

Festivals of Cholistan, Punjab Pakistan

Mohammad Shafeeq

Graphic Designer & Photographer Bahawalpur, Punjab Pakistan

Abstract- Cholistan is the charming desert, locally known as “Rohi”, starting some 30km from Bahawalpur and is spread over an area of some 16,000 sq. km. which is mainly the part of **Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar** and **Rahim Yar Khan** districts and extended up to the Thar Desert in Sindh Province. Darawar fort is the major landmark of Cholistan Desert, located 48km from Dera Nawab Sahib and 100km from beautiful city Bahawalpur. Cholistan is presently inhabited by 100,000 semi-travelers moving from one place to another in search of water and fodder for their animals. The nomads belong to different tribes, though most of them are descended from settlers who came from Balochistan at least 200 years ago. Cholistan has very harsh climate with a very low rain fall annually and this has resulted the most of its part to remain barren. The people of Cholistan speak **Saraiki** language and their main wealth is their livestock. The livestock breeding helps to overcome the need of the milk and meat of the surrounding region. However, the Cholistani people have some other professional activities like clay pottery, weaving, creating the wool products and leather works. Sculpturing and pottery is actually the gift from the nearby Indus civilization to the people of Cholistan. Although the people of Cholistan are suffering from the fundamental necessities of life for centuries, they have amazing richness in their culture. Their life is full of colors as they use bright colors not only in formal but in normal wear. Their customs and traditions are also very unique and attractive for the outer world. The Colors of Cholistan are outstandingly prominent in the festive occasions where many musical and dancing theatres are organized. Special traditional food like “Saag” and “Khunmbi” are prepared. Camel Dancing and Snake Charming are also very enticing for the visitors. The craftsmanship of the artisans at work is very distinctive and it is expressly admired. Today Cholistan is inhabited by tribes of poor nomads who breed camels & cattles. They are peaceful & friendly people living in mud huts & sheep skin tents. Although they frequently face droughts & dry spells they still love the deserts & their animals around which rotate most of their tales & songs. The only way to travel in this spread of sand dunes & dry bushes is on camel back. When the camel man return to their villages at sunset after a hard & hot day in the desert they are greeted with the sound of the flute & the distant bells of returning cattle which create an enchanting atmosphere. The tired men sit in the centre of the village around the fire on Camel hair durries, sip tea & watch the sun go down over their beloved land of beauty & wilderness. To explore this area of mysterious beauty in the most natural way festivals of Cholistan for you to have deep experience of this desert & people that will touch soul. This tour will take you the enchanting Cholistan desert a desert that is full of life and culture. You will enjoy the music from the bells of cows of the desert and ride camels to the villages in the desert. You will also visit the historical places like Derawar fort, Channan Peer,

Mujghar Fort, and meet people of the desert and learn the culture of the desert folks of Cholistan.

Now i come to the point a festival is a special event of feasting or celebration, usually with a religious focus. There are many festivals here the land of Cholistan, such as Channan Peer Urs, Camel Journey, Camel Agony, Camel Dance, Ox Running, Jeep Rally, Cultral Night programme (folk music programme) and Firework Show etc

I. INTRODUCTION

Now let's review the festivals of Cholistan. **Channan Peer:** Channan Peer is a big festival of Cholistan and southern Punjab festival. Channan Peer is located 27km from Yazman Tehsil and 59 km from beautiful city Bahawalpur region. Channan Pir was the saint of desert. His place of burial has been marked in a small village named after him as Channan Pir. There is an annual festival at Channan Pir when people from different distant places comes to the place. The place becomes full of life and colourful in these days, especially now after being connect by metalled road. The festival starts from the last Thursday of February (Hindu month of Chaytra) and last for seven repeated Thursdays. Every year thousands of people arrive in the Cholistan desert, this barren land of saints and mystery, to celebrate the life of Channan Peer and to have a seriously good time. There are as many stories about the life of Channan Peer as there are festival goers but the following story is generally accepted. Just after the birth of Islam in the 7th century the Sufi Saint Jalaludin Surkh Bukhari of Uch Shareef travelled to the area which in those days was governed by a Hindu Raja called Sadharan. Sadharan had a ideal life with one problem he had no children. His wife Rani Nainoo found out about Jalaludin's visit tracked him down and asked him to pray for her to have a son. The Sufi did this and even foresaw that the son would be born a Muslim. A child was really born and tumbled into this world reciting the kalima. The Raja was, shall we say, a little peeved and gave the order to have his son killed. The boy's mother pleaded for the baby's life. Ultimately, the ruler agreed that Channan Peer would be left alone in the desert in a wooden cot. After a few days, Hindu pilgrims found the baby being fed by a mother deer. The Raja was informed and again demanded the death of his son. The Rani then came to the desert and looked after him, until she was forced to desert her child again. Finally, the fairy story says, Channan Peer went on to preach Islam throughout the desert, inspiring poets and converts and many others, before he eventually merged into the sand and was never seen again. The fifth Thursday is the most popular day and also experiential as a local holiday. There are some photographs of Channan Peer festival:



(fig 1-2 Channan Peer Urs, Southern Punjab,Pakistan)



(fig 3-4-5-6 Channan Peer Urs, Southern Punjab,Pakistan)



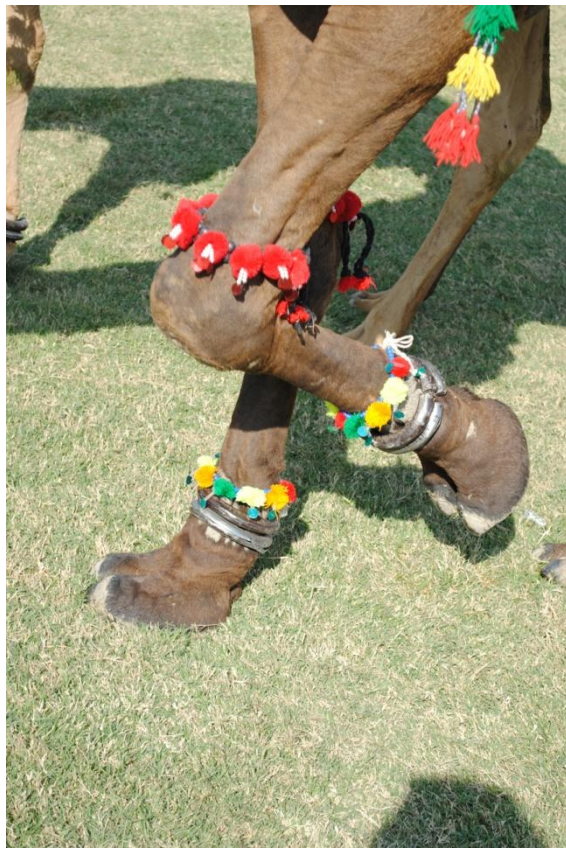
(fig 7-8-9-10 Channan Peer Urs, Southern Punjab,Pakistan)

Camel journey: Camel journey is the famous festival of the Cholistan Desert in which two or more camels run in a specific distance. Camel journey are the ideal way to spend time exploring rustic Thar and Cholistan. A camel journey moves through the golden sands of the savage.No, fixed time for this event but people of the Cholistan are decided before the Channan peer Urs in every year. Here, Camel Safari is also organized in this area time period of camel safari is (9days,12days).Some photographs of this event are such as:



(fig 11-12 Camel Journey/Ranning, Southern Punjab,Pakistan)

Camel Dace: Camel dance is most interesting event held in many times a year in cholistan, Southern Punjab.This event is organized in this areas in Cholistan like Derawar Fort,Channan Peer,Lattan Singhar and Mittra etc There are some photo graphs of this event like as:



(fig 13-14 Camel Dance in Cholistan, Southern Punjab, Pakistan)



(fig 15-16-17-18 Camel Dance in Cholistan, Southern Punjab, Pakistan)

Camel Fighting: *Camel fighting* originated among the different districts of Pakistan especially Cholistan tribes and is considered part of Cholistan culture. This festival is held in these areas of Cholistan like Fatuwali near Sama Satta Bahawalpur, Lattan Singhar, Feroza near Rahim Yar Khan, Kanda Fareed Cholistan, Liaquatpur, Derawar Fort, and Marrot etc. There are some photographs of this event like as:



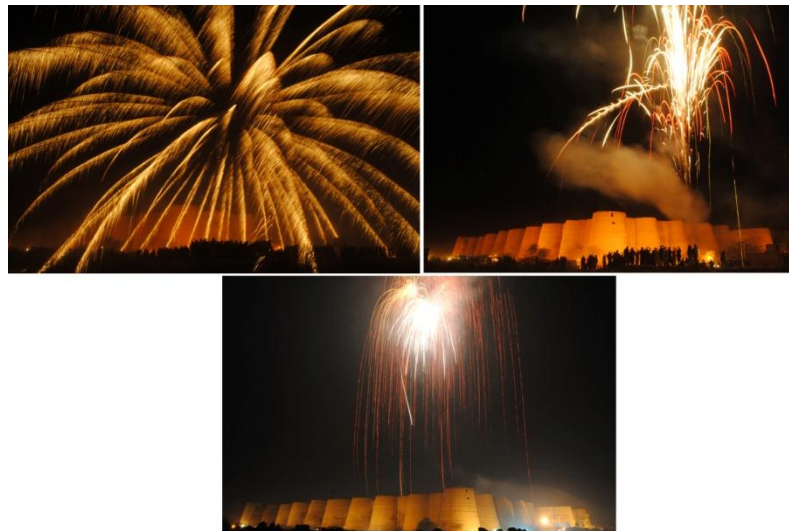
(fig 19-20-21-22-23-24-25-26 Camel Fighting in Cholistan, Southern Punjab, Pakistan)

Bull Cart Race: A bull cart or ox cart is a two-wheeled or four-wheeled [vehicle](#) pulled by [oxen](#). It is a means of transportation used since ancient times in many parts of the world. They are still used today where they also used for running in cultural festivity like as:



(fig 27-28-29-30 Bull Cart Race in Cholistan, Southern Punjab, Pakistan)

Firework Night: Fireworks take many forms to produce religious [celebrations](#). A fireworks event is a display of the effects produced by firework devices. Fireworks event is also regularly held at Derawar Fort every year during the Jeep Rally like as:



(fig 31-32-33 Fireworks Night in Cholistan, Southern Punjab, Pakistan)

Cultral Night:It is also organized in different parts of the Cholistan. People of the Cholistan sing and enjoy full night with the pure Cholistani folk music. Especially held during Jeep Rally event and Channan Peer Urs etc like as:



(fig 34-35 Cholistani Folk Music, Southern Punjab,Pakistan)

Jeep Rally: is known as Cholistan Jeep Rally. TDCP Cholistan Jeep Rally is a [rally raid](#) type of [off-road race](#), organized by the [TDCP](#) in [Pakistan](#). The event is annually run in the [Cholistan Desert](#) venue. It was first introduced in 2005 by Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab (TDCP). The event is run by the [Government of Punjab](#). The rally holds near the [Derawar Fort](#) in [Bahawalpur](#). Above 100 drivers and teams from all over Pakistan participate in the jeep rally and about 100,000 visitors witness the jeep rally every year. The rally is held almost in Feb month. It is a big cultural event of southern Punjab of Pakistan. Some shots are given below like as:



(fig 36-37-38-39 Cholistani Jeep Rally, Southern Punjab,Pakistan)

REFERENCES

- [1] The Islamic University of Bahawalpur Shoba Saraiki ,Cholistan k Qabail or Janwaron k Tottam, research project, Eshtaraq Lok Virsa Islamabad (book style,published)
- [2] Sight in the Sands of Cholistan Bahawalpur's History and Architecture Edited by Major- General Shujaat Zamir Dar(book published by OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)
- [3] Akbar G, TN Khan and M Arshad, 1996. Cholistan desert, Pakistan. Rangelands, 18(4): 124-128.
- [4] Ali I, M Shafiq and U Farooq, 2009. Camel rearing in Cholistan desert of Pakistan. Pak Vet J, 29(2): 85-92
- [5] Khan BB, M Younas, M Riaz and M Yaqoob, 2005, Breeds of livestock in Pakistan. Pak TM Printers, Faisalabad, Pakistan
- [6] PAKISTAN HANDBOOK (Isobel Shaw)
- [7] ANCIENT CHOLISTAN: ARCHAEOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURE AUTHOR: MUGHAL PUBLISHER: FEROSNS LIMITED [8] CHOLISTAN TO BAHAWALPUR by Ihsan H Nadeem (Maktaba Jadeed Publication)

AUTHORS

First Author – Mohammad Shafeeq, Graphic Designer & Photographer from Bahawalpur, Punjab Pakistan,
Email:shafiqgway2012@gmail.com, Contact no: 0092 03017769792