also the nature of the relationship between the Baloch and other countries in the surrounding region, especially Afghanistan, Oman and the Emirates of the Persian Gulf. On the Pakistani side, when the British withdrew in 1947, the Khan of Kalat, supported by the other Khans in Kharan and Makran assumed, like the government in Afghanistan, that everything would return to the way it was before the British arrived: Baluchistan would be an independent state. But only seven months later, in March 1948, the Khan of Kalat was persuaded to sign Baluchistan over to Pakistan, and both the Princely State and British Baluchistan together became the new Pakistani Province of Balochistan with Quetta as its administrative center, circumscribed by the borders drawn by the

British<sup>12</sup>. In Afghanistan the Baloch are a small ethnic minority in the southeastern provinces of Nimruz, Helmand, and Qandahar, but they did not receive any formal recognition as an ethnic or linguistic community until after the revolution of 1978.

In all three countries the Baloch now found their status changed. They were no longer the excluded (but independent) people in a marginalized territory. They were now administratively integrated into a nation-state that they did not choose, and formally subordinated to a central urban authority in each country, with minimal representation at the center, and still experiencing the mediaeval discrimination of the cities against the people who were not part of the agricultural hinterland that benefitted from investment. Their investment potential had not changed. It was not long before opposition and hostility became evident on both sides of the border. The Afghan response to British withdrawal had been to assume that borders drawn by the British (in particular the Durand Line drawn in 1893 that divided Pashtun territory between Afghanistan and India) lost their validity and most of what had become West Pakistan would return to Afghan rule. They therefore promoted the idea of a Pashtunistan to include not only all the Pashtun lands of southern Afghanistan, but also Pakistan's North West Frontier Province and Balochistan. (The latter had been under Afghan rule during the first decade of Ahmad Shah Durrani's rule, and continued to maintain a close relationship with Afghanistan until the arrival of the British.) It is not clear to what extent this Afghan action may have strengthened any Baloch resolve to remain independent of Pakistan.

In Iran the leading members of the Sardārzai tribe in Bahu Kalāt (the main settlement in the Dashtiāri plain) were involved with independence movements that had arisen among Baloch on the other side of the Persian Gulf, supported by Iraq, against the government in Tehran. In 1973 a cache of bombs was found in the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad (which became the capital of Pakistan in 1970), which may have been destined for delivery to the Baloch in Iran (because of Iraq's border disputes with Iran), but was blamed on the Marri tribe in Pakistan. After Iran's revolution in 1979, several Baloch opinion leaders in Iran took refuge again across the border, this time in Karachi, and began to seek American assistance against the new Islamic Republic. They claimed to have been funded by the CIA at an earlier time to organize raids across Afghanistan into the Soviet Union. Another group, from the Rigi tribe in the Sarhadd (northern Iranian Balochistan), launched a new resistance movement called Jundullah in the early 2000s (designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 2010 by the U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism).

In Pakistan open rebellion began before the end of the 1950s, but was contained until the discovery of the arms shipment in 1973, after which a significant number of Marri migrated across the (poorly marked) border into Afghanistan and launched the Baloch People's Liberation Front, which later became the Balochistan Liberation Army. The Marri returned to Pakistan during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and the political situation between them (and an increasing number of other Baloch) and the Federal Government in Islamabad has been deteriorating ever since, to the point where it is now critical.

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<sup>12</sup> It was collapsed into the 'one unit' of West Pakistan in 1954, and reconstituted as a separate province in 1971.

This synopsis summarizes some fifteen hundred years of history in a brief narrative, distinct from the separate unlinked episodes that were previously available. It achieves this by representing the Baloch as part of the history of the larger region in which they had no option but to play the part of the people excluded from the investment dynamic of the citted agrarianate civilization, reduced to making the most of unimproved resources in marginalized territory. The Baloch had been adapting historically, not to their natural environment, but to their socio-economic and political marginalization from the investment centers of the region. In order to understand this long historical process of adaptation we need to explore not how a community chooses and exploits resources, its human ecology, but how geographical space becomes defined within a civilization, how the cultural sense of locality was acquired, and how it changed as the society became more complex.

## 2. Investment and Translocality

The concept of translocality<sup>13</sup> usefully alerts us to the significance of changing orientations towards location, resulting from population growth, increasing social complexity and the expansion of arenas of social interaction that comes with globalization. Translocality grows from locality. Locality is location in socio-cultural context, and translocality is the changing relationship between social life and geographical space, the cultural significance of the way geographical perceptions change according to social interests.

Cities are important in the geography of every civilization. But since the cultural core of the Islamic world occupies almost the entire Old-World northern arid zone, from the western coast of North Africa through the Middle East and Central Asia into China, the contrast between space containing cities and the agricultural hinterlands in which they have invested in irrigation engineering, on the one hand, and the space between them with no cities on the other, is greater than elsewhere and more directly and exclusively related to the development of social formations. For this reason the various cultural traditions of this arid zone, which are all closely related by their common Islamic history of the past millennium and a half, are characterized by a sharp division between the areas dominated by cities and the areas between them. Although colonial administrations began to change this sense of locality a century or so ago and post-colonial nation-state administrations and economic development are changing it more decisively now, the old sense of locality still shows through, because it is rooted in the local identities of people like the Baloch. It has an important social dimension that has not been recognised, and is a significant factor underlying the way the Baloch think about themselves, how they are assessed in the cities around them, their place in the modern world, and their current opposition to the governments of Iran and Pakistan.

