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Title Makran as the Sacred Center of the Zikri Religion: A Historical, Theological, and Cultural Study"

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"Makran as the Sacred Center of the Zikri Religion: A
Historical, Theological, and Cultural Study"

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Abstract

This research paper explores the historical, theological, and cultural evolution of Makran, a region that has served as a spiritual and geographical nucleus of the Zikri faith in Balochistan. The study traces Makran's transformation from an ancient crossroads of civilizations to a center of distinctive religious identity. Drawing upon classical sources such as Arrian, Strabo, al-Baladhuri, al-Ya'qubi, al-Istakhri, and Yaqut al-Hamawi, the paper establishes that Makran—known to the Greeks as Gedrosia—has long been an intersection of Persian, Arab, and Indian influences.

During the Umayyad period, Makran became a frontier province following the Arab expansion into Sindh, while under the Abbasids, it developed into a hub of trade, scholarship, and Sufi mysticism. After the decline of Abbasid authority, Baloch tribes such as the Rind, Lashari, Gichki, and Hot established semi-independent rule, providing fertile ground for new religious movements.

By the fifteenth century, the Mahdavi movement—founded by Syed Muhammad of Jaunpur—reached Makran, where its teachings took root among the local tribes and evolved into what is now known as the Zikri religion. The Zikris emphasized the remembrance of God (Zikr) as the core of worship and regarded Koh-i-Murad near Turbat as their sacred center. The paper concludes that Makran is not merely a barren landscape but a living symbol of cultural synthesis, where ancient civilizations, Islamic mysticism, and local Baloch traditions converged to shape a unique spiritual identity.

Keywords: Makran, Zikri, Arrian, Strabo, Al-Baladhuri, Koh-i-Murad

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The Historical Background of Makran

The Sacred Center of the Zikri Religion

Before presenting the historical background of the Zikri faith, it is necessary to first clarify some facts about Balochistan in general, and Makran in particular.

Makran is divided into two parts:

1. Pakistani Makran

In present times, Makran is a district of Pakistan's province of Balochistan.

The former princely state of Makran is now divided into two regions, of which the larger portion lies within Pakistani Balochistan, covering an area of about 25,000 square miles with an estimated population of 600,000.

Its administrative center is Kech (Turbat), while other major towns include Gwadar and Panjgur.

2. Iranian Makran

The other portion of Makran lies within Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province, covering an area of approximately 22,000 square miles with a population of around 2.1 million.

Its major cities include Pahrāh (Irānshahr), Dezak (Saravan), Sarbaz, Geh (Nikshahr), Chabahar, Konarak, and Jiroft (Beshkard).

Historians and chroniclers state that the name Makran was derived from Makran bin Fark bin Sam bin Noah (A.S.).

He was the brother of Kerman, and when the confusion of languages occurred in Babylon, he migrated and settled in this region.

The Original Narrative (from Arabic sources):

This account is most clearly mentioned by Ya'qut al-Hamawi (d. 1229 CE / 626 AH) in his renowned geographical encyclopedia, Mu'jam al-Buldan (Dictionary of Countries).

سميت مكران بمكران بن فارك بن سام بن نوح، عليه السلام، أخي كerman، لأنه نزلها
واستوطنها لما تبلبلت الألسن ببابل¹

It is said that the name Makran was derived from Makran bin Fark bin Sam bin Noah (A.S.).

He was the brother of Kerman, and when the confusion of languages occurred in Babylon, he migrated and settled in this land.

Corroboration by Other Historians:

He described Makran as a vast province and transmitted the same tradition, attributing it to the authorities on historical reports (Ahl al-Khabar)²

Al-Maqdisi wrote, in his description of Makran's geography, that this region lies near Kerman, and that its name is attributed to Makran bin Fark³.

Boundaries of Makran:

To the north of Makran lies Kharan, to the south is the Arabian Sea, to the east is Jhalawan (Lasbela), and to the west is Iran⁴

Historical Background

Geographical and Historical Introduction of Makran^{1*}

Makran is the southern coastal region of Pakistan's province of Balochistan, situated along the Arabian Sea.

It is bordered by Lasbela in the east, Panjgur and Kech in the north, Iranian Balochistan in the west, and the sea in the south.

Historically, Makran has served as an important corridor between Iran, Arabia, and the Indian subcontinent, which is why the region's culture bears clear imprints of political, linguistic, and cultural influences from various periods.

However, historical sources provide limited information about this territory. As A. W. Hughes observed in his remarks on the subject:

"From the expedition of Alexander down to the commencement of eighteenth century of Christian era, nothing seems to be known of the history of any portion of Baluchistan⁵.

Although this statement cannot be fully agreed upon, because sufficient information about Makran does exist in historical sources, the details are as follows:

Ancient Period (Pre-Islamic Era)

Ancient Persian and Greek historians referred to Makran by the name "Gedrosia".

* (*) Makran is general known as kech-Makran to distinguish it from Persian Makran, Kech Makran and Persian Makran together constitute the Makraniat a term occurring in several histories the etymology of the name is uncertain by some Makran is said to be a corruption of Mahi Khoran, fish-eaters. See imperial gazetteer of India (Provincial series) Baluchistan, Seng-e-Mede Publication Lahore 1991 p 03 central Asiatic Journal, Ricnd N.Krye volume VI(

According to the Greek historian Arrian^{2**}, when Alexander the Great was returning from India in 325 BCE, he ordered his army to march through this region.

Due to Makran's barren and desert-like terrain, scorching heat, and scarcity of water, thousands of soldiers perished along the way⁶.

This period is regarded as the beginning of Makran's geographical identity.

In the ancient Persian empires, the region served as a satrapy (province) and functioned as a natural frontier between Iran and India.

