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## State and Society under the Zikrīs in Makran: A Historical Account



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**Abstract:** Makran is the South-Western division of Balochistan, Pakistan and the South-Eastern region of Sistan-wa-Balochistan, Iran. Makran has been of great importance to many superpowers of the last thirteen centuries. Macedonians, Sassanid Persians, Sindhi Brahmins, and Arabs had all laid nominal claim to Makran at various times. It has been the battlefield for several ancient powers such as Sassanid, Indians and Greek. Throughout the medieval era, it was dominated by the Arabs and other Central Asian dynasties such as the Seljuks, Ghaznavids and Ghorids. During the 16th century, it was also invaded by the Portuguese. However, authority always remained with local rulers, particularly the Maliks, the Buledis and the Ghichkis. The Zikris are the followers of Sayyid Muḥammad Jaunpūrī and recognized him as Mahdī. During the 15th century, the Zikrism spread rapidly in Makran and gained considerable political support as it succeeded to establish a state in Makran. However, during the 18th century, the Zikri State was attacked and occupied by the ruler of Kalat State, Khan Mir Nasir Khan. The Zikri ruled Makran for almost three centuries, which was known for justice, peace and prosperity in Makran. The paper examines the historical development of the Zikri State in Makran and also discusses its socio-political structure and administration in the light of primary sources.

**Key Words:** Zikrī, Makran, Sayyid Muḥammad Jaunpūrī, Mahdī

### Background of Makran

Makran is the Southwestern division of Balochistan, Pakistan and the South-eastern area of Sistan-wa-Balochistan, Iran which was named Gedrosia by the Greeks. Makran is around 80,000 square kilometres in size with a population of approximately two million. There have been different ethnical groups which have been amalgamated from time to time and formed the present population of Makran. The people are

now known by the term Baloch. They speak *the Makrani* dialect of the Balochi language. Unlike other tribal areas of Balochistan, there is no tribal set-up in Makran. The whole population is composed of separate and independent ethnic groups. At the same time, a sharp local distinction had been drawn between the elite class and the middle and lower classes.

Balochi is the main language and the *lingua franca*, while a small number speak Brahui, Jadgali and Lori Chai languages. Mainly people

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of Makran follow the Sunni School of thought, while a considerable number of people follow Zikrism, a sect which follows the teachings of Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpūrī who claimed to be *Imam Mahdi*.

Makran is situated between 25° 1' and 27° 21' N, and 61° 39' and 65° 36' E. It is separated on the northern side by the desert of Kharan and the mountain range of Koh-i-Siahan and Jhalawan in the East. On the South, it is bounded by the Arabian Sea, whereas on the western side, it is bordered by the Kirman Province of Iran (District Gazetteers of Balochistan, 1997). The coastline of Makran has stretched around 1000 kilometres, along Ras al-Kuh, in Iran to the Gulf of Oman. Besides, the coastline, its land is mostly rugged and arid. The fertile land of Kech, Kasarkand, Geh, Bampur and Punjgur is irrigated through a complex irrigation system which is known as Karez which supports in cultivation of dates, rice, wheat and barley. While the arid tract supports pastoral nomads and a scattered population which relies on dry crops. Fishing is the main source of livelihood for the people of the coastal region of Makran.

Greek authors have used the name *Ichthyophagoi* for Makran which means "Fish eaters" (Baloch, 2009). W. Huges states that the word Makran has been derived from the Persian word *Mahi Khoran* (Huges, 1990). However, Hamid Baloch illustrates that the name Makran has been derived from the word *Maka*, which was one of the important eastern provinces of Cyrus the Great (576-530 BC), the founder of the Achaemenid Empire (Baloch, 2009). Later, the name *Maka* turned into *Makran* as it is common in closely interrelated Old Persian and ancient Avestan languages to use "ran" and "an" at the end of plurals. Hamid Baloch further states that the name *Makran* is used in Persian texts of the middle ages, and the name was first mentioned by Arab writers and geographers during the 9<sup>th</sup> Century (Baloch, 2009). It can be concluded that there has been a lot of debate about the origin of the name *Makran*, but the contemporary archaeological findings of ancient civilizations in Pakistan, Iraq and Iran establish that *Makran* has a trade link with ancient civilizations of Iraq and Iran. During the ancient era, *Makran* has been part of the great Persian Empire and it derived its name from the word *Maka* which later turned into *Makran*.

