

THE EARLY HISTORY OF KARACHI CITY: AN EXPLORATION

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Abstract

The present study intends to explore the early history of Karachi starting from the beginning of the eighteenth century when the city was just a small fishing village. However, due to its ideal geographic location it turned into a commercial town and a busy port soon. In this respect, the current research sheds light on the antiquity of the town through various important historical events that have been mentioned in the ancient and medieval chronicles. Furthermore, the paper also discusses different theories regarding the etymology of Karachi that have been revealed through oral traditions as well as the historical accounts. This paper particularly deals with the two general notions regarding the founders of the city whether it was a fishermen's village or it was a Baloch village. In this paper, an effort is made to highlight the early history of Karachi through scrutinizing the early sources.

Key-words: Karachi, Sindh, History, Qalat, Kalhoras, Baloch

Introduction

“You will yet be the glory of the East; would that I could come again to see you, Karachi, in your grandeur!”

Sir Charles Napier uttered these well-known words with an awesome perspicacity as he gazed at the congested small town perched on the edge of the Arabian Sea. This was the Karachi, the fledgling sea port of Sindh that he had captured for the British in 1843 and which had existed precariously for several centuries before.

Karachi, the capital of the province of Sindh in Pakistan is a cosmopolitan city. No reference of Karachi had been found in the historical record for centuries nor has any systematic archaeological survey of Karachi and its environs so far been conducted to trace its

origin. However, surface collections from some of the ancient sites testify to its remote past. Remains of the Neolithic period have been discovered near the new campus of the Karachi University². Some of the ancient sites show the existence of Mesolithic hunting and food gathering communities³.

Karachi: Its Historical Background

It is generally accepted that no authentic record regarding the early history of Karachi is available. But evidences imply that the Arab commander Muhammad bin Qasim must have passed through Karachi while proceeding towards Debal. The modern story of its historical growth and development began with its colonial occupation in 1849 CE. Very soon, Karachi assumed the status of a modern city primarily due to its sea-port and strategic geographical location

The modern history of Karachi is writ large in a number of sources including of chronicles, reports, gazetteers, newspapers, periodicals and official records. The quick phenomenal growth of the city created an abiding interest in the history of its origin and development. While one attempts to probe into the long past of Karachi, a number of questions arise, such as; When was it that Karachi was a small village and who settled in it first? When did this village become more sizeable? When did it grow into a township? It is to note is Karachi had already been developing into a fast growing township of great importance before its occupation by the British in 1839 CE.

‘There is a complete absence of any definite reference to Karachi in the chronicles or maps of earlier than the eighteenth century⁴.’ When one probes into the past of Karachi beyond the second half of the eighteenth century, one finds scarce evidence. Rather the political history of Karachi region has not yet been investigated. We can, though consider different forms of the place name and their chronology. We get the following forms of the name⁵.

- i. Karachi: Since the eighteenth century till now. This is the most standardized form of the name in the British official record.
- ii. Kurrachee: In Alexander Baillie’s account (c. 1890 CE), in T. G. Carless, *Memoirs on the Bay, Harbour and Trade of Kurrachee*; and in Capt. Hart’s *Report on the Town and Port Kurrachee*’.
- iii. Crochey: In Lt. John Porter’s accounts (c. 1744-45 CE)
- iv. Kaurashi: In *Muhit* of Seydi Ali Reis (c. 1553-54 CE)
- v. Ras Karashi/ Ras al-Karazi: In *‘Umdah’* of al-Mahri (c. 1511 CE)

vi. Al-Karazi: In '*Fawa'id*' of Ibn Majid (Compiled before 1500 CE)

The history of present megacity of Karachi dates back to the eighteenth century when Sindh was ruled by the Kalhora dynasty (r. 1701-1783 CE). It was the time when the mighty Mughul Empire was on the verge of its downfall and the rule of the Kalhoras was expanding from Northern Sindh to the Arabian Sea. Today, as Karachi has gained strategic significance and renown at global level in all aspects, it is necessary to understand and highlight its history, in general and its early historical background in particular.

Recently, a considerable amount of literature has been produced about the city its origin and development during the early stages couldn't attain a justified attention of the contemporary scholars. In this context, the researchers follow different contradictory opinions. These accounts generally reveal that the city of Karachi has neither been a part of Sindh since its early times, nor have there been any role of Sindhi tribes and rulers in its foundation, progress and expansion.

The Founders of Karachi

There are two general notions regarding the founder of the city that a) it was a fishermen's village; and b) it was a Baloch village. The foremost estimation about the foundation of the city has been established by Seth Naomul in his Memoirs that Karachi was but a small village of fishermen and that it was settled as a trade centre and fortified for the first time by his great grandfather in 1729 CE, when he writes: "There was a water fountain known as Kolachi's 'kun'. The word 'kun' refers to a deep-water ditch, while Kolachi is said to be the name of a fisherwoman (Mir Bahr) too. The ditch was surrounded by some coastal plants like mangroves. Finally, the place was selected and houses were constructed there, subsequently the all make-and-shift luggage was shifted there from Kharak Bandar. All villages of Kolachi, which were then called 'Karachi', shifted and settled there. This settlement episode occurred in 1785 Sanbat year, in accordance with the Hindu calendar year (1729 CE). This is how the city of Karachi was founded⁶." This opinion is still prevalent. On the other hand, Dr. N. A. Baloch has presented a new perspective in this regard. He states: "This city was founded by the people of Kalmati tribe. It was represented in distinct forms and known by different names during that time⁷."

