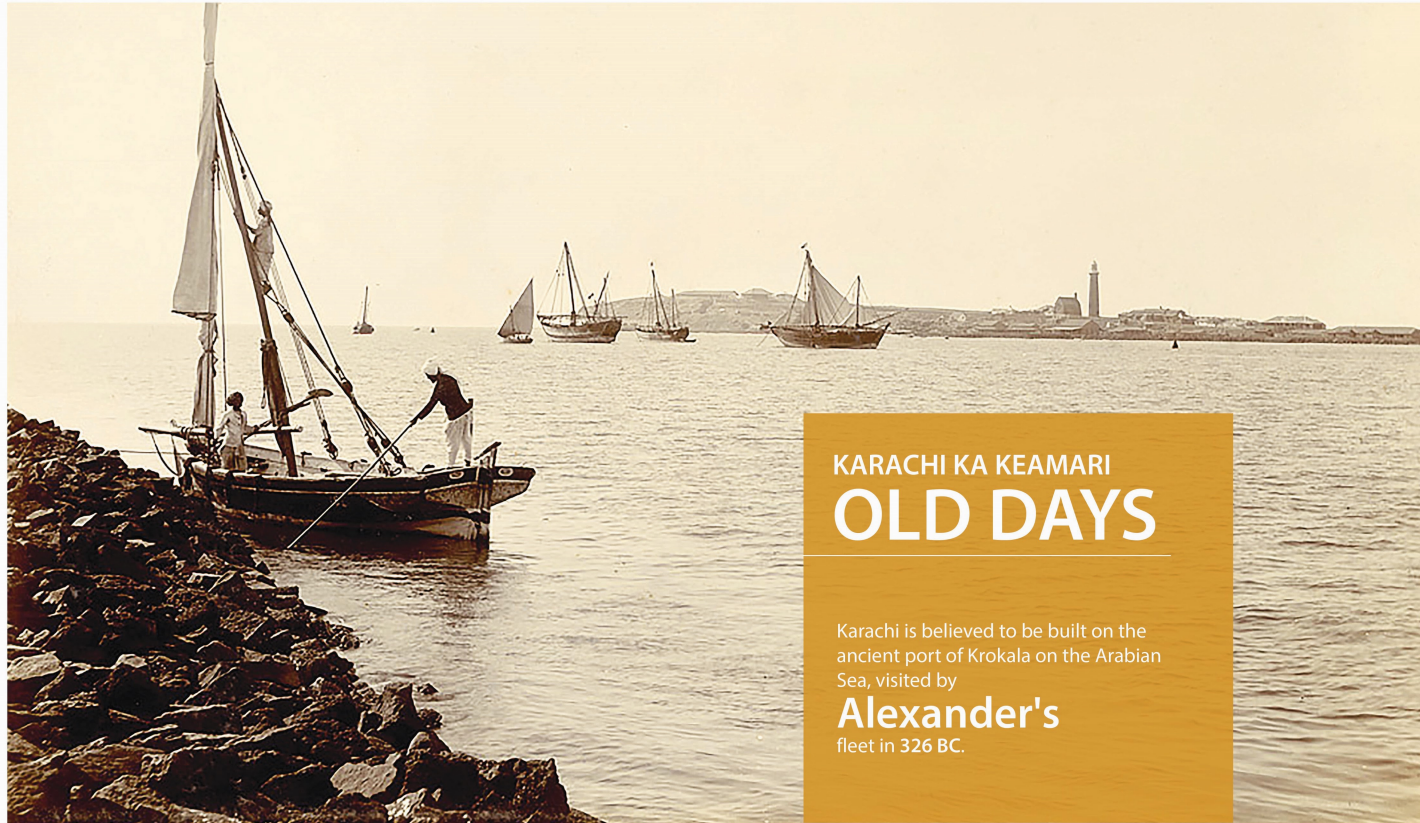


Karachi Ka Keamari

Explore the history of Pakistan's largest and busiest seaport and discover the age-old practices of the fisherfolk.

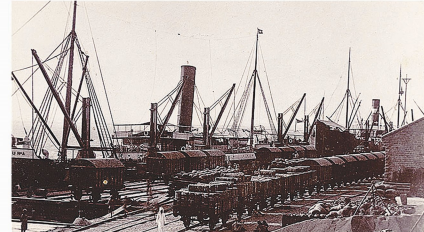




KARACHI KA KEAMARI OLD DAYS

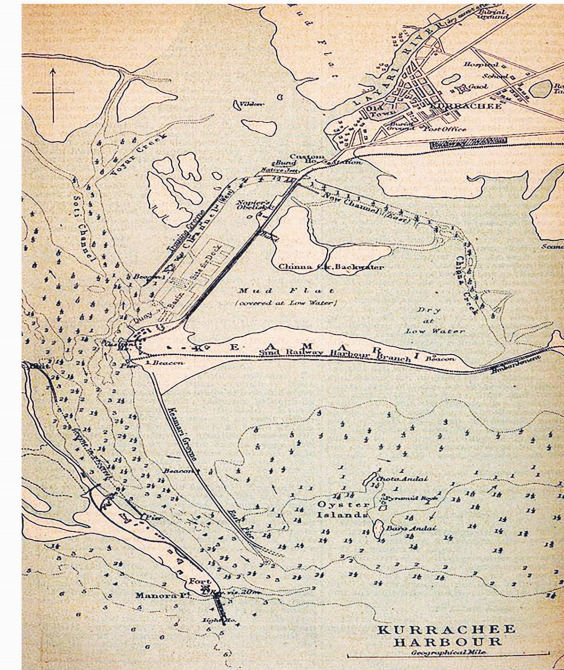
Karachi is believed to be built on the ancient port of Krokala on the Arabian Sea, visited by

Alexander's
fleet in 326 BC.