This assessment raises some larger questions. Firstly, why did agrarianate citted society develop when it did in the Middle East, before other parts of the world that were better watered? Secondly, when the Arabo-Islamic empire took off in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, why did it expand east-west through the arid zone, when all earlier empires, however large, had spread in different patterns? Thirdly, how did the Islamic world from the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750) until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from northwest Africa through the Middle East and Central Asia into China, maintain its cultural unity as a civilization without political centralization over such a vast area before modern communications? And fourthly, how has the introduction of Western hegemony over the past century changed the way peoples like the Baloch inter-relate with the larger society, both within the Islamic world and beyond?

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<sup>13</sup> The term was coined (Appadurai 1995, 1996) to draw attention to the increasing significance of the way our sense of geography has been changing in the modern world.

## **1. Why did agrarianate citted society develop in the Middle East before other parts of the world that were better watered?**

A city begins as an agrarian settlement that has grown large enough to develop division of labor, investment activities and trade with other cities. Archaeological evidence suggests that cities began to appear in southern Mesopotamia in the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. Sedentarization had begun in the Fertile Crescent as a result of the opportunities offered by climate change following the end of the last glacial period. Sedentism increased birth rates, and before long the growing settled populations had to intensify their relationship with the land by cultivating crops in order to feed themselves (cf. Boserup 1964). As their population continued to grow, they moved from the hillsides of the Fertile Crescent down to the rivers in the arid Mesopotamian plains, so that they could further increase production by irrigation of rich alluvial soils. Cities developed in the increased clustering of population on the rivers. From then on into the first millennium BCE these cities in Mesopotamia were the primary world centers of growth in population, agricultural production and trade. It was here that the level of social complexity first advanced, increasing the potential for collective learning and innovation. Gradually, similar urban centers of investment in irrigated agriculture and trade developed where soil and water was available throughout the arid zone. This type of population growth and the clustering that would raise levels of social complexity did not begin in the temperate or subtropical zones until later.

Although other factors have played a role since then, this original social dynamic (settlement, increasing fertility rates, urbanization, investment, trade, collective learning, innovation) set the historical pattern that took off before long on all the other major arid-zone rivers: the Nile, Oxus, Indus, the Yellow River—a process that lasted down to the colonial period (when a new process that had evolved in temperate Europe, where resources were much more evenly distributed) expanded and took over, and continues to condition the relations between urban and non-urban populations like the Baloch in the modern world. It took off in the arid zone rather than the better watered temperate or tropical zones to the north and south because the emergence of the fertile crescent offered the original opportunity, the resulting population growth generated the need for food production, and the necessary soil and water was along the nearby rivers of the arid zone. The resulting clustering of population along the rivers generated the social process of collective learning, investment in the labor necessary for irrigation engineering, other technological innovation and inter-city trade. The domestication of crops and animals began as a response not only to population growth but to clustering in settlements. From then on, down to the colonial period, the population in the arid zone was divided between the investment centers of the citted society and the people who either lost their place in them or could not find a place. They did not themselves have the resources that would enable them to cluster in large enough communities to develop the necessary investment, and therefore did not experience the same rate of social change and the benefits of rising social complexity as the cities.

The people who did not find a place in the urban growth, and in the agricultural development it financed, continued to live in small mainly mobile groups organized in terms of the relationships that evolve informally in the process of socialization and are culturally formalized according to rules of kinship and descent, i.e. tribal societies. They formed counter-societies in the spaces between the cities, some of which were large, such as the areas now occupied by the Baloch, Kurds, Pashtuns and

others. As the carrying capacity of the urban economies fluctuated, some lost their place in the urban economy and joined the tribes, taking their animals (their mobile assets) with them, becoming pastoral nomads on the lookout for any opportunity, such as raiding caravans or cities. From then until the colonial period the history of the arid zone was the history of urban growth and decline (resulting from a variety of factors, including periodic drought and violent conflict) and the response of the sparse tribal populations without investment in the wilderness between them, with whom they continually exchanged population. We know from ethnographic studies (e.g. Barth 1961, Cohen 1965) that interchange of population between cities and tribes was common.

**2. When the Arabo-Islamic empire expanded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, why did it expand east-west through the arid zone, when all earlier empires, however large, had spread in different patterns, especially into better-watered areas?**

Although Hodgson recognized the special 'cited' quality of Islamic civilization and developed a rich analytical description of the distinctive social qualities of Islamic society in his monumental work, he did not attempt to explain why it expanded east-west, throughout this arid zone (which could not at the time support growth without investment in irrigation), creating a newly configured administrative entity, rather than (like earlier empires) spreading into and through its predecessors, especially Rome and Persia, which were contemporary rivals in religion as well as empire. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century once the Arab armies from the Arabian peninsula had broken the resistance of the Roman and Persian empires in Syria and Mesopotamia they pushed not north into the better watered regions of Anatolia or the Caucasus, not into India (until much later), or up the Nile into Ethiopia or Sudan, but east through desert, into Sindh and round the north of the Himalayas towards China, and west along the arid north coast of Africa, uniting for the first time under a single administration a vast area over three thousand kilometers in length, but relatively narrow in latitude.

