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Central Kurdistan: Discussion

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and that of the Tigris tributaries. But the Bashi-i-Ruan mountain range is a serious obstacle, and the Neri district and others north of this range are very isolated in winter.

It is not my place to discuss how we can maintain authority in these distant lands. Perhaps Leachman when he returns will tell you how it is done. He knows the secret, and so do many of the political officers working under him. There is no room for mistakes; and people who criticize often forget the fact that a slip sometimes costs the political officer his life. Leachman himself had a narrow escape when enforcing his own order on the prohibition of arms. A man turned round and fired at but missed him at 20 yards. Military support in a country like this is apt to arrive too late to aid a political officer in a tight corner. Aeroplanes can, however, give both moral and material support if necessary, though their operations are limited by the lack of suitable landing ground in such rugged country. The best site near Rowanduz was 250 yards in diameter and difficult of access owing to the mountainous approaches and the varying air currents.

There is only one other point I will touch upon. When we were in the country early this year we were treated with much kindness. The Kurds wanted help and were prepared to trust us. A chief told Noel that no refugees had preceded the British advance, whereas hordes of starving inhabitants fled before both Russians and Turks. On arrival in England I heard that the Kurds of the Sulaimaniya district had risen against our occupation, and had made prisoners the dozen British officers stationed among them. The rising was headed by Shaikh Mahmud, who, at the request of the local tribes, had been made paramount chief by the British. An expedition was sent up, and the prisoners recovered; Shaikh Mahmud was severely wounded from the air. There seems to be no doubt that the trouble arose partly at the instigation of Turkish agents and partly from swollen headedness on the part of Shaikh Mahmud. The trouble does not seem to have spread to the Rowanduz district, and the country seems to have settled down again. The process of taming brigands by League of Nations methods is not an easy one, and our political officers in Kurdistan have in front of them a very difficult task.

Before the paper the PRESIDENT said: Since our last meeting I regret to say that we have had to abandon our old quarters in Burlington Gardens, where we have been accustomed for many years to hold our meetings. I will not say how many years ago it is since I first lectured there, and I know that a large number of you, like myself, have pleasant recollections of great meetings in that old Theatre. Unfortunately the Government are no longer able to continue to us their hospitality, for they are altering the house, and we are unable to hold our meetings there. We have looked all over London for another temporary place in which to hold our meetings, and I am sorry to say that London is not so full of public halls as one could wish. I think, however, that we shall be comfortable at the Æolian Hall for this session, and eventually—before many sessions

have passed—I hope we shall have a hall of our own. We have had an offer for the end part of the garden of our present House, the old Lowther Lodge, and as soon as the purchase is complete and it is possible to start building operations, we hope to build a lecture hall in continuation of our own building. We shall then no longer be at the mercy of Government Departments.

We gladly welcome Major Mason, who is to lecture to us this evening about Kurdistan, where he did excellent work during the war. Before the war he had already done some valuable geographical work in joining up the trigonometrical survey of India with that of the Russians on the Pamirs, a part of the world with which I was well acquainted many years ago. Major Mason has been engaged in work in Mesopotamia ; we hope we shall gradually come to know something of what our officers have been doing in other theatres of war also. He has not before addressed a meeting of this Society, and I am sure you will hear him with very great interest. I now have pleasure in introducing to you Major Mason.

Major Mason then read the paper printed above, and a discussion followed.

The PRESIDENT : We are glad to welcome here to-night Lieut.-General Sir Alexander Cobbe, V.C., who was Major Mason's chief. It is some years since General Cobbe and I last met, and it was in the Chitral Fort in 1895, General Cobbe having taken a very distinguished part in the relief expedition. As you all know, he has played a very distinguished part in this war also, and he was Commander of the Army Corps which was the first to occupy Baghdad. I now call upon him.

Lieut.-General Sir ALEXANDER COBBE, V.C. : The lecturer has merely hinted at some of the work we ask our political officers to do, but in the course of his lecture has unconsciously given us a greater insight into their work. Your Society knows better than any one else what the young officers and men of our race have done in little-known countries amongst tribes of sometimes hostile attitude ; what knowledge they have brought back, and also what feeling of friendliness and trust in the British they have left behind them. You will therefore appreciate that a commander in the field in the East is never at a loss for men to undertake any job he may ask. But besides courage and resource it is necessary to have knowledge in order to get the best results. I was lucky in having the lecturer as my staff officer for intelligence for three years in Mesopotamia, and it was due to his training and experience in survey work that the good results were obtained from the reconnaissances which he has described to-night. I was also able to give him the opportunity of another very interesting journey shortly afterwards, from the mid-Euphrates across the desert to Damascus *via* Tadmor. He was able to do this in motor cars and in a warm climate, and I have no doubt he appreciated the difference, but I can assure you that the risks were none the less than on the previous trip. When we hear, as unfortunately we do, of outrages on our British officers in these outlying parts of the world we are very apt to say, Why were they there, and how did they get there ? Why were we fighting there ? In the case of Kurdistan I am able to tell you how we got there and why we were there. When the Armistice came and we went to Mosul we had to explain the terms of the Armistice to Ali Ihsan Pasha, the Turkish commander. In the original terms we were to clear out all the Turkish troops and forces ; they were to evacuate Mesopotamia. In fact, I believe the words were that they were to surrender. However, we were not in a position to enforce that, having taken a good many thousand prisoners already, and so we told them to evacuate the