² **Full Name: Lucius Flavius Arrianus (Greek: Ἀρριανός) Period: Approximately 86 CE – 160 CE (Greek and Roman era) Nationality: Greek by origin, but a citizen of the Roman Empire — meaning he was both a Greek historian and a Roman official. Profession: Military officer, historian, philosopher, and Roman governor (he served as Governor of Cappadocia, located in present-day Turkey). Arrian's Famous Book: "Anabasis of Alexander" Original Greek Title: Ἀλεξάνδρου ἀνάβασις (Alexandrou Anabasis) Meaning: The Campaigns of Alexander or The Expeditions of Alexander the Great. Subject: This book narrates the conquests of Alexander the Great (334–323 BCE) — from Greece all the way to India. Arrian wrote this historical account about 450 years after Alexander's time, but he based it on authentic and earlier sources, such as Ptolemy and Aristobulus, both of whom had accompanied Alexander during his campaigns. Because of this, Anabasis of Alexander is regarded as the most reliable and authoritative historical source on the life and expeditions of Alexander the Great. Makran and Arrian's Account. In Book VI of Anabasis of Alexander, Arrian provides a detailed description of Alexander's return journey through the region of Makran, which the Greeks referred to as Gedrosia.

This was the route Alexander chose on his way back from India, marching through the harsh deserts of Makran, where thousands of his soldiers died of thirst and hunger. Arrian called this event "The Gedrosian March", and he described Makran's land as harsh, barren, and waterless. Key Points from Arrian's Description of Makran

Ancient Name: Among the Greeks, Makran was known as Gedrosia. Geographical Description: Arrian wrote that it was an arid, desert-like region, whose inhabitants were hardy and semi-nomadic.

Alexander's Experience: Arrian reported that one out of every three soldiers in Alexander's army perished during the desert march through Makran.

Historical Importance: This account provides the earliest known Greek historical reference to the region of Makran, making Arrian the first historian to mention it in detail.

Other Famous Works by Arrian

Periplus of the Euxine Sea — A geographical treatise on the Black Sea.

Discourses of Epictetus — Based on the philosophical teachings of the Stoic thinker Epictetus.

Indica — A supplementary work to Anabasis, describing Alexander's Indian campaigns, with detailed accounts of Sindh, Makran, and voyages along the Arabian Sea.

Importance of Arrian's Work

Arrian was a Greek-born Roman historian who recorded the conquests of Alexander the Great in a critical and scholarly manner.

His book, Anabasis of Alexander, remains the primary historical source confirming that Alexander the Great, during his return from India, traveled through Makran (Gedrosia).

For this reason, Arrian is still cited today as the earliest Greek authority on the ancient history of Makran.

(b) Strabo³ — Geographica, Book XV, Chapter 2, Section 7

The ancient geographer Strabo writes:

“Gedrosia borders on the part of India about the river Indus; the coast is inhabited by Ichthyophagi (fish-eaters)⁷

It is from this term that the possible etymological origin of the word “Makran” is derived.

(c) Plutarch⁴ — Life of Alexander, Sections 66–67

Plutarch also writes that Alexander crossed the Gedrosian Desert, where “the soldiers perished for want of water and food”.

(Plutarch, Parallel Lives: “Alexander”)

This “Gedrosian Desert” refers to the same region that is known today as Makran.

2. Confirmation by Modern Scholars

(a) Encyclopaedia Iranica

“The name Gedrosia used by Greek historians refers to the coastal region of present-day Makran, extending from Las Bela to the borders of Persia⁸”.

³ Full Name: Strabo (Greek: *Στράβων*)

Born: Around 64 BCE

Died: Around 24 CE

Nationality: Greek (born in Amasia, located in present-day Turkey)

Profession: Historian, Geographer, and Philosopher

Famous Work: Geographica (“Geography”)

This monumental scholarly work consists of seventeen (17) volumes.

In it, Strabo provides a detailed account of the geographical, historical, social, and cultural conditions of the known world of his time.

It is considered one of the most authoritative and comprehensive sources on geography from the Greek and Roman eras.

Here, the term “Ichthyophagi,” meaning “fish-eaters,” refers to the same people who were later called “Mahi-Khoran” in Persian.

⁴ Greek Name: *Πλούταρχος* (Ploutarchos)

English Name: Plutarch

Born: Around 46 CE

Died: Around 119 CE

Nationality: Greek (born in Chaeronea, Central Greece)

Profession: Historian, Philosopher, Biographer, and Priest of Apollo at Delphi

Famous Work: Parallel Lives

This is Plutarch’s most celebrated work, in which he wrote biographies of famous Greek and Roman rulers, warriors, and philosophers, often nting two figures side by side in a comparative manner — hence the title Parallel Lives.

One of the most famous chapters in this collection is “The Life of Alexander,” which recounts the life and campaigns of Alexander the Great.

(b) Imperial Gazetteer of India: Provincial Series — Baluchistan (Lahore, 1991)
“The ancient Greeks knew Makran as Gedrosia, the land through which Alexander led his army on the return from India⁹”.

(c) Sir Aurel Stein — On Alexander’s Track to the Indus (Oxford, 1929)

Sir Aurel Stein⁵, a renowned British archaeologist and explorer, also confirmed that the Gedrosia of classical writers undoubtedly corresponds to the modern Makran region of Balochistan.

Sir Aurel Stein, Who was a renowned British archaeologist, writes:

“Gedrosia of classical writers undoubtedly corresponds to the modern Makran of Baluchistan¹⁰”.

Through his archaeological explorations and historical analysis, Sir Aurel Stein established the connection between Alexander’s route through Gedrosia and the modern region of Makran in Balochistan.

According to all the ancient Greek historians (Arrian, Strabo, Plutarch) and modern researchers (Stein, the Imperial Gazetteer, and the Encyclopaedia Iranica),

“Gedrosia” and “Makran” refer to the same region.

In other words, Makran is the very area that was known in Greek history during the time of Alexander the Great as “Gedrosia”.