The view established by Dr. N. A. Baloch requires an intensive examination on historical basis. A detailed analysis will be carried out on this thesis further. Nevertheless, in above mentioned context, this doctrine seems to be much more appropriate, when he writes: “Kolachi was, actually, a fisherwoman who possessed an eminent status on the basis of her position. The city was associated with her name and later it was modified as Karachi⁸.” At this point, we can deduce that by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the name of this city had been established as Karachi⁹. The historical milieu of the city is evident since the start of the century.

Ghulam Rasool Mehr in his book titled the ‘*Tarikh-i-Sindh*’ (Vol. II) writes that Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro snatched Uch city and fort Sabzal from the Daudpotas and annexed it to his territory. Besides, he conquered the areas surrounding Karachi by defeating Khan of Qalat and expanded the boundaries of his territory in Sindh¹⁰.

However, it is evident that the region of Karachi had always been a part of Sindh, though in 1697, for the first time it was handed over to Khan of Qalat in compensation of blood of Mir Mehrab Khan at the instance of the Mughul Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir. Karachi remained attached to Balochistan during 1697-1757 CE. In 1697 CE, Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro took Karachi harbor from Khan of Qalat and annexed it to Sindh again.

Karachi and Qalat

There seems some lack of authenticity in the works about the linkages between Karachi and Qalat. Sindh as well as Qalat assumed sovereignty on eclipse of the Mughul power in the first half of the eighteenth century. Prior to that, for a long period of about three centuries, starting from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, there existed the principalities of the coastal regions both in Sindh as well as in Balochistan. These principalities were autonomous and most of the times independent. These include the Kalmati principality of Hub, Malir and the Nigamara Rana principality of Dharaja.

There is an important indication in Lt. John L. Porter’s account in 1774 that Karachi formerly belonged to the Baloch tribes but later on, the Prince of Sindh acquired it in exchange of another area. Though, the name of Baloch tribe and the Prince are not mentioned. The text reveals some events which occurred earlier but not the events which were yet to come some three decades later than 1747 CE. An erudite researcher,

Azimushan Haider in his 'History of Karachi' sums up these events as below:

“The history of Karachi until its occupation by the Talpur rulers of Hyderabad in 1795 CE is disconnected. Karachi was formerly part of the territory of the Khan of Qalat but was occupied by the Kalhora ruler of Sindh in 1729 CE. In 1785, Karachi was ceded to the Khan of Qalat as compensation for the murder of Zarak Khan, brother-in-law of the ruler of Qalat Nasir Khan, who was killed fighting with the Sindhi army. But according to the '*Frere Nama*', Karachi was under the control of the Khan of Qalat in 1774 CE. This evidence indicates that Karachi had passed under Sindh between 1774 CE and 1775 CE. It is apparent that Karachi changed hands between the rulers of Qalat and Sindh more than once between 1729 CE and 1795 CE¹¹.”

The Mughuls ruled Sindh from 1592 CE to 1737 CE. Dr. Azeemushan Haider in his unpublished thesis titled 'History of Karachi' cited above mentions that the island 'Man Hara' where Akber's commander Khan-i-Khanan had gone for recreation after the conquest of Sindh in 1592 CE, has been identified by some researchers as the present-day Manora. Carless and Headley who surveyed the delta of River Indus in 1836-37 CE also corroborate in their report that the place where Khan-i-Khanan stayed was 'Manora', near the mouth of River Indus¹².

After this incident, Karachi is mentioned during the reign of Mughul Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707 CE). Khan of Qalat Mir Mehrab Khan was killed in a battle fighting with the Kalhoras and to compensate his death, Aurangzeb took Karachi harbor from the Kalhoras and gave it to Mir Sumandar Khan, a nephew of Khan of Qalat.

The eighteenth century in Sindh witnessed the beginning of the rule of the Kalhora dynasty (r. 1700-1783 CE). But this family did not occupy the whole territory of Sindh at once rather they gained power and expanded their authority gradually. In 1681 CE, Mian Naseer Mohammad laid foundation of the Kalhora dynasty in some parts of northern Sindh. The Kalhoras successfully imposed their influence by the time of death of Mian Deen Mohammad in 1700 CE. His son Mian Yar Mohammad succeeded him and consolidated his power within a year till 1701 CE, and then he further extended the boundaries of his realm. Mian Noor Mohammad ascended after the demise of Mian Yar Mohammad in 1719 CE. He further occupied the province of Thatta in 1736 CE. Mian

Ghulam Shah Kalhora snatched Uch city and fort Sabzal from the Daudpotas and added it to Sindh. He also took the areas surrounding Karachi from Khan of Qalat.

The Kalhoras not only remained successful in establishing their rule throughout Sindh but in fact they unified Sindh geographically and politically to the highest extent again after the Arghuns (r. 1520 CE - 1556 CE). Mian Noor Mohammad was succeeded by Murad Yab Khan in 1753 CE, though he was eliminated in 1757 CE and Mian Ghulam Shah was installed at his place. Mian Ghulam Shah was succeeded by Mian Sarfraz, who ascended the throne in 1772 CE. He was also forced to withdraw in 1775 CE, and was succeeded by Mahmood Khan, Mian Ghulam Nabi, Mian Sadiq Ali and Mian Abdul Nabi respectively. Finally, Kalhora rule came to an end in 1783 CE at the hands of the Talpurs¹³.