The small fishing village of Karachi became a trading port when the Talpur Mirs of Sindh built a mud fort here in the 18th century, but the port remained small. Karachi was completely transformed when its harbour was developed by the British after they conquered Sindh in the mid-19th century. Keamari served as the landing place for all goods and passengers bound for Karachi.

Karachi is built around a bay which is a **natural harbour** and protected from **storms** by a group of small islands.



KARACHI KA KEAMARI VILLAGES

Keamari Town is a cultural pot with several ethnic groups including Kutchi, Sindhis, Balochis, Urdu speaking, Punjabis, Pakhtuns, Kashmiris, Memons, Bohras and Ismailis.

The population is predominantly Muslim with small communities of Hindus and Christians. There are small villages in the rural area of Keamari, including Baba Bhit, Bhutta village, Salehabad, Shamspir, and Manora.

The direct source of income for the people of these islands is mainly related to the sea.



BABA BHIT ISLAND VILLAGE

This is the smallest neighbourhood of Keamari and rises 6 feet above sea level. It comprises of three small fishing islands which are in the centre of the harbour of Karachi. The approximate area of these islands is 4 km² and the population is about 15000, most of whom speak Sindhi.



This village is in the neighbourhoods of Shirin Jinnah Colony. It was once covered with mangroves. Unfortunately, due to commercialization, mangroves were cleared, and the sea was filled with sand to make it a residential area. It was formerly called Jungleabad because of the large number of mangroves that used to be present.



BHUTTA VILLAGE

KARACHI KA KEAMARI MANORA

The word Manora is believed to be derived from Munawar (bright), symbolising the Lighthouse situated here. Some believe it was named Munawwara to commemorate Muhammad Munawwar, an associate of Muhammad Bin Qasim. A tradition goes that Manora was in control of a Hindu man called Manoo whose horha (boats) used to be anchored around the then island. Thus, the place started being called Manoo Horha and then Manhorha. Since Manora is surrounded by rocky stones, it is also believed that the name comes from Manhoor, meaning stone in Sanskrit. Manora has served for more than 50 years as the main base of the Pakistan Navy, with berths for naval vessels located along the eastern edge of the island.



Qasim Fort

Qasim Fort was built in the 18th century by the Talpur dynasty when Karachi used to trade with Bahrain and Oman. The agrarian resources of the Sindh region empowered its participation in maritime trade across the Indian Ocean. Numerous varieties of Indian produce including cotton, timber, rice, sugar, spices and ghee were sent to Oman for both home consumption and re-exportation. The British captured the Fort in 1839 owing to its strategic geographical location. The history of Karachi initiates from this Fort when the Wellesley (British ship) was captured off Manora Island. The Qasim Fort area is currently a naval base station.



St. Paul's Church

Built beside the Lighthouse and constructed from limestone, the Church was erected as a memorial to Sir Charles James Napier. It features English Gothic architectural style with nave without aisles, a vestry and a small assembly hall. Other features include the church's four lancet windows and the three-light stained-glass windows.



Lighthouse

Manora has the tallest lighthouse in the country. It was inaugurated on April 1, 1889 and its light is visible from 20 nautical miles. The original lighthouse at the same place was erected in 1851 which was replaced by much taller lighthouse in 1891 with increased traffic reaching Karachi port. The current lighthouse is 91 feet tall.

KARACHI KA KEAMARI SALEHABAD

The strip between the islands of Manora and Salehabad was filled with sand during Muhammad Khan Junejo's tenure as the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1985. These two localities were connected through a small bridge which was then connected to the main land through a road. Salehabad's original name is Takri because there was a hill in the area. During the British era, a part of the hill was named Bunker Island.



SHAMSPIR

This town has been inhabited by Sindhis for more than 400 years. It is said that the island is called Shams Pir because the Shrine of Baba Shams Pir is located here. Every Hindu vessel that enters or leaves the port deposits a small present at the Shrine. Once a year, a three-day long fair is also held in memory of Shams Pir.



KARACHI KA KEAMARI ARCHITECTURE



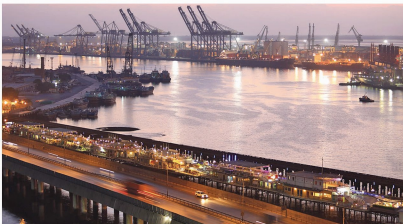
Through the city
By the 19th century, Karachi had burgeoned into an established city with flourishing foreign trade. In 1854, a modern port started, and a main channel was dredged to connect the city to the harbour. Afterwards, Keamari Groyne, Manora Breakwater, the Napier Mole Bridge and the Native Jetty Bridge were built to emphasise the importance of the port since at that time, Karachi was the closest port to Europe. The journey from Karachi to Keamari features various important landmarks on the way, each of which has its own historical significance.