Makran has been the gateway to Balochistan. Due to its strategically important highways in the area, Makran not only links Europe with India but also Near East with the Middle East. "It has been recorded in the chronicles of different periods in history. From Meluhaha, Magan, Gedrosia, Kesmakran to present Makran" (Baloch, 2009, pp.6). Makran has remained the key artery between Mesopotamian civilizations and the Indus Valley Civilization for many centuries and has been involved in comprehensive trading activities with both civilizations. Being the main highway, Makran linked different settlements in India, the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. Makran has seen a number of foreign invaders who were valiantly resisted by the people. The people of Makran gallantly fought against great invaders such as Cyrus The Great (576-530 B.C), Semiramis (811-806 B.C), Alexander The Great (356-323 B.C), and Arabs and most recently the British. The Macedonian, Sassanid, Sindhis, and Arabs rulers have laid nominal claims to Makran at numerous times. But, actual authority was vested with native rulers, known as *Hakim*, particularly the *Maliks*, the *Buledis* and the *Ghichkis* (Pastner & Pastner, 1972). The *Hakim* was the head of a stratified social order and the middle class which is called *Baloch* was composed of different Baloch tribes, while the lower class came from *Luri* (menials) and African slaves known as *Hizmatkar*.

Makran retains the position of the important line of communication between India and the Middle East. It had great significance throughout the ancient era which is why it has been the bone of contention between Turanian and the Iranian Monarchs (District Gazetteers of Balochistan, 1997). Makran was forcefully annexed Iran by during the rule of Kaus (558-530 BC), later Makran was conquered by the famous Turanian Ruler Afrasiab, who was later overpowered and driven by Iranian Ruler Kai Khusrau. There are no historic facts available about their rule in Makran. Makran was later subjugated by Macedonian King Alexander the Great (356-323 BC). Alexander overpowered powerful Iranian Ruler Darius III (380-330 BC) and conquered Iran, later; he headed towards India where his Army was challenged by solid resistance of the Indian force which was commanded by Indian Monarch Porus (r.350-317 BC). Alexander defeated King Porus on the bank

of the river Jhelum. After crushing the Indian Army, Alexander's army declined to march further and Alexander advanced towards Makran through Sindh (Qadiri, 2008).

Alexander advanced through Makran by a tough route, on which it was very difficult to acquire the provisions; even drinkable water was hardly available for the army. Similarly, the weather was unfavourable, the intense heat and rugged terrains were also obstacles to his advance and ruined a great portion of his force, and animals of burden perished from the great depth of the sand, and the heat which scorched like fire, while many died of thirst. Alexander's army confronted another problem when his guides became uncertain of the tracks, at last, they professed that they could not recognize it any longer, because all roads had been destroyed by the sandy storm which blew over them. At last, with innumerable difficulties, Alexander's Army crossed Makran and reached Persia after the journey of two months, but with a cost of men and materials (Qadiri, 2008).

After the demise of Alexander The Great in 323 BC, his two generals Seleukos Nikator (358-281BC) and Antigonos (382-301BC) appeared as the supreme authority in Asia (District Gazetteers of Balochistan, 1997). In 312 B.C. Seleukos Nikator captured Babylon (Modern Iraq) and during the next six years, he conquered Western and Central Asia and became the ruler. The boundaries of his kingdom stretched to India and Makran was incorporated in his kingdom. He advanced through Makran and crossed the Indus River in 305 B.C. to conquer India. However, his army was crushed by the forces of Chandragupta Maurya (340-298 BC), the Ruler of India. He was forced to conclude a peace treaty, by which he surrendered Makran with some other provinces to Chandragupta Maurya.

During the 5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D, Makran was part of India, when the Ruler of India wedded his daughter to Bahram Sassanid (404-27A.D.) the fourteenth ruler of the Sassanian Dynasty, and presented Makran and Sindh as her dower (Baloch, 2009). Possibly, Sassanian ruled Makran for the next two hundred years.

After the fall of the Sassanid Dynasty, Rai Chach (610-71A.D) of the Brahman Dynasty of Sindh occupied Makran (Dehwar, 2007). When Rai Chach arrived in Makran, he was acknowledged as the ruler and every Sardār

offered his submission. From Makran he advanced to Kirman, and stopped on the bank of a stream which runs between Makran and Kirman, there he fixed the borderline between Makran and Kirman. On the bank of the river, he planted a number of date trees and set up a mark which was a border between Kirman and Sindh (District Gazetteers of Balochistan, 1997).

The Arabs focused their attention towards Makran shortly after the demise of the Prophet Muḥammad (Peace be upon Him). During the rule of Caliph 'Umar, the Arabs under the leadership of 'Abdullah bin 'Abdullah attacked Makran (Dehwar, 2007). The chief of Makran Malik Sa'ad fought bravely but was finally crushed by the Arab Army with substantial damages in a bloody clash and Makran fell into the hands of the Arabs. 'Abdullah immediately directed an envoy to the Caliph, and presented a report about Makran, "Commander of the faithful, it is a country with so little water and its dates are worst dates and inhabitants are the most warlike of men. If you send a less numerous army it will perish and if the army is considerable it will perish of hunger. The country beyond is still worse" (District Gazetteers of Balochistan, 1997, pp.683).