The Kalhora reign is significant not only for the reason that the founding of Karachi as a town, but it also prospered and turned it into a district from a small town. Actually, the history of Karachi began to be recorded systematically from this era. When the Kalhoras established their rule in Sindh, Ahmed Zai Brohi also founded his dynasty in Qalat (Balochistan). The sources regarding the names of the Barohi rulers, their subsequent period and nature of their reign represent contradictory view points, it is still evident that the Kalhoras established diplomatic relations with the Khans of Qalat. The names of Sardar Mir Ahmed Khan I (r. 1666), Mir Mehrab Khan I (r. 1695), Mir Samandar Khan (r. 1695), Mir Abdullah Khan (r. 1714), Mir Mohabbat Khan (r. 1734) and Mir Naseer Khan I (r. 1749) are mentioned by the last ruler of the Kalhora dynasty, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan¹⁴.

As far as can be ascertained, the region of Karachi was always a part of Sindh but in 1697 CE, for the first time it was handed over to Khan of Qalat in compensation of the blood of Mir Mehrab Khan (Khan of Qalat) to his nephew Mir Samandar Khan on the orders of the Mughul Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir. Mir Gul Khan Naseer in his book titled *The History of Balochistan* writes about the killing of Mir Mehrab Khan in a bloody confrontation with the Kalhoras and passing away Karachi from Kalhoras of Sindh to Khan of Qalat as follows:

In 1697 CE, Daud Muhammad Kalhoro forcibly took away Malik Baro Zai's daughter. Malik ran to Multan and pleaded with Prince Moiz al-Din. When this incident took place, Mughal Prince Moiz al-Din was the Viceroy of Thatta and Multan. The prince, at the instance of Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir immediately took out his troops and attacked Daud

Muhammad Kalhoro for his rebellion and disobedience of the Emperor's order to return Baro Zai's daughter. Daud Khan and his brother were defeated and fled to the state of Qalat, which was under the suzerainty of the Mughals. Getting the orders of the Mughal Prince, Khan of Qalat Mir Mehrab Khan fought with the Kalhora brothers. During the fight, Mehrab Khan was badly injured.

The author of the first Tadhkira of Qalat entitled the *Akhbar al-Abrar* (c. 1820 CE), writes about this event as follows:

“Mehrab Khan kept living for two to three days. Akhund Mohammad Saleh made his will, in which he ordered that though Wazir Ahmed Khan and Abdullah Khan are his sons but authority should not be entrusted to them after his death. Rather, he would be succeeded by Mir Samandar Khan, the eldest son of his brother Mir Qamber. His will was followed accordingly. The Mughul Emperor Aurangzeb confiscated the area of Koro and Ka'arachi (Karachi) from the Kalhoras and handed over it to Ahmad Zai as compensation of bloodshed of Mir Mehrab Khan¹⁵.”

On the other hand, Rai Bahadur Hattu Ram, who is considered the earliest authority over the history of Balochistan writes about this incident:

“In 1700 CE, Brohi ruler was killed in Bolan Pass. The Mughul Emperor confiscated Karachi and handed over to Khan of Qalat Mir Samandar Khan as compensation of the blood of Mir Mehrab Khan. This city had been under the control of the Khan since the period of Naseer Khan I. Though, Sonmiani was bigger and more important initially, but gradually Karachi gained importance and fame. Dera Ghazi Khan was also being ruled over by the Khan of Qalat who also ruled Karachi for a certain period of time¹⁶.”

Apart from some historical errors, this statement of Hattu Ram displays some contradictions which are discussed ahead.

The last Khan of Qalat, Nawab Ahmed Yar Khan Jomezai (r. 1902-1979 CE) also describes this incident without appropriate investigation, as he writes:

“Samandar Khan departed with Emperor Aurangzeb after having arrested Daud Mohammad and Noor Mohammad. The Emperor rewarded him with the title of ‘Amir-al-Umara’ along with some cash. Karachi Port was also given to the Barohis as the blood price of Mahrab Khan. The Kalhoras had to pay forty thousand cash as tribute to Khan of Qalat every year¹⁷.”

Unfortunately, some scholars could not gain an appropriate knowledge regarding the history of Sindh. With that stated after having studied various opinions about this incident, one may try to comprehend historical facts in the mirror of history. Here the question arises about the Kalhora’s position at that time, immediately the next question emerges whether Karachi existed at that time or not? If the city or seaport existed, who had the influence or rule over it?

The Kalhoras were undergoing difficulties and tough times in 1700 CE. Mian Deen Mohammad was given the death penalty and Mian Yar Mohammad went to Qalat on self-exile. Mir Mehrab Khan was also killed in the encounters with the Kalhoras.

When Mian Yar Muhammad returned to his homeland after a gap of one-year, he laid foundation of his rule in northern Sindh despite of presence of the Barohis of Qalat, Pathans of Sibbi, Daudpotas of Shikarpur and the most importantly, Prince Moiz al-Din. They all were very strong opponents of the Kalhoras. Mian Yar Mohammad gained Royal protocol after having had gone through hardships, and vicissitudes. He died in 1719 CE after eighteen years of rule. His state extended from Sehwan to Sibbi and till Gunjaba¹⁸.

However, the whole area of Karachi was part of Thatta during the Mughul Era¹⁹. According to Naomul’s statement, this town (Karachi) emerged in 1729 CE²⁰. In fact, it was under the control of the Mughuls, the Kalhoras were given the province of Thatta by the last Mughul Nawab Sadiq Ali Khan in 1736 CE. This was the first time when the Kalhoras established their sole authority over the territory Sindh²¹.

In this context, it is evident that when Karachi was handed over to Khan of Qalat by the Kalhoras, it was neither under influence of the Kalhoras nor it was given to the Barohis for blood price. Mir Ali Sher Qani’, who was a contemporary to the Kalhoras, doesn’t mention whether Karachi or any other area was occupied by the Khan of Qalat²². However, it becomes apparent that Sibi, Dhadhar and Gunjaba like ancient areas were compensated by the Mughul Emperor when the compromise between Mian Yar Mohammad and Mu’izz al-Din was settled. The Khan

of Qalat made several attempts after gaining these areas but they weren't able to secure any territory of significance²³.