The answer may lie in the particular stage of urban development and trade that had been achieved by the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The east-west trade routes, between the Atlantic and China and Japan, which had already become arterial by the beginning of our era, had never before been linked throughout politically or administratively. But now the urban entrepôts throughout this zone had grown to the point where they provided seductive stepping stones for the extension of an empire supported by trade interests. By connecting the arid-semiarid zone from the Atlantic to China, even at the slow pace of camel traffic (estimated to have averaged no more than 10-20 miles a day, cf. Knauer 1998), Islam created a uniquely new situation—a geographically homogeneous political unit in which economic growth and political stability depended on the economic trade-off between investment in local irrigation engineering and the profits from long-distance trade, each of which depended on urban growth and the trade and competition between the cities.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> It is interesting here to enlarge our comparative context even further and compare the expansion of Islam with the expansion of Christianity. Although Islamic civilization began with the Arab conquest in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, conquest did not bring immediate conversion to Islam (cf. Bulliet 1979). Conversion came gradually over the following four centuries. It was not politically or militarily enforced. It was a community process (very different from the Christian experience of conversion, which was individual by individual), and seems to have been related to the practicality of Islamic law in the expansion of trade between cities, since contract is a special concern of Islamic law. Later, starting towards the high mediaeval period, when Islam began to spread further, outside the arid zone, into the Indian subcontinent, on into Southeast Asia, and southwestwards into sub-Saharan Africa, it was once again following the trade, when trade began to spread in those directions. Islam spread between partners in trade, and flourished in trade centers. The spread of

In the three millennia of empire building before Islam each empire had been built out from the local power base of an aspiring leader. The objective had been economic growth by capture (a major force in history until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, since which time the expansion of trade has become a better recipe for growth). Succession on the death of the leader tended to be uncertain, and few dynasties and not many empires lasted more than ibn Khaldun's model of three generations. The expansion of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century was the first (and perhaps the only) historical example of religiously inspired expansion. The longevity of the Islamic empire was not dependent on the success or failure of any particular succession. It also benefitted from the earlier heritage of long-term political stability under the Roman Empire in the West and the interconnectedness of (what later came to be known as) the Silk Road to the east. Its future did not depend on any local political process, but on the sense of belonging to a vast community with common legal values, an *ecumene*. For this reason it became the longest lasting empire in world history, with the result that the social arrangements it supported became culturally validated to the point where they are now seriously resistant to change. But its survival is now at risk, because of new political rivalries resulting from the change in the sense of locality resulting from a new relationship with the temperate zone starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (under colonialism). The problem has intensified under globalization. In the *`asabiya*-based communities without investment, in the interstices between the cities, the long-term social inequalities between populations of different densities, that had been confirmed over the centuries, began to take on a new significance.

### **3. How did the Islamic world from the Umayyad Caliphate until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from northwest Africa through the Middle East and Central Asia into China, maintain its cultural unity as a civilization over such a vast area before modern communications without political centralization?**

This pattern of geographical expansion provided a relatively uniform land-use base for social relations throughout the core zone of the Islamic world, which was sustained by inter-city trade, and provided the sense of locality that underlay the culture of Islamic civilization, making the universality of the *shari`a* [Islamic law] more easily acceptable. It was a distinctively different sense of locality from that of the temperate and tropical zones to the north and south, which had very different social formations with different land-use histories and social formations, mostly understood in Christian or other cultural terms. All cultural traditions have peculiarities that start from historical accidents and become emblematic. But cultural process in general is embedded in social processes. The cultural unity of the Islamic world relative to the Christian or Buddhist worlds has generally been put down to the Islamic ideological emphasis on the *umma*, the unitary, undifferentiated community of believers, and the *hajj*, the religious duty to participate in the centripetal ritual of annual pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime. But the uniform social matrix throughout the relatively homogeneous

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Christianity, on the other hand, both before and after the historical spread of Islam, followed very different social processes, all of which had to do political power. It began with the Roman Empire, first in the army, then in the 4<sup>th</sup> century by the emperor's policy. From then through the mediaeval period down to the beginning of colonialism under the Spanish and Portuguese, the Pope legitimized all political authority in the Christian world, and from then until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the Christian world expanded, all political expansion by Christian powers actively encouraged the spread of Christianity.

ecology of the arid zone would have been an important contributing factor<sup>15</sup>. There were no similar factors in the Western, Christian, or Buddhist civilizations.