During the reign of Amir Ma'awwiyah (r.661-80A.D), the position of the Arabs was weakened due to the civil war between Ma'awwiyah and the followers of Caliph 'Ali (r.656-661A.D). So the Arabs could not advance further and their hold on Makran was also declining. It was not until the period when 'Abdul Malik (r.684-705A.D) re-established supremacy of the Umayyad Dynasty over the Muslim Caliphate. He nominated Hajjaj bin Yusuf (661-714A.D) as the governor of Iraq, who appointed Sa'īd bin Aslam as his Deputy in Makran. However, Sa'īd faced the enmity of the 'Allafis, an Arab tribe in Makran during the Arab rule, and was ultimately assassinated by them, Makran fell upon their hands (Dehwar, 2007). During the rule of Walid bin 'Abdul Malik (r.705-15A.D), Muhammad bin Harun became the governor of Makran. "He aided the Arab's army with reinforcement which was under the leadership of Budail, who has been directed to march towards the Indus to avenge the plunder by the Sea pirates of Debal, of eight ships which the King of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) dispatched to Walid. The expedition met with disaster and Budail was killed" (Baloch, 2009, pp.155).

Later, Muḥammad bin Qāsim (695-715A.D) was selected by Hajjaj bin Yūsuf as supreme commander of the armed forces which invaded Sindh. He was also joined by Muḥammad bin Harun in his march towards Sindh. Harun, however, died in Lasbela and was buried there (Baloch, 2009). After the subjugation of Sindh, Makran was united with the recently occupied province of Sindh for administrative reasons.

During the 10<sup>th</sup> Century, 'Isa bin Madan, of Arab descent (r.952-56 A.D) began to rule Makran, and he was locally renowned as *Maharaja*. (Baloch, 2009) In the course of the next seven centuries, Makran was ruled by different foreign dynasties, which followed one and the other in quick succession. Their rule was short-lived and left little or no permanent impression, indigenous sovereigns exercised internal authority. The foreign dynasties which temporarily ruled over Makran were Ghaznavids, Seljuks and Ghorids and there is no historical data that Makran has ever been administrated by the Mughals (District Gazetteers of Balochistan, 1997). Since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Makran was governed by native Baloch tribes, such as *Maliks*, *Hoat*, *Rinds*, *Buledi* and *Ghichkis*. In the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the Portuguese made their way to Sub-Continent and seized a number of places along the Makran coast, but they could not penetrate inland and were shortly defeated by the people of Makran under the command of Mir Hammal Kalmati. During the rule of Mir Nasir Khan (1749-94 A.D), they invaded Makran nine times and brought it under his rule (Baloch, 2012). Makran was annexed with the Kalat State and governed by Khans of Kalat, a *nā'ib* (Deputy) was appointed to look into the affairs of Makran.

The Kalat State was occupied by the British in 1839, Makran being the province of Kalat State also came under them, although it was still administrated by the *nā'ib* of the Khan of Kalat. With the collapse of British supremacy in August 1947, Kalat became an autonomous state and Mīr Aḥmad Yār Khān, the last Khān of Kalat proclaimed independence on August 15, 1947. (Khan, 1975). However, Mīr Bai Khān Ghichki (1890-1974 A.D), the Chief of Kech had an unpleasant relationship with the Khān, although he had very close family relations with the Khān. Mīr Bai Khān approached the Government of Pakistan and had several successful confidential meetings with representatives of the Government

of Pakistan and as a result; the Government of Pakistan declared the accession of Makran on March 17, 1948 (Baloch, 2009). Thus, Makran became part of Pakistan.

### Zikrism

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Zikrism is a religious group in Balochistan, mostly based in Makran. The believers of Zikrism are identified as Zikris pronounced *Zigri* in Balochi Language, owing to the fact that they lay great importance on the doctrine of *Zikr-i-Kathir*. The Zikris mostly live in the coastal belt of Balochistan, such as Hub, Lasbela, Ormara, Kalmat, Pasni and Gawadar. A considerable number of Zikris are also living in Turbat, Punjgur, Mashkay and Awaran, Zikris are also found in Karachi and other parts of Sindh. Turbat is the Center and sacred place for Zikris. Annual Zikri congregation is held in *Koh-i-Murad* at Turbat on the 27<sup>th</sup> of *Ramadan* in which a large number of Zikris participate (Ahmad, 1987). The current population of the Zikris is not known, but according to All-Pakistan Muslim Zikri Anjuman, the current numerical strength of the Zikris is around one million (Baloch, 1996). While Pakistan Government's Census reports record no data because there is no distinct census for the Zikris as they are considered Muslims according to the Constitution of Pakistan. The major Baloch tribes belonging to Zikri Sect are *Bizenjo*, *Darzada*, *Koh Baloch*, *Sangurs*, *Sajidis* and *Meds* (Ahmad, 1987).

