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# Kutanranof Lakki Marwat, Pakistan: A Note on their Origin, Customs and Rituals

\_\_\_\_\_ Ayesha Bibi

===== Altaf Qadir

*Kutanran, a marginalised community of over fifty thousand individuals, resides in the Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. They are part of the many communities in South Asia that were profoundly impacted by the migrations of various ethnicities, mainly from Central Asia. Kutanran can be broadly categorised into two groups based on their regional affiliations and mother tongues: Saraiki and Baloch Kutanran. Unfortunately, their economic, social, and political conditions are dire. Most state institutions remain oblivious to their existence, and none have made any concerted efforts to address their issues. Until very recently, no Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), international humanitarian organisations, or UN subsidiaries had produced any reports shedding light on Kutanran, which could have garnered attention and funds for programs aimed at their upliftment. Pakistan's constitution lacks any provision or clause that recognises the status of Kutanran or similar communities. This study explores their origins, customs, rituals and various aspects of their lives.*

**Key Words:** State, Fundamental Rights, Education, Economy, Health, Marginalised, Migration, Social, Political

## Introduction

Over 50,000 people who live in Lakki Marwat, a southern district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, are part of the semi-gypsy community known as Kutanran. Nonetheless, the current study has mostly concentrated on the approximately 4,000 Kutanran residents of Sarai Naurang, a town and Tehsil in the District of Lakki Marwat. They are the most marginalized individuals because they lack both social status and possessions. Being non-Pashtuns, they are viewed as inferiors. There is little historical data regarding their migration, origin, and ancestry. The current Kutanran can trace their origins to Qamar Mashani in the district of Mianwali in the Punjab province, thanks to their familial ties. Local stories, however, indicate that they were residing here long before the Marwats arrived. Those who spoke Saraiki, had black skin, and came from Punjab or the Baloch Saraiki belt were called Kutanran by the Marwats. Since they are unaware of their ancestors' migration and lack reliable evidence, there are differing opinions and accounts regarding the exact period of their migration to Lakki Marwat. When the construction of railways began, some of their families moved to the Marwat region in quest of a better future. They were abandoned to the hardships of life, though, and failed to find any fortune here. At first, they worked as sweepers in the Railways department. They also held lower-level jobs at Frontier Constabulary Headquarters, such as sweepers, *Ardalian*—office boys, and *Dhobian*—washer men. Records from the colonial era state that in 1861, railroad construction began in the district of Bannu, which included Lakki Marwat. According to one version, migration took place between the 1860s and the 1870s. Genealogical records of the various Marwat clans, or khels, contain some names of Kutanran, who had worked as menials for the Marwats.

The methodology used for conducting the current research combines library research and field surveys. The nature of the study is qualitative; though quantitative data is also reflected in the paper. The total population of this community in Sarai Naurang, Lakki Marwat is around 4000 individuals. The available literature was thoroughly studied for tracing their history. To reflect on the current state of affairs, their customs and rituals, interviews were conducted with community members, the Pashtuns living around, local notables, a few Public sector institutions employees, and development sector activists. Most interviews were arranged at the residence or office of the respective individuals, while some were conducted telephonically. Most of the community members extended cooperation, though a few times, some of them regretted responding. The study was designed and questions for interviews were framed by both authors jointly. The principal author conducted interviews and wrote the initial draft. The corresponding author revised the draft multiple times for submission.

### A. Kutanran's Origin and Migration: Historians' and Colonial View

Since it is impossible to make a firm comment, the current study attempts to investigate various sources and draw some conclusions about the origin of Kutanran. According to Majumdar, prior to the Aryan invasion around 4,000 B.C.,

most of India was covered in trees and home to a variety of animals and birds. There were Kols, Nagas, and Dark-skinned Aborigines who lived nearly in the shadows. He refers to Brahuis as the Dravidian colony in Balochistan's north.<sup>1</sup> According to Woodruff, the world is divided into three original races: black—Africans, white—Europeans and Central Asians and yellow—Chinese.<sup>2</sup> Kutanran are likely of Black ancestry and descend from the subcontinent's ancient natives. They go by various names in Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Australia. Their black complexion, short stature, unique features, culture, and traditions set them apart from Pashtuns.

Baines proposes that the establishment of new railway lines was the primary factor driving migration between states and provinces;<sup>3</sup> Latimeb understands that the construction of railways caused migration from Mianwali to Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, making the area desirable because jobs were created there;<sup>4</sup> in other cases, people moved to new areas during the colonial period if the government employed them in the military as domestic servants or as suppliers of various materials to various government departments.<sup>5</sup> According to Latimeb, the Musalli (Kutana) are winnowers of grain or scavengers. They used to toss the grains into the air to separate them from the lighter chaff particles.<sup>6</sup> It indicates that they worked to assist the local population during the harvest season. In the village community, people who belonged to the professional and menial groups or were dependents, such as *musali*, were called *hamsaya*.<sup>7</sup> Since they lacked property and the Pashtuns in the area did not view them as equals, they were dependent on the locals.<sup>8</sup> In the villages, the *Musalli* were regarded as the lowest caste of the Muhammadan menial groups.<sup>9</sup>

