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HISTORY

Gwadar district, with its 600 kilometers long coast line and un-irrigated tracts of Kulanch and Dasht valleys, has always been an important chapter of Makran's history. The known history of Makran goes back to the time of prophet Dawood when people entombed themselves to avoid famine. The area is said to be possessed by Iranian King Kaus followed by Afrasiab of Turan and then by Kai Khusrau, again an Iranian. Then there is a long list of rulers, including Lehrasp, Gushtasp, Bahman, Huma and Darab, to the year 325 BC when Alexander the Great incidentally found the sea in this area on his way from India to Macedonia . Greek historian Arrian has mentioned the coast line as the country of Ichthyophagoi. At that time Nearchos, the admiral of Alexander, sailed along the coast and mentioned places named Kalamat, Gwadar, Pishukan and Chahbar. Afterwards, the area was ruled by Seleukos Nikator, one of Alexander's generals, who lost it to Chandragupta in 303 BC. Then the tract of history is lost in darkness for centuries. An account of this area is found in the beginning of the sixteenth century when the Portuguese found their way to India and captured several places along the Makran coast. In 1581 they burnt "the rich and beautiful city of Pasni " and Gwadar. Although many invaders conquered the land, mostly the local rulers, including Hotis, Rinds, Maliks, Buledais and Gichkis, exercised authority in the area as the conquerors had no intentions to stay there.



Old Airport Road

Two regimes of local rulers, of Buledais and Gichkis, are worth mentioning here. The Buledais gained power with the rise of the Zikri sect. These rulers are said to be connected with the rulers of Muscat and were called Buledais with reference to the valley of Buleda where they resided. The Buledais ruled the area for more than a century up to the year 1740. In the last years of their regime they embraced Islam. The Zikri folk joined hands with the Gichkis who also were Zikris by faith. The family feuds and internal dissension between Gichkis resulted in

nine successful expeditions (either partially or fully) by Mir Nasir Khan I. It is said, that the main motive behind all these expeditions, made by Mir Nasir Khan I, was to eliminate the Zikris as he belonged to the (anti-Zikri) Muslim faith. These expeditions resulted in a division of revenues between the Khan and Gichkis.



Fokker Landing at Gwadar Airport

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Gwadar and the surrounding country fell into the hands of Muscat. Syed Said succeeded to the Maenad of Muscat in 1783 and had a dispute with his brother Syed Sultan. The latter appears to have fled to Makran and entered into communication with Nasir Khan who granted him the Kalat share of the revenues of Gwadar. Syed Sultan lived at Gwadar for some time and eventually succeeded in usurping the Sultanate of Muscat in 1797. He died in 1804 and during his sons reign, the Buledai chief of Sarbaz, Mir Dosten, is said to have acquired temporary possession of Gwadar, but a force sent from Muscat regained it. Although it is generally understood that the right of sovereignty in Gwadar was transferred by the Khans of Kalat to Muscat in perpetuity, the Khans and natives of Gwadar have always denounced this perception. The un-irrigated tracts of Kulanch and Dasht valleys have always been connected with Kech.



Building

The first Afghan war (1838-39) directed attention of the British to the area. Major Goldsmith visited the area in 1861 and an Assistant Political Agent was appointed in Gwadar in 1863.

Both Pasni and Gwadar have been ports of call for the steamers of the British India Steam Navigation Company. The first ever telegraphic link to this area was made in 1863 when Gwadar was linked to Karachi . Telegraph offices were opened at Gwadar and Pasni. Later post offices were opened at Gwadar in 1894 and at Pasni in 1903. Ormara was linked telegraphically in 1904.





After the division of the Indian subcontinent into two sovereign states, areas except Gwadar and its surroundings joined the Balochistan States Union, as part of Makran state. In early 1949 along with Kalat, Lasbela and Kharan. In October 1955, Makran was given the status of a district of former West Pakistan province after its accession to Pakistan . In 1958, Gwadar and its surrounding area were reverted back from Muscat to Pakistan and were made a tehsil of Makran district. On 1st July 1970 , when one unit was dissolved and Balochistan gained the status of a province, Makran became one of its 8 districts. On 1st July 1977 , Makran was declared a division and was divided into three districts, named Panjgur, Turbat (renamed Kech) and Gwadar. Gwadar was notified as a district on July 1, 1977 with its headquarters at Gwadar town.

A stone-built domed shrine of some saint at Gwadar is said to be centuries old. It may be the same one indicated in the Gazetteer of Balochistan. A square fort along with a tower is present amidst the Memon Muhallah of Gwadar. It is near the old bungalow of the Assistant Political Agent to the Governor General (therefore renowned as governor's house). Moreover, the fort of Syed Sultan is still in good condition and is being used as a police station.