

# BILUCHI TRIBES IN SINDH

BY: CAPTAIN T. POSTANS (1844)



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# ON THE BILUCHI TRIBES INHABITING SINDH IN THE LOWER VALLEY OF THE INDUS AND CUTCHI.

BY CAPTAIN T. POSTANS.

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The general term of Biluchi is applied to a race professing the Mahomedan religion, whose country is hence called Biluchistan, which may be described as the whole of that mountainous and desert region stretching westward of the Indus from Cape Monze to the Valley of Shawl, and of which Kelat may be considered as the capital. This people thus form a connecting link, as it were, between the Persian and Afghan tribes beyond, and the mixed Rajput races who occupy the northern and north-western portion of Guzerat in India.

The earliest detailed and well authenticated account given, I believe, of this people by a European authority, is by that distinguished traveler, and now high functionary, Sir Henry Pottinger, who, in the year 1810, undertook a highly dangerous though deeply interesting journey through the whole extent of this country, and has recorded, in a series of valuable notes, the result of his personal observations and inquiries. From that period up to the last five or six years, few, if any, Europeans have had the opportunities of seeing more of them than was presented by casual journeys through portions of their country: of such the most interesting results have been given by Mr. Masson, who, taken as a traveler beyond the Indus and in Central Asia generally, is probably the most valuable as an actual authority, from the intrepid manner in which he threw himself amongst these wild and lawless people, and the favorable opportunities he therefore had, for a long period of time, of intimately studying their peculiarities and characteristics. These few observations are made at starting, lest any undue value should be placed on the slight remarks which are now to be made, and which solely have for their object the results of the author's experience of portions of tribes, with many of whom the British Government has for the last five or six years been unexpectedly brought more or less into contact, seldom amicably, and latterly in deadly hostility, and over many of whom prospectively it intends, it is to be hoped, to extend the fostering hand of civilization and take to its charge, along with the millions who own its sway in the vast regions of the East. And here the author trusts he shall stand excused if, in having the gratification and advantage of addressing a Society like the present for the first time, he ventures to offer his humble, though sincere, tribute of congratulation, that a body so formed should exist in this country, having such laudable objects to work out as increased knowledge of the races, states, and condition of that "noblest work of the Creator," in all parts of the globe; for surely few purposes for

which societies are formed can be considered as of greater interest or even merit; and, as applied to that magnificent portion of British dominion, to which all the attention that this great nation can shew, will but be found barely inadequate to do justice. Inquiry into its vast and ever varying population must be highly valuable, if the result be only to bring us more intimately acquainted with a people, who demand not only an interest excited by curiosity, but to whom this nation individually and collectively are under deep responsibilities; for it may, in all reverence, be fairly inferred, that so immeasurably important a charge as providing for the well-being of a large share of the population of the globe, was not committed to us as a nation by Providence, without demanding a due weight of obligation.

The origin of the Baluchi, as a distinctive class, is involved, like most inquiries of this sort in the East, in obscurity; though it may be conjectured that they are of an Arabian stock, and in all probability came to the neighborhood of the Indus, either shortly prior to or at the period of the first Mahomedan conquest eastward under the Khalifat of Walid. Their own traditions vaguely ascribe their original locality to Sham or Damascus, though they have no date or record, oral or inscribed, to attest it. As, however, the seat of the Khalifat was in those days at Damascus, and it was from thence that the army which conquered the countries bordering the lower Indus was dispatched, there is some reason for concluding that they were colonies from these conquerors who either subdued and possessed themselves of the countries of the aborigines, who were Hindus, driving them out or else causing them to be amalgamated in religion with themselves by conversion, of which certain classes amongst them to this day bear considerable evidence.

Such are the Babis in higher Biluchistan, and the Jutts in the lower country. It is also particularly noted by the Mahomedan historians of that period, that certain tribes (an appellation not applicable to Hindus, but which the Moslems adopted) embraced Islamism, and were obedient to the conqueror, receiving immunities for so doing. A list of these tribes is even given. But to the Biluchis. They are certainly a different race from all about them, they hold no affinity except in religion with the Affghans, who are more of the Persian character, and are again distinct from the Brahims and Mekranis, who are farther west. The true Biluch, or, as he proudly styles himself, the "USUL," (literally, originally pure,) Biluch of the desert is decidedly a particular and distinct class, and possesses peculiarities apart from his geographical position, which would appear to mark him as having considerable claim to an original offshoot from the Arabian family. With respect to the claims of these people to a Jewish origin, it may be said, like those of the Affghans, to consist principally in the conformation of feature,—the division into tribes and certain curious adherence to the Levitican law in the brother marrying the brother's widow,—punishment of adultery by stoning to death, and other minor points. This is too interesting a subject, however, to be passed over lightly, but where conjecture can only be applied, and where, moreover, the strong bias of the mind might lead to erroneous conclusions, in default of anything authentic, it is perhaps better to





dismiss it than to hazard mere opinions. Suffice it, therefore, to observe, that the Biluch cast of feature is certainly Jewish, the appearance and costume of the wilder tribes, such as is strikingly represented in Calmet's Illustrations of Patriarchal Habiliments (though it may probably arise from the same causes of climate, &c.) and that, as before observed, several of their laws, social and religious, bear an affinity to those of the Levitican;—but whether they (the Biluchi) have any claim to be of the lost tribes, in any Jewish extraction beyond an Ishmaelitish one, is a subject requiring deeper and more learned antiquarian research, than has hitherto been applied, and, until competently dealt with, had better be left alone.