Rose believes that the word Kutana, Kurtana, or Kurutana is equivalent to *musalli* in the northwest and was used for a Muhammadan *chuhra* in southwest Punjab. A group of sweepers who have converted to Islam are known as the Kurtanan. They have made their home on the lower Indus' bank. They no longer consume carrion or engage in scavenging. They have adapted to working in the grass and reeds and making ropes. Although Kutana is sometimes used to describe any Muhammadan sweeper, this is not the correct interpretation. Only those who have converted to *Halal-khor* or who eat food that is allowed by Muhammadan law are eligible to apply. They are appropriately referred to as Kutana or Kurtana. In addition to being the sweepers, they perform threshing, winnowing, and rope-making tasks. They converted from Hinduism to Islam, following all the rites, including eating *halal* food and praying.<sup>10</sup>

The *musalli* do not wed the *chuhras*; they only take their daughters occasionally. The only people who dealt with cleanliness were *Chuhras*, were Hindu or Christian sweepers;<sup>11</sup> the *Chuhras* who converted to Islam were known as *Musalli* (Kutana).<sup>12</sup> In the villages, Shahkhel, or Shahi Khel, is another name for *Musalli*. Shahi Khel translates to "the one who prays." It is noteworthy that Shahi Khel, as used in literature, literally translates to "clan of shah/king," though some may interpret it to mean "clan of king's servants."<sup>13</sup>

They were responsible for winnowing the grains of *Malakan*—chief proprietors or land owners—in the Bannu and Marwat area and cleaning and supplying fire to warm the *hujra*<sup>14</sup> during the winter. They also had to arrange and make winnowing fans. Kutanran performed all the tasks required of them at village funerals and weddings. To summon the guests, sweep the floor, serve water and tea to them, light the fire *chilam*—hooka smoking for them—and perform any other tasks required for various ceremonies, for instance, they would take messages. It should be mentioned that their responsibilities and tasks were different from those of sweepers working in Pakistan's various government departments today. They received one seer (1250 grams) for each mound of grain that arrived at the threshing floor in exchange for the aforementioned services. They got cash gifts at weddings, births, and other ceremonial events, aside from their services on the occasion of death.<sup>15</sup>

Some Kurtanan in certain regions also cultivate land (of others) on their behalf in villages. The Muhammadans grant the Kurtanan religious equality if they cease to scavenge. The people living along the banks of the Indus are likely Kurtanan, who are a different caste from the Chuhras. However, it is a fact that they do not constitute large tribes, and it appears that this group is composed of extinct tribes that were either destroyed by nature or powerful enemies, or that lost their identity for other reasons. The word "Khoja" refers to a repurposed sweeper in the southwest. As a result, it is synonymous with Kurtanas, which translates to "Flogger" or "Executor," denoting a person who used whippings to punish people for disobeying a royal decree.<sup>16</sup> According to Rose, Kuratana, also known as Kutana, is believed to have originated from the Hindi words "Taana," which means stretch, and "Kora," which means whip. As a result, the word means "flogger." He used to sweep and dig graves along the Peshawar border, and he removed night soil from the Frontier towns.<sup>17</sup> According to Mielke, Shaikh Muhammadi is one of Afghanistan's gypsy communities. While Shaikh Muhammadi are found all over Afghanistan and engage in cloth peddling, Kutana and *Musalli* are only found in eastern Afghanistan and work in winnowing with the *Malakan*—lords/Chiefs.<sup>18</sup>

We might not wholly disagree with Latimeb's argument, calling Kutanran Khoja is misleading because the Khoja community in Gujarat has historically been a prosperous business community. M. A. Jinnah (1876–1948) was a member of this group, as was Mahesh Bhutt's mother, a Bollywood film producer.

The current study concludes that, since there is no other reliable information available, the colonial narrative of their conversion may be accepted. The local Pashtuns had employed them as winnowers and scavengers. Even though colonial sources describe them as cultivating landlords' lands, we were unable to locate any reliable sources to support their status as cultivators in the case of Lakki Marwat. No doubt, sources are available to confirm that they had been helping landlords during harvesting season like *hamsaya*.

Diverse stories from the local Marwats are encountered when attempting to determine the ethnicity of Kutanran. A unique perspective, lacking any additional significant proof, claims that Kutanran are local nomads or gypsies who are currently present in various areas of Lakki Marwat. Long before Marwats arrived, Kutanran inhabited the area that is now home to Marwat people. Precise details are not available, and their history is unknown and unwritten. However, they did stray to survive by foraging for food in the wild. They hunted small birds and gathered wild herbs and shrubs. The sandy desert that made up half of the Marwat region had two perennial streams, Kurram and Gambila, along with a fair amount of vegetation. They bore similarities to the African bushmen's way of life.<sup>19</sup> With the arrival of Niazis and then occupation by the Marwats, life and livelihood became harsher for the Kutanran. Most of the area was grazed by the Marwat herds or cleared for crops. Thus, leaving little room for Kutanran to collect their food from the wild, they became marginalised and compelled to depend on the residents for their living through begging.<sup>20</sup> Since the Niazis and Marwats were huge, the Kutanran, with smaller numbers and much lesser resources, could not resist them.

