



of al-Mughīra. <sup>1</sup> At this time Debal was inhabited by merchants, <sup>2</sup> and it may have been either a stronghold of Indo-Persian naval power or, more probably, of Indian pirates who had been raiding the coast of Arabia since a long time. <sup>3</sup> Nearly 75 years afterwards, we learn that Debal was the stronghold of the Sindhian pirates who were operating in the Arabian Sea probably with the connivance and patronage of the Sind rulers of the Brahman dynasty. These pirates looted and captured the ships carrying the Arab refugees from Ceylon whereupon the first two naval expeditions were sent against Debal by Hajjāj, the Governor of Iraq under the commands of 'Ubaidullah b. Nabhān and Budail b. ahTfah-al-Bajaliyye respectively, but both these expeditions failed and the commanders lost their lives. <sup>4</sup> This was eventually followed by Mu'ammad bin Qāsim's well planned invasion of Sind. Muḥammad stormed Debal in 711 A. D. (93 A. H.). At that time Debal was quite a sizeable town and was inhabited by merchants and artisans. <sup>5</sup> It had also a strong fort inside which was a temple "that stood 40 gaz high" and over it was a dome "40 gaz tall". <sup>6</sup> This was the temple-dewal, after which the town had probably been named. After his victory, Muḥammad built a mosque here and settled the Arab population. <sup>7</sup> Under the new Governmental organization, both Debal and Nerun were treated as administrative units and Muḥammad b. Qāsim placed them under the charge of one of his officers named Mas'ūd. <sup>8</sup> About 12 years later we hear of al-Junaid, the newly appointed Governor of Sind by Caliph Hishām, landing first at Debal in 105 A.H. <sup>9</sup> About 25 years later we learn about Mansūr b. Jumhūr who had captured Mansūrāh, the capital of Sind, in 130 A.H., sending his brother Manzūr to subjugate Debal. <sup>10</sup> This was during the transitional period, between the fall of the Umayyads, and the rise of the Abbasides.

After this we again hear of Debal after a lapse of a century during the

1. For details see my article: "The Probable dates of Early Arab Expeditions to India", in the "Islamic Culture" Hyderabad Deccan, Issue of July 1946.

2. Fathnāma, *op. cit.* P. 72.

3. The tribes of 'Abd-al-Qais, particularly the Lukaiz, inhabiting the coasts of Persian gulf and 'Umān had held their own in spite of frequent raids of the Indian Pirates. Said the poet (al-Akhnas

« لکیز لها البحران والسیف کله وان یفشها بأس من الهند کارب »

Vide Mufaddaliyyat P. 414, al-Bakri (Mu'jam) P. 56 & Hamasa, Bulaq 1296 AH., Vol. II pp. 123-12<sup>6</sup>

4. al-Balādhuri: *Futuh-al-Buldān*, chapter on "Futūḥ al-Sind, also *Fathnāma*, *op. cit.* P. 91,

5. *Fathnāma*, *op. cit.* P. 112

6. *Ibid* P. 104.

7. al-Balādhuri: *op. cit.*

8. *Ibid*, P. 218.

9. al-Balādhuri *op. cit.*

10. al-Yaq'ūbi II P. 407

reign of al-Mu'tasim and the Governorship of 'Anbisah b. Ishāq-al-Dabbi when approximately between 230 & 235 A.H. he ordered the upper part of the Stupa (دقل) of the deserted temple in Debal to be pulled down and converted the hollow of it into a prison. He was repairing the buildings damaged by the fallen stones of the Stupa when he relinquished the charge of Governorship by about 235 A. H. One Mansūr b. Hātim had told the historian al-Baladhuri (d. 279) that he had himself seen the demolished part of the Stupa at Debal. <sup>1</sup> That may have been anywhere between 235 & 279 A. H. when al Baladhuri died. Another reference to Debal during this period is contained in the travel book of Sulaimān al-Mahri, entitled *Qalādat-al-Shumōs wa-Istikhirāj Qawā'id-al-Usūs*. <sup>2</sup> written by about 237 A.H. (851 A. D.)

According to al-Suyūti, Debal was rocked by a severe earth-quake by the end of the 9th century. He says: "In the year 280 A. H. a letter was received (in Baghdād) from Daibul that a lunar eclipse took place in Shawwāl, and the world became dark till the afternoon. Then started the black tornado which continued on to one-third of the night and was followed by a severe earth-quake which wiped off the entire city. The number of the dead who were taken out from under the debris was one hundred and fifty thousands. <sup>3</sup> According to this statement Debal was completely destroyed on 27th December 893 A. D. <sup>4</sup> But it is difficult to corroborate this statement of al-Suyūti who, moreover, is not altogether a trustworthy authority on early Islamic history. Accounts by numerous later eye witness conclusively prove that Debal did exist in the 10th century. These later eye witnesses do not mention this episode of the earth-quake at all. al-Suyūti's statement is evidently an exaggerated account of some earth-quake which may have rocked Debal and taken a pretty heavy toll of lives. But the town definitely was not "entirely wiped out". There may have been some damage but it did survive the shock.