The history of the Biluchi is as much involved in obscurity as their origin, until a certain period, when they appear to have constituted themselves with the Brahors under Nasir Khan, about the middle of last century, an independent people, and Kelat became if not the seat of regal power, at least of a powerful chieftainship, which the various tribes duly acknowledged and maintained by a complete system of feudalism. As our object is, however, rather to inquire into the present condition of this people, as presented to our view, than to discuss points which may be considered after all to have secondary or antiquarian interest, we may proceed to describe the Baluchi as they are, or lately were, for with many of them a new order of things has arisen within these two years, and causes are at work which may possibly have a great effect ultimately on their moral and social condition.

The first great feature of the Biluchi, is their intricate division and subdivision into numerous *Koums* or tribes, and these again are subdivided into almost endless families or minor parties. Each tribe acknowledges implicitly the authority of a chief, which office is hereditary. The attachment, amounting to devotion, paid by this people to their chiefs, is manifested on every occasion whether of peace or war, and a true patriarchal system is thus perpetuated. But the tribes are by no means unanimous amongst themselves; on the contrary, it is difficult to find any two who are not at feud with their neighbors, and a great many have blood quarrels, which are perpetuated by continued acts of violence, for a blood feud can never sleep, and it is said that a Baluch never foregoes his revenge, though for mutual advantages these feuds sometimes slumber, and are relinquished for a certain period, and seasons are agreed upon between parties for mutual advantages, wherein they abstain from violence; but on the expiration of these, the old state of deadly animosity is revived with increased bitterness, and a condition of society therefore exists, which is analogous to that of the Arabs and wild tribes of other countries. This, however, does not prevent this people from amalgamating to meet a common foe; their private sources of quarrel are in such cases kept in abeyance, and as a proof of this, the British troops in the course of our campaigns beyond the Indus, often found that Biluchi tribes, who were well known to be at most deadly feud with each other, had joined in meeting the British bayonets in the various terrific defiles and passes which the Biluchi held as their own unalienable right and property.

There are no less than fifty-eight distinct tribes branching from three great heads, *Rinds*, *Mughsees*, and *Nihroes*, not calculating their subdivisions, enumerated by Sir Henry Pottinger. Of the numbers of these it would be difficult to arrive at anything like an approximation, but of those located immediately on or near the banks of the Indus, it was calculated that 40,000 fighting men could be collected, and late events have proved that this was a pretty fair estimate of their strength, though this, it must be remembered, refers only to those dwelling in the cultivated plains, and not including those of the desert or the mountaineers. The principal tribes located in Sindh are the *Murris* (in reality a hill tribe, but having colonies in the plains), *Khosas*, *Muzaris*, *Mughsis*, *Umrans*, *Lakis*, *Chandiers*, *Julbanis*, *Jatois*, *Salpurs* (the late reigning chiefs were of this family), *Kainas* (the preceding dynasty who appear to have been rather of a sacred stock than Biluchi), *Rinds*, *Burdis*, *Kurmatis*, *Jokias*, and *Numrias* (two tribes inhabiting the range of hills immediately to the westward of Karuchi, and belonging in reality to the province of Lus, under the dominion of the Jam of Beila), though their services as escorts to the trader and traveller are constantly called for through Lower Sindh, and others. Of these the *Rinds*, *Burdis*, *Muzaris*, *Umrans*, and *Jatois*, are found to have their head-quarters in the partially desert tracts lying between the Indus and the Bolan Pass, and in or near the same locality are also found the *Murris*, *Brogtis*, *Dumkis*, *Jekranis*, and *Jekrarus*. The *Chandias*, again, are in the Chandokah district, of which Larkhana is the capital, and which is notorious as being the most fertile in all Sindh; a very powerful and numerous tribe, whose influence, when thrown into the balance, has often helped to settle matters affecting the stability of the rulers. There is another very important tribe, the *Lagharis*, the chief of whom, Ahmed Khan, was a distinguished nobleman and statesman at the Court of Hyderabad, holding an office equivalent to that of vizier or prime minister, but this tribe is said by some to be of Jutt extraction, and not real *Biluch*. The *Khosas* were formerly a powerful tribe, but attaching their fortunes to the falling house of Kalora, they were visited, accordingly, by the successful *Talpurs*. On the confines of the desert known as the *Thurr*, which separates Sindh from Cutch and Guzerat, they are predatory, but in Sindh are cultivators and peaceable, and for Biluchi, an industrious class. I am not aware that there are any physical peculiarities distinguishing tribes generally, though, as will be hereafter noticed, the desert and hill Biluchi differ in costume, stature, and habits from their brethren of Sindh. There are numerous other tribes in the line of country designated, but they scarcely merit detail, were not the materials wanting.

The Biluchi, in their divisions into tribes, have a great deal of the family pride which distinguishes the Rajput; and of the above heads of families, the *Rinds* are considered to hold a particularly high place—many of the other tribes, therefore, claim *Rind* extraction, such as the *Murris*, *Dumkis*, *Jekranis*, and others. In marriage this is particularly observable; a daughter may be given by a *Rind* to a *Rind*, but it would be considered degrading to marry into a lower order of clan, the extreme pride with which this people boast of their claim, as before observed, to "*Usul*." A real unmixed Biluch

blood is peculiar, and seldom seen amongst Mahomedans in the East, though happily for them they are, or pretend to be, totally ignorant or unmindful of the very low estimation in which, as a people, they are elsewhere held, the term Biluch being by the other inhabitants of these countries literally translated by its initial Persian letters to mean is  *be*, thus  *bud* or bad  *lam*, *lorchur* or vagabond, and  *cheem*, *choz* or thief, a silly invention in itself, but significant of the bad character this people have gained.