Another explanation claims that Kutanre is a corruption of the Persian word Kota Ney. Ney means not, and Kota means room or home. Thus, "kutani" or "kutanri" refers to homelessness. Kutanran, a nomadic group of people who live in 'homes' or 'huts' usually made of rags and are without a permanent place to live.<sup>21</sup> The present study finds it hard to digest the aforementioned explanation and instead suggests that *kota* is a Pashto word, which means room, and *kotanrey* means small room. There is a probability that these people might be called Kutana and Kutanran because they live in tiny rooms, which were previously mainly reed huts and sometimes a tent. It is not irrelevant to mention here that *kot* is a Sanskrit term used for fortress or an abode.

In Afghanistan, people who survive off of charity or menial household chores are referred to as Shaikh Muhammadi.<sup>22</sup> Kutanran, according to many Marwats, was a Shudra, a lower caste of Hindus who converted to Islam as a result of the Hindu community's social indifference. Although their conversion provided them with some relief, they were limited to a limited social life where they had less opportunity to leave their current occupation as scavengers or village menials because they were not fully accepted by Muslims as a caste. With time, they became more laid-back and eventually turned into the local beggars.<sup>23</sup>

*Chuhras/Jamadar*—sweepers were Shudras, converted to Christianity and used to clean toilet pots as there was no flush system in those days. The Colonial authorities shifted them to almost every part of the then North-West Frontier, including tribal areas, even to Miranshah and Mir Ali of North Waziristan. However, those individuals are not related to the aforementioned Kutanran caste. The majority of Marwats regards Saraiki, Hindko, Punjabi, and Urdu speakers as Kutanran. Unlike the Chuhras and Jamadar, these Kutanran are the converted Shudras who did not clean the toilets for relief. They only performed art, singing, playing a few instruments, and begging or performing tricks. In the streets of villages, they used to sell toys, bracelets, and other accessories for women, like

lipstick. A *Wanjarai* was the name given to the Kutanra who used to sell those items in a *kara*, or reed basket. *Banjara*, which means nomadic, is the root of the word *wanjara*, or it is a synonym of it. They performed tricks, sang, and begged as they went from one village to the next. *Banjara*, which means nomadic, is the root of the word *wanjara*, or it is a synonym. They performed tricks, sang, and begged as they went from one village to the next. *Wanjara* is also similar to the Saraiki word *wanj/wanjo*, which means "go." *Wanj* is polite, but *wanjo* is later used somewhat rudely. Because Kutanran used to beg twice a day, in the morning and the evening, the locals used to jerk them and still do. Marwats used to yell at them to leave, using harsh words known as *wanjo* in their Saraiki language.<sup>24</sup> The Saraiki speaking migrants from Punjab who never beg and own homes and properties, and the nomadic, homeless beggars Kutanran are not distinguished by the Marwats. Marwats dislike mixing or having relationships with them because they view them as inferior.<sup>25</sup> Nor do Kutanran regard themselves as belonging to a low or menial caste; they neither identify as Kutanran. They claim to be members of a respectable caste of Mianwali. Here, Pashtuns view and handle them as inferiors. They connect Datta Khel to their lineage.<sup>26</sup>

It is also a fact that those who have improved economically no longer associate with their community and hide their Kutanran identity. Many investors in the war economy saw opportunities as a result of the war on terror, which also led to an increase in the demand for sepoy and a decrease in the requirements for joining various services. Some Kutanran as a result enlisted in the Army and now identify their ancestry with the Marwat clans. On the other hand, one could easily count the number of such individuals serving in the army.<sup>27</sup>

For twenty years, a new group from Aslam Colony Rajanpur, known as Baloch Kutanran by the Marwats (because they believe themselves to be Baloch), has lived in seven tents close to Sarai Naurang. They spend the summers there, returning to their former residence for the winter and election season. They also transport their dead to the location of their parents' graves. They are distinct from the Kutanran residents of Lakki Marwat who live there permanently. Despite their poor living conditions, they do not beg and they reside in tents. Cattle, such as goats, sheep, and cows, are how they make a living. Owing to a lack of resources, they wander far in search of cattle feed and bring rotting fruits and vegetables from the vegetable market. They have families in the Bannu region as well. They speak Saraiki instead of Balochi and have no idea where they originally came from or lived. A woman who was fifty-five years old could still speak Balochi with pauses. She was uninterested in learning about her ancestors and migration, and she had no answers to questions.<sup>28</sup> For the past few years, some Baloch Kutanran have also lived close to Gandhi Khankhel, a village in District Lakki Marwat, as well as Lakki City. They make their living by raising cattle and selling various household goods, just like their brothers who reside close to Sarai Naurang. Both of them live in tents. In addition, they raise camels and hawk their milk on the streets.<sup>29</sup> Baloch Kutanran are nomadic people who typically travel from place to place. With permission from the landowner, they typically take up residence in the empty

space close to the farmed area and stay there until they feel secure. They also perform menial tasks for the owner of their residence. Additionally, some of the women of Baloch Kutanran dance and sing. Typically, they dance for landowners who hire them for a set period of time—from a night to several months<sup>30</sup> in exchange for substantial compensation.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to certain Baloch families in Rajanpur, where a woman is briefly married (*mutta*) to a man who receives payment before bringing her to his residence (home or another location). These women, who are Baloch Kutanran, reside with their families and are occasionally hired during the agreed-upon time.<sup>32</sup> The families of those Baloch Kutanrans reside in a *malak's* jurisdiction for a set amount of time before moving to a new village that offers better terms.<sup>33</sup> Baloch Kutanrai and her family were observed by the principal author in tent in Maidad Khel Sarai Naurang.<sup>34</sup>

