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Is There an “Urban Mind” in Balochi Literature?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to compare themes in Balochi written literature with those found in Balochi oral literature in search for an “urban mind”. The Balochi language is spoken in south-western Pakistan and south-eastern Iran, as well as by smaller populations outside Balochistan proper. Various estimates give at hand that there may be between 8 and 10 million speakers of Balochi, or even more.

Childe presents a number of criteria for urbanism¹ which are used in this chapter to determine whether there is an urban mind in Balochi oral and written literature. The five written texts examined in this study all date from the 1950s and onwards, whereas the five oral texts are undated but assumed to be of a much earlier date than the written texts.

The study shows that in the oral narratives the urban setting is put forth as an ideal. To become a king or the king’s son-in-law or the foremost merchant in the world is what constitutes true success, and not, for example, to become the richest farmer or cattle owner. This urban mind is only present in a fantasy world, however, and in the written literature there is a totally different and this time realistic setting for the stories. Here the scene is not a world where wishes come true, but the harsh reality of Balochistan. Urbanism as an ideal is absent in these stories, and even though urban phenomena are mentioned they are not crucial in any of the written stories.

Introduction

Following Childe’s criteria for urbanism,² writing is here regarded as one of the characteristics of urbanism. Accordingly, an investigation of written literature together with non-written (oral) literature can be rewarding in the search for differences between an “urban mind” and a “rural mind”. The purpose of the present chapter is to compare themes in Balochi written literature with those found in Balochi oral literature. Five oral tales and five short stories will be examined in this study, and a number of criteria will be used in order to determine what can be labeled as “urban” in these texts.

1 Childe 1950, 9–16.

2 Childe 1950, 9–16.

In his work *Orality and Literacy*, Ong argues for a dichotomy between orality and literacy and rejects the concept of “oral literature”.³ Utas claims that such a model is flawed in that it seems to assume the language of oral literature is the same as that of free speech but different from that of written discourse. Utas argues that, “the language of oral and written literature is more akin, by being normalized, conventionalized and consciously shaped to be remembered”.⁴ Following Utas’ definition, both oral and written narratives will here be defined as literature. Before the actual analysis, I will provide a short overview of Balochistan and the Baloch people.

Balochistan and the baloch, an overview

Balochistan, the land of the Baloch, is divided between Iran and Pakistan by the so-called Goldsmid Line, a border demarcation which was the result of a border commission headed by the British general Goldsmid in 1870–1872.⁵ Exactly when the Baloch arrived in their present habitat is hard to determine. Marco Polo reports that this area, which he called Kesmacoran, had its own ruler and that the people “lived by commerce as much as agriculture, trading both overland and by sea in all directions”.⁶ Spooner holds that the Balochi immigration into the coastal area, known as Makrān, started in the 11th century AD and intensified in the 13th century, when Turkic tribes started invading the Iranian plateau from the east.

According to the epic tradition of the Baloch themselves, they are of Arabic origin and migrated from Aleppo in Syria after the Battle of Karbala in AD 680. Although the majority of the Baloch today are Sunni Muslims, tradition has it that in the Battle of Karbala they fought on the side of the Shiite Imam and martyr Hussein against his enemy, the Umayyad caliph Yazid.⁷ This is likely an attempt to establish a “true Islamic” genealogy for the Baloch.

It is probable that the original habitat of at least a core group of the Baloch was in the north-western part of the Iranian linguistic area and that they migrated south-eastwards under pressure from the Arabic and Turkic invasions of the Iranian plateau from the mid-7th century AD onwards. The main evidence supporting this theory is linguistic, namely the close relation between Balochi and other languages traditionally classified as north-west Iranian, such as Kurdish, Gilaki, Mazandarani and Talyshi. Another piece of evidence is the fact that Arab historians from the 9th and 10th centuries AD associate the Baloch with the geographical regions of Kerman, Khorasan, Sistan and Makran in present-day eastern Iran.⁸ It also appears that tribes and groups of various linguistic affiliations, including Indo-European (e.g. Pashtun), Semitic, Dravidic (Brahui), Turkic, Bantu and others, have been incorporated into the very heterogeneous ethnic group today known as the Baloch.⁹