The Biluchi located in Sindh, acquired under the late Biluch dynasty a great and important share of the country, as Jahgirdars and feudatories, the tenure by which they held their possessions being military service, and very analogous to the old feudal system in Europe. This also obtained throughout the whole of Biluchistan. Locating themselves in the plains, and on the banks of the river, the Biluchi in Sindh, though wild and barbarous as compared with the inhabitants of our own Indian provinces, were yet superior in this respect to their untamed brethren of the desert and mountains, who, occupied alternately as robbers or shepherds, are as wild as it is possible to find any race of men similarly situated. Even those who may be considered as peaceable clans, since they occupied themselves on their farms or estate as supervising cultivators, carried with them the thieving propensities for which they are notorious, and thus acquired for the inhabitants of Sindh generally a proverbially dishonest title, though in reality it appears to be this class which alone merited it; but we shall refer to this point more particularly in discussing the character of this people.

The style of living, as seen among the Sindhian Biluchi is totally devoid of the little comfort even adopted by the inhabitants of India. Each district wherein they are located, possesses a small capital or head-quarters of the chief, which is only distinguished by the presence of a small mud fortification, from the usual reed and mud-built hovels comprising the Biluchi villages all over the country, which have an appearance of dirt and discomfort, unlike anything to be seen in the least important even of our Indian districts. Their fields, in many parts of Sindh and Cutchi, have a small mud tower in their centre, whence the possessor with his retainers guards his produce from the predatory attacks of his neighbors; and a striking proof is thus afforded of a rude and unsettled state of society. In their houses (if they can be so termed) and persons, the Biluchi are filthy in the extreme, and appear to be totally regardless of all beyond the mere everyday wants of an animal existence. It is not uncommon thing to see whole families sharing the shed, or, as it is called, *Marri*, which, composed simply of the reeds growing on the banks of the river, or the dried stalks of the Juwari, gives an inadequate shelter from the intolerably scorching sun of Sindh to themselves, their cattle, and horses, a *charpai*, or rude cot made of the Mimj grass of the country, being the only furniture. Yet there is no cause for this apparent misery, since many of them inhabited a fertile country, and possessed some of its richest portions, but the lazy and indolent habits with which they were imbued, forbode their turning any attention to the improvement of their condition. Their food is principally composed of

Juwari flour cakes, curds, and sour milk (the country being particularly rich in kine), and animal food, when they can obtain it. They prefer goats flesh to mutton for its strong flavor, and use spirituous liquors when attainable. The costume of the Biluchi in Sindh had undergone considerable alterations during the last dynasty, and differed greatly from that still adopted by the mountaineers and wild tribes of the desert. The turban gave way to a curiously-shaped cap, which appears to have been a bad imitation of a Persian head-dress, which looked much like an inverted hat, offering no protection whatever to the face, though the crown extended somewhat beyond the summit. This is composed of the most gaudily-coloured cotton stuffs (or silks with the chiefs), and looked upon as an indispensable ornament. They affect exceedingly wide Turkish drawers, which are closely buttoned at, and fall over the ankle. The surcoat is of white thin cotton, or mixed woollen and cotton in winter, and the waist is ornamented with an enormous roll of silk or cotton cloth of bright colours, the chiefs adopting the hinghi, a beautiful description of half silk and cotton manufacture, for which Tattah was once so famous, and which was coveted at the most brilliant courts of India. Over this is buckled a strap of broad deer-skin leather, with numerous appendages of all the pouches and paraphernalia required for the matchlock, highly ornamented with metal studs (gold and silver with the chiefs), and bright embroidery. The sword is an indispensable article of costume, and never abandoned. These people are passionately fond of arms, and are lavish in their expenditure to procure them. The Amirs sent emissaries, even as far as Constantinople, to obtain sword blades and matchlock barrels, though very beautiful ones were manufactured in the country. The shield, composed generally of rhinoceros horn, is large and flat, and usually suspended between the shoulders. The people dye their garments generally with indigo, and thus are enabled to wear them until they literally drop off, though the Cutchi tribes do not even take this precaution, and wear their flowing robes until they become literally black with grease and dirt. In person the Biluchi may be considered as a fine race of men, and are decidedly handsome. Those living in the hotter climate of the plains have somewhat deteriorated from the unusually large size and muscular strength for Asiatics peculiar to the mountaineers, but they are still a portly people. Amongst all classes corpulence is considered a great mark of beauty, and is encouraged to a ridiculous extent. Nasir Khan, the late head of the Hyderabad family, though only in the very prime of life, and a strikingly handsome fair complexioned man, was so unwieldy with obesity, that it was with difficulty he could walk across his hall of audience, and on rising, or attempting to rise, from his seat, was obliged to be assisted by his courtiers. The author has observed some extraordinary and frequent instances of longevity amongst the Biluchi located in Upper Sindh and Cutchi, far beyond what is usually seen in India, which with the large size and stature of this people united, warrant the conclusion, that the dry soils and climate, notwithstanding a degree of heat which is at times unequalled, is rather congenial than otherwise to the human constitution, certainly more so than the swampy banks of the river; yet the deadly simooms of the Upper Sindh and Cutchi countries are certain death to all but a Much, who, without any hesitation, exposes himself fearlessly to them, at a period when he tells you the very crows even