country. The boundaries of Mesopotamia are not very well known. According to a German account we had, they were shown to extend to the Euphrates west of Mosul. Our line of communication had its railhead some 130 miles short of Mosul, and it was stretched to its utmost ; in fact, the garrison of Mosul were really living on the stores of the Turks, of which we took charge and doled out to the Turks until we got rid of them. General Marshall decided that the most we could do was to clear the Turks out of the Mosul Vilayet, which is not very accurately defined. However, we got Ali Ihsan to draw the line on the map, which more or less coincides with the dotted line on the 1/1,000,000 map and includes Rowanduz and Zakho on the north of Mosul. We arranged he should clear all his troops from all the posts in this district. He asked us rather maliciously if we would take charge of the policing of all these posts ; he had a pretty shrewd idea that we had as much as we could do already. His own experience of the country, undoubtedly, was not very happy, for when he left shortly afterwards to go to Nisibin he asked us to give him two armoured cars to protect him, and he also carried a machine gun in his own motor. General Marshall said, "Yes, you will give us a list of the posts you hold, and we will take them over." We sent a small detachment to Altun Keupri, a political officer with a troop of cavalry to Erbil, and political officers to Sulaimaniya and Rowanduz. When they arrived they got some of the local people and armed them as local police and administered the country. That is how we came to be in those parts of Kurdistan. Directly Ali Ihsan got to Nisibin he began at once to intrigue with the local Kurds and tried to make trouble. Shortly afterwards, however, we were able to get him removed. But this intriguing went on, and the delays and difficulties of peace settlement, of course, made it worse. The Kurds thought we should take vengeance and try them for their participation in the massacre of the Armenians when under Turkish rule, and the Turks played on their fears, so that they naturally gave us trouble, and we unfortunately lost a few officers. I think we may say the Kurds are not at all pro-Turkish ; they are quite inclined, I think, to be pro-British. But they *are* anti-Armenian and certainly do not want to be under the Armenian state or under Armenian rule. As long as they feel that would not be the case I think they would very soon have no more to do with the Turks. If a wise peace settlement is made with Turkey, I hope that we shall have peace and prosperity in all these countries which have been taken from the Turks.

The PRESIDENT : We have with us to-night Mr. De Graaff Hunter, who is Mathematical Adviser to the Survey of India, and carried out triangulation in Kurdistan from the Turco-Persian boundary. Perhaps he will kindly give us his experience.

Captain DE GRAAFF HUNTER : Between November 1918 and July 1919 I was engaged in survey in the area between the Tigris and the Turco-Persian border. I had the pleasure of meeting Major Mason at the conclusion of his journey, and he showed me what he had done. I was much struck with the large amount of mapping he had been able to do, and arranged to complete my own work up to that point, joining his along its southern margin. This was partially effected in the succeeding months. When Major Mason was at Rowanduz I was at Sulaimaniya, and I received a telegram asking for the position of any intersected points in the neighbourhood of Rowanduz. There were some eight or ten suitable points which I had intersected between Kirkuk and Sulaimaniya, which lay about 80 miles south of Rowanduz. Owing to the slowness of communications the data I sent only reached Major Mason after

his return, but he was able to adjust his map to them. When in May 1919 I visited Rania, fixing it by triangulation, there was about 2 miles' difference between my result and Major Mason's by compass survey, and I think that must be considered accurate work for compass survey. The country between Erbil and Rania had settled down considerably, and the earlier state of extreme destitution had been much ameliorated.

A political officer, Captain Barker, had been posted to Rania in the meantime. On our arrival there from Koi Sanjak the Hakim-i-Shehr received me with much hospitality. Prominent Kurds of that district all appeared to be very friendly to the British. Two days after leaving Rania I heard at Koi Sanjak of the rising of Sheikh Mahmud, but it appeared that the prompt action taken prevented any disturbance north of the Lesser Zab river. The lecturer has referred to the failure of the Turkish policy directed towards breaking down the combination of villages. Sheikh Mahmud's rising took place at Sulaimaniya on May 21, and simultaneously three of my survey sections scattered over the country up to 50 miles from Sulaimaniya were made prisoners; two more were taken in a rather half-hearted way two days later. All these men had been working in their particular districts upwards of a month without any escort, and had been treated with marked friendliness, up to the pre-arranged moment of their seizure. Sulaimaniya was in Sheikh Mahmud's hands for nearly a month, the relieving forces entering it on June 18. On July 11, the last day I was there, everything appeared to be settled once more. With Major Mason's remarks on the use of Turkish names for mountains, streams, etc., I am in entire agreement. The names on the maps should be those in use locally; moreover, they should be spelt in such a way that any educated person should be able to pronounce them as nearly as possible as the native does. There is no chance of any one doing this correctly if the names are spelt wrongly. The most important of these is the name I should spell Sulaimānie, which has been spelt with "ia" or "iyah" on nearly every map published during the last twenty years.* In places of less importance, such a mispronunciation of a name would mean that it would be quite unrecognizable to any Kurd who heard it. In conclusion I would say that Major Mason's paper has given a true picture of the country as it was shortly after the signing of the Armistice with Turkey.

