

IBN BATTUTTA AT SEHWAN (SINDH)

Ibn Battutta's remarks on Sehwan and some conclusions.

Ibn Battutta visited Sehwan in 1333 AD, after Jam Feroz Unar Samma lead rebellion against its governor of Tughlaqs, Malik Ratan, and his description of city is as under:

- The river Indus was also called Panj-Ab (five rivers) in the fourteenth century. It was called Hasht Darya (seven rivers) by Mazhar Shahjehani, in 1634 AD, adding, Kabul and Indus it self or probably adding Gomal river.
- Sehwan and Lahri Bunder came under Delhi Sultanate.
- Governor of Multan controlled Sindh and was called Qutb al-Mulk. The incumbent to the post then was Sartiz (sharp headed).
- Sehwan then was called Siwasitan (Siw-asithan) and was ten day journey form Multan. From Multan to Delhi it was forty days journey or fifty days from Sehwan.
- Post runners took 5 days to reach Delhi from Sindh. Post runners were horse mounted or foot runners. Horse runners changed each every four miles and foot runners at every one third of mile. Mile in the fourteenth century was called Koh in Sindh and Kuroh in India and was equivalent to two kilometres or 6,362 feet or 1.2 miles of today and one third of a mile was 5/24 kilometres or 1760 feet. Runners carried rod two cubits (about 2 metres long) with copper (bronze) bells at top. Runners sat ready in a pavilion and on arrival of the runner immediately took post and ran at full speed. Besides post it used to bring fruit from the Central Asia for the king. They also carried criminals on stretcher in the same manner. Sultan got Ganga water for drinking at his new capital Daulatabad in the same manner.
- Delhi Sultans (like his predecessors) honoured strangers and appointed them as governors or high dignitaries. Majority of courtiers, palace officers, ministers and relatives by marriage were foreigners and by government decree were addressed as Aziz or honourable (Aziz in social languages denotes very close relative.)

- To be acceptable to king, the foreign visitors had to present gifts to the king and in return he gave them gifts many times this. The businessmen gave loan to foreigners, provided them with costly gifts and foreigners returned the loan or gifts to businessmen, who made large profits this way. This was flourishing business and Ibn Battuta did make use of the same facility.
- He saw rhinoceros on the Indus entering and crossing it in a northern Sindh forests. It had a single horn between eyes. It was smaller than an elephant, but had head bigger than that of elephant.
- After crossing western branch of the Indus between Kandhkot and Thul and two days by boat or march along its embankment he reached Junnani a large fine town on the bank of the Western Branch (called Warah Course). It was inhabited by Soomras (In 1955, M.H. Panhwar discovered ruins of this settlement in Taluka Warah, Deh Junnani and Junnani Inspection Bungalow, constructed by Sindh Public Works Department in nineteenth century, before advent of automobile and this vast bungalow also had stables for horses. It is built on a high mound of ruins and appears 3-4 feet above surrounding land, which have risen by about 3-4 feet since AD.)
- Ibn Battuta thinks that Soomras established themselves there at the time of Arab conquest.
- Ibn Battuta narrated that Bahauddin Zakariya's ancestor was with Muhammad Ibn Qasim Qureshi conquerer of Sindh. (This is incorrect as Bahauddin Zakariya's grand father actually came from Khurasan in Central Asia.)
- From Junnani he travelled to Sehwan. (He does not mention if he travelled by road or by boat and whether he passed through Manchar Lake.)
- Sehwan was large town outside which, there is sandy desert. (Since the river Indus was a few miles east of Sehwan, and on south of it, there was hilly desert and cultivated area was to its north and north west, he calls surroundings a sandy desert.)
- The desert was treeless except for acacia tree (acacia nilotica is a thorny tree.)
- Food of people consisted of sorghum (Jawar) and mung peas (probably mung). Of Jawar they make bread.
- There is plenty of supply of fish (from Manchar Lake) and the Indus and buffalo milk.

- People also eat a reptile resembling lizard but having no tail. It probably was Giloi. People dug sand and fetched it out, then slit its stomach, threw out contents, stuffed it with curcuma (turmeric) and cooked and ate it. He hated it and did not eat it.
- He entered Sehwan in hottest part of year and heat was so intense that his companions sat naked except a small piece of cloth around their loins and another piece of cloth soaked with water on their back and shoulders and as this would dry in short time, it had to be soaked constantly again and again during hot period of the day. (M.H. Panhwar had seen it being done in Dadu Talukas in early thirties by some people in his village, but by 1950 extension of irrigation and cultivation increased humidity and it is no longer being done.)
- In Sehwan he met a preacher al Shaibani, who showed in a Sanad (order) issued by Khalif Omar Ibn al-Aziz Damascus (717-720 AD), appointing his ancestor a preacher of the town, which post was inherited by him upto to that time. (It is improbable that Khalif Omar Ibn Abd al-Aziz had issued such a Sanad 600 years earlier.)
- At Sehwan he also met Shaikh Muhammad al-Baghdadi, reportedly 140 years old, who lived in hospice built at tomb of pious Shaikh Usman Marandi and claimed to have seen death of Mustasin Billah the last Abbasid Khalif. In spite of his old age he was able to walk on his own feet. (This statement makes it clear that Qalander Osman [Lal Shahbaz] was from Marand, a suburb or Tabriz and tomb existed on his grave and was not built by Feroz Shah Tughlaq who became Sultan eighteen years later and tomb was elaborate enough to have a hospice for other important persons. That this man was 140 years old and still able to walk on his own feet is as doubtful as is the age of Qalander him-self.)
- He narrates details of Wunar al-Samiri (probably Jam Unar Sama) and Qaisar al-Rumi, who both were in Sultan's service and had command of 1800 horseman. There also was a Hindu accountant of Sultan named Ratan skilled in writing and calculations. Sultan made him chief of Sindh and governor of Sehwan and its dependencies, with all honours drums, flag and privileges, accorded to principal amirs. Unar and Qaiser resented about such superior rank bestowed on an infidel and treacherously killed him, by taking him to a dependent district and at night created tumult that a lion had entered the camp and in such chaos had him killed. Then they returned to Sehwan seized 12 lacs (gold dinars?). One gold dinar is

worth 10 silver dinars and Indian dinar was worth two dinars of Maghrib. Then Unar entitled him-self as Malik Feroz. (This Unar later on became first King of Samma dynasty of Sindh under title Jam [Malik] Feroz Unar in 1351/52 AD.) They distributed money among the troops but Unar owing to remoteness from his tribe, became alarmed for his safety, so left to join his tribe. Remaining troops appointed Qaiser al Rumi as their chief. When news reached Imdad al-Mulk Sartiz at Multan he collected troops both by land and the river Indus and after forty days seizure of Sehwan, Qaiser being hard pressed asked for peace at some terms, which were accepted, but when they surrendered, Sartiz broke his word seized their property and decided to execute them. He would strike off heads of some of them, cut others in half and flay other alive and fill their skin with straw and hang them on city wall every day. Greater part of wall was thus covered with skins fixed on crosses. He also collected heads of some of them in the middle of town, where they formed a mound of some size. Ibn Battutta was staying on the roof of a college (Madersah) near the fort and not able to stand the scene of horror, he went away, to stay at some other place. Very soon he left for Lahri Bunder, from where he went to Multan and Delhi via Bakhar (Rohri).