The Zikris claim to be adherents of 15<sup>th</sup> Century Indian reformist, Sayyīd Muḥammad Jaunpuri (1443-1504), who is regarded to be the *Mahdi Mou'wd* (promised Mahdi) by the Zikris. Born in Utter Pradesh, India, at a very young age he was bestowed the title of *Asad-ul-'ulama'* (Ahmed, 2009) in acknowledgement of his knowledge of Islamic Theology and understanding of the *Qur'an*. At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, he claimed to be the promised Mahdi. He was soon forced to leave India and take refuge in Farah, Afghanistan. The Zikris claim that from Farah he came to Turbat, Makran where he stayed for ten years and converted people to his faith and disappeared from Turbat. The Zikris also believe that he will reappear near the Day of Judgment and establish his authority over the world.

Zikris offer five times daily *Zikr* in *Zigrana* (prayer house). They have faith in the finality of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and *the Quran*.

They view that though the Prophethood ended with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), *imams* continued coming until the last *imam* who was *Mahdi*. The city of Turbat in Makran Division is sacred for the Zikris, where on the night of the 27<sup>th</sup> of *Ramadan* at *Koh-i-Murad*, the biggest Zikri congregation is held. Zikris and *Namaz* (Baloch, 1996) share mutual cultural ties and bonds with each other (Baloch, 2009). In some families, some members are Zikris and some are *Namazis*, and in many families marriages between Zikris and *Namazis* are common. There is no major difference in the living style of the Zikris and *Namazis* except for the way of worship. Their lifestyle, culture and traditions are almost similar.

### Establishment of Zikri State in Makran

During the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, many Baloch tribes were persecuted by the Persian monarch Shams-ud-din (Qaisarani, 1994). Baloch tribes were forced to leave Siestan and Kirman and migrate to Makran. Forty-four Baloch tribes under the leadership of Mir Jalal Khan entered Makran. Soon the Baloch tribes defeated the ruler of Makran, Harun (Baloch, 1987). During the mid of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, the first Baloch Tribal Confederacy in Balochistan was established.

Soon after the demise of Mir Jalal Khan, division arose in the Baloch tribal union and his descendants soon became involved in a tug-of-war for the throne of Makran. Mir Rind, his eldest son, was chosen as his heir by the tribal elders, but his younger son Mir Hoat opposed the decision and took control of Kech the capital of Makran, and performed the ceremony of an *Asrok* (memorial canopy) while Mir Rind performed the ceremony outside the city. With the revolt of Mir Hoat, the other sons also declined to take part in the *Asrok* organized by Mir Rind. Consequently, there were four *Asrok* among the sons of Mir Jalal Khan. During this time, the tribal union was divided among the sons of Mir Jalal Khan. As a result, Mir Hoat became the sovereign of Kech and other sons moved to different regions and established their rule.

The Hoat rule in Makran continued until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century (Baloch, 2009) and after the Hoat then Makran was ruled by the Malik dynasty. *Maliks* were of Arab origin, and arrived in Makran during the rule of Caliph 'Umar and *Malik* was the title of their leaders (Baloch, 1996). According to Hamid Baloch, during the reign of

the *Malik* Dynasty, the boundaries of Makran were expanded to Malik-i-Chedag in Eastern Iran (Baloch, 2009).

*Malik* ruler, Malik Farrukh Jahangir was a believer of the Zikri faith (Baloch, 1996) and Qazi Ibrahim Punjguri in his book *Dur Sadaf* mentioned him as the sovereign of Makran and the disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri. According to Qazi Ibrahim, later Malik Farruk handed over the rule to one of his family members and renounced worldly matters and became a saint (Punjguri, 2007). There are no historical facts about whether other sovereigns of the *Malik* Dynasty were followers of the Zikri faith or not and similarly, there are no historical evidences regarding the government and administration of *Maliks*. The last *Malik* sovereign, Malik Mirza began to persecute the Zikris and the Zikris rebelled against him under the leadership of Bu Sa'id Buledi. Malik Mirza was soon overpowered by the Zikris and the *Malik* Dynasty was supplanted by the *Buledi* Dynasty (Nuri, 2010).

