

**The Role of Baloch Tribes in the making of Persian  
Empire before the Dawn of Islam:  
A historical sketch**

**Farooq Baloch\***

***Abstract:***

*A lot of books are available in the market about the history of Baloch and Balochistan. This topic was always important for researchers, readers, historians and intellectuals, but now-a-days it has sharper. In the available sources the historians gave different opinions about the origin and the geography of Baloch tribes. This is true that all these historians have their own opinion, which are different to the others, but all these historians accept the significant role of the Baloch tribes in the making of Persian Empire before the dawn of Islam. After the Aryan invasion many Aryan and non-Aryan groups established their government in the different parts of Persia. Medians Achamaneans ,Parthians and Sasanids groups ruled over Persia, before, the dawn of Islam, and made greatest Empire in the world and Persia got place in history. In the era of these groups the Persian civilization reached on peak, and the Persian Empire had been made super power of his time.*

*The objectives behind this study are to search the Baloch tribes with their significant role in history. This study is descriptive in nature and the Primary and Secondary, both kind sources were consulted for the purpose.*

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### **Key Words:**

Achamanean, Achataphegoi ,Agbatana, Alexander The Great, Anusherwan, Aryan, Ariboi(Mountains + Tribes) Baloch (istan+nation+tribes), Belos,Cyrus the Great, Paras,Gedrosia, Haerkania, Herodotus, Khanate of Kalat, Koch, Makkoran, Med, Mehmood of Ghazna, Parsipolis (Astakhar), Persia, Persian Empire, Sasanids, Shah-Nama Firdosi, Seistan,

### **Introduction:**

The available written sources explore different kind stories about the origin of the Baloch nation and tribes. Baloch own had no historians to write, define and preserve their history, before the British involvement in Balochistan. The Khanate of Balochistan began from the beginning of 15<sup>th</sup> century but, up to the time of British involvement (19<sup>th</sup> century) could not took any attention on history writing. So, when British entered in the area of Balochistan, they started work on the history of Baloch and Balochistan.

The British writers destroyed Baloch history, according to their policies. Every British writer made his own opinion about the origin of the Baloches. Every western writer refuses the opinion of other western writers. If they are agree on any point, that is the refuge of Baloch tribes in Balochistan. No one of them accepts them the original natives of this area.

Professor George Rawlinson was the first person, who assumed a Semitic chaldean (Arab) origin.<sup>1</sup> the prominent supporters of this theory are, Sir T. Holdich, Henry Green.<sup>2</sup> Lala, Hittoo Ram,<sup>3</sup> and in the nationalist Baloch writers, Mir Gul Khan Naseer,<sup>4</sup> Mohammed Sardar Khan,<sup>5</sup> Dr Mir Alam Khan Raqib, Maulana Noor Ahmed Fareedi,<sup>6</sup> Justice Mir Khuda Bakhsh Bijarani Marri,<sup>7</sup> and Mir Ahmed Yar Khan,<sup>8</sup> are the supporters of the Rowlinson's theory.

Henry Pottinger, Khanikhov, Professor keane, Ivanov, and

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some other writers dedicated them with a Altic (turkamen and Kargiz) origin,<sup>9</sup> in the Baloch writers Agha Mir Naseer Khan Ahmedzai Kambrani supports this theory.

Long worth Dames, Burton, Dr bellaw, Gankoviskey, Spiegel and some other western writers assumed an Aryan origin.<sup>11</sup> In the Baloch writers Dr Shah Mohammed Marri<sup>12</sup>, Syed Hashmi and some others are the supporters of this theory.

The all above given theories expose the Baloch nation as refugees in the area of Balochistan. These writers did not see this fact, that, the Baloch tribes were living in the present area of Balochistan before the Aryan invasion. The ancient historical sources provide this information that, the Baloch tribes are the original inhabitants of their present area, and they had not only fought with Aryan,<sup>13</sup> but, they also played a main role in the making of Persian Empire. During the median and Achamanean era, these Baloch tribes were the right hand of the Empire. They took a part in every battle and war against the enemies of Persian and Median dynasties. The all historians accepted their military role in the history of pre-Islamic Persia in the light of Shah Nama Firdosi and some other Persian and Arabic sources. Shah-Nama explain in detail the story of peak and fall of the Baloch tribes.

