Reframing Gender and Agency in Tribal Histories: Baloch Women's Leadership from Medieval to Modern Times

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Abstract

This paper examines the prevailing academic studies that consider Baloch society as patriarchal and ignore the diverse roles of Baloch women in various fields. This research attempts to examine the historical roles of Baloch women, such as the Bandai Baloch, Bibi Ganjan and Banari, and highlights their contributions in conflict resolution. Women's control over household management is also analyzed to show how they exercised their autonomy by adhering to the norms of honor (*izzat*) and hospitality (*melmastia*). Using postcolonial feminist theory, this research examines the roles of Baloch women through primary and secondary sources, which are considered in the context of their families, tribal chieftaincies, nomadic social structures, urbanization and migration. This paper shows that Baloch women have always strategically positioned themselves within patriarchal systems, and expands the dual image of the "oppressed tribal woman" and the "liberated modern woman". This article argues that Baloch women's participation in leadership, warfare, and mediation are forms of gender agency that have reshaped power relations within the tribal system. This research also examines the changes in traditional authority through education, migration, and political activism from the middle Ages to the present. It is argued that Baloch women are not simply victims of patriarchy, but active participants in history, creating new power structures for themselves. The findings of this research make an important contribution to gender history and postcolonial studies, and offer a case study of agency within honor-based tribal societies that also informs a broader regional understanding of the Middle East and Central Asia.

Keywords: Baloch, Tribal, Honour-hospitality, women, Baloch Sardar

1. Introduction

The Baloch people live in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, and have large immigrant communities in the Middle East and East Africa. Discussions of Baloch society are often framed within a rigid patriarchal framework, which limits the cultural presence and prominent role of women (Ahmed, 2017). Colonial texts, national histories, and the international media often portray Baloch culture as unchanging and male-dominated (Baluch 1977; Harrison 1981). Similar views are found in studies of South Waziristan, where women are often portrayed as custodians of family honor under the *Pashtunwali* tribal code. At the same time, men exercise strict control over their movements (Wazir 2025). These similarities suggest that such perceptions of male roles are perhaps not unique to Baloch society, but are part of a broader pattern present in tribal societies.

Ozair and Rauf (2023) highlights that Baloch society has shifted from its traditional, clan-based origins toward a more politically aware lifestyle. However, this change has seldom been understood from a gendered perspective. Examining how women factor into these changes is central for understanding how mass movements are created and how collective identities are formed. Continuous marginalization of Balochistan within political sphere of Pakistan continues inequality based on gender. Khetran (2011) explains that even with an richness of natural resources, the province underinvests in education, health, and welfare, contributing to pushing female enrollment in schools below twenty percent. These inequities in basic services serve to keep women out of public life and political participation.

The center of Baloch tribal governance is the sardar, who is the leader of the tribe, leads the jirga, enforces the law, and adjudicates disputes (Khan & Kasi, 2015). His authority determines much of the social and political system, reinforcing male dominance in leadership. However, historical records and oral traditions reveal a more complex picture, in which Baloch women

are also seen playing active roles in warfare, tribal mediation, and social affairs. In poetry and oral narratives, women appear as mediators during tribal conflicts, as leaders in times of crisis, and as hosts whose hospitality is renowned even in the absence of men (Janmahmad, 1982; Spooner, 2004).

Many have ignored this history because colonial scholars have focused on Victorian values when discussing gender. They have viewed public authority as a primarily male-dominated role (Sokefeld, 2001). In contrast, postcolonial feminist perspectives challenge these assumptions. For example, Ramirez writes about Native American women that gender and tribal identity need to be understood together (Ramirez, 2007). This perspective helps to re-imagine the role of Baloch women in oral poetry, storytelling, and the political sphere (Titus, 1996; Dashti, 2012).

This article adopts a postcolonial feminist perspective to examine the status of Baloch women within tribal structures, which are often undervalued or ignored (Mohanty, 2003). It argues that colonial and nationalist narratives have portrayed the "tribal woman" as passive and powerless, denying her real power in the system of family relationships and political life (Spivak, 1988). An intersectional (comparative-class) perspective shows that their experiences are not only linked to gender but also to tribal hierarchies, class, and regional geopolitical conditions (Crenshaw, 1991).