### The Buledi Era

The historical accounts of the *Buledi* Rule are ambiguous, but it is well known that the *Buledis* governed Makran under a democratic tribal confederation instead of governing as an absolute monarchy. The *Buledis* divided Makran among the local Baloch tribes and the head of the *Buledi* Dynasty governed as the ruler of the confederacy with the title of Malik (Baloch, 1987). Bu Sa'id Buledi was the founder of the ruling *Buledi* Dynasty (Nuri, 2010). He belonged to the Royal family of Muscat, Oman. When he came to know that Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri has claimed to be the *Mahdi*, he left for Garmsel where he met Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri and embraced Zikrism (Baloch, 1996). Zikri sources recognized him as a trusted companion of *Mahdi*.

When the last monarch of *Malik* Dynasty, Malik Mirza started an era of oppression against the Zikris, shortly after that the Zikris rebelled against him under the command of Bu Sa'id Buledi. "Bu Sa'id allied himself with *Ghichkis* and with their support; he defeated Malik Mirza and established *Buledi* and as well as the Zikri rule in Makran in 1613" (Şiddiqi, n.d, 26).

Bu Sa'id allocated Punjgur to *Ghichkis* and retained Kech with him. The coalition could not last long and shortly difficulties arose between

*Buledis* and *Ghichkis*. Bu Sa'id directed his son Shukrullah to attack Punjgur; the *Ghichkis* were quickly defeated. *Buledis* occupied Punjgur and unified Makran under their leadership. After the demise of Bu Sa'id, his son Shukrullah was elected as the leader (Nuri, 2010). He governed peacefully and without any revolt or disturbance. After the death of Shukrullah five other rulers from the *Buledi* dynasty governed, however, there are no historical records available and the Zikri sources are also silent about their rule.

During the reign of Shay Bilal Buledi, the last *Buledi* ruler of Makran, the ruler of Kalat Mir 'Abdullah Khan (1714-34) invaded Makran (Sabir, 1964). Mir 'Abdullah Khan plundered and ruined Punjgur. When the people of Kech received the news of the destruction of Punjgur; they evacuated Kech and took refuge in *Koh-i-Dadamb*, a mountains range situated in Kolanch, District Gawadar. The Khan invaded the *Koh-i-Dadamb* and he met a strong resistance from the natives of Makran. It took him six months to completely subjugate the people of Makran, but yet he could not hold Makran and after loot and plunder, he left for Kalat. Mir 'Abdullah Khan's motives were more economical than religious to attack Makran; his aim was just to strengthen Kalat State's economy (Nasir, 2000). Mir 'Abdullah Khan's attack destabilized the *Buledi* rule and on the other hand, *Ghichkis* were increasing their power. Mostly the Zikri literature records that Shay Bilal denounced Zikrism and lost the support of the Zikris. The *Ghichkis* quickly availed the chance and united Zikris under their leadership and ousted Shay Bilal.

The *Buledis* ruled over Makran for nearly a century. Throughout their rule, Zikrism significantly spread all over Makran (District Gazetteer of Baluchistan, 1997). The hundred years of *Buledi*'s reign witnessed no sectarianism and religious extremism in Makran. Both *Namazis* and Zikri peacefully lived together (Nuri, 2010).

### **Ghichki Era**

Malik Dinar overpowered Shay Bilal Buledi and established the dynastic rule of the *Ghichki* Dynasty in Makran. Originally the *Ghichkis* belonged to Punjab and due to a family conflict, they migrated to the Ghichk area in Punjgur. Later they embraced Islam and were called

*Ghichkis* (Ram, 1987).

With the spread of Zikrism in Makran, *Ghichkis* embraced the Zikri faith. The first ruler of the *Ghichki* Dynasty was Malik Dinar Ghichki; he was the son of Mullah Murad a Zikri reformer, and grandson of Sayyid Siraj-ud-din a great Zikri scholar and religious head, who was also famous as Khuda Dad Chirag. Malik Dinar was brought up by his grandfather Siraj-ud-din in a religious background, as reason he was strict about religious matters (Nuri, 2010).

During the reign of Malik Dinar, Nadir Shah Afshar (1688-1747), the Persian King ordered his general Taqī Khan to attack Makran. The people of Makran under the command of Malik Dinar put up stiff resistance and caused heavy losses to the enemy, but yet they were defeated by the Persian army (Baloch, 2009). The Persians could not rule Makran and they reinstated Malik Dinar as the sovereign of Makran. After Nadir Shah, Malik Dinar had to face another danger which was coming from Mir Nasir Khan (r.1749-94), the ruler of neighbouring Kalat State.