Later, Arab historians, such as Abu al-Hasan al-Baladhuri (d. 289 AH / 892 CE), provided further details about this region in their works, thereby filling some of the historical gaps.

As al-Baladhuri writes:

فتح بلاد مكران (بلوشستان) السندية ومكران هي بلوشستان اليوم وروي عن عبد الصمد بن حبيب العدوي عن والده فقال «غزونا مع سنان بن سلمة مكران» فقال سنان بن سلمة بن المحبق. «ولدت يوم حنين فبشرني أبي فقالوا له ولد لك غلام فقال سهم أرمي به عن رسول الله أحب إلى مما بشرتموني به وسماني سنانا».¹¹

The Conquest of the Lands of Makran (Baluchistan) — Sind Region

Makran is what is known today as Baluchistan.

⁵ Sir Aurel Stein, Full Name: Sir Marc Aurel Stein. Born: November 26, 1862, Died: October 26, 1943

Nationality: Born in Hungary **HU**, later became a British citizen, Profession: Archaeologist, Geographer, Linguist, Historian, and Scholar, Affiliation: Member of the Archaeological and Scholarly Societies of British India, Major Works: Sir Aurel Stein conducted extensive research on Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, Balochistan, and the Indian subcontinent. Some of his most famous works include: 1. On Alexander’s Track to the Indus (1929) the book in which he identified Makran with the ancient Gedrosia mentioned by Greek historians. 2. Ancient Khotan (1907), 3. Serindia (1921) 4. Innermost Asia (1928) 5. Old Routes of Western Iran (1940)

It is narrated from ‘Abd al-Samad ibn Habib al-‘Adawi, from his father, who said: “We participated in the expedition to Makran along with Sanan ibn Salamah”. Sanan ibn Salamah ibn al-Muhabbik said:

“I was born on the day of the Battle of Hunayn, and when my father was given the news of my birth, they said to him ‘A son has been born to you’. He replied, ‘An arrow that I could shoot on behalf of the Messenger of Allah would be dearer to me than the news you have given me’. And so he named me Sanan (meaning ‘spear’)”.

Ibn Hāzīm mentioned regarding its conquest:

“Sanan ibn Salamah ibn al-Muhabbik al-Hudhali marched toward it, conquered Makran by force, and settled there¹²”.

Al-Baladhuri mentioned this account, saying:

“During the time of Mu‘awiyah, Sanan ibn Salamah ibn al-Muhabbik al-Hudhali was appointed (as commander). He was a virtuous and devout man. He was the first to make the soldiers swear oaths of allegiance by divorce.

He advanced to the frontier, conquered Makran by force, established a settlement there, remained in the region, and maintained control over the land¹³”.

Sanan ibn Salamah ibn al-Muhabbik al-Hudhali

Sanan began establishing his residence and founded several towns in Makran.

He was later replaced by Rashid, but was subsequently reinstated to his position. After his return, he expanded the Arab conquests further eastward, until he was treacherously killed in Kachhi¹⁴.

Among the reasons for the scarcity of information about this region, it cannot be overlooked that Balochistan — and particularly the area of Makran — is a non-agricultural region.

Therefore, it held little interest for outsiders.

As works such as Futuh al-Buldan and others have depicted, this area did not attract much attention due to its barren and inhospitable nature.

فلما رجع أوفده إلى عثمان فسأله عن حال البلاد فقال : يا أمير المؤمنين قد عرفتها وخبرتها ، فقال : صفتها لي ، فقال : ماؤها وشكل وتمرها دقت ولصها بطل ، إن قل الجيش فيها ضاعوا وإن كثروا جاعوا ، فقال عثمان : أخبر أم ساجع ؟ فقال : بل خابر ، فلم يغزها أحد في أيامه وأول ما غزيت في أيام أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب ، كما ذكرنا ، قال أهل السير : سميت مكران بمكران بن فارك بن سام ابن نوح ، عليه السلام ، أخي كرمان لأنه نزلها واستوطنها لما تبليت الألسن في بابل ، وهي ولاية واسعة تشتمل على مدن وقرى وهي معدن الفانيز ومنها ينقل إلى جميع البلدان وأجوده الماسكاني أحد مدنها ، وهذه

الولاية بين كرمان من غربيها وسجستان شماليها والبحر جنوبيها والهند في شرقها ، قال الإصطخري :
مكران ناحية واسعة عريضة والغالب عليها المفاوز والضر والقحط ، والمتغلب عليها في حدود

When he returned, he was sent by the commander to Caliph ‘Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with him). The Caliph asked him about the condition of the land. He replied:

“O Commander of the Faithful, I have come to know it well and have observed it closely”. ‘Uthmān said, “Then describe it to me”.

He said: “Its water is brackish, its land is rugged, and its dates are of poor quality. Its thieves are valiant. If the army there is small, it will be lost; and if it is large, it will starve”. ‘Uthmān asked, “Are you giving me a factual report, or are you merely being poetic”?

He replied, “I am giving you a factual report”.

Thus, no expedition was sent there during ‘Uthmān’s rule, and the region was first conquered during the time of Amir al-Mu’minin ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, as historians have recorded.

The scholars of history say that Makran was named after Makran ibn Fark ibn Sām ibn Nūḥ (Noah), the brother of Kerman, because when the languages became confused in Babylon, he came and settled there.

Makran is described as a vast province comprising towns and villages.

It was known for producing fine sugar (fanīdh), which was exported to various lands — the best of which came from the city of Maskan.

The region of Makran lies between Kerman to the west, Sijistan to the north, the sea to the south, and India to the east.

Al-Istakhri writes:

“Makran is a vast and wide region, mostly consisting of deserts, hardship, and drought. The rulers who control it live at its borders¹⁵”.

From these narrations, it becomes evident that Makran was conquered during the caliphate of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), and that several Companions of the Prophet (ṣaḥābah) and their successors (tābi‘īn) participated in this campaign.

The details of their involvement are given below.