Throughout the 10th century A. D.) we find numerous references to Debal in the geographical literature of the period. Ibn Khurdāzbeh (d. 300 H/912 A. D.), the traveller and postmaster general of the Abbasid Empire refers to it in his book *al-Masālik wal-Mamālik*. Then we have the eye witness accounts of it by al-Mas'ūdi (331 (H/942-43 A. D.), al-Istakhari (340 A. H./950-51 A. D.), Ibn Hāuqal (943-968 A.D.) <sup>5</sup>.

1. al-Baladhuri, *op. cit.*

2. Referred to in *'Arboun-ke-Jahāzrāni* (Urdu) by Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvi.

3. al-Suyūti; *Tarikh al-Khulāfā*, al-Muniriyyah Press, Cairo, 1351 A.H., PP. 246-247. I am indebted, to Dr. U. M. Daudpota for this reference.

4. The month Shawwal of 280 A.H. commenced on 14th Dec. 893 A.D. The eclipse must have taken place on full moon i.e. 14th of Shawwal which corresponds to 27th of December 893 A.D.

5. Ibn Hauqal travelled from 331 to 358 A.H. (943 to 968 A.D.) However he wrote his book *Ashkāl-al-Bilād* or *Kitāb-al-Masālik-w-al-Mamālik* in 366 A.H. (976 A.D.)

and al-Maqdisi (985-86 A. D.). All of them unanimously testify that during this period, Debal was the main port of the country and a very flourishing trade emporium inhabited by a population that consisted predominantly of merchants.

Apart from these travellers who had in all probability visited Debal, we have other contemporary or succeeding writers whose statements regarding Debal are important even though they may not have visited the port itself. By 331 A. H. (942/43 A. D.) it is mentioned by Mis'ar b Muhalhil in the accounts of his travels preserved by Yāqūt in *Mūjamal-Buldān*<sup>1</sup> and by Qazwīnī in his *Athār-al-Bilād*. It is again referred to as an important trade emporium and "port of India" in the geographical work *Hudūd-al-'Alam* composed in 372 A. H. (982 A. D.). Next it is mentioned by al-Berūnī (360-430 A. H.) in the *Kitāb-al-Hind* while writing in the first quarter of the 11th century. But in his account we find, for the first time the mention of an Indus Delta port which he calls *Lohārānī*. This statement gives an important clue that Debal which had been the only main port of the lower Indus Valley for the last 600 years or more was now having a rival port in the Indus Delta in the early 11th century, with which it had now to compete.

In 545 A. H. (1150/51 A. D.) it is mentioned by al-Idrisī as "a populous place but not fertile, and is inhabited merely because it is a harbour of the vessels of Sind and other parts."<sup>2</sup> Although al-Idrisī wrote from hearsay accounts, his remarks give an indication that Debal had lost all political importance and existed only as a port.

Al-Sam'ānī (506-562 A. H./1112-1166 A. D.) in his genealogical work, *Ansab-al-Arab*, has mentioned a number of scholars belonging to al-Daibul,<sup>3</sup> which tends to show that prior to 1166 A. D., Debal was flourishing as a seat of learning.

Yāqūt (1179-1229 A. D.) who wrote his *Mu'jam-al-Buldan* between 1224 and 1228 A. D. but, for which, he must have gathered his information somewhat earlier, still described Debal as a port (فرصة). His detailed account may be considered as a sure testimony at least to the existence of Debal during the twenties of the 13th century although while describing the "Greek of Debal" he carefully points out that he has not seen it himself."<sup>4</sup>

Of the other prominent Arab scholars who mention Debal quoting other sources are al-Nuwairī (d. 1332) in his *Nihāyat al-Arab* &

1. *Mu'jam-al-Buldān*, Wüstenfeld Ed., Lipzig, 1869, III/357.58.

2. Vide under *Idrisi*, in Elliot & Dowson's *History of India*, London, 1887, Vol. I, and also Raverty's *Mehran of Sind*, *Journals of Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, P. 224."

3. Al-Sam'ani : *Ansab al-Arab*, Gibb Memorial Series, London, Vide under (الديلي)

4. *Mu. jām-al-Buldān*, vide under (خور)