When the ruler of Qalat, Mir Abdullah Khan attacked Sindh without any specific reason in 1731 CE, he was killed fighting²⁴. The Brohis could not avenge as they didn't have the power. After the murder of Abdullah Khan his son Mohabbat Khan became the new ruler of Qalat State. Afterwards, the Afghan King Nadir Shah attacked and annexed Sindh in 1740 CE. The Barohi army supported Nadir Shah against Sindh. When Nadir Shah defeated the Sindhi forces, the Barohis demanded Abdullah's blood money. A contemporary historian writes that Nadir Shah divided the conquered area of Sindh into three parts: A large part was given to Mian Noor Mohammad, Sibbi was handed over to the Afghans and Shikarpur was granted to Daudpota²⁵. One of the foremost historians of Balochistan, Hattu Ram writes about the incident that, "All the area of Kutchi was given to Mir Mohabbat Khan by the King in compensation for Abdullah's blood price²⁶."

On the other side, one of the ruling family members himself writes about this incident that rewarding Kutch to Mir Mohabbat Khan by the Kalhoras was a better compensation²⁷. Many writers of Sibbi and Kach write about the incident. However, there are certain historians like Malik Muhammad Sa'eed Dhuar author of *Balochistan Tarikh ki Roshni Mein* who write both names regarding handing over of the area.

The third participant of this incident was the Persian King, Nadir Shah Qajar. Let's survey some non-Baloch viewpoints about this incident. The famous scholar Lockhart writes that the area of Kutch adjacent to Sindh was handed over to the ruler of Balochistan Mohabbat Khan by Nadir Shah. Shikarpur was given to Nawab Sadiq Khan Daudpota²⁸. According to another writer the area of Sindh adjoining to Balochistan was handed over to Qalat²⁹. A modern historian Ghulam Rasool Mahr writes about it referring to Robert Leech that:

That was the reason Mohabbat Khan accepted to receive Kutch, Karachi, area of Dhadhar and one lac rupees³⁰. The historical documents of Sindh, Balochistan and Persia corroborate this point that Sibi (including Kutch and Dhadhar) pargana, were taken from the rulers of Sindh and given to Khan of Qalat by Nadir Shah as the blood price. The handing over of Karachi or Kutch in these circumstances seems merely a myth. Kutch is situated in the western part of Sindh while Karachi Port remained under the influence of Sindh.

Karachi remained part of Balochistan from 1697 CE to 1757 CE. In 1757 CE, the ruler of Sindh, Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro took Karachi harbor from Khan of Qalat and made it again a part of Sindh. The Kalhoras appreciated Karachi harbor and undertook many development works to facilitate the traders. According to Naomal Hotchand after destruction of Kharak Bundar (Kharak Harbor), its entire population, which mostly consisted of the Hindu traders, moved permanently to Karachi in 1729 CE. Till that time, Karachi was attached to Sindh, but after only seventeen years, Karachi once again went under the control of Khan of Qalat.

This historical event is narrated by Mir Azim al-Din in his book *Fath Nama-i-Azeem* as follows;

The last ruler of the Kalhora family Mian Abdul Nabi murdered his Talpur chief, Mir Bijar Khan in 1780 CE. Consequently, the Talpurs rebelled against the Kalhoras. The army of Jodhpur came to help the Kalhoras. On the other end, the son-in-law of Nasir Khan (the ruler of Qalat) Mir Zarak Khan also departed for Larkana with his army to support the Kalhoras against the Talpurs. The battle was fought between the Talpurs, and the Barohis. At the end, Zarak Khan, the son in law of Khan of Qalat was killed. His death was an irreparable loss to the Khan, who expressed great anger and demanded compensation. Later on, Madad Khan (from Afghanistan) brought his army to Sindh to provide contingent to the Kalhoras. After successfully suppressing bloody uprisings and destruction of Talpurs, Mian Abdul Nabi successfully reassumed his power³¹. Mian Abdul Nabi became the ruler of Sindh again in 1781 CE. This was the time when Karachi with its harbor was handed over to the Khan of Qalat as compensation of Zarak Khan's blood.

The foremost historian of the city of Karachi Seth Naomul has to say about it that:

“Zarak Khan, the brother of Khan of Qalat was killed in a fight with the Kalhoras and in compensation, the Kalhoras handed over Karachi to Khan of Qalat. An army battalion of Qalat stayed over here from onwards³².”

The first native Baloch historian Akhund Mohammad Siddique sheds light on this incident as:

“Mir Naseer Khan sent Mir Zarak Khan to help Abdul Nabi, who was killed at ‘Sarkand’ by the Talpurs. Later Timur Shah secured Kora from the Talpurs as compensation and handed it over to Qalat³³”.

The author of the *Frere Nama*, recounts the killing of Zarak Khan and passing over of Karachi to Khan of Qalat as follows:

“In 1774, Mian Abdul Nabi handed over Karachi Harbor to Khan of Qalat as compensation for the death of his son-in-law Zarak Khan. After acquiring Karachi, the Khan of Qalat remained only interested in its revenue and didn’t pay any attention to its maintenance or the welfare of its citizens.”

Various Baloch scholars express different viewpoints about this incident. Irrespective of this fact, this was the first and last time when the ruler of Qalat was given the port and city of Karachi by the ruler of Sindh as blood price of Zarak Khan. Later, the ruler of Sindh Mir Fateh Ali Khan Talpur regained all the area of Karachi in 1795 CE and permanently annexed it to his territory.

