

The Importance of the Sports in Baloch Society: A Cultural Perspective

Surryia Banol¹, Nasreen Gul², Yousuf Ali Rodenil¹, Javed Akhter^{3,*}, Abdul Hameed Baloch⁴

¹Pakistan Study Center, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan

²Balochi Department, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan

³English Department, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan

⁴Department of Microbiology, LUAWMS, Uthal

Abstract The main objective of this research study is to identify certain socio-cultural values, norms and traditions particularly sports that have been played in the Baloch society and now these sports (games) are almost near to extinction. The researcher identified a Balochi game “Jee” that has been played by Baloch people in different parts of Balochistan and this game is now not almost as popular as it has been in the past. History of the sports can be traced back to the origin of the human being on the earth. The sports involve human being to hold their command of nature and environment. It is not possible to understand a particular society without knowing its cultural, social and economic history. For example, one cannot recognize the importance of rugby union in Wales without knowing their social, cultural and economic history. The Baloches who are living in their homeland (Balochistan) divided in three countries i.e. Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan and there are about five to eight million Baloch people living throughout the world. The Baloches like other nations of the world assert that they have their own national characteristics in all fields of life like traditions, social norms, traditions, art and music.

Keywords Baloch, Sports, Jee, Culture, Balochistan, Extinction of traditional games

1. Introduction

The origin of the sports may be traced back to the origin of the humankind in the universe. Man is distinguished from animals for certain human traits, which the animals lack. Sport and playing is one those human traits that animals lack. The sports play many functions in society. The Sports have always been involved to support human beings to enhance their command of nature and environment as well as to maintain physical and mental fitness. The sports appear to engage the exercise and development of the people's talent for their own interest. Throughout history, the sports have always been defined as physical action involving competition with challenges by defining certain rules and criteria for determining victory. Modern societies and cultures cannot be fully understood without admitting the importance of the sports (Grant Jarvie, 2006, p. 43). Around 17,300 years before cave paintings have been discovered in France (Lascaux Caves) suggesting portrays of “sprinting” and “wrestling” (Gary Barber, 2007, pp.25). Similarly, the cave paintings, which discovered in Mongolia, show us the crowds that are busy in surrounding a wrestling match. These cave paintings belong to the Neolithic age of 7000 BC and

in Libya near Gilf Kebir at Wadi Sura, rock arts of cave swimmers have been found with the proofs of swimming and archery being experienced about 6000 BC and in Japan similar cave paintings have been discovered showing a sumo wrestling like sport. (Robert Crego, 2003, p .34, Gyoza Voros, 2007, pp. 39). The cave Paintings of eleven caves discovered in Musa Khail Balochistan in 2011 tell the same story. The toys and other items excavated in Mehr Garh (Balochistan), Mohenjo Daro, Harappa and other sites shed light on the sporting and athletic activities of ancient man.

The rise and development of the Indus Civilization in Balochistan between about 3400 and 2000 B.C. and its disappearance by 1500 B.C. It was an isolated cultural-historical phenomenon confined to the Greater Indus Valley. The Indus Valley and the hilly regions on its northern and western borders had remained closely linked with the neighbouring regions lying to the west and northwest of Pakistan. Balochistan is an eastern extension of the Iranian plateau where ancient settlements are clustered in the accessible valleys, which also determined the lines of communications connecting the Indus plain with Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Iran. Balochistan therefore, was neither a “backwater”, “borderland” nor marginalised area. Because of its location and distinctive physical environment, this region was a vital link between the Indus Valley and the contemporary centres of civilization. As the cultural patterns of Balochistan from the Neolithic age, which can be equated and in certain cases, related with the

* Corresponding author:

sangatjavedakhtar@gmail.com (Javed Akhter)

Published online at <http://journal.sapub.org/sports>

Copyright © 2016 Scientific & Academic Publishing. All Rights Reserved

contemporary cultures of adjoining regions. There is evidence of progressive intensification of interactions among these regions along with changes in their cultural configurations.

All physical activities such as sports, stage performances and dance culture have always continuously been existed in all societies. It has almost been observed that all the sports and games have cultural and societal pattern and perspective and are cultural specific. Thoughts regarding the origin and purpose of the sports have usually connected with cultural components (Ashe, 1988, Guttman, 2004b and Szmanski, 2006). The body movements are governed and controlled physiologically but all these movements in sports and dances are subject to certain prevailing social norms as per the existing societies. The physical customs prevailing in a particular civilization is thus rooted in particular communal background (Gertrud Pfister, 2003). Certain questions always arose by historians about the nature and situate of sports connected to a particular society for given period, how did people developed particular type of sports and whether these sports transferred to the rest of societies in similar or diverse forms? History of sports mention how, when and where the particular sport practices evolved (Grant Jarvie, 2006).