Baloch society underwent major changes during the transition from the medieval to the modern era. These included the establishment of states, modernization, and migration, all of which affected the role of women in public life. Although traditional ways of influencing society, such as mediation and the guardianship of cultural traditions, still exist today, improvements in education and political activity have opened new doors of leadership for Baloch women (Baloch & Kundi, 2018; Shah, 2020).

This study examines the changing role of Baloch women in agency, examining three aspects: (1) their leadership and participation in public life; (2) the impact of these roles in challenging gender stereotypes in tribal societies; (3) the evolution of these roles with modernization and education.

This article argues that Baloch women's historical and contemporary participation in leadership, warfare, and mediation are forms of agency that reshape power relations within patriarchal tribal rule, and thus challenge the notion of "passivity" presented in colonial and nationalist narratives.

This paper takes a historical and ethnographic view of the fixed assumptions about tribal patriarchy. It attempts to locate Baloch women's roles not within a binary of seclusion versus visibility but within more dynamic structures of power, kinship, and honor. This study improves our understanding of gender and agency in tribal societies. It highlights the importance of moving beyond colonial ideas and nationalist narratives that treat these groups as if they were all the same.

2. Literature Review and Theory

Eastern literature about Baloch culture produced very much during the 1800s, mostly through colonial narratives. For instance, those by Richard Burton in 1877 and the Imperial Gazetteer of India. These works contained descriptions regarding divisions within the Baloch tribe and their geographical distribution across different areas. However, these were colonial narratives deeply influenced by Orientalist visions and Victorian male values instead of any actual truth (Said, 1978; Burton, 1877). Therefore, women were predominantly showed in domestic roles with no recognition of their political and economic contributions (Sokefeld, 2001). The work of Dyer from 1921 presented Sarhad tribes through a militarized lens

that emphasized predispositions toward violence thereby reinforcing a gendered order that side-lines the importance of women's roles in society.

British officials often thought that female seclusion, or *purdah*, meant women were completely shut out of public life. This view ignored evidence that women played important roles in tribal mediation and warfare (Harrison, 1981). Relying on male tribal leaders for information reinforced stories told from a male perspective and pushed aside women's oral histories (Janmahmad, 1982).The colonial and male-focused viewpoint created a lasting silence about Baloch women's ability to act. This silence still affects how people view gender relations in the postcolonial state.

Since the partition in 1947, the Baloch nationality's history has been dominated by narratives focused on tribal chieftains-sardars and nawabs—as the main figures resisting state authority (Baluch, 1987; Dashti, 2012). More recent studies have emphasized ethnicity and the state relations, yet gender remains largely absent from these analysis. For example Hashmi (2015) focuses exclusively on male participation in the Baloch movement and fails to account for women as historical actors.

This discussion focuses on the important but often ignored roles of women in political movements. For instance, resolving intertribal conflicts, and joining armed resistance (Shah, 2020). Kandiyoti (1991) calls this neglect a "patriarchal bargain," where contributions of women are acknowledged only to reinforce male-centered ideas of nationhood. Research by Pitt-Rivers (1966) and Peristiany (1965) highlights key values like hospitality and loyalty to family. In Baloch culture, although honor and hospitality are usually seen as men's roles, studies show that both men and women maintain these values (Lindholm, 1982).

Paul Titus (1998) explains that the concept of "honor" in Baloch society is complex. It is based on social status and loyalty to tribal leaders. In his research on Baloch and Pashtun

communities, he finds that Pashtuns value justice and individual autonomy. In contrast, Baloch identity is linked to loyalty and collective tribal honor under the leadership of chiefs. These traditional concepts continue to shape Baloch social relations today, especially in matters of gender, where women's actions reflect the importance of honor in this male-dominated society.

Many studies have helped us understand the moral systems in tribal cultures. However, these studies often show women as passive holders of honor instead of active participants in creating and defending it. Recent research on Baloch oral epics and poetry highlights how women play a direct role in protecting tribal honor through diplomacy, mediation, and open defiance (Baloch & Kundi, 2018). This difference between general views in anthropology and the real experiences of Baloch women shows the need for a gender-focused review of these systems. It is important to see women not just as symbols but as political players within the honor code.