If we accept 1781 CE as the year when Karachi was seized by the Khan of Qalat, then it is consequently proved that Karachi had been in the possession of Qalat for fourteen years; and this was the only period, when Karachi remained a part of Qalat.

However, Khan of Qalat’s indifference to the welfare and well-being of the people of Karachi has been summed up by Mehmooda Rizvi in her book titled *Malka-i-Mashriq* as follows:

The Khan of Qalat did not take any interest in the development of Karachi. He neither appointed any regular administrator nor did he allocate soldiers to save port or residents from robbers or foreign attack. A man named Allah Rakho Lohar was appointed as a tax-collector, who gave Rs. 250 annually to the Khan as tax revenue, the rest he kept for himself. It seems that Khan considered Karachi only a source of income and did not take any interest in its progress and development³⁴.

It is notable that that Khan of Qalat, Mir Naseer Khan on behalf of Tipu Sultan built his own trading house in Karachi and Muscat on the pattern of British and French trading houses. By establishing the trading house at Karachi, Tipu Sultan wanted not only to enhance his trade, but also to strengthen relationships with Sindh and Qalat. Furthermore, the reason was to provide military support to each other in time of need³⁵. Settlements of Baloch in South India corroborate this fact.

During the Kalhora period, an important event took place concerning the development of Karachi. In 1729, a famous Hindu trader, Bhojomal along with his companions left Kharak Bandar due to accumulation of sand in its bottom that had made the harbour useless. They first went to Shah Bandar then to Karachi, which they found suitable for their trading activities. So they permanently settled here and requested Jam of Jakhia to depute some soldiers for their safety and protection. But when these soldiers started looting caravans, Bhojomal and his companions constructed a fortified wall around the town and eventually a proper settlement emerged at this place. Bhojomal and his companions took measures for the development of Karachi harbor. Consequently, within few years, Karachi became a busy harbor.

The City's Early History

We can understand the history of Karachi city and its port with clarity on the basis of documentary evidences compiled about Karachi in the eighteenth century. But unfortunately, the works of some scholars have created confusions and complexities through their contradictory explanations. . In the following passages, some arguments shall be given in the context of historical evidence in this regard.

Clear indications about the present name of the city and sea port originate to the start of the eighteenth century. A reliable reference in this context is Mir Ali Sher Qani Thattawi, who is a contemporary historian and author of various authentic works. It is also evident that the city already existed with different names even before Muslim rule. The different names and geographies of the city are found in different writings. Whatever names the city may have had, it possessed strategically important position due to its coastal connection and geographical boundaries. We know that the province of Sindh comprised of five divisions during the Mughul period namely Thatta, Sehwan, Nasarpur, Chachkan and Chakar Hala.

The renowned historian, Irfan Habib has shown Karachi as a seaport of Sindh in his memorable Atlas about the Mughul era. The region of

Karachi is mentioned in Chakar Hala division during this period³⁶. The Kalhora rule began in 1681 CE from certain parts of northern Sindh. The eras of the Kalhora rulers, Mian Naseer Mohammad and Mian Deen Mohammad' are known as the beginning of the independent Kalhora rule which ended in 1700 CE. Mian Yar Mohammad became the ruler in 1701 CE, and reigned for eighteen years. His rule was extended from Sibi to Sehwan. Yar Mohammad died in 1719 CE, and then his son Noor Muhammad became the ruler of the whole region. Karachi was founded in 1729 CE, ten years after his death. In this context Naomal sheds light and further writes that:

Beebee Muradan was advised by Aasodo Mal on the basis of Bhojamal's suggestion that a castle should be built for the protection of Karachi. This suggestion was supported by everyone."

Thus, people cleaned and cleared the swarm of tamarind trees and started to build a wooden and mud castle. A labor force from foreign regions was called to assist local residents. These laborers were paid in foreign currency of Masqat and Bahrain as well as with fresh dates. A remarkable castle was built within record time. Cannons were imported from Masqat and fixed upon the walls of the castle.

There was around sixty to seventy-acre land within the premises of the castle wall. The castle had two gates. The western door was 'Khara Darwaza' that means the door leading towards Alkalescent (Salt) water. The second door which was eastward, was called 'Meetha Darwaza', the door leading towards sweet water. People lived in the castle which was surrounded by a swarm of tamarind and cactus. The port's edge of Shah Bander was blocked due to the sand of the sea, due to which a huge number of people migrated from there to Karachi. Meanwhile, the Kalhora family occupied Karachi silently without facing any opposition or resistance³⁷."

This description of Naomal sheds light on many aspects on the early history of the city. Mian Noor Mohammad was the ruler of Northern parts of Sindh at that time and the Mughul forces also occupied some parts of the province. But the whole area of the province was conquered by Mian Noor Mohammad in 1737 CE after a gap of eight years³⁸.

In this way, the whole region from Sibi to the southern shore came under the direct control and rule of the Kalhoras. As a result, the city of Karachi or port of Karachi naturally came under the influence of these new Sindhi rulers.

However, Dr. N. A. Baloch represents a different perspective citing some British scholars particularly Lt. John Porter who wrote in 1744 that Karachi formally belonged to the Baloch but the ruler of Sindh and taken it giving them some other area in exchange for it. The ruler can be no other than Mian Noor Mohammad Kalhora, who gained Sindh in 1737 CE³⁹. Noor Muhammad adopted a harsh policy against some internally independent states situated on the coastal border. He acquired Karachi from the Kalmati Balochs but this bargain was made in return of some land because the Kalmatis were quite powerful⁴⁰. In fact there seems some misunderstanding and contradictions. Actually, John Porter visited this region from 1744 to 1775.