During the Caliphate of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (13–24 AH)

.1 ‘Uthmān ibn Abī al-‘Āṣ (d. 42 AH):

He was a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ who migrated to Basra and later became the governor of Bahrain. It is reported that he led three military expeditions towards India¹⁶.

.2 Al-Ḥakam ibn Abī al-‘Āṣ al-Thaqafī (d. 45 AH):

He was the brother of ‘Uthmān ibn Abī al-‘Āṣ, the governor of Bahrain. Under his command, an expedition was launched toward Makran, where he achieved a decisive victory¹⁷.

.3) Rabī‘ ibn Ziyād al-Ḥārithī al-Madhlijī (d. 51 AH):

He served as an official under Amir Mu‘āwiyah, with Ḥasan al-Baṣrī as his scribe. He took part in the conquests of Makran and Kerman, which at that time (23 AH) were considered part of the Sindh frontier¹⁸.

.4) Al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Amr al-Ghifārī (d. 45 AH):

A Companion of the Prophet ﷺ sent by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to Makran in 23 AH, where he achieved victory and established Muslim control¹⁹.

.5 ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Utba‘n al-Anṣārī:

A distinguished Companion from among the Anṣār. He participated in the conquests of eastern Iran and India. In 23 AH, he joined Sahl ibn ‘Adī’s army in the conquest of Kerman and later assisted al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Amr al-Ghifārī in the conquest of Makran²⁰.

.6) Sahl ibn ‘Adī al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī (d. 91 AH):

A Companion of the Prophet ﷺ who played a leading role in raising the banner of Islam in Baluchistan²¹.

.7) Shihāb ibn Mukhārīq al-Tamīmī al-Māzinī:

A madrik (one who lived during the Prophet’s time but may have accepted Islam later). He joined al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Amr al-Ghifārī during the campaign in Makran to support him²².

.8) Ṣaḥḥār ibn ‘Abbās al-‘Abdī:

A Companion who participated in the conquest of Makran. After the victory, al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Amr sent him to deliver the good news to Caliph ‘Umar, who then inquired about Makran, and Ṣaḥḥār described its geography and conditions in detail²³.

9). ‘Āṣim ibn ‘Amr al-Tamīmī (d. 23 AH):

A famous Companion and military commander who fought alongside Khālīd ibn al-Walīd in Iraq. He also participated in the conquests of Sijistān, Makran, Khārān, and the Sindh Valley. He was martyred in battle²⁴.

.10) ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umayr al-Ashja‘ī (d. 23 AH):

He participated in the conquest of Makran in 23 AH and was martyred there²⁵.

.11) Yusr ibn Wasīm ibn Thawr al-‘Ijlī:

A native of Bahrain and among the Muḥaḍḍarīn) those who lived during both the pre-Islamic and prophetic periods but did not meet the Prophet (ﷺ). He led the vanguard in the conquest of Baluchistan and fought in various campaigns during the caliphates of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar²⁶.

12). Sa‘d ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī (d. 23 AH):

The cousin of Anas ibn Mālīk. He was martyred in jihad in Makran during the caliphate of ‘Umar. He narrated hadiths from his father, from ‘Ā’ishah (RA), and from Ibn ‘Abbās²⁷.

During the Caliphate of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (24–35 AH)

1.) Ḥakīm ibn Jiblah al-‘Abdī (d. 39 AH)

He participated in the conquest of Makran and later reported the conditions of the region to Caliph ‘Uthmān (RA).

During his rule, the Caliph appointed him as Qāḍī (judge) of Sindh — which also included the Baloch regions of Makran, Gandāwah, and Kachhi.

Thus, he is considered the first Islamic judge of Balochistan²⁸.

2.) Ubaydullāh ibn Ma‘mar ibn ‘Uthmān al-Qurashī al-Tamīmī (d. 32 AH)

He was among the younger Companions of the Prophet — ﷺ only ten years old at the Prophet’s passing.

In 29 AH, Caliph ‘Uthmān appointed him as the governor of Makran, where he achieved great victories.

He was later martyred in Persia.

His campaign in Makran aimed to suppress local uprisings, in which he succeeded²⁹.

3). Umayr ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd al-Sulamī (d. 36 AH)

In 29 AH, Caliph ‘Uthmān appointed him governor of Makran after ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Umayr.

Previously, he had served as governor of Khurāsān³⁰.

4). Mushājaʿ ibn Masʿūd al-Sulamī (d. 36 AH)

He was the conqueror of Balochistan, and also led successful expeditions into Kabul and Kerman.

Following his victories, Muslims permanently settled in Balochistan.

He was martyred in 36 AH at the Battle of Jamal, fighting on behalf of ʿĀʾishah (RA)³¹.

.5) ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Samura al-Qurashī

He accepted Islam at the Conquest of Makkah (8 AH) — his original name was ʿAbd Kaʿb, which the Prophet ﷺ changed to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.

A courageous and capable general, he launched campaigns across Balochistan, attacking Berenj, Kech, and surrounding areas, and was victorious.

He lived about 50 years³².

6) .Saʿīd ibn Kanda al-Qushayrī

His date of death is unknown.

During the caliphate of ʿUthmān (RA), he served as governor of Makran and was martyred in 35 AH, around the time of ʿUthmān's assassination.

He is counted among the trustworthy narrators (thiqat al-rijāl)³³.

7) .Rāshid ibn ʿAmr al-Jadīdī al-ʿAbdī al-Azdī

He was maternally from the al-Jadīdī tribe and called al-ʿAbdī due to his patronage status; al-Azdī by tribal lineage — the same tribe as the Aws and Khazraj.

He took part in the Battle of Qalāt during ʿUthmān's caliphate in 30 AH, and again under Muʿāwiyah in 32 AH.

He was later appointed as governor of Makran in place of Sannān ibn Salma³⁴.