The Balochi language is spoken in the province of Balochistan in south-

3 Ong 1982, 11.

4 Utas 2006, 209.

5 Hopkins 2007.

6 Spooner 1989, 609.

7 Dames 1907/I, 1–2.

8 Spooner 1989, 606.

9 See e.g. Spooner 1989, 599–600, 606–607; Swidler 2008, 366; Korn 2005, 43–51.

western Pakistan, and in the province of Sistan and Balochistan in south-eastern Iran.¹⁰ It is also spoken by smaller populations in Punjab and Sindh and by a large number of people in Karachi, as well as by Baloch who have settled in the north-eastern provinces of Iran, including Khorasan and Golestan. It is also the language of smaller communities in Afghanistan (particularly in the province of Nimruz), in the Gulf States (especially in Oman and the United Arab Emirates), in the Mari region of Turkmenistan, in India, in East Africa, and nowadays also in North America, Europe and Australia.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of Balochi speakers. Many Baloch, particularly in areas bordering Indian languages (in Punjab and Sindh) and Persian (in the western parts of the Balochi-speaking areas in Iran and in Khorasan and Golestan), identify themselves as Baloch but no longer speak the language. The same is true of many Baloch in East Africa and on the Arabian Peninsula, particularly after having lived there for generations. The Baloch in Turkmenistan, however, have retained their language well, mainly owing to the fact that they have maintained a traditional lifestyle of agriculture and pastoralism and have, on the whole, a low level of education.

Another reason that it is difficult to give any certain figures for Balochi speakers is that first and second languages are not always recorded in censuses carried out in the countries where Balochi is spoken. A serious attempt at estimating the total number of Balochi speakers was done in the mid-1980s¹¹ with about 5 million as an approximate grand total. This figure has been questioned by some Baloch as unreasonably low. There is, indeed, a tendency on the part of central authorities to underestimate the number of members of ethnic minorities, and this may show up in any figures based on official statistics. The total number of speakers of Balochi, as estimated in the *Ethnologue*¹² (divided between Eastern, Southern and Western Balochi speakers) amounts to 7 million. In view of all this, and the fact that the birth rate in the province of Sistan and Balochistan in Iran is the highest in the country, and in Pakistan about average, the total number of Balochi speakers at the time of writing (2010) probably amounts to between 8 and 10 million, or even more.

Balochi is neither an official language nor a language of education in any of the countries where it is spoken. This is reflected, for example, in the lack of a standard written norm for Balochi.¹³ There is also a dispute about which dialect, or dialects, ought to be the basis of a literary language. On the whole, writing and reading Balochi is at the moment an exclusive activity carried out by a small number of persons belonging to the Balochi literary elite, mainly in Pakistan. Thus, Balochi is, as a minority language, largely restricted to traditional and informal domains such as the family, the neighbourhood, and traditional occupations (e.g. pastoralism and agriculture). A career outside these traditional sectors is linked to a great extent to higher education and a good command of the national language. Efforts to preserve and promote the Balochi language are mainly of an unofficial character and based on private initiatives. However, there is a growing concern among the Baloch that their language may well be lost within a few generations if it does not develop a written standard.

10 The official spelling in Iran is Sistan va Baluchestan (see Fig. 1).

11 Jahani 1989, 91–97.

12 www.ethnologue.com. These figures are from 1998 or earlier.

13 See Jahani 1989.

The Baloch have traditionally sustained themselves on pastoral nomadism and/or seasonal agriculture and date cultivation, and to some degree on fishing. Fishing is limited to the shores of the Indian Ocean, that is, to the southernmost coastal area of Balochistan. Agriculture and date cultivation prevail in the lowlands of southern Balochistan as well as in oases and along rivers, for example in Iranian Sarawan and Pakistani Kharan. Further to the north, the main occupation has traditionally been pastoral nomadism.