The Kutanran residing in the Marwat region are linked to various Marwat clans, such as Ghazni Khelo Kutanran, Begu Khelo Kutanran, and Mama Khelo Kutanran, since those Khels' Khans provided them with protection and favors. Zar Sanga, a renowned Pashto singer born in 1946, asserts her lineage to Mama Khel Marwat.<sup>35</sup> For over a century, the Musa Khel Marwat genealogical record contains mentions of certain Kutanran names.<sup>36</sup> On the elders of the tribe's orders, some of those Kutanran used to murder people. In the regions of Tajori, Tari Khel, Khan Khel, Kot Kashmir, Takhti Khel, and Nar, these Kutanran people reside in tents or mud homes.<sup>37</sup> They only pay a yearly visit to the tribe elders, usually during harvest season, to express their loyalty and obtain a share in kind or cash.<sup>38</sup>

In the district of Lakki Marwat, the percentage of men is higher than that of women in Kutanran. There are 4086 boys and 3926 girls, making up their total of 55141, while there are 27807 adult males and 19322 adult females.<sup>39</sup>

## B. Customs and Ceremonies

Any human entity living on the earth's surface has its way of living and celebrations. Kutanran has no exception in this regard. Despite their living among the Marwats for centuries, they have been least affected by the customs of the majority population living around them. They not only follow their ancestral traditions but also feel pride in it. Following is a brief description of a few of their such customs and traditions.

### a. Betrothal and Marriage Ceremonies

The announcement of a girl's engagement to a boy is known as the betrothal, and it is regarded as an essential stage before marriage. The Kutanran refer to it as *Mangrhi*, while the Marwats call it *Kozda*. In the camps, most marriages are arranged. In the Marwat community, a boy's mother or sister is typically responsible for choosing the girl he will marry. They do this by going door to door and looking through various homes in the village. However, the small community of Kutanran is different in this regard. Since the Kutanran do not observe *pardah*—veil and roam freely, the boys and girls develop a liking for each other at a very early age. The likes of a boy and a girl determine whether they get married. Their

parents are only involved to make arrangements or to fix and pay the bride's price. However, parents who are able to pay more tend to give the boy the girl's hand. In childhood, sometimes even before puberty, they get married. Kutanran claim that because they lack the financial means to provide for their daughters, they marry them off young.<sup>40</sup>

Mostly in their community or among the Kutanran of other cities like Bannu, Kohat, Peshawar, and occasionally with their relatives in Qamar Mashani, Makar Wal, and Mianwali area, Kutanran sell their daughters for outrageous offers. The typical price of a girl in Pakistan ranges from 40,000 to 2,000,000 rupees, including dowry. Seldom did the sum exceed two lacs. The father keeps the majority of the money he receives from the boy's family for himself, using the remaining portion to pay for the boy's *daaj*—dowry.<sup>41</sup>

The exchange of girls (*badalamong* Pashtuns, *watta satta* among Punjab) is common among Kutanran for multiple reasons including poverty and hesitation of other communities to establish matrimonial relations with them. Pashtuns marry their daughters to boys in *badal*. In exchange, a brother, cousin, father, uncle, or other female relative of his sister, aunt, or cousin marries a member of the bride's family. Like the bride, Kutanran also wed their daughters to the groom, who then weds a female relative to a male member of the bride's family. In a *badal* case, both families pay the dowry for their prospective bride, not for their sister or daughter, and the amount of the dowry is fixed. For Kutanran, who are always poor, *badal* is an easy way to get married.<sup>42</sup>

A boy and girl usually announce their engagement through the betrothal ceremony. A tiny quantity of candies is sent to the bride's family and divided among the family. Following the conclusion of the betrothal, the couple works to tie the knot as quickly as possible. In contrast to the local Marwats, who are not permitted to meet during the period of engagement to marriage, the boy and girl do indeed meet. The boy's parents or elders visit the girl's home to arrange the marriage date.<sup>43</sup> The couple adopted the same customs as Punjabis do during their marriage. Three days or one week prior to marriage, the girl sits in *Mayoon*.<sup>44</sup> A *Mehndi*<sup>45</sup> function is scheduled for the evening before the *Rukhsati*.<sup>46</sup> When the bridegroom and his family arrive at the girl's home, the groom gives the bride's hand mehndi. Other traditions include the giving of sweets to one another by the bride and groom and *Gana Bandhna*.<sup>47</sup> Most of the time, the marriage procession starts at night when the groom rides in to bring the bride. Since neither of these are customary among Marwats, the locals find it amusing to witness the groom sitting atop a horse and donning the traditional *Sehra*—headdress. These days, a car takes the place of a horse, and the bride is driven to the groom's house in a car. Unlike the Marwats, who find mixed gatherings in marriages objectionable, they do. The locals watch and enjoy their Punjabi songs and dances as they sing and dance along the way or in an open space next to their residence. All the men and women make their way to the bride's house in a procession. At marriages, they sing folk songs from Punjab and occasionally Pashto. At the bride's house, they carry out a variety of traditions, such as *Sheesha Dikhana*,<sup>48</sup> *Joota Chupai*,<sup>49</sup> and the groom



bringing a pitcher. The bride is then brought to the groom's house by the groom and his entourage. The marriage contract, or *nikah*, is signed at the groom's house. The marriage ceremony concludes in a day, and everyone who was invited is given post-marriage food (*rukhsati* and *walima*) because they cannot afford to host guests for an extended period of time.<sup>50</sup>