During the Caliphate of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (35–40 AH)

1) .Qāghir ibn Waghr

A Ṭābiʿī (Successor), though his date of death is not recorded.

During ʿAlī's caliphate, he led an expedition against Qalāt (in Balochistan).

When his soldiers cried "Allāhu Akbar!", the enemy fled in panic³⁵.

2.) Ḥārith ibn Murrah al-ʿAbdī (d. 42 AH)

A native of Bahrain, he conquered Gandāwah (Qand Asīl) and Qayqān (Qalāt) with ʿAlī's permission in 36 AH.

He was later martyred in Qalāt in 42 AH during the caliphate of Muʿāwiyah³⁶.

3). Ḥurayth ibn Rāshid al-Nāḥī

A Tābī'ī from the Banū Nāḥiya, a branch of 'Uthmān's clan of Quraysh.

He met the Prophet ﷺ in person and is believed to have visited Balochistan (Makran)³⁷.

After the martyrdom of 'Alī (RA), Imām Ḥasan (RA) was pledged allegiance to as caliph.

After six months, he abdicated in favor of Amīr Mu'āwiyah (RA), bringing an end to the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn)³⁸.

During the Umayyad Caliphate (41–132 AH)

1. 'Umar ibn 'Ubayd Allāh (d. 84 AH)

His father, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar al-Tamīmī, had served as governor of Makran. 'Umar attacked and conquered Armanhīlah (present-day Lasbela), where he also built a mosque.

He further captured Qandahīl (modern Gandāwah)³⁹.

2. Abū al-Yamān al-Ma'lā al-Baṣrī

(His date of death is not recorded in Asmā' al-Rijāl.)

He participated in the Battle of Qalāt (38 AH), where the enemy fled upon hearing the Muslim battle cry of Allāhu Akbar⁴⁰.

3. al-Muhallab ibn Abī Ṣufra al-Azdī (d. 82 AH)

He lived during the Prophet's lifetime but did not meet him personally.

In 44 AH, he fought in Makran, Qayqān (Qalāt), Nāl, and Qandahīl (Gandāwah), extending campaigns as far as Bannu⁴¹.

4. 'Abd Allāh al-Sawwār al-'Abdī (d. 47 AH)

He served as governor of Sindh under Amir Mu'āwiyah (RA) — at that time, Sindh included large parts of present-day Balochistan.

He led two successful military campaigns in Qalāt⁴².

5. Yāsir ibn Sawwār al-'Abdī

(Brother of 'Abd Allāh al-Sawwār; date of death unknown)

He fought alongside his brother in the Battle of Qayqān (Qalāt) in 47 AH⁴³.

6. Sinān ibn Salma al-Hudhalī (d. 53 AH)

Born at the Conquest of Makkah (8 AH), he died in 53 AH during the reign of Mu'āwiyah (RA).

He conquered Makran, Buddh, Kachhi, and Qasdar (Khuzdār), and was buried there.

After his death, Ziyād ibn Abīhi appointed his son 'Abbād in his place, who marched through Sijistān and Helmand to Kech, and went on to capture Qandahār.

Following this, Ziyād sent Mundhir ibn Jārūd as governor of Sindh⁴⁴.

7. Kizr ibn Ḥārith al-Kūfī

)Date of death not recorded(.

In 45 AH, during the caliphate of Mu'āwiyah, he took part in the Qalāt campaign, achieving victory.

On his return, the Caliph sent him once again to Qalāt⁴⁵.

8. Abū al-Ash'ath Mundhir ibn Jārūd al-'Abdī (d. 55 AH)

After the martyrdom of Sinān ibn Salma al-Hudhalī, he became the governor of Sindh.

He launched jihād campaigns in Khārān and Qalāt, and died in Balochistan⁴⁶.

9. al-Ḥārith al-Bāhilī (d. 38 AH)

A Tābi'ī and an excellent commander and administrator.

He fought alongside Sinān ibn Salma in the jihād of Makran, Qalāt, Kachhi, and Khuzdār, and later in Khārān.

After Mundhir ibn Jārūd, he was appointed governor, expanding Islamic control over many territories⁴⁷.

10. Sayghī ibn Shaybānī (d. 53 AH)

He arrived in Gandāwah (Qand Abīl) during the caliphate of 'Uthmān (39 AH).

A supporter of 'Alī (RA), he was martyred near Damascus along with six companions during the rule of Mu'āwiyah⁴⁸.

11. al-A'shā al-Hamdānī (date of death unknown)

A Tābi'ī and poet from Kūfah, among the renowned poets of the Umayyad period.

He participated in the Makran campaign⁴⁹.

12. Abū Ayyūb ibn Yazīd al-Hilālī

A Tābi'ī and eloquent orator, he traveled extensively across India and Makran⁵⁰.

13. Hudhayl ibn Tughtha al-Bajlī (d. 95 AH)

During the reign of Caliph al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik (84–96 AH), he led a military expedition to Debal (Sindh) and died there⁵¹.

14. Ḥātim ibn Abī Qabṣah al-Muhallabī al-Azdī

His grandfather's name was Muṭṭlab, hence al-Muhallabī.

He belonged to the Azd tribe and served under the famous general al-Muhallab al-Aṣghar.

He promoted agriculture and public welfare and assisted Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf in Muḥammad ibn Qāsim's conquest of Sindh.

Before that, the two had conquered Panjgur together⁵².

15. Junayd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 116 AH)

During the caliphate of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik (105–125 AH), he served as governor of Sindh, overseeing the frontier regions including Balochistan⁵³.

After Junayd, Tamīm ibn Zayd al-Qabīnī (date of death unknown) and later al-Ḥakam ibn 'Awānah al-Kalbī (d. 95 AH) were appointed as governors of Sindh⁵⁴.

End of the Umayyad Rule

Due to internal succession disputes, political uprisings, and the 'Abbāsīd revolutionary movement led by Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī, the Umayyad Caliphate collapsed in 132 AH (749 CE), marking the beginning of the 'Abbāsīd era.