are obliged to leave the country. For eight months in the year Cutchi is, however, a fine climate, and for five as cold as the most fastidious need require. The author, speaking from experience, would prefer Shikarpore, with a good protection from the sun, to any climate in Sindh, though the range of the thermometer there is 115° to 120° in the shade from May to August. The Sindhian Biluchi are of very dark complexion, with fine oval contours of countenance, aquiline nose, and large expressive eyes. Unlike Mahomedans generally, they cultivate the growth of the hair on the head as well as the beard. In Sindh, the former is confined under the cap by a knot and comb, being thrown back from the forehead; but in Cutchi and the mountains it is allowed to fall in wild luxuriance over the shoulders, and is often twisted in with the folds of the turban, imparting a peculiarly wild and savage appearance. A slight sketch of one or two of these figures would tend better to elucidate their appearance than an inadequate description. The hair is dyed black when it becomes grey, and holy characters use the henna plant to induce a red tinge to the beard and hair. The costume of the women is simply a pair of full drawers, confined by a string at the waist, and a loose shirt over them, reaching to the knees, and open at the bosom. Over the head is thrown a loose cloth. Their condition is that of perfect slavery, doing the whole of the hard work and drudgery for their lazy lords, who, occupied in the unceasing amusement of smoking or talking in groups, pass their time away. The Bilach women are hard featured and plain, bearing in their manner and countenances strong proofs of the degradation to which they are exposed.

The Jutts do all the laborious work of the cultivation; for though the Biluchi possessed the land, they considered themselves, like the military class in India, above such menial occupations. This people profess the Mahomedan religion, and are, for the most part, of the Suni faith, though the chiefs were of the Sheah persuasion; totally ignorant, however, of any beyond the mere outward forms of their profession, they leave the whole to Scynds, Pirs, and other holy men, who are well paid, and encouraged to settle amongst them; so great is their reverence for these sacred characters, that they find a safe conduct at all times for themselves, and those whom they choose to protect, even through the most murderous clans, and in localities where no other stranger dare venture to trust himself; and are always employed as mediators to settle quarrels. If a Bilfich have the promise of a Scynd, he considers himself safe; but he knows full well the little value of that of his deadly enemy. Of course, under such circumstances, many claim the prophetic descent, who are little entitled to it; and, indeed, most of these men in Sindh and Biluchistan are as ignorant as all around them, though, such is their enthusiasm, that many learn the sacred volume by rote, without being able to translate a single word, and thus acquire the title so much coveted of "*Hafiz*," or remembrance. For the Koran they hold a superstitious reverence, commensurate with their ignorance of its contents; and a Batch falls on his knees when the sacred volume is produced: he would not dare even to touch it; but when he takes an oath, the book is put upon his head by the priest or scynd. Each tribe has its spiritual pastor, and a great portion of Sindhian cultivated territory was held in enam or gift by these men. A great authority,

on Sindhian matters, has said (Mr Crow), "that the Sindhian has no liberality but in feeding lazy Scynds—no zeal but in propagating the faith—no spirit but in celebrating the *edes* or festivals,—and no taste but in ornamenting old tombs:" this is certainly true of the Biluchi. Reputed holy and rapacious mendicants flourish amongst them whilst living, and their tombs become places of pilgrimage after death. In their fanatical zeal, they carry proselytism to the extent of often forcibly circumcising Hindus; and those of the latter, who held the principal offices as revenue collectors under the late Biluch government, were invariably obliged to adopt the beard and full costume of the Mahomedan. The exactions of holy mendicants in Sindh are a real source of evil to the country; and so great are their numbers, and so distinct is their classification, that they would provide materials for a chapter by themselves;—some even carry their effrontery so far as to travel mounted and fully armed. Such a vagrant character is not likely to go away empty-handed!

The arms of the Biluchi are the matchlock, sword, and shield, in the use of which they are very expert, though they pride themselves particularly, and trust implicitly, to the sword. Their country is considered famous for its breed of horses; and though these are large and powerful animals, their paces, of a fast walk and shuffling amble, are intolerable to a European; they themselves, however, invariably use mules, or a small description of pony, called in the country a *jabu*, very useful, and wonderfully enduring animals. The marauding clans ride only mares, to prevent the noise which horses make when together. The distances these little insignificant-looking animals will carry a heavy armed man, are incredible; and some of their *chapaos* or forays prove incontestably that no breed of horse, except, perhaps, the Turkoman, could beat them at this kind of work; yet are they kept half-starved, and, to all appearance, quite unfit for exertion. The author recollects, on one occasion, having to ride a distance of forty miles express, and had, therefore, a relay of three horses to do the distance: he was accompanied by a Biluch guide, mounted as described, who laughed heartily at the quantity of horses required to do what he performed with one sorry looking brute, riding in advance the whole way, his steed shewing no symptoms of distress at the journey's end. On another occasion, a party of Hindostan horsemen, in pursuit of a predatory band, disabled twenty-eight horses, and left three dead on the field, in vainly attempting to catch these Biluchi. As the Biluch, in his boasted character of soldier and robber, is so intimately connected with his steed, this digression may be excused. The chiefs ride well-trained camels of the Mekran and Malwah breeds, but principally the former, which are much prized. One of the great propensities of the Sindhian Biluchi, is their immoderate love of field sports. The chiefs, it is true, set the example, by making them the all-absorbing occupations of their lives, appropriating extensive and valuable portions of territory to preserves; but throughout the whole of Sindh, the poorest Biluch, if he can muster a pair of hawks, or a dog or two to assist him in his chase, will be seen pursuing it. This is not so much the case beyond the river, where it is not easy to find game. Sindh swarms with every description, and hence, probably, the inducement.