Once thought to be a rumor, the current study confirmed an exciting custom during research. When Kutanran's *nikah* is over, the groom climbs a tree. The bride asks him to descend, but he usually refuses until she gives him her word that she will provide for him forever (*tol umar gata de pa ma da*). The groom descends from the tree and completes the remaining marriage rites after obtaining the bride's assurance. The interviewee attested to having witnessed this ritual in every marriage she had attended and had personally assured her husband at the time of her *nikah*.<sup>51</sup>

Up until the late 1980s, the Kutanran celebrated their marriages outdoors in fields or on open spaces. During these celebrations, people from the community freely danced and sang outside without inhibition. The Pashtuns from the area occasionally attended and took pleasure in witnessing their events. These festivities were confined to their camps or the interior of their Kachi Basti after the emergence of Taliban in the area. Their celebrations will undoubtedly not include loud music or musical instruments because of the Taliban's threats.<sup>52</sup>

As previously mentioned, a boy and girl's mutual attraction or affair is the reason behind the majority of Kutanran marriages. They assure the locals, though, that they arrange their children's marriages during begging because they are aware of how unpopular it is with them. An elderly Kutanrai is typically accompanied by a girl between the ages of nine and ten when she begs. The elderly woman typically informs the local ladies that she entered into an arranged marriage (*pa sir sandare me wr kre da*). They make such claims in an attempt to win over the hearts of the local ladies and increase their share of the alms for their daughter's marriage.<sup>53</sup>

Although Kutanran people are predominantly monogamous, there is some indication that they have extramarital affairs with other women in their community. The Kutanran people don't care about maintaining a strict marital relationship; they merely do so to defend and preserve their family and children. Compared to the local Pashtuns, they are less rigid about social norms and values.<sup>54</sup> The current study indicates that although most people find it offensive when this topic is discussed in public, there are other communities where extramarital relationships are not uncommon.

### **b. New Born and Eid Festivals**

Most people welcome and acclimate newborns to the community. When a new baby is born, the clan distributes sweets. On the fortieth day after a child is born, some rice or porridge (wheat and gram are boiled together only in salt; locally called *goongrai*) is prepared and given to relatives. Muslim customs dictate that baby boys must be circumcised. Occasionally, they wait until a boy is almost

puberty before doing it. A girl baby's birth is also joyous. The Pashtuns, on the other hand, typically dislike the birth of a girl. The explanation for this is that, historically, Pashtuns saw males as symbols of strength, and a family with few male members may be viewed as weak. Unlike the locals, the Kutanran view baby girls as a blessing rather than a curse because they are more dependent on women than men in their community. Like the locals, the men, however, view themselves as strong, and they get concerned if a couple doesn't have a boy child.<sup>55</sup>

Muslims celebrate the festival of Eid with great enthusiasm and fervor. Marwats celebrate this festival with great fervor as well because, as a group, they are regarded as orthodox Muslims. According to the lunar calendar, Eidul Azha is celebrated on the tenth of Zil-Hajj, and Eidul Fitar is celebrated at the end of Ramadan. The festivals are not particularly interesting to Kutanran. They view those days as their earning days. Locals refer to Eidul Fitar as *Waruke Eid*. On the day of Eid, Kutanran prepare differently than the locals do. Their children are the only ones who prepare for and enjoy the day, celebrate it to some extent, but they are also few in number. The majority of children accompany their mothers to homes in order to gather alms, which can take the form of large amounts of cooked food, pudding, sweets, or rice. Sadqa-e-Fitar is an amount that every Muslim must pay on or before the day of Eidul Fitar.<sup>56</sup>

Eidul Azha is the second festival of the Islamic year. It is a time when Muslims slaughter animals and share the meat with their loved ones, neighbors, and the underprivileged. Eidul Azha is regarded by Kutanran as a day of great wealth. Kutanran women visit houses accompanied by their kids and plead for meat. Every house gives them a handful of meat. Since they rarely have refrigerators, they cut the meat into long pieces after gathering, sprinkle it with salt, and hang it from a rope or wire to dry in the sun outside their homes. After Eid, a lot of meat is visible hanging on ropes to dry. The dried meat is used for months later on.<sup>57</sup>

### c. The Burial of the Dead

Similar to regional funeral customs, deaths are carried and mourned. There had previously been a number of myths and rumors regarding the interment of the Kutanran dead. Kutanran used to dry the corpses before eating them, according to the Marwats. Others claim that they murder people, tear apart their corpses, cook, and consume them. Since the Marwats in the area had not previously witnessed the Kutanran burying the corpses, this rumor was widely believed by them. However, that is not the case in reality. The deceased were buried by Kutanran, although not always in the Lakki Marwat region. They used to transport their corpses, usually at night, to their former residence in Mianwali. Occasionally, they interred their dead in village collective graveyards rather than the individual Marwat tribe graveyards. The murideen, or Kutanran, who are the adherents of various Piran spiritual heads, are interred in nearby or adjacent cemeteries. The cemeteries where they are interred are in Machan Nike, Gandhi Sahiban, Zafar Mama Khel, and Lakki Ada (Bus Stand).<sup>58</sup> Due to spiritual or matrimonial ties to the relevant clans, Kutanran is