Given this cultural basis of locality, it is likely that translocality also would work differently in the Islamic arid zone from elsewhere. Although the concept has broadened our understanding of globalization, little attention has so far been given to cultural variation in the processes it helps us to analyze. Locality has rarely drawn the attention of ethnographers or been analyzed by social or cultural anthropologists. This is a gap in the ethnographic literature<sup>16</sup>. Before the Industrial Revolution people measured time in terms of space and space in terms of time. In the last 200 years we have learned to measure them separately and come to disregard the relationship between them. Not only the scientific discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the advancing technology of transportation, but the forces driving globalization, have changed the meaning of both. However, there are also other cultural factors from the past playing into the process of change.

Students of the history and sociology of Islamic civilization have long been aware that locality works differently in the Islamic world compared to Western and other orientations. But there has been no comprehensive analysis. Besides the linguistic classification of land types in Arabic and Persian (which are the koines of Islamic civilization), toponyms in the arid zone, from northwest Africa through the Middle East and Central Asia into China, generally have a different range of connotations from those of other parts of the world. For example, names like Hijaz and Tihama (the Red Sea coastal regions of Arabia and Yemen), or Khorasan (historically the great northeast frontier territory of the Iranian Plateau), or Iraq (in its mediaeval sense of both the Mesopotamian lowland and the uplands to the northeast, now in Iran) are large unbounded regions, defined in somewhat vague geographical terms, but closely associated with the names of the cities located within them. These terms would not be used to refer specifically to the territory between the cities (although they contain much of that territory), which would be something like Pers. *biyābān* [the equivalent of wilderness, but etymologically land without water], or perhaps Pers. *kavir*, Ar. *sabkha* [salt desert], or Pers. *lut* [gravel desert]. This is the locality dimension of the agrarianate citted society of the Islamic world. All such geographical terms have social connotations and imply either the presence or absence of cities<sup>17</sup>.

Locality is an important aspect of the unevenness between social arenas as they merge under globalization. Each community at the time of merging is at a different stage of translocality as well as a different level of social complexity. These unevennesses underlie most violent conflicts and other political problems in the modern world, both within the Islamic world and between Muslim communities and their neighbors. But the problems vary because of the historical difference in the conception of locality. Under the accelerating rates of modern change, geographical relationships begin to look very different. The merging of different experiences of locality into the process of translocality is part of the general merging of cultural traditions that we are experiencing in the

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<sup>15</sup> For example, the plant communities in the Hexi corridor of western China are almost identical to those of the western steppe over four thousand kilometers away in northeastern Iran.

<sup>16</sup> Evans-Pritchard 1940:94-138 is an exception, but even here it is time rather than locality that is the focus of attention.

<sup>17</sup> The only historian of Islamic civilization who has contributed significantly to our understanding of this dimension of Islamic cultural history is Annemarie Schimmel (2000). Although her interest focuses on the treatment of locality in poetry, she also draws attention to the importance of cities.

modern world. The imposition of nation-state borders, their initial consolidation, and now their incipient loss of validity in the face of intensifying flows, not just of people that disregard them, but of information, are simply the most tangible factors in this process. The development of new resources, such as oil and gas, and changing routes of transportation are others. Apart from the annual movement of large numbers of people from all corners of the Islamic world to Mecca and back once a year, which has increased significantly in recent decades, the patterns of movement between populations in different parts of the Islamic world resulting from unprecedented changes in the markets for labor and for services are a new development that introduces new forms of translocality.

While translocality changes the relationships, it takes longer for the identities to be reevaluated according to the new conditions. For example, the Baloch were never held in high regard in the cities. But they were relatively independent and they could be valuable as mercenaries, or they might be feared as raiders. They were free to threaten. More recently, although they have not benefited in terms of investment or any other advantage from their new formal relationship with the urban government of the nation-state into which they have now been included, they are still looked down on and have now lost their independence without gaining meaningful representation at the federal level. However, the relationship between the Baloch and the state is different in each of the countries we are considering. It was first defined in nation-state terms in Afghanistan under Abdu'l-Rahman between 1880 and 1901, next in Iran by Reza Shah following their defeat in 1928, and finally in Pakistan after the accession of Kalat in 1948. The relationship has gone through phases in each country and the heyday of the nation-state is now over: each government is having difficulty controlling its entire territory.

Not only in these three countries but throughout the northern arid zone, from present-day Morocco to China, the human response to geographical relationships has changed over time as the relative ability to invest in increased productivity has changed—which has occurred as a matter of course as population has increased, and society has become more complex and more closely inter-related with activities in the rest of the world. The historical experience generates relationships and cultural values that influence the way communities interact with each other for generations ahead. Now that under globalization the arid zone is becoming more closely inter-related with the rest of the world, its past is throwing a shadow not only over the regional present but into the global future. The relationship between cities and tribes in the arid zone has outgrown its regional context and mutated into a problematic relationship that demands international attention.