Most contemporary political scholarship is consistently devoid of gender as an important category of analysis. Ozair and Rauf (2023) note the transition of Baloch nationalism from a regime of tribal resistance to a broad-based mass movement, but once again, undermine women activism and hence reinforces androcentricity in its interpretations of that history. Khan and Kasi (2015) discuss the dominance of male authority within the entity called Jirga and the construction of political legitimacy in terms of sardar parameters. Related concerns arise within Native feminist scholarship as well: Ramirez (2007) calls for a woman-centered vision of sovereignty. The work also brings to the forefront the issue of challenges in integrating notions of gender within Baloch tribal contexts.

Postcolonial feminist scholars, especially Mohanty (2003) and Spivak (1988), help us to understand how voices of women have been marginalized in colonial and nationalist histories. Mohanty points out that portraying all "Third World women" as the same and equally oppressed is misleading. The concept of Spivak the "subaltern" shows that historical stories

often ignore colonized women. Kandiyoti's (1991) concept of "bargaining with patriarchy" examines how women navigate limitations and take action within patriarchal systems, particularly in contexts such as those of the Baloch.

An intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1991) shows how gender, linked to tribal affiliation, class, and geopolitical marginalization, creates different experiences of power and deprivation for Baloch women. For example, elite women from chieftaincy families can gain greater political influence through family ties. While women from non-elite backgrounds gain more control over their lives by using cultural norms and community support. This situation challenges simple labels such as “traditional” and “modern” roles. It shows that women’s participation has changed over time, but at the same time continues to adhere to local and indigenous values.

The theoretical framework for this study draws upon three interconnected lenses: postcolonial feminism, intersectionality, and the honor-hospitality code. These frameworks work to help us understand roles of women in society. Postcolonial feminism shows how colonial rules have silenced indigenous women. Interconnectedness of identities highlights the differences in class and tribe within Baloch society. The honor hospitality code explains how these power dynamics fit into accepted moral systems. This combination allows us to look at women's agency in a way that is both tied to local contexts and relevant globally. Yuval-Davis (1997) says that gender, ethnicity, and nationhood affect each other. Kandiyoti (2005) and Basu (2024) also point out that feminist analysis should consider how family structures and state power are changing. Building on these ideas, this study supports Abu-Lughod’s (2015) idea of examining indigenous moral codes as flexible tools that women use to navigate, rather than just oppose, patriarchy.

Postcolonial feminism critiques the idea that Western feminism universally applies to all women and also questions the acceptance of local patriarchal systems. Western feminists have often depicted women in the Global South as a homogenous group—oppressed and in need of saving (Mohanty, 2003). This view does not recognize the different historical and cultural backgrounds of their experiences. This view stereotypes Baloch women as "Third World women" (Spivak, 1988). Also, simply praising "authentic" local traditions can lead to gender-based exclusion while pretending to respect cultural differences (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

Postcolonial feminism looks at the histories of Baloch women to challenge colonial stories. It shows that women play important roles in society, often overcoming patriarchal constraints. Baloch oral histories describe women as guardians of honor who also engage in political discussions. This perspective is often missing from colonial narratives (Dashti, 2012). Recognizing this helps position Baloch women not as victims of tradition but as historically situated agents who negotiate between genders, power, and cultural continuity.

Intersectionality, as Crenshaw (1991) explains, makes it clear that we cannot look at gender in isolation. We must also consider other aspects of identity and power, such as race/ethnicity, tribe, class, and whether people are nomadic or settled. In Baloch society, these factors largely determine the extent to which women can act autonomously. For example, women belonging to chieftaincy families can be influential in inter-tribal diplomacy because of their family ties. In contrast, women belonging to Malwand nomadic groups have more freedom and authority to manage livestock and organize economic activities during migration (Baloch & Kundi, 2018). This distinction shows that constraints and opportunities coexist within the same patriarchal system.