According to Shah-Nama Firdosi and some other reliable sources, that the Baloch and Sasanid Persians clashes and conflict started during the 5<sup>th</sup> century, A.D and in 531 A.D Baloch tribes of northern and north western Persia defeated by Persian Sasanid army<sup>14</sup>. Baloch- Perso conflicts were continued up to the dawn of Islam.

In the following subject it will try to search the position and role of the Baloch tribes in Persia before the dawn of Islam.

### **Baloch tribes in the Persia before the Dawn of Islam:**

This information based on some very reliable and authentic sources, in which some sources belong to pre-Islamic era and some are after the dawn of Islam. These important sources solve the

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Baloch ethnic problem and attempt many questions about the Baloches with their original homeland. These statements are very different than the British and other 19<sup>th</sup> century's theories. In this perspective the father of history "Herodotus" is the first historian, who discussed the Baloch tribes in his book and mentioned them as the Vain Guard of Persian army. His book "the history of Herodotus" translated in Urdu by Yasir Jawwad, gives various names of Baloch tribes. But this translation is un-complete, and the translator has left some important statements, especially the journey of Makkoran by Cyrus the Great. This is a historical fact that, the Persian who made their rule over Persia and the surrounding countries, were consist on some tribes, which mentioned by the Herodotus and the other historians. Majority of those tribes, who played a role in the making of Persian Empire, originally were not Persians.

The work of ancient historians as like, Ctesies, Xenophon, Arian and Strabo are also have big importance as an authentic source of history. They completed their work before the Birth of Christ. They also mentioned the names of various Baloch tribes in the territories of Balochistan and Persia.

Moreover, after the emergence of Islam, many Arab writers and historians provided very important information about the Baloch tribes of Persian and Baloch dynasties. In these writers, Ibn-e-Khuldoon, Ibn-e-Hauqal, Al-Masoodi, Ibn-e-Masqavi, Ibn-e-Kharadadba, Abu-Abdullah Yaqoot, Nasir Khusro and some others are include.

The Persian work is also very important for searching the role of Baloch tribes during the era of Persian Empire before the dawn of Islam. In the Persian sources the work of Firdosi is most authentic, who explained the role of Baloch tribes in detail during the reigns of Achamaneans and Sasanids,.

Herodotus mentioned the Baloch tribes many times in his book, as like Median tribe of the dynasty of Media, who ruled over Persia before the emergence of Achamaneans. Herodotus writes

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them a Non-Aryan group.<sup>15</sup> According to him, that the Medians do not want the supremacy and rule of Persians, because they scared for their language and culture.<sup>16</sup> According to historical sources, that the Medians and the Persians were belong to different ethnic groups.<sup>17</sup> And the first one ruled over Persia, and their dynasty was called Media.<sup>18</sup>

The Achamanean Persians were established their self in the area of southern Persia, which called Persi polis (Astakhar) or paras or pasagard<sup>19</sup>.

Majority of the writers on Baloch history claimed that, the Median were Baloch by origin, whose still exist in the Baloch tribes, called Meds and mostly they lived in the coastal area of Balochistan (Makkoran), and by profession, majority of them are fisherman.

The Median rule ended in 550BC<sup>20</sup>, and Cyrus the Great became a new ruler, and the founder of Achamanean Persian dynasty<sup>21</sup>. The area of Persia was divided between two dynasties, were called Media and Paras, before the expedition of Cyrus. Cyrus made them one and gave it a single name of Persia (IRAN). As Herodotus told, that the Persians were not happy under the rule of Medians and majority of Medians also dislike their King. So, during the revolution of Cyrus, most of the Medians supported Persians under the command of Cyrus, against their own ruler, King Astiagus.<sup>22</sup> Herodotus discussed the Medians in his book more times, and explore their brief history, and mentioned them a Non-Aryan group.

Moreover, Herodotus mentioned many more tribes in the Persian dynasty, in which many tribes are still alive and include in the Baloch nation. Herodotus writes a name of a tribe precani or parecani, or perkani, which is no doubt still exist with a big majority in the Brahui, Baloch tribes with the same name of Prikani.

According to him that, they were nomads, and were settled in the desert of eastern Persia and southern Afghanistan. He did not give the name of their dynasty but, show them in the above mentioned areas. He also described that they were armed with same

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weapons, as wearer and taken by Paktian tribes of Bactria.<sup>23</sup> Another place he gives the detail of Prikani tribes in the following words.

