



RESEARCH PAPER

Tradition, Transformation, and Community Resilience: Communal Social Practices of Gwadar Fisherfolk (1958 to 2020)

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the social life of the fisher folk in Gwadar from the years 1958 to 2020 with respect to the kinship structures, gender roles, and cultural rituals of the fisher folk. Even though previous research gave significant priority to economic and developmental approaches, the present study puts focus on social cohesion, cultural continuity, and community agency. The study is conducted in a qualitative format, through a series of in-depth interviews, oral histories, and participant observation to unravel the lived experience and intergenerational knowledge transfer. The results indicate that close kinship ties and community cohesiveness are still among the core elements of social organization. There is a slow positive change in gender roles in the economy and law of managing the household. Cultural beliefs such as marriage rituals, traditional clothing, music, dancing, and handicrafts help preserve identity, whereas religion, visits to shrines, folk medicine, and charity strengthen communal and dynamic cultural adjustment.

Keywords: Gwadar Fisherfolk, Kinship, Gender Roles, Communal Practices, Rituals, Cultural Identity, Social Resilience

Introduction

Gwadar is a port city located in the Southwest of Pakistan that has an abundant history of maritime trade and various kinds of fisheries. Situated on the Arabian Sea, Gwadar has been a historic fishing, trade, and cultural exchange station throughout the past few decades. The history of the city is inextricably connected with the reign of the Sultanate of Oman and its reign over Gwadar till 1958, affecting its social frameworks, tribes, and customs. (Allen, 2017) With this handover to Pakistan control, there was a significant transformation with the addition of new political and economic factors, but old social traditions underwent minimal change.

The population of Gwadar fishers, which consists mainly of Baloch (Makrani) and Med tribes, is still proud of their lifestyle, community spirit, the urge to gain power, and adaptability. (Dinesh, 2024) Their economy revolves around fishing, and broadly defines their social lives as well. Their social fabric is based upon an extended family structure, patrilineal birthrights, and close inter-family relations and marriages as a social alliance, as well as the main instrument of survival. Tribal loyalties (Khouda) are used to establish hierarchy in society and social responsibilities, as well as facilitate needs when societies and families go fishing and engage in other economic activities together. (Sohail, 2017)

The Gwadar fishing community has been marginalized in social life; however, there has not been a significant change over many generations because this community has been adjusting to external and inner influences. The solidarity is also based on its rituals, marriage traditions, religious traditions, and even seasonal celebrations that serve to reinforce the unity in the society as well as a sense of belonging. Before engaging in fishing

activities, people visit shrines, and practices such as prayers exercised by the Zikri people reveal how a common way of life centers on faith and experience. (Gazdar, 2007) People who are assigned such roles as the chieftains and magistrates, as well as resolving different conflicts through methods of mutual help, further contribute to the power of adapting to the new sets of social and economic conditions in the community.

The Gwadar fisherfolk have been tightly bonded together and have also survived through the ages as they have remained involved in kinship, collective work, and complicated social activities. Consequently, they have protested and even gone beyond the new conditions of modernization and development. This article focuses on how such social practices have formed and, in many ways, characterized the communal life of the Gwadar fisher folks. A crucial aspect to consider is the development of the given traditions throughout history and their changes since the 1950s, together with the interaction of history, culture, and social resilience.