They have no idea of firing at winged game, but knock it down with blunted arrows; and this they will do with great precision.

The courts of the Sindh Amirs, at Hyderabad and Khyapur, furnished striking characteristics of Biluch manners, and were certainly peculiar. At the former resided the heads of the family, who, as is well known, divided the sovereignty of the lower Indus between them, and held conjointly under a singular participation of power. The leading features of a rude and semi barbarous state of society, were here exemplified; the public durbars, or councils of the state, were attended by a heterogeneous mob of Bauchi, (chiefs and wild retainer's,) Persians, Afghans, Seikhs, Rajputs, and adventurers from every part of the East; and although the greatest respect, even to devotion, was intended by the Biluchi to their lords, yet their manner of shewing it was little in accordance with our notions of etiquette or propriety,—they spoke in the loudest tone, and by their uncouth manners and gestures, would appear to a stranger to be anything but obedient followers. Knowing no respect of persons outwardly, the lowest Biluch would unhesitatingly beard even the Amirs themselves in open durbar; and as a brother, and by caste an equal, he could not be denied any *viva voce* representations which he might have to make. In a corner of the same hall of audience, where the most important affairs were probably discussed, a group of nautch women would add to the din and noise by their inharmonious yelling; and, taken altogether, it was quite impossible to find anything in the East—where generally a ruler or chief is surrounded by so much studied etiquette—half so barbarous as a Sindh durbar. That of Khyrpur, in Upper Sindh, was much more primitive, and therefore barbarous, than the Hyderabad court. Yet the effect of such a combination of savage and armed groups was highly picturesque, and decidedly interesting. Strikingly contrasted with the rude and totally unpolished manners of their retainers, were the conduct and bearing of the Amirs themselves; for they were decidedly as courteous, and indeed gentlemanlike in this respect, as all around them was to the contrary. How they obtained this distinction, it is difficult to understand; for they are scarcely a whit more enlightened than any other of their Biluch brethren,—having adopted a system of living excluded from the world and countries about them, which kept them centuries behind even the scanty civilization of their neighbors. Yet certain it is, and all who have had the opportunities of seeing much of them will corroborate it, that the Amirs, particularly of Lower Sindh, were individually and collectively, gentlemanly and polished men in their intercourse and familiar style. Nasir Khan, the late head, was particularly so, and could, indeed, render himself quite fascinating by his very agreeable deportment. The same may be said of his late elder brother and his nephews, the sons of Mir Mahmud. A Biluch welcome to court, has been described by the author in his work on Sindh, (see page 200 to 205,) and it was illustrative of the rude virtue of hospitality which this people certainly possess. The Biluch forces, when assembled, were principally remunerated by supplies of food, and a very small proportion of pay. A certain number of these rude troops were always on duty at the capital; for so distrustful and jealous were the Amirs of each other, that they took especial care to be well attended. The wild uncouth figures encountered in the

bazar, and even the royal residence of Hyderabad, were composed of these guards. A Biluch army, when assembled, was not easily dispersed; and the chief's authority became subservient to the general feeling, and they were borne along by it. Some striking instances of the absence of any control over their savage troops by the Amirs, have been repeatedly given of late years.

The wild and marauding tribes of Biluchi who inhabit the desert tracts and rocky hills of Cutchi, are not to be confounded with their brethren who dwell in Sindh;—little claim as the latter have to any but a barbarous title, they are yet far advanced when compared to the former; and, moreover, do not so completely merit the titles of murderers and robbers, which have not undeservedly been applied to hordes, who lived by plunder and relentless cruelty—at deadly feud with each, and the scourge of the cultivated and peopled country in their vicinity. Some of these tribes are again distinct in this particular from those in the neighborhood of Kelat, or the mountaineers. Two or three of the former, of whom the author had personal experience whilst in Sindh, deserve particular notice, as they afford examples of a reckless bloodthirsty propensity, and irreclaimable love of a lawless life, which none of the other tribes so markedly possess. A strong proof of this was afforded in the deadly animosity they shewed to a clan claiming holy extraction, and therefore highly esteemed; the Kyhircs, who styled themselves Sheikhs, but who were driven from their possessions, and treated with every imaginable cruelty by the tribes now to be mentioned, though with all others their sacred stock procured for them the highest respect, and they lived amongst them peaceably and were protected. These are the *Dumkis*, *Jekranis*, and *Burdis*;—though thus mentioned together, it must not be concluded that they were partners in their vocation; on the contrary, the *Burdis* owned no connection with the other two, who offered almost a single instance of any two Biluch tribes combining continually for a definite object, and that was plunder, effected often by the most violent and cruel means. The *Dumkis* and *Jekranis* inhabit the western borders of Cutchi, at the foot of the hills, (commonly known as the Murri hills, from the tribe inhabiting them,) and separated from Sindh by a broad belt of complete desert. Cutchi, or as it is better known by its title of Cutch Gunderva, is that portion of territory extending from the desert to the point north and west of Shilialpu, where the inundations of the rivers cease to influence cultivation, to the mountains which separate the valley of the Indus from the higher country of Biluchistan and Affghanistan. The partial fertility afforded by mountain streams on the western side of Cutchi, and the effects of rain in fair seasons, causes it to be held as the granary of the Brahue and higher Biluch country; but it is in various parts inhabited by the wildest of the Biluch tribes, particularly in its eastern confines, where a dry climate and scanty supply of water from wells, hardly furnish the means of raising forage for cattle; and where (but for the fact of Sindh possessing interminable extents of uncultivated land capable of any amount of fertility), the Baluchi might plead necessity for the lawless life they lead. Under a redoubtable leader, it was found on our first entry into Sindh, and during the march of our armies, that these clans, though comparatively few in number, were powerful in a wild and