The Baloch moral code is based on two fundamental values: honor (*izzat*) and hospitality (*melmastia*). Dyer's campaign diary, although written in a colonial tone, contains descriptions

of rituals and practices related to hospitality and oath-taking. These descriptions show that both men and women participated in the culture of melmasticia. Social values determine how people relate to each other, resolve conflicts, and form political alliances (Lindholm, 1982; Peristiany, 1965). While these codes may seem restrictive on the surface, they also provide women with opportunities to be recognized as hosts, mediators, and guardians of tribal honor.

When male heads of household were absent due to seasonal migration or war, women could temporarily assume public roles that carried significant political weight. The symbolic capital of honor, when linked to the prestige of a household or clan, had a direct political impact on women's behavior in such situations (Janmahmad, 1982). Viewing these relationships through the honor-hospitality framework makes it clear that gender norms simultaneously limited and empowered women. These aspects are also linked to the third question of this research, which examines the changes in agency under modernization, education, and activism.

3. Methodology

This research applies a historical sociology perspective, integrating social history, anthropology, and feminist theory to investigate the political, social, and cultural roles of Baloch women from medieval to modern times. This viewpoint helps us analyze long-term changes in society and understand how gender roles fit into shifting political systems (Skocpol, 1984).

This research uses different sources to answer three main questions. It follows two key principles. The first is contextualization, which means looking at women's roles in the specific social structures of Baloch society. This method helps to avoid outdated or overly simple assumptions. Second critical Re-reading – identifying and deconstructing colonial, nationalist, and anthropological biases through postcolonial feminist and intersectional framework. This study investigates three key research questions:

1). How did Baloch women exercise leadership, participate in warfare, and engage in public life from the medieval to the modern period?

2) How do codes of honor and hospitality-izzat and melmastia, respectively-facilitate or hinder the agency of women in the tribal framework?

3) How have modernization, education, and political activism transformed traditional forms of female authority and participation in Baloch society?

Data triangulation used three sources: oral traditions, poetry, colonial and postcolonial memoirs, secondary ethnographic and historical research. Each source offered a different perspective. Oral narratives focused on community memory and gender symbolism while colonial memoirs showed biased views from outside the community. Ethnographic accounts provided interpretations bound to context. Looking at these layers together provided both a clear historical view and a balanced interpretation.

In tandem, the research draws on a wide range of secondary literature, including recent ethnographic studies of Baloch society (Spooner 2004; Dashti 2012) that provide field data and theoretical interpretation. The comparative feminist studies of Pashtun, Kurdish, and Bedouin societies provide the wider interpretive frame within which to place the experiences of Baloch women within global discourses on gender in tribal systems. Baloch nationalist historiography is also investigated for its internal political narratives, which often replay gendered silences. A selective comparative element, referencing other tribal societies-most notably Kurds, Pashtuns, and Bedouins-highlights structural continuities (such as honor codes, kinship-based governance) but underlines the distinctive cultural configuration within which women's agency is shaped in the Baloch context.

Through this comparative approach, the study ensures that cross-cultural parallels underpin, rather than dissolve, the specificity of Baloch women's historical and political experiences.

4. Findings and Analysis

Historically, Baloch women have played important roles that go beyond visibility. From the medieval period to the present day, they have joined battle, participated in or conducted diplomacy, and shown up in public life. The following elements are thematic in the analysis: the involvement of women in warfare, their leadership and mediation roles, their custodianship of public space, and the interconnections between ideas of honor, hospitality, and social rank. The *Sardar* has important legislative, executive, and judicial powers. He can call meetings of the *Jirga* and issue binding decisions (Khan & Kasi, 2015). Similar issues occur in Native American contexts, where councils led by men often overlook cases of gender-based violence because of colonial patriarchal systems (Ramirez, 2007). This situation reinforces male authority in Baloch tribal institutions. However, evidence shows that women have also played a role in resolving disputes and leading councils, challenging the idea that the *Sardar* is the only authority in tribal governance.