buried in these particular graveyards. The Kutanran community in Sarai Naurang bury the deceased in the nearby Committee graveyard and hold the funeral service in the same Qila ground where they reside. The deceased of Kutanran, Lakki City, are buried in the same Ada (Bus Stand) cemetery close to their residence. The Pashtuns of the area used to forbid outsiders from interring their dead in their cemeteries. Although the locals used to fear Kutanran as well, they have since grown to accept them and even let them bury their dead in nearby cemeteries. Kutanran's propensity for religion as a result of tableeghi jama'at is another reason to tolerate him in this respect. It is important to highlight that the Marwat people in this area are not hesitant to establish social bonds with Kutanran Muslims.<sup>59</sup>

The current research survey also revealed an intriguing fact: some Kutanran mourn their dead for a few days after they pass away, leaving no trace of the body or grave. According to Mr. Sajid Jamal Marwat, a Kutanran in Gandi Khan Khel passed away in his neighborhood. After two days of sitting around the dead body on a bed, they organized a musical performance around it on the third day. Following the musical performance, the deceased body vanished, and neither the grave nor the aforementioned Kutanran could be found. Some residents think that some of them may be burning their dead in accordance with Hindu rituals. Sometimes they commit such enigmatic acts, which piques the curiosity of the locals, who spread rumors. Since Kutanran are aware that the Marwats are devout Muslims who will rarely compromise on practices that are against Islam, they continue to observe and carry out these practices in secret. Should they become accustomed to such non-Islamic customs among the community, they may refuse to let Kutanran reside there and will never provide them with financial support. Their survival is at stake, so it appears that they adhere to Islam.<sup>60</sup> This claim cannot be supported by the current study because flames can be seen for a considerable distance and burning bodies emit a pungent odor. It's possible that they buried the body in their pir's clan cemetery, in an undisclosed location in a local cemetery without causing a stir with the locals, or they transported it back to their ancestral home to be buried.

#### **d. General Culture and Traditions**

In general, Kutanran are incredibly joyous. Even in the face of abject poverty, they fully embrace life. They don't worry about the future; they just enjoy the moment. They dance and sing and wear vibrant colors. Poetry, singing, and dancing are also enjoyed by Marwats, although some feel embarrassed about it while Kutanran are proud of them.

Despite having Saraiki as their mother tongue, they are able to speak Marwats' dialect with pauses and an accent. It is a known fact that Kutanran, Changarian, or Musalli, whether they reside in Lakki Marwat, Peshawar, Hazara, or other regions of Pakistan, will speak the Marwat dialect if they speak Pashto and are not Saraiki speakers. An interviewee mentioned hearing the Marwat dialect when riding a bus in Quetta. When he turned to look at them, he saw Kutanrai instead of the Marwat ladies he had assumed might be in Quetta. Though the

majority speak Marwats, they also speak other languages, such as the Peshawari dialect of Pashto and Hindko. Speaking Marwat Pashto demonstrates their bond with Marwats and the room they have been granted by them.<sup>61</sup>

Another important contributor to Lok Virsa is Kutanran. They wear vibrant colors and have their own unique culture. Their songs and culture are comparable to those of Qamar Mashani and Mianwali, but they have also incorporated Pashto music and culture into Lakki Marwat. They sing upbeat songs with catchy lyrics. Marwats have a common belief that they have a black tongue and that those who have it have a melodious voice. Among them are talented vocalists, who perform primarily for their own enjoyment and occasionally for weddings and other special occasions. The tabla, piano, drum, and other musical instruments are kept in the homes of Kutanran. At local weddings, Kutanran used to sing and dance. They occasionally throw random musical performances in their homes. These events were previously held outdoors at Qila Ground, Sarai Naurang, and occasionally in the open fields of certain villages. When they used to perform at night, the community enjoyed their shows. The primary author, a local, and the co-author, who have closely studied the past few decades, have discovered that these kinds of programs have been reduced to near extinction since the rise of the Taliban.

One notable example of a well-known Pashto vocalist is Zar Sanga, a Kutarani of Sarai Naurang who was born in 1946. Her popularity as a vocalist of Pashto songs and ghazals has transcended political boundaries in Pakistan. She traveled the world performing songs and promoting Pashto culture. She calls herself a Mama Khel Marwat with pride. This claim is supported by the fact that she is Gilasi Kutanrai's niece, who was wed to Husain Khan of the Zafar Mama Khel clan. Khan Tehsil (1931-2016), a well-known Pashto singer and recipient of multiple honors and accolades, including one from Afghan King Zahir Shah in 1970, was a cousin of Zarsanga's husband and a member of the same community. Duo Gana, a high-pitched song sung by men and women together, was a favorite song of Khan Tehsil and Zar Sanga.<sup>62</sup> He began his career with Zar Sanga by performing at Radio Pakistan and attending village wedding ceremonies.<sup>63</sup> She gave performances in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, the USA, France, Germany, and London. She still resides in a camp in Matani, close to Peshawar, in part because of her prior nomadic lifestyle and in part because of the State's and society's negligence. The house's walls and rooms' boundaries are built, but they lack roofs.<sup>64</sup> On March 8, 2016, Khan Tehsil passed away from a heart attack.<sup>65</sup>