It is not possible to understand a particular society without knowing its cultural, social and economic history. For example, one cannot recognize the importance of rugby union in Wales without knowing their social, cultural and economic history. likewise, the representative connection among the Grey Cup (ice-hockey) and Canada, or the All-Ireland Gaelic Football Final and Ireland, the World Super bowl (American football) and the United States of America, or Wimbledon (tennis) and Great Britain, cannot be fully elucidated without validating and admitting that such sport events are also social institutions which either escalating or decreasing the significance to diverse nations because of the historical connection between these events and the cultural and national historiography of the particular nations (Grant Jarvie, 2006).

2. The Baloch

The Baloch people who are living in their homeland (Balochistan) divided in three countries i.e. Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Although there are communities, who are also living in different parts of the world other than divided Balochistan, like Gulf States, in East Africa, Turkmenistan, UK and USA. According to an estimate there are about five to eight million Baloch people living throughout the world (Carina Jahani, 2000, p. 11). Pre-Indus civilization has been discovered in Balochistan at Mehr Garh in 1979 that seem to extend back as far as the Stone Age (70,000 to 7,000 BC). The Baloch people suggest that they have been a self-differentiating and self-defining ethno-cultural group all over the history yet if they did not have sense of social or political harmony to affirm

themselves as a nation (The Foreign Policy Center, 2006). As if other nations The Baloch assert that, they have their own characteristics in all fields of life like traditions, social norms, art, sports and music. Influenced by other nations during invasions to the region and modern life and due to urbanization the Baloch people have also adopted foreign norms in their social setup and have forgotten many of their own cultural and tradition norms (Panah Muhammad Afzal Qaisarani, 2012, Pp. 78-102).

The people belonging to Baloch tribe speak Balochi language. Balochi language is an ancient language. Its roots are traced back to Iranian branch of Indo-European family. It has resemblance with languages such as Sanskrit, Avesta, Old Persian and Phalavi, which now a days are said to be as dead languages. This tribe is further divided in to

- Rind
- Lashar
- Marri
- Bugti
- domki
- Magsi
- Khosa
- Rakhashani
- Dashti
- Umrani
- Noshervani
- Gichki
- Buledi
- Sanjarani
- Khidai

The tribe has a head known as “sardar”, the sub-divided tribes also have heads known as “Malik” or “Takari” or “Mir”. These tribe heads are members of districts and local Jirgas.

3. Jee (G)

This is a game played between youngster boys aging 15-30 years old. This game is mostly played during night especially in moon light although children practice during day light in order to learn the game. This game is played between two teams, there is no restriction on the number of players but it should not exceed 10 number players in each team. The game is divided into two halves i.e., “Band” and “Rau”. The game is played in a boundary of about 100-150 meters all around and in the centre of the boundary a centre point is drawn where the player of the team who are playing the “Band” round stand back to back attentively in the circle keeping their faces towards the ground. Both the teams either decide voluntarily which team to play “Band” and which to play “Rau” or there will be toss and toss winning team will decide to play either for “Band” or “Rau”. When both the teams become ready on the field, the game is announced to start. Players of both the teams challenge each other by saying loudly “Jee”. The literally meaning of “Jee” is “Yes”, “Come on”.

The players of the “Rau” team spread all over the ground, surrounding the “Band” team all around just like besieging them. Players of “Rau” team try to touch or hit and run away to cross the boundary and Band team try to catch and hold the players of the “Rau” team within the boundary but at one time only one player is allowed to be touched or hold from both the teams otherwise it will be foul. Similarly, if a single player of the teams is touched or hold from the teams, he will be declared out and sit outside the boundary. On the next round if the opposite team whose one player has been declared out will make an attempt to make the points equal, the player who has been declared out again come and join the team to play. At last if one team get success to make all the players out and wins the first round and on the next round the teams play for the opposite halves as one team in first half played the “Band” round now they will play for the “Rau” and vice versa. In this round if both the teams make their points equal than will go for third round otherwise the winning team of the both rounds is declared winner.