The oral traditions and primary sources indicate that some Baloch women fought in the battles. One of them is Bandai, the sister of Amir Chakar Rind, who led a contingent of the Rind army in 1539 Battle of Chausa when it joined Mughal Emperor Humayun to fight against the Sur dynasty (Baluch, 1987; Dashti, 2012). This shows how tribal structures sometimes recognize capable female commanders. The military leadership of Bandai exemplifies Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the "patriarchal bargain," where women maneuver within patriarchal constraints to gain agency and recognition in male-dominated institutions.

Dyer (1921) provides an ethnographic observation that complements this historical record: "These men are fine skirmishers, and will fight with the utmost bravery when well led. They have confidence in their leaders. In fact, in some notable examples, the women of the Sarhad exercise great influence over their husbands, and, when this is so, rule with the proverbial rod of iron." This statement shows the significant roles of women in nomadic Baloch communities.

These points align with what we hear in oral stories about participation in tribal life and underscore the fluidity of gender roles in pastoral settings. From an intersectional feminist lens (Crenshaw, 1991), the visibility of elite women such as Bandai represent visible authority, while non-elite women's agency persisted through oral traditions and communal memory.

Women also played leadership roles when their men were away, such as during wars, political discussions, or seasonal migrations. For example, Mai Jato is remembered within the *Jatoi* tribe for preserving kinship continuity and tribal cohesion (Dashti, 1989). Bibi Ganjan, political adviser to Khuda Dad Khan is another example, remembered for her diplomatic acumen in intertribal negotiations during the late 19th century (Dashti, 2012). These cases shows how leadership role of women was legitimized through kinship authority. While Ozair and Rauf (2023) attribute recent political mobilization to middle-class participation. Viewed through postcolonial feminist theory (Mohanty, 2003; Spivak, 1988), these women demonstrate "situated agency," using relational power rather than individual autonomy to influence political outcomes.

In these circumstances, women were doing more than serving as placeholders for absent male leaders. They convened and hosted jirgas, and mobilized collective defense in the face of external dangers. Their authority was based on the honor–hospitality code (*izzat* and *melmastia*), through which they were authorized to represent households and clans in public affairs. Honor plays a dual role here both as constraint and as source of empowerment. As restriction and negotiation coexist within patriarchal structures, moving in line with Kandiyoti's 1991 notion of the "patriarchal bargain."

Dyer (1921) also recounts the case of Gul-Bibi, the wife of Shah Sawar, who publicly reproached her husband and another chief for yielding to British demands, and later received Dyer with diplomatic formality. Though framed through orientalist fascination, this account provided racial colonial evidence of women's participation in tribal diplomacy and their ability

to influence male political behaviour. These historical moments show how women turned moral authority into political power. They connected domestic honor with tribal strategy, a distinctly indigenous form of feminist negotiation (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

The *Otaq* is commonly known as a communal guesthouse. It is important in Baloch socio-political life. It serves as a place for hospitality, diplomacy, and sharing (Lindholm, 1982). When men were away, women managed *Otaq*, reinforcing kinship alliances and maintained household honor. This authority helps women strengthen tribal alliances and maintain household and tribal *izzat* (honor). This situation challenges the idea that gender segregation leads to political marginalization.

There is an important example of moral authority in the story of Mast Tawakali and Sammo, who are part of the Marri tribe. The tale tells how Sammo, a married woman, honored the Baloch tradition of *melmastia* by welcoming Tawakali, who was traveling for a tribal raid. Her hospitality came from a strong sense of duty (Shah, Sultan, & Kaker, 2018). This moment became an emotional experience that changed Tawakali's life. He chose to give up violence and follow a new path focused on poetry and reflection. This episode shows how dedication of women to honor and hospitality helped maintain social values and encouraged men to change for the better. It highlights that Baloch women play significant role in public and moral life, reaching far beyond traditional domestic roles *(*Huma, 2024*)*.

Women are closely associated with *izzat* in Baloch society. Historically, it has been a tribal norm not to harm women, children and old aged people during war (Peristiany, 1970; Dashti, 2012). These rules protected women but also expected them to behave modestly and preserve family honor. Therefore, women were both symbols and protectors of communal integrity. Postcolonial feminist perspectives show that these moral codes were not just limits on women but also created accepted ways for them to have an influence. This allowed women to be moral protectors and negotiators within a male-dominated society (Abu-Lughod, 2015).