We will understand the Baloch situation better if we put it into a comparative context. Other similar tribal identities in the Islamic world include the Kurds, the Pashtuns and the Tuareg<sup>18</sup>. The Kurds in northern Iraq, eastern Turkey and the adjoining parts of Syria and Iran (c. 40 million), the Pashtuns in southern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan (c. 45 million), and the Tuareg in southern Algeria and Libya, northeastern Mali and western Niger (perhaps a million) are historically

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<sup>18</sup> We will omit the Bedouin in the west, and the Turkmen in the east, since they are dispersed through a number of separate areas. We shall omit also the smaller groups, mainly in Afghanistan and Iran, such as the Aimaq, Bakhtiari, Boir Ahmad, Lur, Qashqai, and Shahsavan, since they have been more closely integrated into the national administrative systems of Afghanistan and Iran over the past century and politically neutralized.

comparable to the Baloch, because in each case they are mainly identified with a single large area that until not much more than a century ago was a refuge area, beyond the reach of any urban control, and which within the past hundred years or so has been divided by modern nation-state boundaries. Since these territories have no historical cities and have not been included historically in the agricultural hinterland of any significant cities, they have functioned as refuge areas for people who either lost their place in the citted economies or could not find a place in them. Nowhere in these refuge areas, which in each case were named by the surrounding populations, was the population able to cluster sufficiently to support the development of an investment center that could join the urban network. We have ethnographic and historical data that suggest continuous exchange of population between such refuge areas and the surrounding cities as the carrying capacity of the urban economies fluctuated. Families in the refuge areas which succeeded in building their social position emulated the urban elites, even though the populations of the refuge areas and the cities remained ideologically opposed to each other. Occasionally, a force from the refuge area succeeded in overtaking one of the cities and forming a new government. Most new dynasties in the history of the Islamic world provide examples of this historical interdependence of urban investment centers and refuge areas unable to generate investment, as ibn Khaldun explained (Rosenthal 1967). More recently, in every case where nation-state governments have been installed in the primary cities over the past century they have failed to change the investment ratio between the cities and the refuge areas, and in recent decades the populations of the refuge areas have reacted by becoming an increasing threat to the stability and integrity of the nation-states.

#### **4. How has the introduction of Western hegemony over the past century changed the way peoples like the Baloch inter-relate with the larger society, both within the Islamic world and beyond?**

The dialectical relationship that had developed through the period of agrarianate citted civilization between the investment dynamic of the cities in locations rich in soil and water and the investment-incapable population reserves (such as the Baloch) in the resource-poor wilderness, formed opposing cultural identities of city and tribe. The city did not control the tribe, but had to make deals with it to ensure the security of trade between the cities and discourage raiding. The tribe was always on the lookout for new resources, including the possibility of raiding and even taking over a city. At the same time the cities drew on the tribes to satisfy rising labor demands, and the tribe absorbed the rejects when the city's labor market declined. The urban population developed identities based on location and land, while the tribes developed identities based on descent and kinship. These identities became historically opposed to each other, despite their continual inter-change of population.

The colonial period introduced a new way of thinking territorially into the arid zone. The European powers were interested not in agriculture but in raw materials and trade for their industrial economies. They therefore valued land differently and introduced a new sense of locality. The change affected not only relations between the Islamic and non-Islamic societies, but also relations between the urban and non-urban Islamic societies. Most modern boundaries were drawn by Western powers since 1870 and are Western cultural constructs, but despite some uncertainties in the middle of the last century (referred to above) there is no longer any expectation that they should be undrawn. When the European powers withdrew, Islamic civilization was divided into nation-states, and the states are now accepted on the international level, even if the national identities are

in some cases uncertain at the local level. Every square kilometer, from Mauretania to the borders of China, came under the authority of a national government. Every resident became the citizen of a Muslim-majority state (although such social division of the *umma* conflicts with the essential Islamic concept of *tawhīd* and the *shari`a*), with constitutionally equal rights guaranteed by a national government. But this fundamental reorganization of society did not change the investment ratio between the cities and the tribes. Human societies have generally used the past to provide stability and legitimacy in the present. The cultural attitudes built into longstanding relationships have always been slow to change, except insofar as social interests change. In this case the cities gained formal responsibility for the territory and resources of the tribes, but had little interest in them. The tribes are minority populations in the nation-states. They have not found a way to ensure sufficient political voice for adequate representation in the cities. It is not surprising, therefore, that to begin with, in the middle of the last century, little changed. But as information flows increased, and the tribes became more aware of what they could claim, tribal populations gradually became a major force of opposition to the perceived controllers of the status quo in the cities. Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 most conflicts were state sponsored. Since that date most have been driven by community interests against the state or against perceived transnational forces. In the last two decades all these tribal populations have become actively rebellious against their state governments.

### **3. The Larger Historical Significance of the Baloch under Global Urbanization**

We have summarized the available data on the Baloch and reinterpreted it in terms of the social history of the Islamic arid zone and the relationship between the arid zone and the larger regional context. Starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it becomes difficult to explain anything regionally without reference to what is happening in other parts of the world. The closer we come to the present the more necessary it becomes to expand the framework to a global context. But although globalization is a common paradigm for the discussion of anything in the modern world, there is little agreement on its definition, what drives it and how it works.