Other writers also mentioned the possession of Karachi by the Kalhoras, but they could not reach a definite conclusion. It is repeated during re-reading the historical chronology that Karachi came under the control of the Sindhi rulers when Kalhoras gained the province of Thatha in 1737 CE.

In this context, the previously mentioned research of Naomal proves that the Kalhoras easily conquered Karachi without any resistance. A mention of Karachi is found in Mir Ali Sher Qani's book, he writes about an incident of Mian Noor Mohammad's era:

Muzaffar Ali Khan Biyat Beglar Begi passed through the Karachi port while he was going to Surat to observe making of the royal fleet in 1742 CE. Nawab Shah Quli Khan came to see him in Thatta and stayed for two and a half months there and then returned⁴¹.

Mian Noor Mohammad died in 1753. After his death his son Mohammad Muradyab Khan became the ruler of Sindh. Later Mian Ghulam Shah's era started. Several tribal chiefs of the coastal region had become powerful during the period of the later Mughuls. These tribal chiefs even maintained their autonomy even during the Kalhora period too. Consequently, the Kalhoras took military steps in order to subdue those insurrection chiefs to maintain sovereignty and unity of Sindh.

Meanwhile, the Karachi port gradually became extensive and gained more importance. During Muradyab and Noor Mohammad's era, the port began to use to travel to Iran and holy place of Hijaz for pilgrimage besides commercial and trading purposes. Moulvi Mirza Mohammad Ja'far Shirazi, who had been in Sindh for a certain period, left for Kakrali to go to his homeland, during Murad Yab's period. A fight broke out between Kakrali and Muradyab at that time. As a result, Mohammad

Jaffer came back to Thatta to go to Karachi port. A person called Mahmood, also passed through this region at that time. Another elderly man Shah Najam al-Din departed for Hajj from the Karachi port⁴².

The references about Karachi are found not only in Muradyab Khan's era (1755-1757 CE) but contemporary resources also support the notion that this city and the port were under the control of the Kalhoras. This endorsement is made by representatives of Dutch East India Company, Mahue and Brahe in their report. They reached Karaatje (Karachi) in 1757 along with the Dutch commercial fleet. They write about Karachi:

Karachi is within the territory of Sindh. This is located at the edge of an alkaline pond. Mahajans and Sindhis live here. Mahajans are busy with trading activities while Sindhis are engaged in navigation from Masqat to Malabar." They also report about Auranga Bandar and Dhareja that "Debal was firstly under the control of the ruler of Sindh, but as soon as it came under the control of the Jam II, it never paid any tribute to any sovereign power⁴³.

This description seems very important as this extraction endorses Mir Qani's statement related to the conditions of Lar and Sea-shore.

Mian Ghulam Shah was installed as the ruler of Sindh replacing Muradyab in 1757. Ghulam Shah had been a powerful ruler of Sindh. The city of Karachi was under the control of the Kalhoras previously.

The British got permission to continue their trading activities in Sindh during this period. The letters by Ghulam Shah mention the cities and ports, in which Karachi's Port is also included⁴⁴. This city had great importance during Ghulam Shah's era. Dharejas, who were the settlers of the coastal-line captured Kakrala and other ports taking advantage of the mutual skirmishes between the local tribal chiefs and the Kalhora rulers. Auranga Bandar and Shah Bandar were eliminated due to the changing of the course of River Sindh. In these circumstances, inhabitants of these regions and ports migrated and settled in Karachi. In this manner, the Karachi city expanded and gained more importance. At this time, John Porter was present in this area for the purpose of surveying Arabian Sea and in search of sea-shores. Alexander F. Baillie in 1890 CE refers to Porter's statement arguing about Karachi's history.

The city of Karachi is at the distance of five to six miles away from where the ships are anchored and one mile away from the coast (khari) where insufficient water was available to sail the small sea ships. It was surrounded by temporary fortifications, which include high towers. There

are two cannons placed on it, which are not in a good condition ... Earlier this was a Baloch habitat but later on it was secured by the prince of Sindh in return of some other land on the coastal area assuming it a better choice than the other areas for travelling facilities⁴⁵.

Alexander F. Baillie's statement has been analyzed with different perspectives which proves that the above-mentioned prince belonged to the Muslim Abbasi family (the Kalhoras), who resided in Hyderabad. The exchange of places occurred in 1768 CE, when the city of Hyderabad had not come into existence yet. It is possible that the Prince was Ghulam Shah. It should be remembered that this city was handed over to Khan of Qalat by the Kalhoras.

Besides referring to Baillie, Dr. Baloch has also analyzed Porter's writing. John Porter had been busy in searching this region during 1774-75 CE, while Dr. Baloch's given year in this regard is 1744, which doesn't seem appropriate. Dr. Hameeda Khuhro also mentions that John Porter was engaged here in some exploration work during 1774-75 CE⁴⁶.

However, the historical facts reveal that Mian Ghulam Shah passed away in 1772 CE. After his death, his son Mian Sarfaraz became the ruler of Sindh. When John Porter was busy in his task at the Arabian Sea, Sarfaraz Kalhoro was ruling over Sindh, and Karachi was under his control. Porter was not only busy in adventurous activities at the sea beaches of Sindh but also in the regions of Balochistan.