Literature Review

Over the last few years, researchers have been interested in the social structure, lives and cultural activities of the fishing community in Gwadar, Balochistan with particular emphasis on how kinship, communal labor and resiliency contribute towards their lifestyle. (Tuba, 2022) In her work, *The Politics of Indigenosity of Med Fisherfolk of Pakistan: Their Cultural Rights in Perspective*, focuses on the fact that the Med fisherfolk rely on extended family and tribal connections to foster social cohesion and address disseminated resources and coordinate labor. These networks are the foundation of everyday life, which allows families to endure both the economic and environmental difficulties and maintain the cultural traditions. Equally, (Shakir Ullah U. K., 2022) in their article, in the article titled *Indigenous Knowledge, Climate Change and Transformations of Gwadar Fishing Community* demonstrate that these daily social activities, which include fishing collectively, mending fishing nets within kinship or groups and making common decisions are a system of adaptation. The authors claim that intergenerational routines such as informal leadership and elder problem-solving allow the community to effectively respond to external forces which can be climate change, fish stocks, and market fluctuations. How development projects have affected the fishing community has also been put into consideration. *Development of Gwadar Port: A Plight of Fisherfolk Community* (Muhammad Talpur, 2023) emphasize that infrastructural projects like port expansion through CPEC have led to the disruption of the traditional fishing activity and endangered the livelihoods. Despite these tensions, fisher folk have been able to retain social networks and support systems and use their culture which is an indication of the adaptive capacity of the community. The analysis of gender roles in Gwadar fishing communities has also taken place. In the article *Marine Fisheries and its Impact on Community: An Overview*, (Mahboob Sana, 2024) women are stated to be extremely vital in the processing, marketing, and informal trade of fish. They are the key to the survival of the household and the strength of the community even though they still lack access to formal decision-making and leadership because of patriarchal structures. Women participation in protest such as the one organised by Haq do Gwadar ko presents a gradual change in gender regulations and the way women are currently becoming more agentic socially and politically. The current research is unlike the past studies because it uses a theoretical framework that enables one to get an in-depth insight on why Gwadar fisherfolk could preserve social cohesion and resilience even in the face of external forces. Contrary to the previous research, it emphasizes how the concept of kinship, sharing of labor, and gender roles evolve through time, and how the daily practices and the process of conveying intergenerational knowledge support community identity and collective power in response to economic, political, and environmental shifts.

Material and Methods

This paper uses qualitative research method to explore the social practices of Gwadar fisherfolk that are practiced as a community between 1958 and 2020. It lays stress on family life, kinship, sharing of resources, help, and unofficial leadership in passing knowledge among the generations. Information was gathered using interviews and oral histories and participant observations but the first importance was paid to personal experiences and narratives of community members as opposed to statistical data. Interviews involved older fishermen, community leaders, fisherwomen involved in net making, and young members of the fisher community in order to embrace daily activities, social interactions and historical changes. Oral histories were most required in re-creating the events before the 1980s. The participant observation was conducted in the fishing seasons and this gave a firsthand experience in the areas of cooperative life, social life and work. The paper uses a framework of daily social practices to comprehend the process of how habitual activities, including communal fishing, helping neighbors and conflict resolution, define and maintain social life. This style is aligned with the idea of habitus by *Pierre Bourdieu* that describes how habitual practices reflect and support social norms, values, and community integration (Pierre, 1977). Transcription of all the data collected followed, systematization and thematic analysis were conducted on all data analyzing the most important aspects of trust, respect of the aged, cooperation, and adaptability. The study was conducted with the strict adherence to ethical standards, such as informed consent and confidentiality. This approach would help to have a subtle and well-rounded perception of the lived experiences, resilience, and cultural identity of the Gwadar fisherfolk.

Family Dynamics and Gender Roles of the Gwadar Fisherfolk Community

Gwadar fisher-people have their roles framed by tradition, economics, and various demands of modernity, which make gender roles less rigid and both men and women capable of sharing work, domestic responsibilities, and decision making. The fishing industry in the Makran region has always been associated with a male-dominated activity. Traditionally, the primary income earners were the Med and other tribes, where men would spend lengthy periods at sea and dominate the fishing, marketing, and reselling of fish. These leaders (Khudas or secular leaders) provide coordination of labor and settling of disputes, which is a combination of patriarchal power among the workers as well as the family. (Biagi, 2019)

Patrilineal descent determines the inheritance, household composition, and tribal ancestry systems of the extended family. The dwellings within important settlements such as Mullah Band, Surbandar, Pishukan, Ganz and Churbandar tend to form close kin units; moreover, these close kin units also possess economic duties beyond domestic obligation. (Shakir Ullah, 2024) These extended families can share resources, child and elder care and lend a support system in times of economic difficulties or another crisis.