The tribal structure has been both a uniting and a separating factor among free-born Baloch in all of Balochistan. It has been easy for originally non-Baloch tribes and clans to associate with and be incorporated into the Balochi tribal system,¹⁴ and the unity within the tribe has also traditionally been very strong. However, tribal loyalties are often felt to hamper a nationalist movement, and nowadays many intellectual Baloch try to promote the replacement of tribal loyalties with a national Balochi loyalty. This raises the question of how to delimitate the Baloch *ethnie*.¹⁵ For instance, what is the position of persons who no longer speak Balochi, of larger groups of Baloch living outside Balochistan,¹⁶ of non-Baloch living in Balochistan,¹⁷ of Baloch professing another religion than Sunni Islam,¹⁸ and of sub-tribal groups and former slaves, who are not normally regarded as Baloch?¹⁹

Three of the reasons that the Baloch are found over such a large area – from Turkmenistan to Tanzania and from Iran to India, and also in Australia, Europe and North America – are the natural and political conditions of Balochistan and the fact that the Baloch were often recruited as soldiers owing to their reputation of bravery.

Balochistan is situated at the crossroads between east and west, north and south. From Alexander the Great's time onwards, many conquerors have passed through this region. The Sea of Oman also links Balochistan to the Arabian Peninsula and eastern Africa. These geo-political conditions of Balochistan have caused a considerable amount of migration.

The main natural reason for migration from Balochistan is the long droughts that often plague this area. In the late 19th century there are reports of severe droughts, which caused many Baloch to migrate northwards to Khorasan and Golestan in Iran, to northern Afghanistan and all the way to Turkmenistan in search of pasture for their herds.²⁰ Some of the Baloch also migrated westwards, to the Iranian provinces of Kerman, Hormozgan, and Fars, where they still speak Baloch and are known as Koroshi.²¹ A long and severe drought in Iranian Balochistan between 1997 and 2004 forced many Baloch to sell their herds or abandon their agriculture and look for other occupations, such as border trade, which is one of the main pillars of the economy in Balochistan today. Many also moved out of the province.

Another migration was when a number of Baloch were moved by force to Australia by the British colonial government during the second half of the 19th century to facilitate the exploration of the Australian interior. This could only be

14 See e.g. Titus 1998, 668.

15 See Smith 1986, 21.

16 See e.g. Al Ameer 2003; Axenov 2003.

17 See e.g. Yadegari 2008; Afrakhteh 2008.

18 See e.g. Badalkhan 2008.

19 See e.g. Yadegari 2008.

20 Axenov 2000, 72.

21 Nourzaei 1388.



Fig. 1. Balochistan and adjacent regions. Sincere thanks to Agnes Korn and Christian Rammer, Frankfurt am Main, for producing this map.

done by means of camels, and the Baloch were among the ethnic groups in British India who kept this animal.²²

Political changes that have caused migrations out of Balochistan include attempts on the part of the central Iranian government to subdue local Baloch rulers and penetrate the region; this occurred in the 1850s and in 1928 during the third year of Reza Shah's rule. Particularly after the second invasion, many Baloch moved to Karachi in British India. Also in the 1950s, a number of Iranian Baloch sought refuge in Oman after revolting against Mohammad Reza Shah.²³ Many Baloch on the Arabian Peninsula and in East Africa have been recruited as soldiers, particularly in the Omani army.²⁴ After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, a small number of educated young Baloch sought refuge outside Iran, mainly in Pakistan and Europe.

It is interesting to note that there are two different words in Balochi to define pastoral nomads and settled agriculturalists. In former times, it was only the Baloch pastoral nomads that were known by the term "Baloch", whereas the agriculturalists were called "townspeople" (Bal. *šahrī*).²⁵ This latter term suggests that the village where the agriculturalists lived was indeed some sort of urban centre.