## **Conclusion**

According to the current study's findings, the Kutanran people of South Asia were among those who were heavily impacted by the migration of other human populations from various regions, primarily Central Asia. They are members of the human race, Dravadians. Thousands of years ago, they lived in parts of South Asia. Despite having lived in the Lakki Marwat region for centuries, their exact

migration is unknown. Prior to colonialism, a small number of Kutanran lived among the Marwats as the subservients of certain Khels. Their main concentrations are in Lakki City and Sarai Naurang. Although they reside permanently in these two locations, they can also occasionally be found in other Marwat villages. Kutanran comes in a variety of forms, the two most common being Saraiki belt Kutanran and Baloch Kutanran. Baloch Kutanran people live differently than Saraiki Kutanran people. Although the majority of historians concur that they were Shudras, their religion is unknown. The social indifference of the Hindu religion led them to turn to Islam. Even so, they were excluded from society as a whole and assigned menial tasks like cleaning and winnowing instead of social equality. Generally, whether they are Sunni or Shia Muslims, they follow the faith of the majority in the community in which they reside.

Kutanran, who have lived in the region for a long time, are known for their resistance to change and for maintaining their ancient "Hindu" customs and culture. They inherited all the vibrant and wandering qualities, such as singing, dancing, and music. It is safe to say that they have a vibrant, rich culture of their own even in spite of their theft and addiction tendencies. Locals are drawn to their culture and take pleasure in its various celebrations and events. The people who live close to them find enjoyment in them. By doing these tricks and creating art, they entertain the locals with themselves and their pets and make a small income.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Asoke Kumar Majumdar, *The Hindu History, B. C 3,000 to 1200 A. D* (Dacca: City Publishing House, 1920), p. 61, henceforth Majumdar, *The India History*.

<sup>2</sup> William Woodruff, *A Concise History of the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 5. Henceforth Woodruff, *Concise History of the World*.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Baines, *Census of India 1891* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1893), p. 80. Henceforth Baines, *Census of India 1891*.

<sup>4</sup> C. Latimeb, *Census of India 1911, Vol. XIII: North West Frontier Province* (Peshawar: Government Printers, 1912) p. 40. Henceforth Latimeb, *Census of India 1911*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>7</sup> These clients of the main tribal entities are named *faqir*, *hamsaya*, *kasabgar* by Pashtuns/Pukhtuns and *kami* in the Punjab.

<sup>8</sup> In the past and present, this attitude of the Pashtuns/Pukhtuns towards such marginalized classes challenges the stance of Pashtuns/Pukhtuns that they are egalitarian by nature.

<sup>9</sup> Latimeb, *Census of India 1911*, p. 236.

<sup>10</sup> H. A. Rose, *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North West Frontier Province, Vol II A-K* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1911), p. 573. Henceforth Rose, *Glossary of the Tribes, Vol. II*.

<sup>11</sup> Adopted Christianity after the arrival of English in colonial Sub-Continent.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>13</sup> H. A. Rose, *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North West Frontier Province, Vol III L-Z* (New Delhi: Nirmal Publishers and Distributors, 1997), p. 182. Henceforth Rose, *Glossary of the Tribes, Vol. III*.

<sup>14</sup> In Pashtun areas, Hujra is centre of all social activities of male population of the respective area/village.

<sup>15</sup> Latimeb, *Census of India 1911*, pp. 237-38.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 573; H. A. Rose, *Glossary of the Tribes, Vol III*, p. 182.

<sup>17</sup> Rose, *Glossary of the Tribes, Vol III*, p. 182.

<sup>18</sup> Katja Mielke, "Tracing Change: On the Positionality of Traditionally Mobile Groups in Kabul's Camps" *Internationales Asienforum*, Vol. 47, No. 3-4, (2016), pp. 245-271, <http://crossasia-journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de> > iaf > article, accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Personal telephonic interview with Abdul Hamid Marwat, former Chief Environment Planning Commission, Director National Programme UNDP, Government of Pakistan, dated 21.12.2019.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Personal telephonic interview with Amir Mohammad, Former Federal Finance Secretary, Government of Pakistan, dated 03.05.2019.

<sup>22</sup> Personal telephonic interview with Prof. Muhammad Nafis, Government Postgraduate College Lakki Marwat, dated 07.05.2019.

<sup>23</sup> Personal interview with Irshad Khan, M.Phil Scholar Pakistan Studies Centre, University of Peshawar, dated 08.04.2019.

<sup>24</sup> Personal interview with Prof. Fazal Raheem Marwat, former Vice Chancellor Bacha Khan University Charsadda at Pakistan Studies Centre, University of Peshawar, dated 02.05.2019; Personal Telephonic interview with Abdul Hamid Marwat, Chief of Environment Planning Commission, Director National Program UNDP, Government of Pakistan, dated 03.03.2019.

<sup>25</sup> Personal interview with Prof. Fazal Raheem Marwat, former Vice Chancellor Bacha Khan University Charsadda at Pakistan Studies Centre, University of Peshawar, dated 02.05.2019.