The Agbatana, Media, Prikani and Thokori Bantees were paid 450 talents to the King. He also mentioned names of some other tribes in the area of Makkoran and Siestan, as like, Segartoi or Segarti, Sarangi or Zaranji, Thamani or Thamai, Yoti or Hots and Mashai or Mamshai, and says that, if the king needed to punish any prisoner or his enemy, he was sent them above mentioned dynasties.<sup>24</sup> As its know that, the Mamshai is still a major cast in the Brahui Baloch tribes. Zaranji or Zarangi mean the people or a person who belong to the Zaranj, a capital of Siestan. No doubt, inhabitants of Zaranj, were baloches, because the history says that the mostly tribes of Seistan were Baloch during the Persian rule, and still the majority population of Seistan consists on Baloch tribes. They called Nahrohi, which are divided into countless tribes. According to an author that, the ShahNama's hero Rustam was a Nahrohi Baloch and was the ruler of Seistan during Achamanean era.<sup>25</sup> Yoti or Hot is well known cast in the Baloch tribes, and it is also divided into many sub-tribes, and mostly hot tribes are settled in Sindh and Punjab. These tribes ruled over a huge area of Punjab during the reign of Mughals of India.<sup>26</sup> He further says, that the Mamshai and Prikani tribes were together in the army under the commands of Samenius the son of Darius and Seromitrus the son of Obazus.<sup>27</sup> Syed Sibte-Hassan, a famous writer of various books, also support this statement and accepts these tribes as Baloch the inhabitants of Makkoran.<sup>28</sup> He mentioned another Baloch tribe as Sagedi or Sajidi, which is also a famous tribe of Jhalawan Balochistan. He gives the detail of Makronian tribes and say, that, they were together with mosinoshian tribes under the command of Artaiknus the son of Keramus.<sup>29</sup> These tribes were independent in the time of famous Roman writer Xenophon.<sup>30</sup> He also mentioned another big Baloch tribe as a name of Haerkani, which were settled in the mountains of Al-Burz and on the coast of Caspian Sea.<sup>31</sup> Taurakeena Qazi also described them in his book as the natives of Northern Persia, and rewards them the

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Vain Guard of Persian army, which were called Aswaran in Persian language.<sup>32</sup> And Firdosi called them Koch-o-Baloch inhabitants of Al-Burz mountain, whose defeated by Anusherwan in 531.A.D.<sup>33</sup>

Herodotus gives the names of many other tribes, which are not present with their ancient names now, but, they were together with the other Baloch tribes in the past. As like, the Casperi tribe was together with Prikani tribe in the army of Persia. May be kasperi was the part of Prikani tribe or may be it was a separate cast, but, according to historians that it was with Prikani tribe and in present it is still un-identified. Medians were together with the Sishyai or Shasiyai tribes in the wars.<sup>34</sup>

Mekkronians, Mosinoshians, Moshians and Teranians or Toranians were together,<sup>35</sup> and hot or yoti, Mamshi and Prikani tribes were together.

Many tribes, which described by the Herodotus are still alive as major clans, like Prikani, Hots, Sajidi etc. And many tribes have merged into the other powerful clans. And many tribes have given their dynastic or regional names, like, Zaranjians, Makkornaian, Kirmanians, and Haerkanians etc. these all tribes have given their regional names not the tribal names or ancestors names as like, Makkornian or Haerkanian tribes had their territories names. The tribes and the people of Haerkania (Caspian Sea and Al-Burz Mountain) were called Haerkanians and same like this, the tribes of Kirman and Makkoran were known with their regional names.

This reference of Herodotus create a question that, is the Makkoranian tribes were belong to the territory of Makkoran, so, what was the name of dynasty of Makkoran in the time of Herodotus, because he did not give the name of their territory, just mentioned them in the east and south of Persian dynasty.