The main political centre of the Baloch between 1666 and 1947 was Kalat in present-day Pakistan (Fig. 1). This was the centre of the Baloch-Brahui Ahmadzai

22 Oral communication, Amin Goshti, Canberra, Australia.

23 Al Ameeri 2003, 239.

24 See Lodhi 2000; Al Ameeri 2003; Collett 1986.

25 See e.g. Baranzehi 2003, 79; Yadegari 2008, 254; Noraiee 2008, 346.

Khans, who ruled over a considerable part of Balochistan. The town of Kalat was described in the early 19th century as having more than 3,500 houses altogether (within and outside the wall surrounding the settlement) and was thus an urban milieu of some repute. Many of the shopkeepers were Hindus.²⁶

Quetta (from the Pashto name for fort), the mainly Pashtun-inhabited capital of the province of Balochistan in Pakistan, has a very low percentage of Balochi population and is therefore less important historically to urbanism among the Baloch than another fort and urban centre, namely that of Sibi. According to the Balochi account of history, Sibi was the place where one of the early Baloch rulers, Mir Chakar, known from classical heroic ballads, established the capital of the Rind-Lashari Balochi confederacy in the late 15th century.²⁷ Some other early urban centres in Balochistan that can be mentioned are Bampur, Pahra (now Iranshahr), Sarawan and Chabahar in present-day Iran, and Bela, Gwadar, Kharan and Khuzdar in present-day Pakistan.

It is hard to speak of a written Balochi literature before the 1950s. It is, however, highly likely that poems in Balochi were indeed written down by the poets themselves or by people around them. Strong indications that there might have been such early written records of Balochi literature are found in a British colonial document: "A considerable body of literature exists in Western Baluchi and many of the leading men keep books, known as *daftar*, in which their favourite ballads are recorded in the Persian character".²⁸ There were thus literate Baloch who were educated in traditional Islamic schools, where they were taught, for example, Arabic and Persian. It was thus natural for such persons to use the Arabic-Persian script for writing Balochi. Balochi was, however, never used as the official language at the court of Baloch rulers. The language of the administration in Kalat, for example, was initially Persian and later English.²⁹

During the British period a considerable amount of publication of Balochi oral literature took place. More than anyone else, the person associated with this activity is the British civil servant M. Longworth Dames. The purpose of this effort was mainly to provide material for the British officials to learn Balochi. Also parts of the Bible were translated into Balochi in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and, possibly in response to this, the first translation of the Quran appeared in the early 20th century.³⁰ However, only after the independence of Pakistan in 1947 do we find books in Balochi published by the Baloch themselves. The readership is so far limited to a small literary elite, comprising a few hundred people at best. This limited readership naturally puts a heavy mental and financial constraint on anyone wishing to publish his or her literary production in Balochi.

Criteria for urbanism

Gordon Childe, held by Smith³¹ to be "the most influential archaeologist of the twentieth century", presented the following criteria for urbanism:³²

26 Swidler 2008, 369, 371.

27 Hosseinbor 2000, 38–39; Breseeg 2004, 140; see also Spooner 1989, 610.

28 *Baluchistan District Gazetteer Series* 1986 [1907], 81.

29 Jahani 2005, 153.

30 Jahani 1989, 24.

31 Smith 2009, 3.

32 Childe 1950, 9–16.

1. "In point of size the first cities must have been more extensive and more densely populated than any previous settlements, although considerably smaller than many villages today."³³
2. "In composition and function the urban population already differed from that of any village. Very likely indeed most citizens were still also peasants, harvesting the lands and waters adjacent to the city. But all cities must have accommodated in addition classes who did not themselves procure their own food...full-time specialist craftsmen, transport workers, merchants, officials and priests."³⁴
3. "Each primary producer paid over the tiny surplus he could wring from the soil with his still very limited technical equipment as tithe or tax to an imaginary deity or a divine king who thus concentrated the surplus."³⁵
4. "Truly monumental public buildings not only distinguish each known city from any village but also symbolize the concentration of the social surplus."³⁶
5. "[P]riests, civil and military leaders and officials absorbed a major share of the concentrated surplus and thus formed a 'ruling class.'"³⁷
6. "Writing"³⁸
7. "[T]he elaboration of exact and predictive sciences – arithmetic, geometry and astronomy."³⁹
8. "Other specialists, supported by the concentrated social surplus, gave a new direction to artistic expression."⁴⁰
9. "Regular 'foreign' trade over quite long distances was a feature of all early civilizations."⁴¹
10. "[E]ven the earliest urban communities must have been held together by a sort of solidarity...Peasants, craftsmen, priests and rulers form a community, not only by reason of identity of language and belief, but also because each performs mutually complementary functions, needed for the well-being...of the whole."⁴²

Following these criteria, and the added parameter of a monetary economy, I will now investigate whether there is an "urban mind" depicted in Balochi literature and, if so, whether it is found in both the oral and the written literature, that is, whether this "urban mind" is an old or a rather new phenomenon in Balochistan. At this point it should be noted that the "urban mind" under study here has nothing to do with modernity. Totally different criteria would be needed for the study of modernity, but this is outside the scope of the present chapter.