desert country, which was habitable solely by themselves, scarcely affording more than forage for their horses, to do immense mischief. They had from time immemorial laid the Sindhian frontier completely at their disposal, and held the high road to Sandahar through the Bolan, quite at their mercy; the traders purchased safety for their Kuffillars at exorbitant exactions, and in short, completely unmolested, these robbers ruled supreme; they were all horsemen, and had for chiefs and leaders well approved and long-tried warriors. In campaigning against these hordes, and reducing them to obedience, much was seen of them, and they presented the appearance of wildness and ferocity to a degree unequalled in our Eastern experience. The inhabitants of Sindh, when the leaders were captured and brought in, would scarcely believe it possible, with all our power, that we could reduce such (to them) impracticable enemies. In person, these tribes differed much from those seen in Sindh, being larger in bulk and stature, and much more ferocious in aspect. Their costume was composed of the coarsest materials, large and flowing; the turban a piece of loose dirty cloth twisted round the head, and interwoven with the long shaggy hair which hung in masses over the neck and shoulders. At all times fully armed and accoutered, and mounted on his singular-looking *jabu*, the *Dumki*, or *Jekrani* warrior, or rather robber, formed a fitting subject for a study. The chapaos or forays of these tribes are services of danger, and made, as they often are, to an extreme distance from their own line of country. If, through fatigue or other accident, any individuals should fall, they deservedly receive little mercy at the hands of the inhabitants. Each Biluch carries a supply of grain and water with him, the latter by means of a small skin slung under his horse's belly. Hardy, and inured to a trying climate, horses and men will undergo an almost incredible degree of fatigue and exertion in these raids, of which they are passionately fond. Neither age nor sex are spared to accomplish their pillaging purposes, and on these occasions they often kidnap children, whom they bring up as slaves. When it is known that a chapao of Biluchi is out, or has been seen in the desert, the whole cultivated country is in a state of alarm, for, like a flight of locusts, it is impossible to say where the descent may occur. It was found totally impossible to impress these people with any sense of their being culpable in the lawless life they led; they owned without the slightest hesitation, and rather, indeed, with a sense of merit, that they were born and nurtured in robbery and murder, and considered them lawful and honorable vocations. One miscreant, who, for his awful catalogue of crimes, was particularly denounced, and considered fully deserving of extreme punishment, exultingly shewed his sword, a murderous weapon, and declared that he counted one hundred lives to the blade. At a distance of thirty leagues from the *Dumki* and *Jekrani* haunts, the poor inhabitants trembled for their safety, for no police existed to protect them. Strange to say, the leader of these very men was an old chief, far above his countrymen in sagacity and experience, with a great degree of dignity in his manner; and *Bigar Khan*, for so he was called, was a far superior man to any real Biluch whom the author has met. Though living in this uncontrolled way, these tribes nominally owned the authority of the Khan of Kelat, though of course they paid no tribute beyond military service when required. The Amirs of Sindh were so afraid of them, that they gave them good lands within their own territories.

The *Burdis*, an exceedingly troublesome and restless tribe, inhabited a tract of rich country to the north and east of Shikanpur, and, before our arrival in Sindh, were almost as annoying as the two clans before mentioned; but being at deadly feud with all about them, they were more confined in their operations. The author recollects a striking instance of the extraordinary state of society amongst these people, which may be quoted. On one occasion, having to transact business with a party of Bardis, some twenty of the tribe were seated around him, and it was suggested by a spectator that not a single individual of the party would be found with a whole skin, or without wounds over some part of his body. The examination was made, turbans were removed, and chests and arms bared; the result was, that every man was more or less desperately seamed with sword cuts; skulls indented, and awful scars, the results of fearful wounds, more or less disfigured each individual. As the party was accidentally assembled, they offered a pretty fair specimen of the peaceable habits of Biluchi. The Sindhian authorities, whenever they had the good luck to catch a notorious delinquent, (which was seldom,) mutilated him or them by cutting off the left hand; for the Bach men never deprived a Biluch of life; and many does the author know so situated, yet still managing, with his Khuassan mare, and right hand at liberty, to be capable of setting a whole district in a state of perfect misery and commotion! The experiment was tried by the British authorities, of reclaiming these tribes by holding out inducements to peaceable occupations, but in vain; for as the Asiatics happily express it, the "ass on which the prophet<sup>1</sup> rode was still an ass"—the robber was a robber to the last. The Biluchi, as well as the Mekrains, are found in India, serving in the capacity of mercenaries; and the author heard of a colony of them settled in the neighborhood of Aurungabad, in the centre of the Deckan, where they had originally emigrated in the above capacity. They do not, however, hold so high a title as the Arabs as military hirelings—the latter being some of the most determined enemies we have had to encounter.