Khan Mir 'Abdullah Khan was the first ruler of Kalat to attack Makran with the motive of loot and plunder. After his demise, Mir Muhabat Khan (r.1734-49) became the head of Kalat State. During the rule of Mir Muhabat Khan, the chief of Punjgur Mir Shāhu Ghichki proclaimed his freedom from Malik Dinar. Malik Dinar directed an army under the leadership of his son Mir Shay 'Umar Ghichki to subjugate Punjgur. Shay 'Umar assassinated Shāhu Ghichki and conquered Punjgur (Nuri, 2010). The *Ghichkis* of Punjgur had family relations with Khan Muhabat Khan; they asked him to interfere in the conflict. Mir Muhabat Khan attacked Punjgur and Shay 'Umar could not fight the Khan. His mother Bibi Rozhatun brought the *Qur'an* before the Khan and requested for mercy of her son. The Khan pardoned Shay 'Umar and Shay 'Umar left Punjgur and returned to Kech. The Khan appointed Mir Lallah ruler of Punjgur (Nasir, 2000).

After the death of Mir Muhabat Khan, Mir Nasir Khan was enthroned as the Khan of Kalat. Mir Nasir Khan was an ambitious monarch, who desired to expand the frontiers of Kalat State and sought to unify all the regions of Balochistan under his leadership (Baloch, 2012). Makran was the first choice for the expansionist strategy of the Khan, since it had cultivatable land of Punjgur and Kech, on the other side; it had a long coastline

from Ormara to Chabahar. The Khan's first attack was against Punjgur at the request of Mir Karam Shah Ghichki whose father was murdered by his uncle Mir Ghajian Ghichki, who himself became the ruler of Punjgur. Khan Mir Nasir Khan conquered Punjgur. Mir Nasir Khan next concentrated on Kech. Shortly Mir Nasir Khan got an opportunity when descendants of Shay Bilal Buledi asked Mir Nasir Khan to conquer Kech and reinstate them on the throne of Makran. Therefore, in 1756, he invaded Kech (Baloch, 2009). The defence of Kech was not very strong against the powerful army of the Khan, therefore, Malik Dinar directed his brother to Kandahar, where he appealed to the King of Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Abdali (r.1747-72), to order Mir Nasir Khan to end the siege of Kech, at that time the Khan of Kalat was not entirely autonomous from the King of Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Abdali directed a messenger to Mir Nasir Khan with the message to withdraw from Kech as quickly as possible otherwise force would be used against him (Nasir, 2000). Mir Nasir Khan returned to Kalat without conquering Kech. Mir Nasir Khan felt humiliated by the interference of Ahmad Shah Abdali, and in 1758, he responded by proclaiming his autonomy and warning Ahmad Shah not to interfere in the independence of Kalat State (Baloch, 1987). Khan's proclamation led to a confrontation between Ahmad Shah and Nasir Khan, the confrontation ended with a peace agreement between Nasir Khan and Ahmad Shah which is known as the Kalat Treaty, or the Treaty of Non-interference (Baloch, 2009).

As soon as Nasir Khan gained independence from Ahmad Shah, he invaded Kech and detained Malik Dinar. Nasir Khan asked Malik Dinar to renounce the Zikri faith, but he declined and he was viciously tortured and murdered (Nuri, 2010). The assassination of Malik Dinar proved to be a fatal blow to the Zikris, they evacuated their houses and hid in the mountains, religious literature was burnt, sacred places were demolished and no one was permitted to visit *Koh-i-Murad*. Shay 'Umar, son of Malik Dinar renounced the Zikri faith and Nasir Khan appointed him the ruler of Kech (Qasarqandi, 1984).

Shay 'Umar initiated a reign of terror in Kech; whoever declined to renounce the Zikri faith was cruelly tortured and assassinated (Baloch, 1996). The Zikris left cities and went to mountains and forests, their properties were occupied and they

were brutally persecuted by Shay 'Umar (Bajarani, n.d). He killed the religious leader of the Zikris, Sayyid 'Abdul Karim with thirty other *Mullais* and their forty-one supporters (Nuri, 2010).