The written texts examined in this study all date from the 1950s and onwards, whereas the oral texts are undated. Since common themes in the oral literature, almost identical stories in fact, are found among the Baloch who migrated westwards to Fars as well as those who went north-eastwards to Turkmenistan, the oral literature is here assumed to be of a much earlier date than the written

33 Childe 1950, 9.

34 Childe 1950, 11.

35 Childe 1950, 11.

36 Childe 1950, 12.

37 Childe 1950, 12–13.

38 Childe 1950, 14.

39 Childe 1950, 14.

40 Childe 1950, 15.

41 Childe 1950, 15.

42 Childe 1950, 16.

texts. The texts analysed consist of five traditional tales and five short stories. The texts will be summarised in search for criteria of an “urban mind”.

Summary of the texts with notes on criteria of an “urban mind”⁴³

I. Oral texts

a. Mister Five-Slayer

The first text is a story of a poor man who decides to leave the town where he is living and move to another kingdom. There he happens to become the chief minister of the king by claiming he can kill five tigers all at once, which of course he has never done. His duty as the chief minister is to ward off any dangers to the king and his rule. As soon as he is given a new mission, he returns home and starts beating his wife, who had once mockingly called him “Mister Five-Slayer”, something which he had taken as a pretext for his claim at the king’s court. By pure luck and the skill of his wife, he successfully fights tigers and thieves, and attacks the king’s enemies. On one of his missions, he dresses up as a businessman in order to fight robbers. Finally he receives half the kingdom.

In this text a more densely populated place, a “town” (Bal. *šahr*), is contrasted with the “village” (Bal. *halk*) that Mister Five-Slayer came from. There is also mention of “shopkeepers” (Bal. *dukkāndār, bakkāl*) and “construction workers” (Bal. *hunarkār, tāhēnōk*). As for monumental buildings, Mister Five-Slayer builds himself a “palace” (Bal. *mārī*), and the place where the king and his ministers gather is described as a “court” (Bal. *dīwān*). Regarding the ruling class, in addition to the “king” (Bal. *bādšāh*) there is mention of his “ministers and deputees” (Bal. *wazīr u wakīl*) and his “soldiers” (Bal. *sipāhī*). There is also reference to a “war” (Bal. *miṛ u jāng*) between this king and another king. The climax of the story comes when Mister Five-Slayer is transformed from being “poor and destitute” (Bal. *bēwass u nēzgar*) into “lord of half the kingdom” (Bal. *bādšāhīay nēmagay wāḡā*).

b. Moses and the starving man

The second story is about Moses, in this Islamic context given the title of a “prophet”, and a destitute and starving man. The man asks Moses to intercede for him and plead with God to give him everything that has been provided for his whole lifetime in one go, so that he can fill his stomach if only once. God does so, and since the poor man cannot eat all the food he gives some away as alms. God rewards him, and at the end of the story the man becomes the foremost businessman in the whole world.

The very first criterion of urbanism found in this text is that Moses is seen as a mediator between God and man, the same role a priest has. Another notion associated with urbanism is giving alms to the poor “for God’s sake” (Bal. *bi rāh-i xudā*). An indirect reference to tradesmen is also found in that the poor man, upon receiving his allocation, goes to the “marketplace” (Bal. *bāzār*) to buy food. There is thus a monetary economy in this text. A more direct reference to

43 Bibliographical information about the texts is found at the end of the chapter.

tradesmen is provided at the end of the story, where the “starving fellow” (Bal. *gužnagēn bandag*) becomes “the tradesman of the world” (Bal. *tajjār-i jahān*), a transformation similar to the one in the first text. This also bears witness to an awareness of long-distance trade.

c. The little lizard-girl

Story number three is that of a childless couple, a poor man and his wife. After the intervention of a man with supernatural powers, the wife gives birth, not to a human child but to a lizard. This lizard proves to be a blessing, since she can change her appearance into different utensils and by doing so bring home dates, wheat, oil and other necessities. Only when she visits the school, which seems to be only for boys and thus a traditional religious school, does she get nothing. Eventually she manages to get hold of a merchant’s entire fortune and bring it to her parents.