It would be uninteresting to describe in detail all of the tribes; but we may mention the really powerful clan of *Murris*, who inhabit the rocky defiles and valleys of the Murri hills. This division holds a very high reputation for bravery and independence, and it was proved by us that they fully merited it; for on its being considered necessary to occupy their country, we were brought into hostility with them, and they behaved with true gallantry, and spewed a high-minded and generous sense of honor and good faith, which was little to be expected from what we had seen of their neighbors. The occupation of this stronghold, its gallant and almost unparalleled defence by a mere handful of our men, the fierce battle of Nufusk, which cost us an awful sacrifice of valuable lives, were the prelude to scenes, wherein the most extraordinary and striking proofs were given by the Murri Biluchi, of their being a high minded set of men; actuated by principles which all must honor, even in more civilized communities, and

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<sup>1</sup> Our Saviour.

lastly begetting, from deadly hostility, that mutual confidence, and indeed admiration, which springs from just appreciation of good qualities. (Interesting details of these may be seen in the United Service Gazette for March, and subsequently.) Inhabiting the same range of hills are the Baylis. Neither these nor the Murris were actively predatory, though they allowed the Dumkis and Jekranis the shelter afforded by the strong hilly country they inhabited. The Murris commanded the lower portion of the Bolan pass, disputing the domain over this terrific defile with the Kakurs and Khusacks; and beyond these again, westward, the Muzaris and Kulpurs. These two latter were troublesome subjects of the Punjaub government, and as restless and predatory as all about them; but they were kept in admirable order by the governor of Multan, who occasionally dispatched large forces against them. The Muzaris are at deadly feud with the Burdis, alternate devastating forays being made by both.

The Biluchi, particularly the wild tribes of Cutchi, entertain Bards, or, as the Rajputs call the same class of people, Bhats; in Sindh the Laris are a kind of gipsy vagabond tribe, who make this their vocation. The songs are often composed on the warlike deeds or records of forays, or chapaos; the music, if so it can be called, is rude in the extreme; the opening of each stanza being given by a loud cry, as of a person in intense pain, or under great grief, and the voice is gradually lowered until the conclusion of the stanza; it is accompanied by a rude guitar. Thus amused, a group of these wild men will sit for a whole night smoking and dozing, their greatest idea of happiness being the "*dolce far niente*" of the Italian, or the Kheif of the Turk. With the Cutchi tribes, the women appear to hold a higher rank than in Sindh;—here they are said to be admitted to council, and in warfare share the dangers with their husbands or relatives. On several occasions, these heroines presented their own bodies as shields to protect individuals from the fire of our troops.

As the Mahomedan laws with regard to marriage, plurality of wives, &c., are generally adhered to by these tribes, it may be unnecessary to revert to them.

The Brahius, who form the large body of the mountaineers and pastoral people in and around Kelat, are a distinct race from the Biluchi, and have been so accurately and minutely described by Sir H. Pottinger and Mr. Masson, that these authors must be consulted for all information on this people, who preserve implicitly a primitive, simple, and patriarchal style of living, and whose character as inoffensive and industrious, is far superior to that of their neighbors the Biluchi.

In speaking of the character of the Baluchi, our remarks should be tempered with due consideration for the circumstances which have conduced to form it; living in a state of semi barbarism, and separated from all civilizing and ameliorating influences by their somewhat isolated position, they have retained only some of the ruder virtues, and have engrafted, on these, many propensities which may be denounced as vices. But first, of their better qualities, we may allude to their hospitality, good temper,

sociability, good faith when pledged, courage, and patience of endurance. Hospitality is peculiar, I believe, to nomade people, and it is a prominent feature amongst the Biluchi. The kind welcome given to the wayfarer or stranger, is very marked and pleasing. In all, the true patriarchal mode is adopted, as seen with the Arabs to the present day, of giving the stranger the tenderest of the flock, and the best the hut or tent affords. Amongst the chiefs and rulers, it was carried to a great excess; and on any arrival of a man of rank at their courts or strongholds, he was not only entertained himself, but all his retainers were feasted to their hearts' content, and all their wants provided for, for any length of time he or they chose to sojourn as a guest. The first study of a Biluch, from the highest to the lowest, was this display of kindly feeling. On arrival, tired or way worn at a Biluch village, the author has often thrown himself in a cot, and, to his surprise, has suddenly found himself surrounded by a party of these wild men, who began to chafe and knead his limbs, and continued to do so for hours, to dispel lassitude and fatigue; vying with each other, at the same time, in supplying his wants, or appeasing hunger or thirst with the best of their simple food or beverage. Not to receive such civilities is the height of rudeness, and, on the other hand, to eat of his salt and dip your hand into his dish, is the signal for claiming him as a brother;—in short, all who have travelled through their countries have been forcibly impressed with this very pleasing trait of Biluch character.

These people have an amazing stock of good temper mixed with their ignorance, almost amounting to stupidity. A Biluch can readily understand and enter into a joke, and, like the Arab of Egypt, it is the best means of effecting a purpose with him. He may be thus brought to meet your views when other plans would probably fail; when excited, however, he is fierce and savage enough for any deed of blood or violence. The Biluchi are sociable even to an extent unknown amongst Asiatics generally, as evinced in their ordinary salutations, and the great delight they take in forming parties for the sole purpose of smoking, talking, singing, or drinking together. They accost each other with a curious string of inquiries, not only after the health of the individual addressed, but those of his family, and the welfare of his house generally; the *Salaam uleikum*, is only a prelude to the usual *chunqo*, *hullah?* *khiar?* *sullah?*<sup>2</sup> &c., which, when concluded by one party, must be taken up by the other. In a large assembly, as for instance a burbar, these inquiries and rejoinders occupied a considerable space of time, and even after these, if, during the interview, the stranger's eye caught that of an acquaintance, he would join his hand, and demand inquiringly and earnestly, "*Koosh?*" Are you well, or happy? The Biluchi embrace a friend by laying the head alternately on each shoulder; and being, as before described, a portly race, the ceremony was trying in so sultry a climate, for each individual of a party exacted this ceremony. In all this, however, there was, beyond the mere ceremonies which in the East are a regular portion of education, and as indispensable as any other occupation of life,, a great deal of sociable and kindly feeling, and, from the most polished to the rudest of the race, formed a marked feature