The Political Status of Makran during the Early Umayyad Period

After the establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750 CE), the Muslims began to organize and consolidate their frontier territories.

At that time, Makran served as a frontier province situated between Sindh and Khurasan, adjoining the territories under the control of the people of Sindh and Raja Dahir.

During the Umayyad period, Makran functioned primarily as a military and administrative outpost⁵⁵.

From Makran, the Muslims maintained strategic communication routes not only with Sindh but also with southern Iran (Kerman and Sijistan)⁵⁶.

3. The Importance of Makran under Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf

During the governorship of Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (r. 694–714 CE), Makran gained exceptional military importance.

He strengthened its borders and turned it into a strategic base for launching military expeditions into Sindh⁵⁷.

When Muḥammad ibn Qāsim invaded Sindh in 712 CE, his army marched through Makran on Hajjāj's orders.

According to historical sources:

“Muḥammad ibn Qāsim proceeded through Makran and crossed the frontier into Sindh with the permission of Hajjāj⁵⁸”.

Thus, Makran became the gateway for the Islamic conquest of Sindh during the Umayyad period.

Besides its military significance, Makran served as a vital supply route, caravan passage, and logistical base for reinforcements.

4. Administrative Organization under the Umayyads

The Umayyad caliphs formally recognized Makran as a frontier province (wilāyah).

At times, it was placed under the authority of the governor of Sijistan or Khurasan, and at other times under Basra or the governor of Sindh.

According to Al-Balādhurī and Al-Ṭabarī, peace treaties were concluded with local Baloch tribal chiefs to ensure regional stability.

As Islamic rule solidified, mosques, markets, and forts were constructed, and the Makran coastal routes were increasingly used for trade and maritime exchange⁵⁹.

5. Cultural and Religious Developments

During the Umayyad period, Islamic influence began to spread in Makran.

Although a significant portion of the local population still followed ancient Iranian or Buddhist beliefs, the presence of Arab soldiers, settlers, and merchants gradually introduced Islamic culture, the Arabic language, and new social norms⁶⁰.

Arab merchants began to settle permanently in the coastal towns of Makran, leading to a fusion of Arab and local cultures — a process that later became a distinctive feature of Baloch civilization.

Conclusion

During the Umayyad Caliphate, Makran played a pivotal role in Islamic expansion, frontier defense, and trade connectivity.

It served not only as the gateway to the conquest of Sindh but also as the first entry point of Islam into Balochistan and the western coasts of South Asia.

Under Umayyad administration, Makran evolved into a semi-autonomous yet strategically vital province, a status that continued and became more consolidated in the ‘Abbāsīd era.

Makran under the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258 CE)

During the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258 CE), Makran evolved from being a mere frontier zone into a major center of Islamic civilization, learning, commerce, and political influence.

This study examines the political conditions, administrative organization, religious and cultural developments, and relations between Makran and the Abbasid Empire in the light of historical sources.

Due to its strategic geographic location, Makran served as a bridge between Iran, Arabia, and the Indian subcontinent, enabling the deep-rooted spread of Islamic civilization into South Asia.

After the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate in 132 AH / 750 CE, the empire extended and consolidated its political and administrative control over the eastern frontier regions⁶¹.

.1 Makran’s Political Status during the Abbasid Period

Under the Abbasids, Makran — which during the Umayyad period had served as a frontier to Sindh — was elevated to the status of a distinct province (wilāyah). Its geographical importance, trade routes, and ports, particularly Tump, Gwadar, and Kech, made it highly valuable to the Abbasid state.

Makran was formally linked with Sijistan (Sistan) and Khurasan, and governors were appointed who oversaw both political and religious-judicial matters⁶².

During the reign of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809 CE), Makran’s coastal routes became part of the Persian Gulf trade network.

Arab, Persian, and Indian merchants traversed this region, and Makran’s ports maintained commercial ties with Oman, Aden, and Basra.

As al-Ya‘qūbī records:

“The signs of Islam spread across the land of Makran, and the Arabs made treaties with the local chieftains⁶³”.

2. Abbasid Administration and Provincial Organization

The Abbasid administration appointed ‘Umalā’ (regional governors) in Makran who reported to the central authorities in Khurasan.

These officials maintained peace and order, collected taxes (kharāj), and entered treaties with local Baloch tribes.

During this period, Islamic fortresses, mosques, and bazaars were built across Makran.

Traces of Abbasid architecture can still be seen today in the ruins of Tump and Kech.

3. Intellectual and Cultural Developments

The Abbasid era is renowned for its promotion of knowledge and culture, and Makran too witnessed these influences.

Arabic became the official and religious language, and the local Baloch population gradually embraced Islamic learning — particularly jurisprudence (fiqh), Qur’anic exegesis (tafsīr), and linguistics.

Several Arabic schools and scribes emerged in coastal towns that maintained intellectual contact with Khurasan and Basra.

Arab-Baloch ethnic and cultural intermingling also deepened during this period, leaving a lasting mark on later Baloch civilization⁶⁴.

4.Economy and Trade in Makran

Under the Abbasids, the economy of Makran was based mainly on trade and fishing.

Its coastal cities maintained active commercial relations with the Persian Gulf, Aden, Muscat, and Basra.

The region exported sugar (fanīdh), salt, dates, leather, and grain.

As the geographer al-Iṣṭakhrī wrote in *Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik*:

“Makran is a vast yet barren land, but from its shores ships depart for the Arab lands⁶⁵”.

5.Religious Developments

During the Abbasid period, the people of Makran gradually embraced Islam.

In the early stages, some Kharijite and Zaydi influences were observed, but eventually the Sunni majority prevailed.

This period also saw the arrival of Sufi saints and scholars who contributed to the spiritual spread of Islam in the region.