The Zikris revolted against Shay 'Umar under the leadership of his younger brother Shukrullah and Shay 'Umar was thrown out of power. Mir Nasir Khan once again invaded Kech and restored Shay 'Umar. The rebellion in Makran needed continuous armed interference, and the Khan was conscious of the difficulty of governing Makran without the support of the local chiefs. Meanwhile, Shay 'Umar and the *Ghichki* chief of Punjgur realized that their position in Makran would be vulnerable against the Zikris without consistent support from Kalat. Consequently, a mutual understanding was reached between the *Ghichki* chiefs and the Khan, by which half of the revenues of Makran would go to Kalat annually, and the administration, remained in the hands of the *Ghichkis*. Shay 'Umar was soon killed by the *Buledis*; the disturbed situations of Makran needed further invasions against it. These invasions brought more devastation to the Zikris. Their families were destroyed; houses were demolished by the army of the Khan. He arrested and executed large numbers of the Zikris, and defiled the graves of their patron saints. The bones of the saints were unearthed and burnt with horse manure (Baloch, 2009). Mir Nasir Khan's successive persecutory invasions not only ruined most of the Zikri records and texts but also entirely destroyed their political power (Baloch, 1997). After his consecutive invasions, the Zikris never regain power in Makran

### The Socio-Political Structure of the Zikri State

The Zikri rulers of Makran were influenced by the egalitarian teachings of *Imam Mahdi* (Baloch, 1997). The message of *Imam Mahdi* had a great impact on the rulers of Makran, where his teachings were propagated and practised by the ruling dynasties (Baloch, 2009), and the Zikrism has been followed by the ruling dynasties for centuries. Subsequently, the invasions of Mir Nasir Khan have destroyed the religious literature (Baloch, 1996) and there is little primary data available regarding the socio-political structure of the Zikri State. However, it is known that a 'federation' existed under the Zikri sovereigns of Makran. The capital of the state was situated at

Qasarqand-Geh in the present-day Iranian province of Sistan-wa-Balochistan, while the religious centre was at Turbat. There was no statute law to guide state machinery. The State was administered on the basis of traditions, Islamic *Sharia* and the Baloch code of conduct.

### Hakim

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The political system of Makran during the Zikri era was established on the basis of centralization of power headed by a ruler, who was called *Hakim* with considerable power and prestige. The ruler enjoyed sufficient power in managing the affairs of the state and there was no limit to the power of the ruler, he was the highest court of appeal. He was the symbol of bravery, honesty, and generosity and the most honoured person in society. He was a military, political as well as moral leader of the society. However, it could have been practically impossible for the ruler of the state to have all the administrative and judicial powers centralized in his own hands. The nature of political association in the Zikri State of Makran was mostly religious. Since a large section of the population was Zikris and the ruler had to be a Zikri. As it has been already discussed that whenever a ruler denounced the Zikri faith people rebelled against him and finally he had been sacked or killed. The office of the ruler was hereditary and he was not elected rather eldest son of the former ruler was selected. (Sayyid Essa Nuri, personal communication, April 3, 2022). Generally, the ruler had several wives and also had extramarital relations with low-caste women and slave girls, sons from these women would never be selected as rulers. In case the eldest son was of inferior social status from his mother's side, then the selection would create a dispute. Because in the Baloch society purity of blood was considered necessary for the ruler. It was more convenient that the ruler appointed *Kahuda* (leader) to different territories to manage local affairs. The *Kahuda* collected taxes on behalf of the ruler and also settled minor disputes and acted as the court of appeal. The ruler could replace *Kahuda* on charges of incompetency, gross irregularities or misuse of power (Dashti, 2019).

### Economic System

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The most important economic characteristic of the Zikri State in Makran was that it laid great importance on *sawwiyat*. This means equality among the people and equal distribution of

wealth, material and no one was denied access to the resources. Society was built on the egalitarian doctrines of *Imam Mahdi* under which private property was abolished. After one's demise, his or her personal property should be divided amongst the deprived members of the community. Economic resources were distributed equally, and a joint labour system was established (Baloch, 1997). During the Zikri rule, the land belonged to the community and it was jointly cultivated, and the harvest was equally distributed according to the need of the people (Sayyid Essa Nuri, personal communication, April 3, 2022). Makran on the one hand had the cultivatable lands of Kech and Punjgur and on the other hand, it had a coastline which stretched around six hundred kilometers and was famous for its seaports. Kech was its trade centre. Trade and commerce flourished under the Zikri rule, and people from different countries arrived in Makran to exchange goods. Makran had trade relations with India, Sindh, Iran and Central Asian States through its sea routes and highways. Makran exported dates, cotton, sugar candy and dry fish to different countries. The economy of the Zikri State of Makran was tax based. Regular taxes were imposed on commerce, trade caravans, manufacture, cattle and land produce. At the time of emergency, every citizen had to contribute according to his resources which were known as *Bijjar*. It was a kind of support and cooperation during the war or any other difficulty. It was paid in kind and cash.

### Judicial system

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In the Zikri State justice was given the highest place. Cases were adjudicated on the basis of Islamic *Sharia* and Baloch traditions. There was no separate judiciary; the Council of Elders could decide the cases. The decision of the council was binding on both parties, the persons found guilty of crimes could be fined or severely punished even the punishment could be a death sentence (Dashti, 2019). If anyone disagreed with the decision of the council, he/she could appeal to the local *Kahuda* to further investigate and review the judgment of the council. The ruler of the state was the highest court of appeal with absolute authority and no one could deviate from his judgments.