The rule of Sarfaraz Kalhoro ended in August 1775 CE. Mir Bahram and Mir Sobdar were killed. During this period, one of the important family members, Mir Bajar was on pilgrimage and was not present in Sindh. He first came to Masqat and then reached his homeland after having performed Hajj the author of the *Frere Nama*, Mir Yar Mohammad gives a reference of an incident in 1863 CE, as "Mir Bajar came to Karachi by ship which became part of the rule of Qalat during Nadir Shah's era. And then left for Qalat from Karachi⁴⁷. While Abdul Majeed Jokhio writes about Mir Bajar's way back to home as: "He left for Kohistan (Qalat) via Kech and intended to gain support from Mir Naseer Khan Barohi and his army⁴⁸.

Mir Yar Mohammad is not a contemporary witness of this incident, while Abdul Majeed Jokhio is a contemporary historian. Therefore, Mir Yar Mohammad's statement cannot be considered as more authentic than Abdul Majeed Jokhio's findings. In fact, Karachi had neither been under the rule of Qalat during Nadir Shah's period, nor Mir Bajar came to Karachi while returning to his homeland. He came to Qalat from Masqat passing through Kach and Makran. He stayed in Qalat for few days and then returned to Sindh. It has been mentioned above through references

of contemporary sources that Karachi had been in the possession of the Kalhoras from the beginning.

The war for succession broke out in Sindh after the death of Mian Sarfaraz. Later on, Mir Bajar was killed by Mian Abdul Nabi in 1780 CE. The contingent army from Jodhpur and Qalat came to help Abdul Nabi. Consequently, Mian Abdul Nabi successfully regained power and established his rule in Sindh after some bloodily contested battles in 1781 CE. It seems evident that this time, Karachi was given to the Khan of Qalat as blood compensation.

As mentioned above, Mir Bajar returned to Sindh after having performed Hajj by the end of 1775 CE. Ghulam Rasool Mehar writes that Karachi was handed over to Khan of Qalat at that time. He writes after five years of this incident that Karachi was handed over to Khan of Qalat by Mian Abdul Nabi as a reward of his help and support⁴⁹. In fact, the author should have written that Abdul Nabi had regained Karachi any time during these five years of period and later he had again handed it over to the Khan of Qalat.

Conclusion

The district of Karachi had always been a part of Sindh. Later on, it came to be known as 'Karatshi' or 'Karashi' during the Mughul era. It was also known as 'Kalachi', 'Kolachi' or 'Karachi'. But it is evident that the present name of the city of Karachi was popularly known in the beginning of eighteenth century when the Mughuls ruled over Sindh. The founders of this city are the tribes of Sindh. In this context, the writings of representatives of the Dutch East India Company are a solid proof, as they saw the city of Karachi and the port during Muradyab Khan's era. In this way, Naomal's statement corroborates that: The founders of this city are the fishermen whose source of life was navigations and the Mahajan and traders further developed this city whose source of income was commerce.

The contemporary historian of the era, Mir Ali Sher Qani, sheds light on the Kalhora struggle in detail about gaining revenue from various places at the seashore and Lar region. But he writes nothing regarding Karachi. It means the Kalhoras gained the city silently. In this way, Naomal's writing about occupation of the city is further endorsed. John Porter's writings about this era of Karachi are quite important. A number of scholars write that he came to Karachi in 1744 CE, while the fact is that Porter was here in the region thirty years later, in 1774 CE. In this

manner, the contradiction about the history of the city on the basis of the year 1744 removes itself.

Karachi was under rule of the Kalhoras, when Mian Noor Mohammad was granted Thatta by the Mughuls in 1737 CE. The native and other contemporary historical documents prove that the city and port of Karachi was under the Kalhora rule from the period of Mian Noor Muhammad till the period of Abdul Nabi. Karachi was handed over to the Khan of Qalat only in 1781 CE, during the second era of Abdul Nabi. In the Kalhora period, not only the city evolved and prospered but the port also progressed. Though there was not an appropriate industrial system in the city, the local trading ships lingered at Kach, Kathiawar, Bombay, Malabar, Bandar Abbas and Zanjibar⁵⁰. The city had been in the possession of Qalat for thirteen years only. The Talpur rulers of Sindh regained it from Qalat in 1795 CE. The city and port progressed swiftly during the Talpur era. Finally, the city was made the capital of Sindh in 1843, when the British occupied Sindh.

Notes and References

¹ Sabiah Askari, *Studies on Karachi: Papers Presented at the Karachi Conference 2013* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), p. 74.

² Hamida Khuhro and Anver Mooraj(eds) *Karachi: Megacity of our Times* Karachi, Oxford University Press 1997, pp11-12.

³ Abdul Rauf Khan, "Ancient Settlements in Karachi Region" *Dawn*, Karachi 21 July 1968, p6.

⁴ Azimusshan Haider, *History of Karachi, with special reference to Educational, Demographical and Commercial developments from 1839 to 1900 AD* (Karachi: 1974)

⁵ N. A. Baloch, *Sindh, Studies Historical*, Vol. I (Jamshoro: Pakistan Study Centre, University of Sindh, 2002), pp. 368-369.

⁶ M. Hanif Siddiqi (Trans.), *Yaddashten* (Memoirs), (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1968), pp. 53- 54.

⁷ *Sindh, Studies Historical*, Vol. I, pp. 311-314.

⁸ Nusrat Abro, *Roshnion ka Shehar Karachi* (Karachi, City of Lights), p. 8.

⁹ Alexander Francis Baillie, *Kurrachee Past, Present and Future* and Anvaru Pirzado, *Cultural Heritage of Sindh*, Karachi, Peacock Publishers, 2015, pp. 16,17.

¹⁰ Ghulam Rasool Mehr, *Tarikh-i-Sindh (Kalahora Period)*, Vol. II (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1963), pp. 196, 262 & 395.

¹¹ *History of Karachi*, p. 2.