In more recent decades, education, urbanization, and political activism have further transformed public roles of women. Middle-class and student-led movements, such as the protests for missing persons across Turbat, Quetta, and Gwadar, demonstrate the rise of new forms of gendered activism (Ozair & Rauf, 2023). This modern activism builds on a long history of women using their moral authority and family connections to challenge political exclusion. It shows the link between the tribal past and today's public life.

From a postcolonial feminist viewpoint, the dynamics show challenges and opportunities for women. Terms like *izzat* (honor) and *melmastia* (hospitality) support the male-dominated system. It also give women moral and political power. Baloch women navigate patriarchal expectations by negotiating their roles and resisting situations unique to them. This helps women show leadership, build unity, and influence society. An intersectional view shows that elite women use cultural norms to gain public influence and non-elite women find ways to participate within accepted local behaviors and movements. Thus, the participation of women in Baloch society emerges as negotiated, relational, and deeply embedded within indigenous moral frameworks rather than externally imposed feminist paradigms

5. Discussion

The findings of this study fundamentally challenge the reductionist binaries often applied to women in tribal societies, particularly the simplistic opposition between the "oppressed tribal women." On the contrary, the historical record of Baloch women shows a range of gendered agency shaped by kinship obligations, and culturally embedded codes of honour *izzat* and hospitality. These findings call for a restructuring of theoretical approaches that situate roles of women not at the margins of political life but at its centre, achieved through negotiation, adaptation, and strategic subversion within patriarchal works.

Women have played active roles in warfare, mediation in tribal system, necessitating a re-evaluation of how honor and hospitality codes relate to gendered power. Several ethnographic

interpretations influenced by mid-twentieth century functionalist thought (Pitt-Rivers, 1966; Peristiany, 1970) have traditionally regarded these codes as instruments of female oppression. The Baloch version of these codes, however, extends beyond restriction, providing symbolic protection and culturally sanctioned space for women to exercise social and moral authority. This supports Kandiyoti's (1988) theory of the "patriarchal bargain," wherein women exploit structural expectations to access authority while maintaining social legitimacy.

Postcolonial feminist analysis, as described by Mohanty (2005) and Abu-Lughod (2015), challenges the idea that all women experience oppression in the same way. It shows that women's ability to act and make choices can depend on their cultural background. This study builds on Mohanty's ideas by explaining that indigenous values, such as *izzat* and *melmastia*, are not simply oppressive traditions. They are also systems that allow women to seek recognition and leadership. In Baloch society, women take part in settling disputes and managing *otaqs* (community guesthouses). This shows that they have situated agency, which goes against Spivak's (1988) claim that the subaltern "cannot speak." The historical visibility of figures such as Bandai and Bibi Ganjan demonstrates that subaltern women have, in fact, articulated authority within culturally legitimized forms of speech and practice.

Ramirez (2007) suggests we can rethink sovereignty using Indigenous ideas of interdependence. Additionally, looking at Baloch tribal history requires us to recognize women's contributions and rights, moving away from patriarchal views.

The evidence clarifies Kandiyoti's (1988) idea of the patriarchal bargain. In the Baloch community, bargaining is about more than just survival; it also helps maintain communal balance through kinship and family loyalty. Women do more than represent honor; they also act as important negotiators in intertribal relations. They use patriarchal rules to facilitate social negotiations.

When placed in comparative perspective with other tribal, honour-based societies, such as the Kurds of northern Iraq and Syria, the Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Bedouin tribes in the Levant and Arabian Peninsula, certain parallels emerge. Yet the Baloch experience deepens postcolonial feminist understanding by demonstrating that moral economies like *izzat* and *melmastia* can institutionalize women's participation in governance rather than erase it—complicating the binary of suppression versus liberation in global feminist theory.

Modernization and education increase gender gaps in different regions, according to Ghosh and Choudhuri (2011). In Balochistan, urban, educated women use historical memory to support their political involvement. On the other hand, rural women's ability to act is closely tied to family connections. This shows how geography, class, and gender are interconnected (Crenshaw, 1991).