### Foreign Policy

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The Zikri relations with neighbouring states were

generally good; the Zikris had cordial relations with Iran, with the exception of a short period of hostility when the Persian Governor of Hormuz made an unsuccessful attempt to occupy Makran (Baloch, 1997). When the Zikris were ruling in Makran, the Kingdom of Oman was ruled by the Kharijis. They had friendly relations with the Zikri rulers of Makran (Baloch, 2009). Both of the states had links with each other and were jointly involved in trade with East Africa. Even after the fall of the Zikri State of Makran, many Zikris took refuge in Oman and joined Sultanate's army and achieved high ranks and played an important role in the defence of the Sultanate of Oman.

The Zikri State of Makran also acknowledged the supremacy of the Ottoman Caliphs (Hamid Baloch, personal communication, December 22, 2021). The sixteenth century witnessed the tension between Iran, the Ottomans, the Mughal Empire and the expansion of the Portuguese mercantilists. The coasts of Balochistan had great strategic and commercial importance for Mughal India (1526-1857) and the Ottomans, which sought to keep the sea trade routes, open between South and South-West Asia and to protect pilgrims to Makkah against Portuguese and Persian attacks (Hamid Baloch, personal communication, December 22, 2021). Ottoman Caliph Sultan Suleiman (r.1520-66) sent a fleet, under the command of Admiral Sidi Ali Reisi (1498-1563) to punish the Portuguese and to ensure the safety of the pilgrims (Shaydai, 1994). According to Hamid Baloch, the ruler of Makran Malik Jalal provided the Ottomans fleet with material help (Hamid Baloch, personal communication, December 22, 2021). When the Ottoman ruler Sultan Salem (r.1512-20) sent a fleet to the coasts of Deccan and Gujarat, India to destroy Portuguese pirates, the *Buledi* rulers of Makran helped him to destroy Portuguese power.

Before the rise of Mir Nasir Khan, the Zikris also had cordial relations with the neighbouring Baloch State of Kalat. They were bound to marital relations with the ruling dynasty of Kalat. The Ahmad Zai dynasty married their daughters to the *Ghichkis* of Punjgur who were the Zikris (Nasir, 2000). But by the mid of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, regarding himself as a true *Ghazi*, Mir Nasir Khan mounted a *jihad* and destroyed the influence of Zikrism and added the Zikri state of Makran into his domain as a province. He persecuted a large number of the Zikris.

## Military System

The military system of the Zikri State of Makran was based on Mir Jalal Khan's military system. The army was divided into three main divisions and every division was commanded by a family member of the Chief. The Chief was the Supreme Commander of the army and was assisted by the tribal chiefs, *Kahudas* or *Mo'tabirs*. The State had no regular army, the fighting force was constituted by every able-bodied man. The force was collected from different tribes or areas, and *loris* and slaves were exempted from military duty (Mullah Nazir, personal communication, June 17, 2022). The warfare was not the business of any specific tribe or particular people, every citizen had the obligation to place his services for the defence of his country (Dashti, 2019). The force received no pay, however, they were entitled to get a share of the war booty, and the distribution of war booty significantly differed from time to time. However, it is evident that the Chief and sectional commanders got a larger share. Shares of footmen and horsemen varied and the war booty of a person carrying a sword, bow and arrow also differed. Forces were generally commanded by the tribal chiefs, who were under the overall leadership of the head of the state.

## Conclusion

Makran has been strategically important for many ancient powers which resulted in invasions and occupation of the country. However, the local rulers of Makran sometimes remained semi-independent and sometimes kept their independence. During the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri claimed to be *Imam Mahdi* and his message spread throughout South Asia. The 16<sup>th</sup> Century witnessed the spread of the teachings of *Imam Mahdi* in Makran and his followers were known as Zikris. Within a few years, the first Zikri State was established in Makran. The Zikri State continued to flourish for around one and half centuries under the leadership of the Zikri rulers, who were the social, political and economic nucleus of the Zikri State. Being a religious state Makran was administered on the basis of Islamic *Sharia* and Baloch tradition. The principal characteristic of the Zikri State was that it put great emphasis on *sawwiyat* which means equivalence amongst the people and equal distribution of wealth, which brought peace and prosperity and Makran became peaceful and

prosperous. The Zikri State kept cordial relations with other neighbouring states which was helpful to maintain peace in Makran. Though the Zikri

State could not survive long, it has a great impact on the life of the people of Makran beyond the discrimination of sect or religion.

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