¹² Muhammad Usman Damohi, *Karachi in the Mirror of History* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 2016), p. 24.

¹³ See *Tarikh-i-Sindh* (Kalhora Period), p.

- ¹⁴ Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baloch, *Inside Balochistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1975), p. 76.
- ¹⁵ Akhund M. Siddique, *Akhbar al-Abrar*, Urdu Trans by Mir Gul Khan Naseer (Quetta: Nisa Traders, 1982), p. 37.
- ¹⁶ Rai Bahadur Hattu Ram, *Tarikh-i-Balochistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publication, 1907), p. 107.
- ¹⁷ *Inside Balochistan*, p. 80.
- ¹⁸ Mir Ali Sher Qan'i, *Tuhfat al-Kiram* (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1971), pp. 262-265.
- ¹⁹ Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughul Empire*, Reprint, Map 5A (Delhi: OUP, 1982), pp. 15-16.
- ²⁰ *Yaddashten* (Memoirs), p. 54
- ²¹ *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, p. 267.
- ²² *Ibid.*, pp. 261-262.
- ²³ Ghulam Rasool Mehr, *Tarikh-i-Kalhora*, Vol. I (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1958), p. 196.
- ²⁴ Mir Ali Sher Qan'i, *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, pp. 267. [There was a series of battles between Abdullah Khan Barohi and Noor Mohammad Kalhoro in 1731. Dr. Azeem ush-Shan Haider writes that before this, Karachi was under the control of the Barohis and during the same year, victorious Mian Noor Mohammad Kalhoro gained this city from Khan of Qalat. (Ref. *History of Karachi*, Karachi, 1974, p. 58)].
- ²⁵ *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, p. 268.
- ²⁶ *Akhbar al-Abrar*, pp. 55-56.
- ²⁷ *Inside Balochistan*, p. 38. [Malik Mohammad Saad Dhawar writes in this regard that: "The region of western Sindh, which is usually known as 'Kachhi' including Khan Garh and Shahdadpur came under the control of Mir Mohabbat Khan. (Ref. *Balochistan Tarikh ki Roshni me*, p. 465). This is an inappropriate statement about the occupation of this region by the hands of Nadir Shah, the King of Persia. Secondly, this place was actually Shahdad Kot, not Shahdadpur.]
- ²⁸ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, Reprint (Lahore: 1976), p. 161.
- ²⁹ Mohammad Hussain Qudusi, *Nadir Nama* (Anjuman A'asar-i-Milli Khurasan, 1339), p. 178.
- ³⁰ *Tarikh-i-Kalhora*, Vol. I, p. 395. [Regarding the lands of Sindh acquired as blood wit, Ghulam Rasool Mehr has provided with some very interesting arguments. He says this is not appropriate to consider it as death-penalty, whereas Abdullah Khan himself began the fight and was killed in the battlefield. Such kind of killings, in any case, does not require any sort of *khoon baha* or compensation. Nadir Shah wanted to reward the people who were loyal to him. Ultimately, the burdens of this recompense laid on Sindh.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, Pages from Ch-15 to 18.
- ³² *Yaddashten* (Memoirs), pp. 57-58.
- ³³ *Akhbar al-Abrar*, *op.cit*, pp. 71-72.
- ³⁴ *Karachi in Mirror of History*, p. 30

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- ³⁵ Robert A. Huttenback, *British Relations With Sind*, Reprint, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 1, 2.
- ³⁶ *An Atlas of the Mughul Empire*, Map 5A, pp. 15-16.
- ³⁷ *Yaddashten* (Memoirs), pp. 54-55.
- ³⁸ *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, p. 267.
- ³⁹ *Sindh, Studies Historical*, p. 372.
- ⁴⁰ *Sindh, Studies Historical*, pp. 312-313.
- ⁴¹ *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, p. 267.
- ⁴² Mir, Ali Sher Qani Thattawi, *Maqalat al-Shuara*, ed. Syed Hussamuddin Rashidi (Jamshoro: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1958), pp. 741 and 807.
- ⁴³ William Floor, *The Dutch East India Company and Diewel Sindh* (Karachi: Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi, 1993), pp. 57-59.
- ⁴⁴ H. T. Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*, Reprint (Karachi: 1966), pp. 55.
- ⁴⁵ Alexander F. Bailliee, *Kurrachee; Past, Present & Future*, Reprint (Karachi: OUP, 1997), p. 21.
- ⁴⁶ *Tarikh-i-Kalhora*, Vol. II, p. 651. [This reference has been taken from the 'Frere Nama', which is still unpublished.]
- ⁴⁷ Abdul Majeed Jokhio, *Tarikh-i-Balochi*, Trans. Dr. Khizar Noshahi (Karachi: 1996), p. 32. [Azeem al-Din Thathwi, a contemporary of Abdul Majeed Jokhio also corroborates this statement. (Azeem Thathwi, *Fath Nama*, ed. Sher Mohammad Nizamani (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1967), pp. 42- 43.) Mirza Kalich Beg is also of the same opinion and ignores the statement of Mir Yar Mohammad. (Ref. Mirza Kalich Beg, *History of Sindh*, Vol. II, reprint 1902, p. 171.)]
- ⁴⁸ *Tarikh-i-Kalhora*, Vol. II, p. 779.
- ⁴⁹ S. P. Chablani, *Sindh ki Iqtisadi Tarikh* (Economic History of Sindh), Trans. Siraj ul Haq, Vol. 2 (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1968), p. 94. [Note: When the Report of John Porter was published in 1787, the names were suggested as; *Remarks on the Balochee, Brodia, and Arabian Coasts.*]
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid* p. 94.