Processing fish, mending nets, small-scale trade, or selling at the local markets are all traditional roles of women. They play a significant role in providing the revenue vital to the survival of the household by preparing and preserving food, regulating local trade transactions, and, in some instances, dealing with informal credit or lending of other women in the community. (Asad Raza Talpur, 2023) With the rising economic strains and education rates among the younger generations, the efforts and contributions of women to trade and their protests at the local levels have also become more critical.

Over the last few years, women of Gwadar have been on the frontline socially and politically. As an illustration, during the "Haq do Gwadar ko" (Give Rights to Gwadar) campaign, women walked alongside the men to protest the existence of illegal trawling as well as the closure of foreign fishing boats, which had overstepped into domestic fishing territories. Despite being poor and facing gender divisions, women participated in this

effort. (Siddiqi, 2021) Their grievances and aspirations within the fishing community have been highlighted by local activists, including Anila Yousaf, who has broken stereotypes by liaising with law enforcement and political authorities.

Family life is also influenced by modernization. New patterns in family structure have emerged due to the expansion of the port city, changes in fisheries governance, and shifts in the job markets. Despite the fact that the main role of fishing and ownership of vessels remains with men, women and children are also engaged in economic activity particularly to overcome the problem of land dispossession, the decrease in fish stocks and temporary migration to labour. There is increased diversification in the sources of income; women are being employed in fish processing companies and they engage in informal home trading. (Azeem, 2022) The role of women in protests and negotiations shows that they have a value and that the gender-based norms are gradually altering, although, still, women have fewer opportunities to make official decisions and control them.

However, undesirable challenges still exist. Women still have poor access to formal education, household expenditure, and they cannot compete in the leadership of tribal councils, or in fishing syndicates. Patriarchy family system has already guaranteed that most critical decisions in the family like marriage arrangements, property and investments are in the hands of men. But with more women entering the economic and political sphere there is a little though slow change in the fishing community of Gwadar. (Gupta, 2008)

The Baloch people of Gwadar, especially fishing communities such as the Med are said to have a very important symbol of heritage and status in the traditional dress that they wear. To the common people, their everyday lives are primarily determined by the environment around the coast and the functionality of their everyday lives. Men in Gwadar are seen wearing loose shalwar kameez made of lightweight cotton to stay cool and breathe easily in the hot, humid weather. (Allen, 2017) A plain turban or cap often complements their clothing to protect against the sun. Women's daily attire typically consists of long, colorful embroidered dresses called Doochi (poshaks), usually accompanied by a Gushaan (scarf) decorated with various hand-stitched designs. These embroidery patterns are not just beautiful; they often tell stories and identify the tribe. One of the local craftsmen of the Med community reported that the designs on the female attire are used as a form of telling the history and ancestry of that particular tribe. (Muhammad, 2024) According to Heemna Riaz in an interview, embroidery is not only a trade, but it is also a means to connect the women with their ancestors and their people.



Figure 1: Balochi Dochi dress: vibrant embroidery reflecting Baloch culture and tradition.

Dochi is a traditional Balochi women's dress. This is a unique dress embroidered extremely elaborately and using colourful threads, mirrors, and beads. It is costly to make

and can be sold for between 20,000 and 200,000 Pakistani Rupees or even higher because of the expensive fabric. Thus, Dochi is not only fashion- it is the representation of the roots of the woman and her society. The garment is distinguished by its mirrors and intricate embroidery, which not only enhance its appearance but also reflect light and protect against evil spirits. (Khan, 1979)

Shalwar Kameez are considered the conventional male dressing, but what is more remarkable about the Balochi male wear is the shalwar. The oversized and loosely cut shape of this fashion piece has revealed pride and tradition within the Baloch and is also a source of cultural identity and social status. (Dames, 1904) This manner of using the shalwar is exclusive to the Baloch culture and demonstrates a different take on fashion. It too is long and loose, and this also helps show as the cultural beliefs of modesty and simplicity.