Native Jetty Bridge
Native Jetty Bridge was built during Charles Napier's tenure who wanted the port to be fully established for international trade. The Bridge was to connect the city of Karachi to the Keamari region. It is now crossed by millions each day on their way to work.

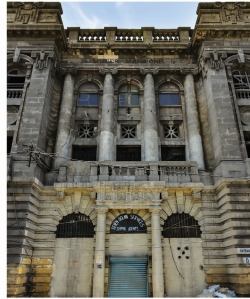
Sydenham Passenger Pavilion (Keamari Clock tower)

The Sydenham Passenger Pavilion was inaugurated on January 20, 1913 by Lord Sydenham, the Governor of Bombay. The clock tower has stood tall informing the British and keeping them punctual during World War I. It was then that the area of the port expanded, which included a new boat basin, which was five hectares across, ringed on three sides by the Return Wharf, the Sydenham Pier and the Railway Wharf.



Mules Mansion

Mules Mansion was designed by Moses Somake and built in 1917 with rugged stone masonry. It was named after the first chairman of the Karachi Port Trust, Charles Mules. After partition, the mansion served as the Naval Headquarters. Now the ground floor houses shops and the upper two floors are used for residential purposes.



St. Anthony Chapel

One of the two churches in Keamari, St. Anthony Chapel was built in 1921 and intended to serve the British servicemen. Before it became a church, it used to be an Anglo vernacular school named after an English Gentlemen 'Humbly'. There were 39 students enrolled in the school and four languages were taught there. Today, the church needs constant maintenance. The original timber roof of the church is replaced by concrete and the stone masonry walls are painted with weather-resistant paint. The church remains out of sight due to its short height and the presence of numerous houses around it.



Port Water Jet Fountain

KPT has constructed the second highest fountain in the world, about 660 ft, which was inaugurated in January 2006. Port fountain was made with an objective to beautify Karachi's coastline and is clearly visible from Clifton beach. 18 flood lights of 400 watts illuminate the fountain at night.

KPT Building

The building is a wonderful amalgamation of British, Hindu and Gothic cultures. G. Witted, a consultant architect of the Government of Bombay, designed the KPT Head Office. It is located on Eduljee Dinshaw Road and was inaugurated in 1916. The appearance of the building is unique with yellow, stone-based Sepia. There is a large dome placed at the top which is a prominent feature of Roman architecture. The other classic materials of the buildings are its doors, windows and arches, which are huge in size and in green colour.



Shri Varun Dev temple

Another place of worship, this temple is said to be dedicated to Varun, the Hindu deity associated with waters and rain. According to legend, Bhojomal Nancy Bhattia, a sailor, bought the island from the Khan of Kalat around the 16th century and built the temple on it. It is said that the temple looks out for the safety of fishermen at sea. It also houses two smaller temples, the Jhoalay Laal and Shiv temples. It was sealed in 1992, after people broke into it and destroyed the structure. The last Pooja ritual held at this place was in 1950s.

KARACHI KA KEAMARI PROBLEMS

The villages of Keamari are severely underdeveloped. Unemployment, non availability of potable water along with lack of health and education facilities are major issues of Baba Bhit, Bhutta and Shams Pir islands.



Lack of Health Facilities

The islands do not have proper health facilities and hospitals are scarce. For instance, in the period from 2013-2018, the people of Manora received medication worth Rs. 25,000 only. Diseases of heart and skin are rampant because of lack of sanitation and sewerage. There has been an increase in environmental pollution due to the sewage of the city coming through the Lyari River. Chemical waste from Malir River is also contributing towards an increase in pollution on the islands. To avail proper health facilities, the locals have no option but to rush to hospitals in other towns, even in case of emergencies. The elderly, especially, experience great hardships while boarding the boats, which is the only means of transportation between Keamari and other towns of the city.

Unemployment

The income of the residents of Keamari is mainly dependent on the sea. Most of the people are involved in fishing and boating which becomes a problem during the monsoon season when the authorities ban boating due to the rough tides. Thus, they face seasonal unemployment and their boats remain stranded. As a result of the lack of educational institutions and the inability of the people to afford education, the natives also find it challenging to acquire jobs in specialized fields. For these reasons, the sea remains their only option.



Lack of Resources

Severe water shortage is one of the biggest problem being faced by the inhabitants of Keamari. From 1965, the islands were provided water from Sandspit through underwater pipelines but owing to the mangroves and their roots, the pipelines got choked and were eventually destroyed. Clean water is rarely available and when it is, the people residing in those areas are required to wait in long queues at the water supply depot with their pots. At times, the residents are also forced to buy water through tankers transported by boats. Shams Pir does not have any gas supply and electricity breakouts are common. The villagers often collect donations and restore power by their own means.