Globalization results from the intensification of interaction among larger and larger numbers of people—a process that has accompanied accelerating population growth. It is essentially a social process, rooted in the demographic factors that have been the primary engine of change in human history. While exogenous factors, such as climate change, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters have here and there caused significant human change, differential life cycles and changing fertility and mortality rates have always been the continuous drivers of change. However, while population growth has spread the species, gradually populating almost the entire land-surface of the world, and then increased the average density of population, growth alone does not determine distribution. Increasing density is at least as likely to cause conflict over resources as cooperation in efforts to increase their productivity. But despite the significance of conflict in human history, cooperation has won out and in recent times generated the increasing global interconnectedness that we now understand as globalization. What is driving globalization is the human response to growth. The response is to cluster in larger and larger numbers to the extent that is ecologically viable, up to the limits of carrying capacity. Carrying capacity supported only very low densities until about ten thousand years ago when climate change increased it significantly. The result was not only increased growth but increased cooperation, increasing collective learning and ambient awareness. The larger the number of people working together, the greater the innovative capability, the more intensive the human-land relationship becomes, generating technological innovation and increasing the carrying capacity (Boserup 1964, Spooner 1972).

Increased clustering (up to the limits of carrying capacity) has been an evolutionary tendency, evident in most species, since the prokaryotic age. In the human case, as numbers increase, people come into contact more. Each individual not only interacts with more others but engages in more interactions per day and interacts more intensively, in a larger social arena. Whereas most humans, as late as fifty years ago, still lived in communities in the scores, hundreds or at most thousands, and interacted mostly face-to-face in the dozens, even in big cities, now more and more of us are interacting remotely more than face-to-face, with larger numbers of others, through a variety of media that can potentially connect us with anyone of our seven billion odd co-humans irrespective of location. Mobility has also been increasing, bringing people from different social arenas into contact with each other, increasing the proportion of interaction occurring between individuals with different cultural experience. As our range of interaction extends, everyone becomes more aware of what others (who have different experience and think differently from themselves) are doing and thinking. Our minds experience more associations, which give us new

ideas, leading to more innovation. As a result the general level of social awareness rises, irrespective of formal education or training. Whereas awareness had previously been a product of education and professional training, it now rises independently of education. More people participate in the formation of public opinion, and in public decision making. The process of collective learning accelerates and expands. Rates of innovation rise. Productivity also increases, further accelerating social change.

Cities, where before the age of remote communication clustering was most advanced and interaction most intense, have always been the engines of innovation and economic growth. When the cities of China and the Islamic world were larger than those of Europe (in the later mediaeval period), they were the world's main centers of technological innovation. But at the end of the mediaeval period European society began to grow faster. Why? Possibly because of the unprecedented series of disruptions it experienced, starting with the Black Death, which decimated the upper classes, weakened social controls, and provided new opportunities, leading to the Reformation, followed by the religious wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and the first age of revolutions, starting with the English in 1649. Until that time, as political structures had expanded, authority had always worked from the top down. After the Reformation in Europe top-down authority began to give way to increasing degrees of bottom-up power. The democratic process developed very slowly, but gradually accelerated, first in Europe and America and more recently in most other parts of the world.

The rate of intensification of our interactive lives has been especially significant in global cities such as New York, London or Paris. Studies of the acceleration of daily life have already been published (Rosa 2013). Urban life has begun to extend beyond the city everywhere. City-based administrations now reach out into the countryside incorporating rural populations into urban life. Scarcely any part of the world is any longer independent of urban interests. This process has been steady in rural parts of the Western world. In large parts of Africa and Asia it has been revolutionary, tearing apart the intricate systems of interaction on which traditional societies were based. In general the reaction to this intensification has been positive. Humans have without hesitation taken advantage of opportunities for more frequent interaction among more people than was possible with smaller numbers, changing the quality of life, sometimes with chaotic results. This type of change, when it accelerates to the point where everyone is aware of it, generates conflicting responses. The underprivileged in the cities, especially the young, see new opportunities. The privileged, especially those with vested interests, want to hold on to the past. The most conservative, apart from the Islamic scholars (whose social roots are often in villages), are in the least complex parts of the society, in the smaller tribal and rural communities. Where the past can no longer be restored, they seek to re-establish an idealized version of the past as they remember it, as they would like it to be.

These changes are characteristic of the modern world, but occur at different rates in each community, in each arena of social interaction—until continuing growth merges each arena into those of its neighbors. As globalization has sped up over the past fifty years, the merging process has connected arenas at more and more incompatible stages in the general process of increasing social complexity. Each community is drawn into the process at a different stage of growth, and of social complexity. When communities merge they are at different stages of growing social complexity. All

dimensions of globalization, whether political, economic, or linguistic, proceed unevenly in different arenas, because each arena of interaction is at a different stage of growth, a different level of social complexity. Tribal populations, like the Baloch, are at the lower end of the spectrum of unevenness, because, so long as they continue to be autonomously tribal, they cannot grow in social complexity and awareness. However, now they have begun to benefit from the increasing flows of information, raising their awareness of possibilities.