<sup>26</sup> Personal interview with Baqi Tror (Kutanrai), dated 13.04.2019. Datta Khel is a caste living in Mianwali district of the Punjab and there is a considerable town with the same name in the said province. It is pertinent to note that Datta Khel is a Tehsil of District North-Waziristan, Pakistan which usually remains in news due to Pakistani forces operations.

<sup>27</sup> Personal interview with Farid Shah, a local Marwat, dated 15.07.2018.

<sup>28</sup> Personal interview with Izat Mai, a Baloch Kutanrai, dated 24.07.2018.

<sup>29</sup> Personal telephonic interview with Ikramullah Marwat, Lecturer Government Postgraduate College Lakki Marwat, dated 12.12.2018.

<sup>30</sup> The Principal author has observed mobile phone and other electronic gadgets with the Baloch Kutanran women in 2003-04 when these items were not yet common in the area. There is a common perception that mobilr phones were provided by the local *malakan*.

<sup>31</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Naimatullah Shah, Librarian Government Degree College No 02, Bannu, at his residence Sarai Naurang, dated 18.11.2018.

<sup>32</sup> Personal interview with Allah Ditta, a Baloch Kutanra, dated 14.01.2020.

<sup>33</sup> Personal interview with Miss Parveen, PST Teacher, Government Girls Primary School Maidad Khel, Serai Naurang, Lakki Marwat, dated 27.12.2019.

<sup>34</sup> Some details are concealed due to persons and family reservations.

<sup>35</sup> Personal interview with Fazal Qadeem, a local Marwat, at his residence, dated 20.04.2019.

<sup>36</sup> A Marwat tribe.

<sup>37</sup> Mama Khel, Gandi Khan Khel, Kot Kashmir, Tajori, Tari Khel & Takhti khel etc are the names of different villages of district Lakki Marwat.

<sup>38</sup> Personal telephonic interview with Haroon al Rashid, a local Marwat Businessman, dated 07.07.2019.

<sup>39</sup> Received data from Mr. Ihsanullah Khan (Head clerk Assistant Commissioner Office Lakki Marwat), dated: 16.07.2019.

<sup>40</sup> Personal interview with Baqi Tror, a Kutanrai (female), dated 22.10.2018.

<sup>41</sup> Personal interview with Reema, a Kutanrai (female), dated 15.03.2019.

<sup>42</sup> Personal interview with Sumbal, a Kutanrai (female), dated 15.03.2019.

<sup>43</sup> Personal interview with Suraya, a Kutanrai (female), dated 15.03.2019.

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<sup>44</sup> A pre-wedding custom in Pakistan when a bride goes into seclusion a few days before marriage.

<sup>45</sup> It's also a pre-wedding practice in which henna is applied to bride's hands and feet as part of marriage preparations.

<sup>46</sup> Literally means departure of a bride from her parental house to husband's home.

<sup>47</sup> It is a custom in which the bridegroom along with his friends and relatives, visit the house of the bride and tie some flowers/colorful thread or something like that to each other hand and also to bride's hand. They also sing in chorus and enjoy the evening.

<sup>48</sup> Gifting something to bride on the first night of the marriage.

<sup>49</sup> It means hiding of shoes. It's a south Asian custom that usually sister or a female cousin of the bride hides shoes of groom when he takes off and returns when the groom pays her some amount.

<sup>50</sup> Personal interview with Waheed Khan, a local Kutanra, dated 17.10.2018.

<sup>51</sup> Personal interview with Parveen, a local Kutanrai, dated 03.03.2018.

<sup>52</sup> Personal interview with Abdul Qayum Shah, a local Marwat, dated 17.08.2019.

<sup>53</sup> Personal interview with Fazal Raheem Marwat, former Vice Chancellor Bacha Khan University Charsadda, at Pakistan Studies Centre, University of Peshawar, dated 02.05.2019.

<sup>54</sup> Personal interview with Suraya, a local Kutanrai, dated 10.11.2018.

<sup>55</sup> Personal interview with Baqi Tror, a local Kutanrai, dated 04.04.2019.

<sup>56</sup> Personal interview with Rukhsana, a local Kutanrai, dated 03.03.2018.

<sup>57</sup> Personal interview with Fazal Raheem Marwat, former Vice Chancellor Bacha Khan University Charsadda, at Pakistan Studies Centre, University of Peshawar, dated 02.05.2019.

<sup>58</sup> Personal interview with Irshad Khan, M. Phil Scholar, Pakistan Studies Centre, University of Peshawar, dated 08.04.2019.

<sup>59</sup> Personal telephonic interview with Sajid Jamal Marwat, M. Phil Scholar A.I.O.U Islamabad, dated 06.05.2019.

<sup>60</sup> Personal telephonic interview with Sajid Jamal Marwat, M. Phil Scholar A.I.O.U Islamabad, dated 09.05.2019.

<sup>61</sup> Personal interview with Irshad Khan, M. Phil Scholar, Pakistan Studies Centre, University of Peshawar, dated 08.04.2019.

<sup>62</sup> Personal interview with Fazal Raheem Marwat, former Vice Chancellor Bacha Khan University Charsadda, at Pakistan Studies Centre, University of Peshawar, dated 02.05.2019.

<sup>63</sup> *Daily Dawn*, Islamabad, March 9, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Zar Sanga, interviewed by Farooq Firaq, *Voice of America*, July 10, 2016.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Dawn*, Islamabad, March 9, 2016.