However, when it comes to their dressings, the Balochi men can put on a woven waistcoat and a cap during the times of celebrations and other events in society. They use such clothing accessories to explain their cultural pride and adherence to the Balochi customs. (Kakar, 1998)

The life of fishermen of Gwadar is not personal or romantic; it is based on the events, relations between families, tribes, and social community, connected with rituals, duties and culture celebrations. In case of Baloch castes and Med cultures when most marriage rituals are traditional, the key emphasis lies in the continuity, kinship, and the unifying society. (Ronald., 1954)

Negotiating is usually initiated by the elders and the heads of the household- the elders of the groom make a proposal to the marriage to the family of the brides. This process does not only bring about an agreement but also entails negotiations and creation of a partnership between two families which could be of a long history or in some instances two networks of tribes. When the proposal is accepted, one of the greatest moments of the Baloch culture is held which is known as HabaBandi (Engagement) wherein both families hold negotiating on marriage terms, costs and responsibilities each of them has towards each other. HabarBandi is succeeded by an engagement ceremony, or Zamati as it is popularly called by female members of the groom family who present rings and gifts to the bride as a sign of good relationship between the two families. (Titus, 1994) It is important that guidance of the elders is vital in such weddings; they give recognition and advices and their experience eases the process by normalization of the wedding by eliminating the situations which may lead to serious problems before they escalate into serious problems.

Planning of wedding ceremony is usually a sequence of activities, after which the choice has been finalized and extends to several days. Dancing, singing and music are also important rituals, as Gwadar has always been obsessed with art and drama. These are Duzzuki and Henni Band, in which the individuals dance in delight as the tropes apply henna and sing blessing songs and wishes. Weddings of other Baloch and Makrani communities include similar dance and music traditions which contribute to the formation of the joyful atmosphere and underline the culture. (Khan, 1979) Similar dance and music traditions are part of weddings among other Baloch and Makrani communities, helping create a joyful atmosphere and emphasizing cultural identity. These music-filled celebrations, known as Aroosi Dewaan (Wedding Ceremony), are famous throughout Baloch communities. Through these festivities, Gwadar markets and family homes become venues for storytelling, poetry, and performances featuring emperors, Baloch heroes, or local legends. (Titus, 1994)



Figure 2: People performing Chap, a traditional Balochi dance, in a Balochi Dewaan

Rituals like Julbandi are also used to complete the marriage contract, where the bride is covered with a veil and placed in a separate room within the house, surrounded by her female relatives. Balochi jewellery has ancient origins from Oman or the Arab regions and often includes precious materials like gold, pearls, and turquoise. During the wedding, the bride is treated as a special girl and wears a Balochi wedding dress called Doochi, sitting in her room among her female relatives. The Doochi outfit is the most precious present that is carried by the family of the groom and is placed in this room. Some of the traditional jewellery worn during the ceremony are Mourth (necklace), Dholan (bracelets), Har (necklace or waist chain), Dhoor (earrings), Nalook (hoop earring) and Baron (ring); these are worn during the ceremony. These symbolically loaded objects, well designed are an important constituent of the Balochi culture. (Museum, 2005)



Figure 3: Baloch woman and child adorned in traditional silver jewelry, symbolizing cultural heritage.

The jewellery item is a bridal Noth Set that combines pearls, feroza (turquoise), and gold in order to form the set, which brings more beauty and meaning to the piece. Dolan is a curved ornament, a sword form, which is used on some occasions as a sign of bravery and courage. Another jewellery piece worn by the bride, the Jawak e Har, is also only produced by the Balochi jewellery craftsmen and has a great cultural value. Banadi Baloch says that the Har, as well as the Nath, can be worn unfilled, and is all of gold, a symbol of good luck. Gurki Datan is part of Dolan family, has animal teeth and bears a significant historical importance. The other decorative ornament is the Mota Pati which is made of pearls, and this represents the symbolic natural beauty and the status of the bride. Wali is composed of pierced gold which is round and the whole ear is encircled with gold earrings, which depict completeness and fullness. The Dhoor is a traditional earring that indicates age and heredity and it is normally given in a particular sequence through generations.