As the rate of change increased, the thresholds<sup>19</sup> of change into rising levels of complexity have come faster. The emergence of cities in early agrarian societies introduced the period of world history in which it was no longer necessary for everyone to be a food producer. The next threshold was crossed with the Industrial Revolution, which began to reduce significantly the proportion of the world population occupied in food production. The next came when the nation-state framework was adopted as the criterion for membership in the United Nations in 1945, which spread the idea of national societies. As imperial administrations withdrew after the Second World War, converting their colonial territories into independent nation-states, they created the global framework for everyone to have equal citizenship status within the formally delineated boundaries of a state. The arrival of the service economy in the 1980s raised the level of social complexity another degree into a condition where social service became a major economic concern in addition to production. In the past decade we crossed yet another threshold as global urbanization passed the 50% mark. Urban life became culturally dominant in every state. People now communicate and move between cities, irrespective of state borders. As a result of the growth of remote communication, the growth of social intensity is no longer restricted by location, and increasing social mobility everywhere has further advanced translocality. The level of socio-political awareness has risen globally, in tribal societies as well as in cities.

But we are still in a phase of globalization in which each society, each arena of social interaction, is at a different stage of growth and of increasing social complexity. The differences sometimes fade as the arenas merge. Sometimes they create social boundaries that become cultural borders, and potential sites conflict, sometimes ideologically opposed. Until now we have simply seen tribal societies as different, and we have studied them separately. We noticed that neighboring cities and tribal communities developed ideologically opposed attitudes toward each other, that the social difference became a social boundary, and although individuals could cross the boundary (cf. Barth 1969) the communities were opposed to each other, and the opposition had hostile implications. But we failed to draw the conclusion that each was participating in the same long-term social dialectic (between resource-rich and resource-poor communities) that was a core process of human history. The reason we can see it differently and more productively now is that the acceleration in the global rate of change in recent decades, resulting from the approaching climax in world population growth, forces us to take change into account, and as we learn to do that we see the past in longer and longer term trajectories.

The case of the Baloch spans this whole trajectory of social development. They are a sample of people who, although they served as a reserve pool for the expanding citted society, were not

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<sup>19</sup> A concept introduced by David Christian in his periodization of "Big History" (Christian 2004).

included in it and continued to live at a simpler level of social complexity. The current phase of change is particularly difficult for them, because they are finally being enveloped by the expanding citted society and being forced to adapt to higher levels of social complexity very quickly. At the same time relationships that were formed before the last two thresholds were crossed, while no longer determinative, have not entirely faded away. They continue to influence current developments everywhere, in a manner that is similar to racism (which is a historical product of similar factors). The Baloch are at a disadvantage in the transition to the nation-state era, both because they are relatively few in number (less than 5% of the population of each country) and sparsely distributed over a large territory (43% of the total in the case of Pakistan), which unlike that of the Kurds or the Pashtuns has relatively little economic or strategic value.

We have upgraded the status of the Baloch in the modern world from that of ethnographic curiosity (as sought out by anthropologists in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century), and the historical source of urban insecurity in Islamic civilization (as seen by ibn Khaldun), to that of necessary player in the longterm dialectic of the social history of the arid zone. The Baloch case helps us understand how the unevenness in the historical development of social complexity in world history has become a problem in the current stage of globalization.

This account of the Baloch also provides some historical illumination of larger political problems, especially with regard to Pakistan, but also Iran, and in a different way Afghanistan. It provides a model that can be tested in other parts of the arid zone, and at a more general level it helps to clarify the current problems in the larger relationship between the Islamic world and its neighbors. These problems began with the merging of the Western (temperate) and the Islamic (arid) arenas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The imposition of Western imperial conceptions of locality, British and Russian to begin with, followed by French, Italian and Spanish, was the first threshold of change. The second was the replacement of Western administrations with the administrations of nation-states in territories that had been defined by imperial powers. The third has come in the last two decades with the increased mobility and information flows of the current stage of globalization. Each of these thresholds introduced a fundamental change in the relationship between tribe and city, by breaking the historical reciprocity, and restricting the options of the tribes, while subordinating them to the cities and raising their awareness of their disadvantage. The tribes are now minorities in nation-states without the numerical power to even out their relationship with the cities. The cities still look down on the less complex society of the tribes, and are not constrained to extend their investment activity into tribal territory.

The country with the largest Baloch population, Pakistan, is an improvised country. It was assembled at Independence in 1947 from the historical cities of the Indus plain in Sindh and western Panjab and large tribal areas of Baloch and Pashtuns on the fringes of the Iranian Plateau, which before the arrival of the British had been more closely related to Qandahar than to Delhi. It was reorganized in 1954 in an attempt to manage the political imbalance of its West and East Wings, and revised after the secession of its East Wing (as Bangladesh) in 1971. Since then its main political problem has been between the urban populations of the Indus plain and the tribal populations of Baloch and Pashtuns, which though small in numbers are large in territorial significance, and threaten to tear it apart. The problem is similar in Iran, though less strategically significant because the proportions are smaller (both of population and of territory), and the sense of ethnic identity and

