



MAKRĀN

MAKRĀN (also Mokrān) the coastal region of Baluchistan, extending from the Somniani Bay to the northwest of Karachi in the east westwards to the fringes of the region of Bashkardia/Bāšgerd in the southern part of the Sistān and Baluĉestān province of modern Iran. Makrān is thus bisected by the modern political boundary between Pakistan and Iran.

Geography. Makrān is an upland, generally arid region, with east-west running ranges of mountains in the Pakistani part of Baluchistan, with the coastal Makrān range or Talar-e Band rising up to 5,180 ft (1,578 m), the central Makrān range up to 7,500 ft (2,286 m) and the Siyahan range up to 6,760 ft (2,060 m). Within Persian Makrān, the mountains rise up to 6,865 ft (2093 m) and then fall down westwards to the Jāzmuriān depression. Between the coastal and central Makrān ranges lies the Kech valley, with an urban centre at Turbat, the only town of any significance in Pakistani Makrān, and between the central and Siyahan ranges lies the Rakhshan-Mashkel valley, in which, with irrigation from the seasonal streams there (which, however, peter out in the Mashkel Hamun), some agriculture (rice, dates, cereals) is possible; but the mediaeval geographers describe Makrān as a region of low population density and few resources, its main product being sugar-cane syrup (*pānid*). The *Hodud al-‘ālam* (tr. p. 123, commentary pp. 372-73) considers Makrān as being part of Sind, with Tiz, Ptolemy’s Tēsa, in the Čāh-bahār bay, as its chief port, and Kič or Kēč (see above), as one of its few urban centers and the seat of its ruler (*malek*).

In modern Persian Makrān, there are urban centers at Nikšahr, Bampur and



the administrative centre Irānšahr, the mediaeval [Fahraj](#) (in Suppl.). Off the Arabian Sea coast considerable fishing can be practiced, but there are very few natural harbors there except for Pasni and Gwadar (q.v.) in Pakistani Makrān and the Iranian naval base at [Čāh-bahār](#). On these geographical questions, see Holdich, 1896, pp. 387-405; Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 329-33.

History. The name Makrān has found a popular etymology in *māhi-k̄vorān* “fish eaters,” following the Greek description of the coastal inhabitants as *ichthyophagoi*, but more probable is a connection with the name Magan, which in Sumerian and early Babylonian texts denotes a land lying beyond the lower Persian Gulf and having trade connections with Mesopotamia (see Hansman 1973, pp. 554-87). Magan would thus be the Maka of the Old Persian inscriptions, described as being one of Darius’s satrapies, the later Makararēnē of Seleucid and Byzantine times. By the time of Alexander the Great, eastern Makrān was becoming known as Gedrosia, with its people the Gedrosii; in 325 BCE the conqueror traveled from the Indus mouth through eastern Makrān and then inland into southeastern Persia, whilst his general Nearchus sailed along the coast to the upper Persian Gulf, where the two forces were to link up (see Kiessling, “Gedrosia,” in Pauly-Wissowa, *RE* VII/1, cols. 895-903; Marquart, *Erānšahr*, pp. 31-32; see also [ALEXANDER THE GREAT](#)).

Until the early Islamic period, eastern Makrān at least must have been within the sphere of Indian religion and culture. Arab raiders entered Makrān from Kerman during the caliphate of ‘Omar, with further penetration during Mo‘āwiya’s reign, when Ziād b. Abihi is said to have dispatched an expedition thither which planted a garrison and which turned northwards as far as Qiqān/Kizkānān in the region of central Baluchistan known as [Ṭurān](#) (Balāḍori, pp. 433-35; Yāqut, *Boldān* [Beirut], V, pp. 179-80). The aridity and general unattractiveness of the region apparently preclude long-term Arab settlement, but Makrān was the springboard for Moḥammad b. Qāsem’s invasion of Sind in 92/711 (Balāḍori, p. 436).

Virtually nothing is known about events in Makrān till the later 9th and early 10th century, when the ruler of the region, ‘Isā b. Ma’dān, became tributary to the Saffarids of Sistān (Bosworth, 1994, p. 202). Then in 360-61/970-72 the Buyid amir ‘Azod-al-Dawla sent an army against Tiz and western Makrān as part of his operations to subdue recalcitrant mountain peoples of the Kerman region like the Baluch and the Qofṣ or Kufiċis (q.v.; Bosworth, 1971, pp. 117-18). Soon after this, the sources for Ghaznavid history begin to throw clearer light on the situation in Makrān, where the Ma’dān family had



apparently continued to reign from their centre of Kij/Kēč; according to Yāqut (*Boldān* [Beirut], V, p. 180), citing Eṣṭakri, the ʿIsā b. Maʿdān mentioned above was still in power there towards the mid-10th century. Qoṣḍār, to the north of Makrān, came under the Ghaznavid founder Sebüktegin’s suzerainty as early as 366/976-7 (see [TURĀN](#)), and at some unspecified date, but probably soon after then, Makrān also became tributary to Ghazna. In 416/1025-26 Maḥmud of Ghazna was able to intervene there when a succession dispute arose within the Maʿdānid family, and his son Masʿud sent a further expedition under his uncle Yusof b. Sebüktegin in 421/1030, when Kij was sacked by the Ghaznavid forces and the sultan’s protégé Abu’l-ʿAskar placed on the throne there. We now have very little information on events in Makrān, apart from sporadic mentions of punitive expeditions dispatched against Qoṣḍār and Makrān from Ghazna, presumably when the payment of tribute by the local rulers had lapsed; but Makrān seems to have remained under Ghaznavid suzerainty until the Ghurids ended that dynasty in the later 12th century. See for all these events, Bosworth, 1994, pp. 205-09.

After this time, the region appears only infrequently on the scene of Islamic history and probably remained under the rule of local potentates with only a vague suzerainty exercised over it at times by outside powers. On his way homewards from the Far East in 1290, Marco Polo (II, pp. 334-35) sailed along the Makrān coast, calling it Kesmacoran (i.e. Kiz Makrān), considering it as the last province of India and attributing to it a ruler of its own. In the early 14th century, Ebn Baṭṭuṭa (II, pp. 341-2) records that, after the death of the Il-Khanid sultan Abu Saʿid (i.e. after 736/1335), a certain Malek Dinār seized power in Makrān. It was during these centuries that Makrān was colonized by Baluch tribesmen moving southeastwards from Persia, so that it is today predominantly Baluch-speaking. The boundary between Persian Makrān and that part coming within the British Indian province of Baluchistan (the easternmost part forming the Native State of Las Bela) and after 1947 within Pakistan, was demarcated by an Anglo-Persian Boundary Commission in 1870-72 (see Dames, pp. 625-26).

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