Thus, the roots of Sufi Islam in Balochistan can be traced back to the Abbasid era, where it became a defining feature of the region's social fabric⁶⁶.

6. Cultural and Linguistic Influences

Alongside Arabic, the influence of Persian grew stronger in Makran — mainly due to Khurasani cultural exchanges.

These two languages later became the foundation of the Balochi language.

The spread of Islamic calligraphy, mosque construction, Arabic manuscripts, and trade documentation in Makran stand as vivid examples of Abbasid cultural influence⁶⁷.

7. Conclusion

Under the Abbasid Caliphate, Makran was no longer just a frontier outpost.

It became an integral part of the Islamic world, where civilization, scholarship, trade, and faith flourished side by side.

Situated at the crossroads of Arab, Persian, and Baloch cultures, Makran emerged as a cultural melting pot whose legacy profoundly influenced the later identity of Balochistan and Sindh.

Makran's Historical and Cultural Background after the Abbasid Period

After the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate, Makran entered a new historical phase.

With the weakening of central authority, local rulers, Baloch tribes, and Iranian influences gradually consolidated their power in the region.

Once a distant eastern province of the Abbasid Empire, Makran transformed into a semi-autonomous political region, where Islamic, Persian, and Baloch cultures intertwined to form a unique civilizational identity.

By the 9th and 10th centuries CE, as the Abbasid control weakened, the eastern provinces — particularly Khurasan, Sistan, and Makran — witnessed the rise of independent local dynasties.

Due to its remote coastal geography, Makran soon fell beyond the direct reach of the central caliphate.

From that point onward, the history of Makran became a story of local autonomy, tribal governance, and Islamic cultural fusion⁶⁸.

1. Political Developments: Makran's Rule after the Abbasids

(a) The Ṭāhirid, Ṣaffārid, and Sāmānid Influence (9th–10th centuries CE)

Following the decline of Abbasid power, Makran first came under the influence of the Ṭāhirid dynasty (821–873 CE) and later the Ṣaffārids (861–1003 CE).

The Ṣaffārids, ruling from Sistan (now part of Iran and Afghanistan), administered Makran as a frontier province under their control.

According to Al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal, the Ṣaffārids established administrative and military garrisons in Makran to control the Arabian Sea trade routes⁶⁹.

(b) The Ghaznavid and Ghurid Periods (10th–12th centuries CE)

In the 10th century, during the reigns of Sebūktigin and Mahmud of Ghazni, Makran once again became an important military and trade corridor linking Sindh with Khurasan.

The Ghaznavid Empire used the Makran coast for logistical movements and supply routes to India.

Islamic culture, Persian administration, and Khurasani traditions flourished during this era⁷⁰.

(c) The Seljuk and Khwarazmian Eras (11th–13th centuries CE)

Under the Seljuks and later the Khwarazmians, Makran remained semi-autonomous.

Local Baloch chieftains retained significant internal independence.

Historical sources such as *Mujmal al-Tawārīkh wa al-Qiṣaṣ* and *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam* describe how the inner parts of Makran — Kech, Tump, and Gwadar — were governed by Baloch tribal states⁷¹.

2. Rise of the Baloch Tribes and Local Rule

Between the 10th and 13th centuries, the Baloch tribes established local authority across Makran.

Among them, the Rind, Lashari, Gichki, and Hot tribes became prominent.

These tribes combined Islamic and Persian political traditions with indigenous customs, giving Makran a distinct cultural and political character.

During this period, oral traditions such as Balochi Sīrat and Riwayāt-e-Balochān emerged, preserving the heroic tales of early Baloch chiefs⁷².

.3Religious and Intellectual Influences

After the Abbasid period, Sunni Islam remained dominant in Makran, but Zaydi, Ismaili, and Sufi influences also spread.

Sufi saints from Persia and Sistan traveled to the region, establishing centers of learning and spiritual guidance.

The Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya orders later became deeply rooted in the religious life of Makran.

This period also witnessed the rise of the Zikri faith, which developed its own distinct identity in the coastal areas of Balochistan⁷³.

4. Cultural and Linguistic Evolution

In post-Abbasid Makran, the interaction between Arabic, Persian, and Balochi languages produced a new hybrid culture.

Persian became the language of administration, literature, and religion, while Balochi flourished as the language of oral poetry and folklore.

Local poets and Sufi mystics laid the foundations of Balochi poetic tradition, which became a hallmark of regional identity.

Culturally, Makran reflected a synthesis of Persian architecture, Arabic script, and Baloch tribal customs⁷⁴.

5.Economy and Trade

Even after the Abbasids, Makran retained its economic significance.

Its coastal regions maintained maritime links with the Persian Gulf, Aden, Oman, and Indian ports.

Major exports included salt, dates, leather, fish, and wool.

Trade hubs such as Gwadar and Pasni hosted Arab, Persian, and Indian merchants — making Makran an essential part of the Maritime Islamic Civilization.

7.Sufi Influence and Spiritual Centers

In the centuries following the Abbasids, Makran evolved into a region of spiritual and Sufi activity.

Numerous Sufi scholars and saints spread Islam through peaceful preaching and popular devotion.

Many of their descendants are still revered as Sayyid lineages and spiritual leaders in modern Makran.

The Sufi character of Makran fostered religious tolerance, social cohesion, and cultural unity⁷⁵.

7. Conclusion

After the Abbasid period, Makran embarked on a new historical journey.

The decline of central authority led to the rise of local autonomy, and Baloch tribes emerged as the main architects of the region's political, cultural, and religious identity.

This period represents a turning point in Makran's history, as the region's Islamic–Baloch civilization took its definitive shape — one that continues to influence Balochistan's heritage and identity to this day.

Arrival of the Baloch Tribes and the Spread of Islamic Civilization in Makran

In the 10th century CE, the Baloch tribes began settling in the valleys of Makran, permanently transforming the region's social and linguistic landscape.