Silver jewellery is also a fairly typical daywear Khada since it makes sense and serves as a cultural object of beauty. Brides also wear these accessories as well as identify themselves with their background, society, and family culture. The ritual of Doochi through well-planned ornaments makes a bride beautiful with all the symbols of femininity, physicality, and cultural pride. Thus, the ritual could be regarded as an important event that presents the Balochi identity. (Museum, 2005)

Other cosmetics which are worn by the groom, such as Surmai (kohl), perfumes, henna, and others, are also carried with them and the bride is gifted with the same as a part of her preparations. The ceremony is an indication of respect and devotion to the groom by the family of the bride. At the same time, the groom is subjected to his ceremonies, including the Korag. At some point, he is invited to the wedding family where he meets the bride at her father house where the formal ceremonies are done. Marriage contract according to the Islamic religion is called the Nikah and is conducted in the presence of two witnesses and elders of both families which adds more bonds in the community. In the local Balochs in the Nikah, jewellery is declared by the tolah procedure with 10 to 50 tolah of gold provided by the groom family. The most important traditions, such as hair combing of the bride before the guests, then the traditional Balochi dance of Chaap show the combination of religious significance and cultural traditions.

The dowry payment in Gwadar is a customary practice in which the family of the groom offers dowry to the family of the bride just like it is traditionally practiced amongst the Balochs. But the bride exchange practices are uncommon in Gwadar unlike other areas. Rather, symbolic presents, family feasts, and marriage ceremonies characterize marriage occasions. Men sing and dance, as well as reciting poetry, and in many cases, the elders may be the master of the ceremonies and negotiators. The last stage, which is Mubaraki, is when the congratulations are given by the extended family and friends to the newly-wed couple and the acceptance of the bride in her new home marks the beginning of a new kinship. (Titus, 1994)

Marriage strengthens kinship and social ties.

The fishing community in Gwadar remains to be based on kinship and marriage. Marriages are usually endogamous (within the tribe or extended family) and this enhances social relationships and facilitates passing of fishing rights, property and community roles. Arranged marriages in which family elders bargain and grant permission assist in maintaining the tribes intact, maintaining family commitment, and family image. Also, marriages assist in strengthening the collective knowledge and practices since the young generation are exposed to the traditions, tales, and practices during the events. This has been the case with marriages in Gwadar in recent years as they start to mirror broader social changes. Regional processing and increased urbanization have introduced certain aspects of colonial and mainstream Pakistani traditions. (Mustafa, 2001) However, the value of core

Balochi and Makrani customs remains, such as the use of haldi ceremonies or the underlying significance of the valima (wedding feast).

The shared married life, the vital roles of music, dance, and ritual, and the importance of elders all suggest that, as marriage is a rite of passage for individuals, among the fisherfolk of Gwadar, marriage is also a crucial link in the ongoing cycle that supports people, their community identity, and social continuity.

The two societies, among the societies in these clans, focus on kinship based on multi-generational extended families that share labor and resources. The common family of fishers consists of grandparents, parents, and children who do the same work associations on daily basis. One sees in Gwadar much co-working in the same boat by fathers and sons (and on occasion uncles and nephews). Adding, to the words of an octogenarian fisherman (Nakhuda Sharif), who reminisced: I used to wait till my father brought the harvest home and now it is my sons who are waiting for me the same way. The acquisition of the fishing trade through such father-to-son transmission is normal. Indeed, one Dawn deep activity is reported as the in-the-morning repairing of nets by fishermen in kin groups called net menders, open platforms where relatives congregate and repair nets, play cards, and exchange fishing news. An individual Dhoria may belong to or be in possession of a single large family or groups of interrelated families. Through such process the daily life of fishing is embedded within kin-based practice: fathers bequeath boats and knowledge about fishing to sons and brothers can be the mainstay of the productive crew of a boat. (Gazdar, 2007)