Now, there is a question, that, why the Greek historians after Herodotus used the word Gadrosia for Makkoran, and Gadorsians for tribes, and Achitaphegoi for the area and the people of coastal Makkoran.<sup>36</sup> while the Herodotus used word Makkronian for the tribes at least 300 years ago, before, Alexander the Great. The Greek

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historians, Arian and Strebo used the words Ariboi for Jhalawan, Oritai for lasbela, Achitaphegoi for coastal Makkoran and Gadrosia for central Makkoran after the invasion of India by Alexander the Great.<sup>37</sup>

Vincant-A-Smith, George Mc Crindle, Herald Lamb also follow the Arian and Strebo. While the period of Cyrus the Great is 230 years before than the emergence of Alexander the Great.

May be, the said area name was Makkoran in the begging of Persian Empire or before of it, as mentioned by Firdosi in Shah Nama<sup>38</sup> and the Herodotus, who gives the name of Makkoranian to the people of the area of Makkoran.

The Arab historian's support it as Makkoran (Makran) form the beginning.<sup>39</sup> Tabkat-e-Ibn-e-Saad gives the following statement, that, the Kirman and Makkoran were two brothers and the successors of the Sam, the son of Prophet Noha (Noah). When the historical and famous dam of Yemen crashed and destroyed, than these both brothers, Kirman and Makkoran left Yemen and marched towards Persia and a head. Kirman reached an area of Persia and gave it his own name "Kirman" and settled with his people. As like him, Makkoran reached the present time Makkoran and settled here. Than this area got his name.<sup>40</sup> Maulana Abdullah Dehrmani and Maulana Abdul Samad Sarbazi are the prominent supporters of Ibn\_e\_Saad.<sup>41</sup>

D.D.Kosambi<sup>42</sup> and Dr: Hansman<sup>43</sup> discussed a territory as Makkoran. Between Malooha (Sindh ) and talmoon ( Behrain ), before the Aryan invasion. and Dr: Hansman discussed a territory as Maakaan or maagaan. Between Malooha (Sindh ) and talmoon ( Behrain ), before the Aryan invasion.

The other Arab historians like, Ibn-e-Khuldoon, Tibri, Al-Masoodi, Ibn-e-Hauqal and many others used the word (name) Makkoran for the area and Koch-o-Baloch for the inhabitants.<sup>44</sup> They also mentioned their area of settlement from Persia to the borders of Sindh.<sup>45</sup> The Arab historians do not give their tribal names, but, collectively write them Koch and Baloch, but they don not give Perso-Baloch relations, just write them the independent tribes of eastern Persia up to the borders of Sindhi dynasty.

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Ibn-e-Khuldoon also gives their detail, and describes their settlement in the desert of Lut (eastern Persia), Seistan, Makkoran, Jhalawan (Khuzdar) and many other parts of Baloch territory during the era of Mehmood of Ghazna.<sup>46</sup> He gives the detail of these tribes and called them Jaskia (native of Jask a place of eastern Persia and Makkoran) and Huruskia, the inhabitant of desert, and many other regional names. He also defined the relation between Al-Bavids, ruler family of Seistan, and Gaznavids.<sup>47</sup> But he did not give any detail of them before the dawn of Islam.

A book *Tarikh-e-Seistan* in Persian, which author is unknown and the chief Poet of Pehlvi Persian court, Malik-ush-Shora Bahar edited and compiled it. This book has written during 445-725 A.H. It gives more details of the Baloch tribes from the beginning of Persian Empire to the Gaznavid rulers of Gazna Afghanistan. He also defines the perso-Baloch relations with their peak and fall.<sup>48</sup> It also gives the names of Koch-o-Baloch, Qufs-o-Blufs, Kufch-o-Blufch, Koj-o-Abloj and Kuffaj.<sup>49</sup> Ejaz-ul-Haq Qaddusi says that, the Baloch squad was a numinous part of Mehmood's army.<sup>50</sup> But, he also failed to give the detail of Baloch-Perso relations before the dawn of Islam.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is well known personality of the world, and was belonged to India. He was the author of various books, mostly on religious, politics and history. He justifies the Cyrus the Great as the Zulqarnain of Holy Quran, who's discussed in the Soorah-e-Khaf.<sup>51</sup> According to him, that, the Cyrus invaded towards west, east and north by the order of Allah. He says in the east he invaded towards Makkoran, because the people of Makkoran were not accepted his supremacy and started rebilious activities, so, Cyrus the Great attacked upon them and brought them under the Persian Empire.<sup>52</sup> The all historians accepted the journey or expedition by Cyrus the Great towards Makkoran. Abul Kalam Azad says, that, he captured the dynasty of Makkoran, but the other authors and historians says that he destroyed his army in the deserts and dry mountains of Makkoran, and hardly he escaped back to