4. Historical and Cultural Background

As Balochistan has been the centre point for the invaders and travellers from east to west and west to east. They have always attacked and influenced the Baloch society. In the past even today the Baloch is known as a nomadic people. They are consistently migrated one place to another and do not lead a settled life. Most Baloch practice a mix of nomadic pastoralist and settled agriculture. Baloch culture is opposite to the general perception about it. Though Balochistan is an area of barren lands, deserts and mountains, the Baloch culture is full of traditions, arts and crafts. Balochi embroidery is one of the most popular arts and crafts, which are done by the females. Baluchistan is also known for its tribes and festivals. Another distinct feature of Baloch culture is the storytelling tradition. Poets and storytellers are highly respected in Baloch culture.

There are many popular games and sports in Baloch society include *chauk*, and *Jee*. The other games like wrestling, horse racing, shooting and hunting pastimes among the wealthier people of Baloch tribes. Card games and gambling are also popular among groups of some Baloch tribes. The Baloch depend on livestock and rare small ruminants (sheep and goats) as a source of income and livelihood until today. They use to graze their animals in range areas in hilly and mountainous areas and for such a harder lifestyle they need to be healthy and strong and “Jee” is one of the games that make them strong and healthy. Jee is their most favourite game and it is popular in Baloch society. In addition, the historical background of the game the Baloch has always been involved in battles with invaders and even with their neighbouring brother tribes. In addition, the halves of the game “Jee” tells them that how to defend themselves from their invading enemy. For example, the “Band” round tells that how to be unite and face when there is enemy who is attacking you and “Rau” round tells that when you attack

on someone than besiege them, attack on them and escape to make yourself save until the enemy has not become weaken.

5. Conclusions

The present paper is an attempt to outline the importance of sports in Balochi society.

The main objective of this study is to identify certain social and cultural norms, values and traditions particularly sports that have been played in the Baloch society and now these sports (games) are almost near to extinction due to urbanization and modern games introduced throughout the world. In this study, we retrieved literature about the history of sports and Baloch history. We identified a game “Jee” that has been played by Baloch people in different parts of Balochistan and this game is not almost played any more in that sense as it has been played in past. Therefore, the present research paper tends to conclude that the traditional and historical Balochi games and sports are rapidly going to extinct along with the extinction of the old values and traditions of Balochistan. There are many causes of this extinction; the strongest one is the influence of science, technology, computer, mobile phone and information technology.

REFERENCES

- [1] Balochistan of Pakistan. (2006). On the margins of History. The Foreign Policy Center.
- [2] Barber, Gary. (2007). Getting Started in Track and Field Athletics: Advice & Ideas for Children, Parents and Teachers. Trafford Publishing. ISBN 978-1-4120-6557-3.
- [3] Crego, Robert. (2003). Sports and Games of the 18th and 19th Centuries. Greenwood Publishing Group. ISBN 978-0-313-31610-4.
- [4] Guttmann, A. (2004b). Sports: The first five millennia. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- [5] Gyozo, Voros. (2007). Egyptian Temple Architecture: 100 Years of Hungarian Excavations in Egypt, 1907-2007. American University in Cairo Press. ISBN 978-963-662-084-4.
- [6] Holly, Capelo. (2010). Symbols from the Sky: Heavenly messages from the depths of prehistory may be encoded on the walls of caves throughout Europe. Seed Magazine.
- [7] Jahani, Carina. (2000). (eds.), Language in Society- Eight Sociolinguistic Essays on Balochi. Uppsala, Sweden: Acta Universitatis. Studia Iranica Upsaliensia.
- [8] Jarvie, Grant. (2006). Sport, Culture and Society: An Introduction. London.
- [9] Jeff, Hartsell. (2011). “wrestling in our blood.” In: Says Bulldogs” Luvsandorj. The Post and Courier.
- [10] Panah, Muhammad and Afzal Qaisarani. (2012). “Status of

- Women in the Baloch Society”. In: Hanken. Vol. (4). 2012. Department of Balochi. University of Balochistan Quetta. Pp. 78-102.
- [11] Pfister, Gertrud. (2003). Culture, sport, Society. Vol 6(1) pp. 61-91.
- [12] Poliakoff, M. B. (1987). Combat sports in the ancient world: Competition, violence, and culture. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- [13] R, Ashe Jr. (1988). A hard road to glory: A history of the African-American athlete 1619-1918. New York: Warner Books.
- [14] S, Szymanski. (2006). A theory of the evolution of modern sport (No. Working paper series, Paper No. 06-03): Association Internationale des Economistes du Sport/International Association of Sports Economists.