References to urban concepts in this text are the presence of a “religious man endowed with supernatural powers” (Bal. *pīrpārsā*) and specialised craftsmen such as a “keeper of the storage” (Bal. *anbārčīn*), a “gardener” (Bal. *bāgpān*), a “blacksmith” (Bal. *āhinkār*), and a “merchant” (Bal. *bakkāl*) who has a “shop” (Bal. *dukkān*). We also meet the “king’s daughter and his minister’s daughter” (Bal. *bādšāh u wazīray jīnikk*). The “royal palace” (Bal. *bādšāhī māri*) is mentioned as well. In this text, there is also reference to education with the words “school” (Bal. *madrasag*), “reading” (Bal. *wānag*), “small blackboard for each pupil to write on” (Bal. *taxtī*), and “pen” (Bal. *kalam*). The climax of this story is when the poor parents become “rich” (Bal. *māldār u ganjdār*) after receiving the merchant’s entire fortune.

d. Goli and her husband

The fourth story is that of Goli, who treats her husband, Ahmad, so badly that he decides to throw her into a well. When he has second thoughts and tries to pull her out of the well, a dragon comes out instead of his wife. The dragon manages to get Ahmad married to the king’s daughter by twisting itself around her neck and only letting go on Ahmad’s order. When the dragon does the same with another princess, Ahmad is called to rescue her as well. The dragon had warned him, however, that if he comes to rescue more princesses, the dragon will eat him up. However, Ahmad manages to save this second princess by telling the dragon a lie, namely that Goli has escaped from the well and is looking for it. On hearing this, the dragon flees head over heels in order to escape falling into Goli’s hands.

In this story there is mention of a “town” (Bal. *šahr*), two “kings” (Bal. *šāh*), two “kings’ daughters” (Bal. *šāhey jānek*), and a “court” (Bal. *maǰles*). There is also mention of “wise men” (Bal. *ālem*) who try to free the king’s daughter from the dragon, but in vain. The climax of the story is not when Ahmad becomes the “king’s son-in-law” (Bal. *šāhey dūmād*), although this is an important event, but rather when he manages to free the second princess despite the dragon’s warnings.

e. The Indian merchant and the Egyptian goldsmith’s daughter

The final story is about an Indian merchant who takes a wife from Egypt, but throws her into a well on the way back to India. Another caravan pulls her out and takes her back to Egypt. She does not tell her family the truth about her husband and what he did. He, on the other hand, goes back to India where he loses his fortune. Fate brings him back to Egypt as a beggar, where he again meets his wife, who remains faithful to her husband even though he has been cruel to her.

At the end of the story it becomes apparent that the merchant is the offspring of a slave and his wife the offspring of a prince, something which is then seen as the reason for their evil versus good deeds.

Already in the title of the story there is a tradesman, a “merchant” (Bal. *tajjār*) who does “business” (Bal. *tajjāratt*) between India and Egypt, and a craftsman, an Egyptian “goldsmith” (Bal. *zargar*). The Indian merchant is described as having a “caravan” (Bal. *kāpila*) and the Egyptian goldsmith has “wealth” (Bal. *sarmāya*). Other merchants also appear, and the person who takes the woman back to Egypt is to bring a written “receipt” (Bal. *rasīd*) from her father, a reference to written documentation. The Egyptian goldsmith lives in a “palace” (Bal. *kāx*). When the Indian merchant loses his fortune he goes begging to different “towns” (Bal. *šār*), and when he comes to Egypt and meets his wife he asks her, not knowing who she is, for “alms” (Bal. *xayrāt*) “for God’s sake” (Bal. *pa xudāy nāmā*). A “prince” (Bal. *šāzādag*) is also mentioned as the father of the girl in the story. The girl, who is of royal lineage, does the good deed of protecting her husband even though he has mistreated her. Note also the presence of long-distance trade (and begging) which brings the Indian merchant-beggar to Egypt, not only once but twice.