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Paras with remaining only 7 soldiers.<sup>53</sup> But this is true that Cyrus attacked upon the people of Makkoran, and the historians mentioned the people of Makkoran in the era of Persians, as Baloch, but majority of historians, especially Greek historians give their tribal or regional names, and in same period the Firdosi writes them the Koch-o-Baloch. And during Arab period, the Arab historians also write them Koch-o-Baloch. According to Abul-Kalam Azad, that, these people and their dynasty has been discussed in the Holy Quran,<sup>54</sup> as the inhabitants of eastern Persian.

Shah Nama Firdosi is one of the most authentic written formed historical sources, which has written by Abul Qasim Firdosi, the Chief poet of Mehmood ghaznavi's court. He completed his work during the period of Mehmood from 998 to 1030. A. D.

Shah Nama discussed Baloch in detail, and Firdosi focused them in five chapters and sketched their amazing and mythical picture. He titled them the bravest squad of Persian Army, which was called "Aswaran" in Persian language. They were totally different than the other squads of Persian army. They have their own symbols of warfare and flag of destination with picture of Leopard or Cheetah and they were fully armed top to bottom, with weapons and iron, and their bravery was very famous every where as an example. He says,

ہمیں پہلی پارس کوچ و بلوچ

زگیلان جنگی و دشت سروچ

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Translation:

These are the Persian warriors Koch and Baloch, they have chosen from the warriors of Gailan and the desert of Saroch.

Shah Nama explored the Baloches with their achievements for Persian Empire in five chapters, and in every chapter Firdosi gives

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them the reward of Bravery and accept that the Persian army was incomplete without Koch-o-Baloch warriors. Firdosi says,

سپاہی زرگردان کوچ و بلوچ

سگالیدہ جنگند مانند قوچ

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Translations:

These are the Koch-o-Baloch warriors, who have cut their enemies in the war like a scissor.

Firdosi sketch their history from the beginning of Persian Empire and explores their all history of peak and fall.

Moreover, Firdosi mentioned some very important points, which are very helpful to understand the ethnic and geographical history of Baloches.

In his book he defined the population of Baloches in the northern Persian, Al-Burz Mountains and near the coast of Caspian (Haerkanian) Sea. He described in detail the expedition of the Sasanid King Anushirwan over these areas.<sup>57</sup> He also describes Baloch population in the other parts of Balochistan, as like, near Bolan Pass, Mastung, Seistan, Khurasan, Makkoran, Desert of Lut, coastal belt of Persia and Balochistan, and in the northern areas of Persia.

In the end, in short words, that, there are lot of ancient written sources, in which Baloch history, geography, social system, professional life and the other information have explored in detail, but these are not compiled. In these sources, the role of Baloch tribes in the making of Median and Persian Empire has well explored. And these sources also justify the Baloch tribes as the original natives of the area of Balochistan, eastern and northern Persia.

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### **Conclusion:**

This research work is not a totally new study, but, the objectives of this work are different. As it's known that the Greek, Persian and Arab historians provided very basic and primary sources about Baloch nation. They very well defined the ethnic, political, geographical and, social and warfare history of them.

Many times some questions come on front of the readers of Balochistan study, as like, are the Baloch tribes were present before Christ? Are they discussed in history? Are they having any historical background? or, are they have played any role in the history? or, such like other questions.

The sources of history answered many of these questions with the significant role of Baloches for the making of Persian Empire. These sources, which have briefly defined in the above pages, can help in search the role of Baloches in history, not only in the Persian reign, but, before of them in the same areas as defined in the above pages. This research work proved it that, the Baloch and Persian tribes were living together or in the neighbors to each other. The dynasty of Median Baloch tribes was called Media which was situated in the north-west of Persian, and the Persians were in the south. And their dynasty was called Paras, Parsagard, or Pasagard. Medians ruled over Persia from 854 B.C, to, 550.B.C, and than the Achamanians captured the Median dynasty and merged the areas of paras and Media and make them one. Majority of those books, which focused the history of ancient Persia, described the role of Baloch tribes including Medians. Herodotus, Arian, Strebo, Abul-Qasim Firdosi, Ibn-e-Hauqal, Ibn-e-Masqawee, Ibn-e-Khardadbah, Nasir Khusroo, Bahar, Abdullah Yaqoot, Ibn-e-Khuldoon, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and dozens of other authentic historians display the significant role of Baloch tribes in the making of Persian Empire. These authors, especially, the Firdosi is most impressed by the role of Baloch tribes, so, he discussed them in his Shah Nama time to time and chapter to chapter, and praised their role and dedicated

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them many conquests for Persian army out side from Persian dynasty.