Baloch culture merged with the region's ancient Iranian and Islamic traditions, giving rise to a unique cultural synthesis.

Islam among the Baloch was primarily practiced in a Sufi and mystical form, which later contributed to the spread of Zikri beliefs and Sufi Islam throughout the region.

Baloch Rule in Makran (10th–13th Centuries): A Historical and Social Overview

Between the 10th and 13th centuries, the Baloch tribes firmly established their political, social, and cultural foundations in Makran.

Powerful tribes such as the Rind, Lashari, Gichki, and Hot not only shaped Makran's political order but also laid the groundwork for its distinct cultural identity.

Makran, comprising present-day southern Balochistan and the Iranian borderlands, had long served as a frontier province since the early Islamic conquests.

After the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate, central control weakened, and the Baloch tribes established autonomous local rule.

From the 10th to 13th centuries, the Rind, Lashari, Gichki, Hot, Naudzai, Mirani, and Buledi tribes became the core of Makran's political and cultural structure⁷⁶.

1. Geographical and Strategic Importance of Makran

Makran's location made it historically significant — bordered by Sistan and Kerman (Iran) to the west, the Gulf of Oman to the south, and Sindh to the east. This strategic position turned Makran into both a trade corridor and a military route between the Middle East and South Asia.

The Baloch tribes used this geography to establish semi-independent tribal states that controlled both inland routes and coastal trade⁷⁷.

2. Emergence of the Baloch Tribes in Makran

Historical sources such as *Tuhfat al-Karam*, *Tārīkh-e-Makran*, and *Tārīkh-e-Balochistān* describe the gradual migration of the Baloch from Sistan and Kerman into Makran.

Initially nomadic, these tribes began settling permanently in Makran, Kech, Tump, and Turbat after the 10th century.

This settlement marked the beginning of Baloch political organization in the region⁷⁸.

3. Establishment of Baloch Rule in Makran

(a) The Rind Tribe

The Rind tribe held a leading position among the Baloch.

Their leadership was linked to the family of Mir Chakar Khan Rind, who consolidated power across Makran and its surrounding areas.

The Rind state was centered in Kech and Turbat, operating under a tribal yet organized system.

The chief (sardar) ruled with the consent of the tribal council (jirga), reflecting early Baloch democratic traditions.

(b) The Lashari Tribe

The Lashari tribe rivaled the Rinds in strength and influence.

Under Mir Gohram Lashari, they established an independent political authority in Makran.

According to Tārīkh-e-Makran, the Rind–Lashari wars (12th–13th centuries) were decisive in shaping Makran’s political map.

Despite these conflicts, both tribes jointly contributed to the formation of Baloch identity and culture.

(c) The Gichki Tribe

The Gichki tribes dominated Makran’s coastal belt — including Gwadar, Pasni, and Ormara.

They controlled trade routes and ports, fostering maritime commerce with Arab, Persian, and Indian merchants.

Under their rule, Makran’s coastal economy prospered and became an integral part of regional sea trade⁷⁹.

(d) The Hot Tribe

The Hot tribe exerted influence over Makran’s desert and inland regions, particularly between Panjgur and Mand.

Their leaders promoted tribal unity and established relations with other Baloch groups.

Under their governance, customary law (rewaj), village systems, and tribal institutions became well-organized⁸⁰.

4.Social and Cultural Development

The 10th–13th centuries were not only a time of political consolidation but also of cultural transformation.

The Baloch combined their traditional customs, music, poetry, hospitality, and rural values with Islamic and Persian influences, forming a distinct Balochi culture.

This era saw the emergence of Balochi folk poetry and epic tales, most famously the story of the Rind–Lashari war, which remains central to Baloch oral literature today.

5. Religious and Intellectual Influences

The Baloch tribes embraced Islam as their faith, but its Sufi interpretation left the deepest imprint.

Sufi saints — especially those from Iran and Sistan — established khānqāhs (spiritual lodges) in Makran’s mountains and coastal areas.

These centers promoted religious education, brotherhood, and equality, laying the foundations of the region's spiritual tradition⁸¹.

6. Economy of Makran under Baloch Rule

During Baloch rule, Makran's economy was based on agriculture, livestock, and maritime trade.

Its coastal regions maintained commercial links with the Arabian Peninsula and India via the Gulf of Oman.

Major exports included dates, salt, fish, and wool.

This maritime economy made Makran a crucial part of the Indian Ocean trade network⁸².

7. Conclusion

The rise of the Baloch tribes in Makran (10th–13th centuries) marks one of the most significant turning points in the region's history.

These tribes established political stability, fostered social unity, and created a distinct Balochi-Islamic civilization.

The Rind, Lashari, Gichki, and Hot tribes made Makran a center of blended Islamic, Persian, and Baloch traditions — a cultural synthesis that laid the foundation of modern Baloch identity and remains alive in Balochistan's heritage today.

Colonial and Modern Era

In the 19th century, Makran came under the control of the Khan of Kalat, but the British Empire, recognizing its strategic value, incorporated it into the Baluchistan Agency as part of its frontier policy.

According to the Imperial Gazetteer of India:

“Makran is a barren but geographically significant region, lacking major rivers, with most of its valleys dry and rocky”.

After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, Makran, along with the State of Kalat, was merged into Pakistan. In 1955, during the creation of the One Unit system, Makran became a permanent part of the province of Balochistan.

Conclusion

The historical background of Makran reveals that it has never been merely a barren land— it has long served as a crossroads of civilizations, empires, and faiths. From ancient conquerors and traders to Sufi missionaries, each left a lasting imprint on its soil.

The Islamic conquests, Persian influence, arrival of the Baloch tribes, and British colonial policies

all contributed to shaping Makran into a symbol of cultural diversity and historical continuity.

Even today, Makran holds vital national and regional importance as part of Pakistan's coastal defense, home to the Gwadar Port, and as a core region of Baloch identity and heritage.



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