2. *Written texts*

a. **The inheritance**

The first story is that of a dying old woman named Granaz. At the start of the story, she is moaning in agony. She has raised five sons, but the first is dead, the second has left the country and abandoned her, the third has become a guerilla fighter in the mountains, the fourth is in prison, and only the fifth son, who seems to be somewhat disabled, is at her side. She used to be a strong woman, but is now totally destitute. At the end of the story she dies in this sad condition.

In this text, there are few references to what could be described as an urban mind. Granaz mentions a “fortress” (Bal. *kōṭā*) and a “prison” (Bal. *bandīxāna*), phenomena that are associated with the exercise of power. There is also reference to “religious people” (Bal. *pīr u fakīr*) who will only provide “amulets” (Bal. *čiṭ u tāyī*) if they are well paid. There is no climax in this story of the kind found in the oral narratives.

b. **The evil-doer**

In the second story, a court report of a murder is given. Dawlat Khan has killed the wife of his brother, Muhabbat Khan, accusing her of having had an affair with a passer-by. Muhabbat Khan himself is a guest worker in Dubai and is about to return home for a vacation. As the story develops, it becomes clear that the woman was pregnant, and that it was in fact Dawlat Khan himself who had an affair with her. He committed the murder in order to conceal his guilt, but at the end of the story there is a report of a new murder. Muhabbat Khan has found out the whole truth and has killed his brother.

This text revolves around a court case, and there are references to an “investigation” (Bal. *taftīš*), “written reports” (Bal. *ripūrṭ*), “imprisonment” (Bal.

kayz u banday sazā), and the “crime branch” (Bal. *krāym brānc*). Once again there is no climax, and the story ends on a sad note.

c. Thunder

The third story tells of a long drought and a prediction during a ritual sacrifice that there will be heavy rain in the near future. The man who makes the sacrifice, Kuhda Shahsuwar, has a son, Kasim, who has joined the army in Muscat. Kasim sends a message with another soldier to say he is about to return, whereupon his father begins making preparations to marry off his son in order to get him to stay at home from now on. He sends a servant to meet his son at the port on the day of his return and to travel back home with him. When Kasim arrives at the port he decides to visit a friend on the way home, and he sends the servant in advance. The servant arrives safe and sound, but not Kasim, who is struck by lightning when he takes shelter under a tree as the long-awaited rain starts to pour down. His father loses his mind as a result of his son’s death.

References to criteria of an urban mind in this text are the title of “village elder” (Bal. *kuhdā*) given to three people in the text, being a “soldier” (Bal. *sipāhī*) in the “army” (Bal. *pawj*), and the use of money, namely “Pakistani rupie” (Bal. *kalladār*).

d. Ormara 2030

The fourth story is set in the future, namely in 2030, and the location is the port of Ormara in Pakistani Balochistan. The main character is Balach, who is an old Baloch nationalist, a member of a nationalist party, and a poet. When the story opens, he is sitting and watching the sea. He sees people dressed in different kinds of clothes, even shorts and skirts, which are not common in Balochistan today. He compares the noisy crowd in the restaurant to the seabirds of old times. He is very lonely since his friends of old are all dead, and there is a heavy burden on his heart. Nobody speaks Balochi any more, and Balochi culture is about to be forgotten as well. Balach remembers how he had foreseen and warned against this situation in his days as an active politician, but nobody had taken him seriously enough to do something about the situation. Balach hears young people conversing in Urdu and English, then suddenly somebody speaking in Balochi. He turns around and finds that it is only a little beggar. The next day Balach’s death is announced from the mosque, in Urdu rather than in Balochi.