The kinship and tradition are also used to organize gender roles in the family. Studies citing Gwadar observe that fishing households have their roles divided: in a fishing household, men, women and children have specific tasks to perform: whereas men and older boys would go out to fishing or work in the boats, women would be involved in marketing the fish and conducting work such as processing (cleaning and salting fish), refrigerating family ice, and chaatri (fish-drying) units in the household. Women seldom accompany men on deep fishing and their contribution to the communal economy is essential: wives or sisters of fishers organize informal cooperatives roasting and selling the family fish to local traders or in local cities. (Sohail, 2017) Fisherwomen who were interviewed frequently reported that they are considered as members of the same kin unit, i.e. they participate in one another weddings or lend money to pay school fees, when their men are at the sea (Masi Zaini). Simply put, kinship is where division of labor and collaboration are supplied - a boat is generally family- or clan-owned, and families related to one another share resources and revenues. Captured oysters One old fisherman was blunt about it: among us Meds, you help your cousin get his fish before you help a stranger. It is one of the rules of our family, unwritten" (Interview; Zir o Zindaman). Such close coordination implies that informal crews are frequently structured in terms of blood and marriage, strengthening kin solidarity by working side by side daily.

Kin-related organization also applies to the communal enterprises. As an example, several extended families of coastal areas, such as Ganz, Jiwani, Pishukan and Pasni, provide men to a collective fishing launch or net watching cadre. When a boat owner in family family gets sick, his relatives frequently substitute in his watchkeeping or provide one of his sons with another boat. This mutual support can occur due to the dense interlocking kin networks: as a youth from fishing clan explained, "We all regard the other intervillage as brother, and the Kalmati as uncle. The others support you when your clan is down, the same we all rely on one another "we are all capable of helping each other, because sooner or later, we would need help of others in our own clan". (Azeem, 2022) In such respects, the kinship system of the city of Gwadar, in its foundantions of family units, lineage and clans, supports the provisions of its own structure of fishing labor and the organization of life together.

Kinship also forms the culturally rooted aspect of Gwadar as opposed to being purely economic. The fishing community defines itself through occupational group, and also

through the kin lineage. Lineages, tribe affiliation and family names make oral heritage which upholds some sense of belonging. The practices are seen in birth, marriage and death rituals where family that constitutes a part of the kinship relation dictates social responsibilities and duties. (Rehman, 2018) As an example, during a wedding, cousins and uncles extend material support to the family of the bride and strengthens the intergenerational ties. Ancestors who beat storms or presented some new fishing methods are often hymned in oral culture such as songs sung in the sea, or folktales told in fishing huts.

In a feature in the Dawn Newspaper in 1998, it was related how during community gatherings the elders would recite family genealogies going back to the time of ancestors who had migrated to Oman or Makran centuries ago. Such behavior, even though less widespread in the younger population, can serve as a cultural depository, memory, and identification. (Newspaper, 1998)

The connection was captured well in one interview with the 63-year-old fisherwoman, Fatima Baloch: "I was named after my uncle because the boat was saved in a tremendous storm by our great-grandfather, whose name my son was given by my uncle. We hang onto these names as a way of helping our children know their ancestry." These symbolic continuities ensure that there is no threat of cultural practices through the forces of modernization and migration through kinship.

Rituals, Shrines, and Religious Beliefs among Fisherfolk of Gwadar: Wider Practices and Folk Healing

The religious and spiritual life of the fisherfolk in Gwadar is deeply woven into the daily routine, encompassing not only mainstream Islamic rituals but also unique local traditions tied to life by the sea over centuries. While collective worship and pilgrimages to shrines like Koh-e-Murad are particularly characteristic of the Zikri community in Gwadar, other groups participate in rites related to healing, community welfare, and fishing.