One thing more which has defined by the historians is this that, they defined their settlement in a huge area of present times Persia, Central Asia, Afghanistan and Balochistan. Herodotus, Arian, Strebo, Mc Crindle, Smith, Firdosi and the Arab writers and historians mentioned their settlement in the different parts of above countries. The above research proved that the Baloches were settled in the north, west, and east, of Persian dynasty, desert of lut, Seistan, Makkoran, Jhalawan, Sarawan, Sothern Afghanistan and in the coast of Makkoran. This study also proved that the Baloches were well settled in the above areas before the Aryan invasion, and in the beginning they fought with Aryan invaders for centuries , but than slowly they accepted them and majority of the Arian tribes merged into the ancient natives of the area, which were no doubt, Baloches. There is no solid and authentic source of written to prove it that, who were those inhabitants of above mentioned areas, before Aryan invasion, but, it thought that, those tribes were Baloch and had well formed social system. Their territory was consist in a huge area, which was divided into different parts and every part had its own name, as like, Media, Haerkania, Seistan, Makkoran, Tooran, Gailan, Mazindran, Ailan, Desert of Saroch, Oritai Gadrosia, Achitaphigoi, Ariboi (in Greek ) Balish or Walish or Belos or Balis or Walishtan ( Quetta to Qandhar ) ( in Arabic ), and etc. This study brought this conclusion under the authentic written sources that the Baloch tribes were well settled in a huge area of Persia, Afghanistan and present Balochistan thousands years before the birth of Christ. They had cities towns and a compact village system. Before the Aryans they were unified under the tribal confederacies, but, when they centralized their government in the Media than mostly tribal confederacies accepted the supremacy of Media, but, still many confederacies were independent because of the distance among the areas.

After the emergence of Persians, the majority of the Baloch

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tribes support and helped them for the establishment of a formed government in the dynasty of Persia. According to written evidences, the Baloch tribes did not accept the supremacy of Cyrus the Great in the beginning but, very soon they not only accepted his supremacy, but also joined his army with full strength. This study explores briefly the names of some ancient Baloch tribes with authentic references.

Maybe these tribes had their single or national names but, history is silent about it. Shah Nama gave them the name of Koch and Baloch and the Arab and other Persian historians also follow him. Some times Koch and Baloch changed into Kufch and Bulufch, Kufs or Qufs and Bulfs, Koj and Abloj and etc. In present time Pashtoon tribes called them Balos, and Arab called them Balosh.

Greek historians did not mention their single name and they just gave the details of their tribes. Some eastern authors like Taurakeena Qazi also follow the Greek point of view and gives the detail of tribes with their dynasties.

So, in the end, it concluded the Baloch tribes are the original inhabitants of the above mentioned areas, and they played a significant and historical role in the making of Persian Empire. They supported the all Royal Families of Persia against their enemies, and, secured the Persian dynasty and as well as Baloch populated areas. During the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D, Baloch-Perso relations took an unfavorable turn, which ended on fifty years war between them. During the reign of Anusherwan (531-571 A.D), the Baloch tribes of northern and north western tribes roughly destroyed by the Persians. So, in big number of them killed, some of them escaped towards different areas and the others accepted the supremacy of Persians. The Baloch tribes of other areas were independent in their dynasties, but, the occupation of Persia was remaining over them.

In the last years of Sasanid Empire, the Sindhi rulers of Aror attempted an expedition towards southern Balochistan and eastern Persia. They captured a huge area of Balochistan and Persia up to the Kirman. So, the central and southern parts of Balochistan came under the supervision of Roy and Brahman Sindhi dynasty.

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This situation was continued and remains, up to the dawn of Islam, and than the Socio-Political, and Geographical map and atmosphere has changed in the all Asia, when Arabs came out from their sandy borders.

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