In this text as well, there are some references to criteria of an urban mind. Balach is described as a writer of “poetry” (Bal. *šāhirī*) and as a “political figure” (Bal. *syāsī mardum*). There are also references to “political meetings” (Bal. *syāsī majlis u jalasah*) and to a monetary economy in the form of “Pakistani rupie” (Bal. *kalladār*). But once again, the urban mind is not a foreground theme, and the story ends in despair since there seems to be nobody left to care for the Balochi language and culture after the death of Balach.

e. Bitter

In the final story we meet Rahmat, a young and successful writer, who is frequently published in magazines. He is very well received by the headmaster when he returns to his former school, and he believes that it is thanks to his success as a writer. The headmaster wants to talk to him about something, so Rahmat stays on until the headmaster has finished his daily duties. Rahmat imagines that the headmaster, who is a well-educated man with two M.A.’s and one M.Ed., may

want to hear a poem of his, or maybe even ask for advice on writings of his own. As it turns out, the headmaster wants to discuss a totally different matter. Rahmat has an influential brother in Bahrain, and the headmaster needs this brother's help to find a suitable job for his own brother who is also in Bahrain.

The main criterion of an urban mind found in this text is that of writing. The whole milieu is a school where we meet the "headmaster" (Bal. *hiḍmastīr*) and the "poet and writer" (Bal. *šāiru labzānt*). Mention is made of "literary magazines" (Bal. *labzānkī tāk*), "poetry and writings" (Bal. *šayr u nibištānk*), a "meeting for reciting poetry" (Bal. *šāirī dīwān*), "literary and other scientific work" (Bal. *labzānkī u diga ilmī kār*) a "school" (Bal. *iskūl*), "paper and files" (Bal. *kāgad u fāyl*), the "marketplace" (Bal. *bāzār*), a "secretary" (Bal. *munšī*), "university degrees" (M.A. and M.Ed.), and a "letter of introduction" (Bal. *pārṭī kāgad*).

Conclusions

Is there, then, an urban mind in Balochi oral and written literature? In the oral narratives the urban characteristics are very clearly put forth as an ideal. To become a king or the king's son-in-law or the foremost merchant in the world is what constitutes true success, and not, for example, to become the richest farmer or cattle owner. The presence of businessmen is more strongly felt than that of religious men in these stories; in other words, Mammon is given more attention than God in this cultural setting. It is thus clear that there is indeed an urban mind strongly present in these stories, but that an urban lifestyle exists only in a fantasy world and is something that one can dream about but probably never attain.

It is interesting to note that writing in the vernacular (i.e. Balochi) has not been a prerequisite for an urban mind and urban ideals. Further, in the pre-modern society with a mainly non-literate population, where the oral tales were created and retold, the urban life was presented as the successful life.

In the written literature the stories have a totally different setting, which is grounded in real life. Here the scene is not a dream world where wishes come true, but the harsh reality of Balochistan. In fact, all the short stories end on a pessimistic note, with the death of an important character or with deep disappointment. Urbanism as the ideal is absent in these stories, and even though urban phenomena are mentioned they are not crucial to the plot in any of the stories. Their grounding in actual life rather than in dreams must be considered the main reason for this marginal treatment of urban ideals.

Again, it must be noted that urbanism has nothing to do with modernity. Modernity must be evaluated in totally different parameters, which would make for another interesting study. While traditional themes are the focus in three of the written texts (loneliness in old age, infidelity, the whims of nature), in the fourth story the worry about the future of Balochistan and the Balochi language is intertwined with the theme of loneliness, and in the fifth story human egocentrism is depicted in a somewhat modern context.

The answer to whether there is an urban mind in Balochi literature must, however, be affirmative, at least for the oral narratives. The urban lifestyle and occupations are depicted as the ideal ones, those that one can only dream about. Even though these oral narratives may have drawn upon a cultural heritage that was not only limited to the Baloch, it would have been impossible to tell stories

about concepts that were totally unknown to the audience or for that matter the storyteller. Thus, there must have been a certain presence of urban concepts, as well as knowledge of an urban lifestyle, in the very rural area of Balochistan during the time when these stories came into being. The very old dichotomy between the “Baloch” and the “townspeople” (see above) is further evidence that the people of rural Balochistan had an awareness of urbanism even in past centuries.

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