Before fishing trips, it is common for fisherfolk to pray, asking the gods for safety, good luck, and a plentiful catch. These prayers may be offered at homes, at the shoreline, or at sacred shrines located along the coast. These shrines, found in places like Hyder Takina, an ancient landmark along the sea shore in the coastal Balochistan region, where all the locals as a point of spiritual contact and material favour. Many fishermen visit these shrines to seek protection from the dangers of the sea, especially before a long journey or during a crisis. Elders often recount that prayers are said before a ship sets sail and continue until the vessel safely reaches port, usually accompanied by vows of charity (sadaqah), such as giving fish or alms to the poor, as expressions of gratitude and religious duty. (Sohail, 2017) The Gwadar fishing community has always regarded charity and almsgiving as essential parts of their moral code. When we return home successfully from a trip or when we have a large catch, we donate some of our earnings to people experiencing poverty, as well as to our fellow fishermen, widows, and orphans in the village, as Nakhuda Abbas said. Such practice isn't just about religious duty but also serves as a reminder that the community should share blessings and stay united through both good and bad times. Other aspects of fisherfolk life are also more vibrant, such as healing rituals, especially when fishermen fall sick on the high seas, or when the nearest town with a doctor is far inland in the rural island interior. Communities in these situations have devised some form of folk cures and spiritual treatments. To give an example, ancient times were characterised as follows: in case a fisherman gets sick on board during those months, when there are no doctors, the following procedure was unique: paraded above the head of a patient were six eggs, dates, one paratha, and three fried fish, and verses of the Quran were recited. It was considered that this ritualistic procession would take the ailment out of the afflicted. (Kachhi, 2025) In case the illness could not be cured, the fisherman would take it to a mullah (religious leader) or hakīm (herbal healer) who was nearby to treat him spiritually or with herbs. The use of

intercession of spiritual forces, community support, and local knowledge contributes to the significance of the aforementioned in ensuring healthy and resilient people of the far-flung communities in the interiors of the country. (Sohail, 2017)

These rituals are summaries of common life in the society of Gwadar seashore; prayers and sacrifices to ensure a safe journey while fishing, communal alms during times of abundance, visits to shrines such as Hyder Takina, and innovative cures for illnesses or misfortune. The blend of mainstream Islamic culture, Balochi rituals, and local Baloch medicines shape how religiosity, culture, and social bonds influence daily life.

Conclusion

Communal social life of fisherfolk Gwadar, 1958-2020 has always been the strong base of their identity through the political, economic or cult changes they might face. With the transfer of sovereignty of Oman to Pakistan and pressure of modernization, the community has retained the extended family systems, kinship relationship, and cycles of rituals as vibrant mediums of unity and support in the period. Such factors as patrilineal kinship, networks organized by tribes has made provision of diffuse support on a large scale possible. Even though the patriarchal orientations of gender norms remain consistent, gender roles have changed to incorporate the incorporation of more women in formal and informal economic spheres and in social activism. The staging of cultural attire, dancing during marriage, the wearing of handmade ornaments and the practice of periodic rituals such as Eid and Nowruz are means of realization through which the cultural memory is nurturing and identity collectivity is reconfirmed. Meanwhile, the spiritual geography of the community, represented by the worship of coastal shrines, folk healing and recitation of prayers testifies to this pluralistic perception in which the sciences of Islam and local cosmologies intermix.

Adaptive capacity of the fisher folk of Gwadar is reflected on their capacity to sustain local customs and group strength in face of a growing adoption of new professions, additional income activities, and modes of resistance that have been emerging. Their social customs that are changing bring to fore the dynamic nature of interaction between traditional customs and a developing social situation, insisting on the significance of keeping local tradition in spite of the development projects and outside influence oiling the redevelopment of the coastal landscape. This tradition and flexibility do not cease in Gwadar as they are keeping social life moving.

Recommendations

This study has a number of implications on policy and practice recommendations. The process of development planning in Gwadar needs to be inclusive and formally incorporate fisherfolk particularly women in decisions about port development, marine governance, and land use along the coasts in a manner that kin-based organizations and communal rituals are viewed as institutional assets as opposed to liability. Cultural and social infrastructure, community centers, cooperative associations, women groups and cultural activities such as embroidery cooperatives and performance groups can also maintain intangible heritage as well as strengthening the existing social safety nets. Specific social protection initiatives are required to take care of the education disparities, increase access to healthcare (e.g., mobile coastal clinics), and the widening of livelihood opportunities in a manner that will conform to the norms of local kinship and religion. Lastly, more comparative and longitudinal studies about Arabian Sea fishing societies, with a consistent emphasis on Gwadar, are necessary to learn how kinship, gender relations and ritual practices have remained changing in response to the development pressures and climatic change.

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