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<sup>2</sup> Are you well, happy comfortable?

of character. The author could quote some personal anecdotes of this, but they are perhaps unnecessary. When a Biluch has plighted his faith to the performance of any particular act, as of safe-conduct or protection (except in cases where a strong enemy may come within his power), he is generally to be relied upon, at least as far as his influence may extend. The traders found this in traversing their country; for though they paid a certain amount for the service performed, yet completely at the mercy of their escort with highly valuable consignments, they could only look for safety to this principle; and, indeed, acting upon it, the commerce of those countries was carried on to a certain extent flourishingly, whilst we ourselves, in attempting to alter it, and protect the merchant, were the most formidable enemies to the latter, and almost ruined his vocation.

The Biluch is brave when occasion calls for the display of bravery, as late and many previous events have testified; and when, with his rude arms and total ignorance of any other principle, than that the best swordsman and strongest man is the best soldier, he meets a disciplined force and falls at the muzzles of our guns or points of our bayonets, we must, in justice to him as well as his gallant opposers, pronounce him a warrior worthy of our steel. Reverting here to some of his bad points, we may attach, to his courage, cruelty; and certainly amongst some of the wilder tribes, this accusation may fairly be supported, though it is doubtful if it will stand against the whole body. The late Amirs were particularly distinguished for a total absence of this vice, and, though their power was absolute, they seldom or never punished with death any of their subjects, and it may be doubted if, except amongst the determinedly lawless tribes, the Biluchi generally are obnoxious to this accusation. With hordes who exist by plunder, the result must be sanguinary and ferocious habits, but though the whole of the Biluchi tribes have been pronounced, and are more or less knavish and prone to thieving, there are only a few who follow robbery as a regular profession; and these have acquired for the mass, at least those who have suffered more or less from their violence, a really worse character, in this respect, than they deserve. A high authority (Captain M'Murdo) has said, that this thieving propensity is so inherent in the Biluch, that in Sindh, chiefs and men, otherwise in no way impelled to do so, will, for the mere love of the thing, take the road and turn highwaymen. Pride commensurate with a state of barbarous ignorance, is a leading feature in the Biluchi, and they are mean and avaricious. Bigoted in proportion to their want of knowledge of all beyond the mere forms of their religion, they treat with studied intolerance all Kafirs or unbelievers; and the miserable Hindu, who, to suit his own purposes of traffic and gain, has located himself amongst them, is at all times prepared for violence prompted by fanaticism and degradation, the result of his creed; but this, and more, he is contented to bear to effect his object (not only with Biluchi, but even Turkomans), and, curiously enough, one vice counteracting another, in many parts of Sindh the Hindus have become not only wealthy, but so influential, as to be able at times to resist oppression by a sort of tacit opposition, which is very effective. Thus, in any extraordinary act of oppression, threatened or committed on any of their body individually, the Hindi's of Shillinpur would shut up their shops and

abandon the city. All trade was thus at a complete stand-still, and the revenue ceased altogether; they thus soon obtained their own terms with their avaricious rulers. The state of the Hindi's in these countries, however, is by no means so bad as that of the Copts in Egypt, or the Jews occupying nearly the same relative position in Mahomedan countries generally. Captain M'Murdo's summary of Sindhian character may be applied, to a certain extent, to the Biluchi situated between Mickran and Hindustan; they seem to have acquired the vices both of the barbarity on the one side, and the civilization on the other, without the virtues of either.

The Biluchi are addicted to the use of spirituous liquors, and the intoxicating seed of the hemp plant, or Bang. They do not, however, carry these to the effect of downright inebriety, but induce a certain degree of stupidity, which may be analogous to that so much coveted by the opium eater.

The pipe, with both sexes, is scarcely ever from the mouth. They are, as may be supposed, indolent and lazy, leaving labor of every kind to the Jutts, and other working classes.

The language of the Biluchi is different from that of their neighbors, whether Sindhs, Brakes, or Afghans; and, in sound, assimilates to bad Persian; so that, as observed by Sir H. Pottinger, it is possible to catch the meaning occasionally by a knowledge of the latter tongue. It is not written, however, and is considered altogether so barbarous even in these barbarous countries, that the Biluch is said to have learnt it of his goats when he was a shepherd in the mountains. A vocabulary and grammar was formed by Lieut. Leed, a highly intelligent officer, which exists in the records of the East India Company.

Having thus concluded the few observations which he has to offer on the Biluchi, as seen by him in the course of a residence of 32 years, divided between Upper Sindh and in the Cutchi districts,—he only trusts they may be found of some trifling interest, though he does not presume for a moment to place his rough notes in conjunction with the records of those higher authorities whom he has quoted, and who should be consulted by all anxious to obtain a more intimate acquaintance with a people, over a great number of whom we now wield a direct sway, and whose interests may therefore be said to be in our keeping. Though the Biluch has been considered an implacable enemy, the author would remark, as the result of his experience, that if the interests of these people were duly cared for, and sufficient inducements, with a conciliatory manner adopted, there is no reason, he thinks, to doubt, but they would duly appreciate a change which might thus be effected in their condition. But this is a subject scarcely admitting of inquiry here; and it only remains to observe, that with all their faults, he looks back with many pleasing recollections to opportunities he enjoyed in Sindh, for seeing much of a wild but interesting people.