The Baloch Missing Persons Movement, led by Maha Rang Baloch and Sammi Deen Baloch, combines local traditions with global human rights efforts. This approach expands on postcolonial feminist theory. It shows that feminist resistance in indigenous contexts can express local ideas while also connecting with global issues (Ozair & Rauf, 2023).

This research questions the belief that all women's experiences are the same in Western feminism. It shows that indigenous moral economies can support feminist action while still respecting their cultural traditions. The Baloch example demonstrates that women's leadership, both in the past and today, is not against tradition. Instead, it comes from reinterpreting the symbols and meanings within that tradition.

This analysis shows how colonial and nationalist histories have overlooked the contributions of women. It builds on Spivak's (1988) idea of the "subaltern" by showing that Baloch women have continued to express their voices through oral stories, poetry, and family ties. Even when their contributions were not included in written records.

In doing so, the study not only recovers women's agency but also critiques the epistemological bias of postcolonial feminist discourse itself, urging scholars to see agency as collective, relational, and historically embedded rather than purely individual.

Modernity, education, and political activism have changed how women participate in public life, but key negotiation structures still exist. Urban Baloch women in politics often look to historical female leaders to boost their authority. Leaders like Dr. Shahida Baloch and Mahnaz Baloch connect today's struggles to figures like Banari. This highlights a line of moral and political leadership that ties past actions to today's feminist efforts.

Structural challenges still exist for rural women by virtue of militarization, resource extraction, and uneven development limit their mobility and participation in decision-making. Indigenous codes are still important for negotiation in Baloch society. This shows that patriarchy is not fixed; instead, it changes constantly. Women reinterpret these codes through their actions and engagement from within the system.

In theoretical terms, the findings of this study extend postcolonial feminism by transforming it from a critique of representation into a framework for understanding culturally grounded agency. They reveal that indigenous moral codes—rather than suppressing women—can serve as alternative grammars of empowerment that demand feminist theorists to rethink agency beyond Western epistemic boundaries.

6. Conclusion

This study aims to change how we see Baloch women in tribal history. It challenges stories that either ignore or overly glamorize their roles. The research shows that from medieval times to today, Baloch women have played active roles in public life and have held important leadership and military positions. This paper challenges the "oppressed tribal women" versus "liberated modern women" dichotomy by showing how, throughout history, women have had

different levels of agency in society. The findings also resonate with wider South and Central Asian contexts, illustrating how tribal women negotiate patriarchy through continuity and transformation rather than rupture.

This study looks at the historical and political roles of women from a postcolonial feminist perspective. It questions the idea that Western feminism applies universally and critiques the way nationalist history often reflects patriarchal views. The study shows that ideas like *izzat* (honor) and *melmastia* (hospitality) have historically allowed women to shape tribal leadership and relationships instead of just limiting them. By using an intersectional approach, the research shows that the influence of women varied based on their tribal affiliation, class, and marital status. This intersectional and culturally grounded approach provides a more accurate understanding of Baloch society than colonial or nationalist narratives.

The Baloch case shares some traits with Kurdish, Pashtun, and Bedouin traditions that honor women, Balochistan stands out due to the significant role women play in leadership and oral memory. These findings are important for understanding gender history, and postcolonial studies. They suggest we rethink the idea that tribal societies are solely patriarchal and focus on how the authority of women can vary across contexts. This study helps change historical perspectives by recognizing that women play active roles in the political and social life of Balochistan.

Future research should look at the activism of Baloch women in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This study should focus on issues like militarization, displacement, and politics in the diaspora. It is important to highlight how oral histories are passed down between generations in Balochistan and among Baloch communities abroad. TThe narrative of Baloch women, therefore, does not only carve the path for collective memory but also molds the perception of how women should behave in public spheres. Such a comparison could

uncover the cultural and structural dynamics at play concerning female leadership and offer potential insights into the contextualization of gender equity agendas through indigenous frameworks.

Ultimately, this study affirms that Baloch women's histories are not peripheral annotations but integral chapters in the region's political and cultural evolution, a recognition demanding both scholarly attention and public engagement.

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