nationalism is less well developed. However, Iran has other tribal populations around its borders, each of which has had a similar historical relationship with the cities and must now be integrated into the national economy. Afghanistan's case is different. Where Balochistan would probably not have survived politically till the British came if it had not been for the prowess of Nasir Khan (reg. 1749-1794), Afghanistan owed its survival to Ahmad Shah. Under his rule (1747-1772) the Afghan Empire was the most powerful political entity between India and the Mediterranean. But in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century both Afghanistan and Balochistan would have disappeared, like the typical Islamic city-centered polities before the colonial period (e.g. Ghazni, Herat, Nishapur, Bukhara, Samarqand), if their continued existence had not served British and Russian imperial interests. The British preserved them mainly because of their different cultural approach to territory. They converted the disintegrating Afghan Empire into the nation-state of Afghanistan. Since the majority of the population were tribal, and roughly half of them were Afghan (Pashtun), the whole population became Afghanized. In British India the Baloch came under indirect British rule as a Princely State, and gradually became known as Balochistan.

The particular geographical and demographic relationship between the Baloch and the rest of Pakistan makes them a special case (a) for the Baloch in general, (b) for tribal populations in the Islamic arid zone, and (c) for tribal populations under globalization in general. Our Western efforts to understand these relationships has been hindered by the way we have formulated our research questions, which has been partly due to the fact that our research has been divided up in the modern period into separate fields of specialization, isolated from each other by discipline and method, and often further divided between subfields. But the period of history in which we could manage growth by increasingly minute classification and division is over. The continued increase in growth that has made us conscious of globalization is breaking down all these divisions in our organization of knowledge. Not only do both anthropologists and historians now have to view their material in world-historical terms, but they have to work together. Because of the speed of change and the continual merging of social arenas social scientists must look at their material historically, and historians must view their material in a larger social context. Our understanding of the modern world so far has been deficient because it is not sufficiently interdisciplinary. The importance of translocality as an analytical concept is that it draws our attention to a particular type of globalizing change in the way we understand geographical relationships over time.

By offering an interpretation of the current Baloch situation based on the use of social factors to answer questions about their history and the changing evaluation of locality under globalization, we may have appeared to suggest that all current problems are in the hands of the governments of the countries involved. But it would be possible to take this argument further and suggest that all nation-state governments are now losing the authority that would allow them to solve such problems. The idea that nation-state governments embody the final authority for their populations may never have been entirely true, but it is now visibly losing its validity.

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## Information on the competence network Crossroads Asia

The competence network Crossroads Asia derives its name from the geographical area extending from eastern Iran to western China and from the Aral Sea to Northern India. The scholars collaborating in the competence network pursue a novel, 'post-area studies' approach, making thematic figurations and mobility the overarching perspectives of their research in Crossroads Asia. The concept of figuration implies that changes, minor or major, within one element of a constellation always affect the constellation as a whole; the network will test the value of this concept for understanding the complex structures framed by the cultural, political and socio-economic contexts in Crossroads Asia. Mobility is the other key concept for studying Crossroads Asia, which has always been a space of entangled interaction and communication, with human beings, ideas and commodities on the move across and beyond cultural, social and political borders. Figurations and mobility thus form the analytical frame of all three main thematic foci of our research: conflict, migration, and development.

- Five sub-projects in the working group **"Conflict"** will focus upon specific localized conflict-figurations and their relation to structural changes, from the interplay of global politics, the erosion of statehood, and globalization effects from above and below, to local struggles for autonomy, urban-rural dynamics and phenomena of diaspora. To gain a deeper understanding of the rationales and dynamics of conflict in Crossroads Asia, the sub-projects aim to analyze the logics of the genesis and transformation of conflictual figurations, and to investigate autochthonous conceptions of, and modes of dealing with conflicts. Particular attention will be given to the interdependence of conflict(s) and mobility.
- Six sub-projects in the working group **"Migration"** aim to map out trans-local figurations (networks and flows) within Crossroads Asia as well as figurations extending into both neighboring and distant areas (Arabian Peninsula, Russia, Europe, Australia, America). The main research question addresses how basic organizational and functional networks are structured, and how these structures affect what is on the move (people, commodities, ideas etc.). Conceptualizing empirical methods for mapping mobility and complex connectivities in trans-local spaces is a genuine desideratum. The aim of the working group is to refine the method of qualitative network analysis, which includes flows as well as their structures of operation, and to map mobility and explain mobility patterns.
- In the **"Development"**-working group four sub-projects are focusing on the effects of spatial movements (flows) and interwoven networks at the micro level with regard to processes of long-term social change, and with a special focus on locally perceived livelihood opportunities and their potential for implementation. The four sub-projects focus on two fundamental aspects: first, on structural changes in processes of transformation of patterns of allocation and distribution of resources, which are contested both at the household level and between individual and government agents; secondly, on forms of social mobility, which may create new opportunities, but may also cause the persistence of social inequality.

The competence network aims to mediate between the academic study of Crossroads Asia and efforts to meet the high demand for information on this area in politics and the public. Findings of the project will feed back into academic teaching, research outside the limits of the competence network, and public relations efforts. Further information on Crossroads Asia is available at [www.crossroads-asia.de](http://www.crossroads-asia.de).

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