The PRESIDENT: Captain Beale, one of the political officers referred to by the lecturer and by General Cobbe, is present. Perhaps he will tell us the secret which political officers make use of in their work.

Captain CHARLES T. BEALE: General Cobbe has been good enough to say that he could always find officers to undertake what had to be done, but he did not say that they go forward because they have great confidence in their leaders and with the knowledge that they will be given every support. Perhaps I may be permitted to supplement Major Mason's paper by a short account of a political officer's life in Kurdistan. I was sent under Major Noel to Sulaimaniya at the beginning of the expedition, as I might call it, which comprised six military and political officers. The town of Sulaimaniya before the war had a population of 40,000; in December last there were barely 9000 people, and many of these were dying of hunger. Dead bodies were collected in the bazaar every morning, and in some cases people were eating their dead babies. After a short stay in Sulaimaniya, I was transferred to Koi Sanjak. The first evening

* The trouble seems to be rather with the stress than the spelling. The *Journal*, in agreement with the I/M map, spells it Sulaimaniya; and if it is required to indicate the stress, Sulaimāniya.—ED. G. J.

I spent in a mosque ; it was a mud hut, which served as a stable as well as guest-house. The priest spent the time in telling me very questionable stories in Persian, and later joined his flock and recited the prayers with great fervour. At Rowanduz, some chiefs called to see me one day ; they were nomads pass-up into the mountains with their sheep. About ten of them came, and we talked very agreeably together, when suddenly the son of one of the chiefs fell on the floor with his rifle and commenced shooting at a stone about 500 yards from my house. All the chiefs then joined in, and I felt that I had to do the same. I awarded prizes on the conclusion of the performance. This is the best way of conducting negotiations with Kurdish chiefs. I left Rowanduz about three months ago and moved north to Neri, accompanied by a local chieftain named Said Taha, a descendant of the prophet and therefore of hereditary sanctity. Though he considers himself a very important person, he has spent the last twelve years in prison or trying to escape from it, in Persia, Russia, and twice in Constantinople. There he has learnt something of civilization, because when I arrived at Neri he provided me with a tolerably luxurious bath, towels, etc., a rather surprising reception at the hands of a brigand chief in the wild and inaccessible mountains of Central Kurdistan. Major Mason spoke of the Christians in Kurdistan. In Central Kurdistan there is a village of six hundred houses, half of which is Christian, and both parties live together in harmony. Near Koi Sanjak there is an entirely Christian village. The country to the north of Rowanduz is even more devastated than that of southern Kurdistan. For days one sees neither villages nor people ; the whole country seems to have been obliterated, first of all by the Russian forces and afterwards by the Turks ; in fact, in northern Kurdistan, even more than in southern, there seems to be a smell of death about the whole country. I camped near Neri for a week. Turkish troops were in the district, and a force was sent to my camp. I therefore moved into Persia and stayed at Urmia. The Urmia plain is exceedingly fertile, and Russians, Kurds, Turks, and Christians periodically fight for it. There was a massacre of Christians at Urmia about two weeks before I arrived. You will be interested to know that Shaikh Mohammed Agha, whose picture you saw, with his baggy trousers, proved our loyal friend during the rising. The Turkish motor car that succeeded in making Rowanduz from Erbil, fell over the gorge at Rowanduz. I think I may say that the Sulaimaniya rising on the whole was a failure and served to contribute to the popularity of British rule as a contrast to Turkish. It took months for the Kurd to understand it, but when he did there was no doubt about our popularity, and it is illustrated by the fact that six imprisoned military political officers—one of whom returned home a few days ago—were on the whole very well treated.

The PRESIDENT : Major Stewart Murray, another political officer, is here. We shall be very much obliged if he will kindly say a few words.

Major S. MURRAY : I was at Erbil, the first political officer posted there, and in that capacity had dealings with the people in Sulaimaniya, Rowanduz, and all those other places. Therefore I listened with great interest to Major Mason's lecture, and to what we have heard from Captain Hunter and Captain Beale. I was on the telegraph at Erbil during the Sulaimaniya risings, and I know what a very unpleasant time those people out there had. They were in actual distance not very far away, but they might have been thousands of miles off for what help we could give them. But it was owing to the men out in those far places that the rising in Sulaimaniya, such as it was, did not spread very much further. When I left Erbil about three months ago the

whole place seemed to be settling down, and I think the Kurds are now realizing that we are not out to get their blood, so to speak, but are doing all we can to help them. We have been sending them up food and clothes and have done much else. I am quite certain that things will settle down, and then when the peace, if ever it comes, is known to everybody, it will find things very very different from what they have been during the last year.

The PRESIDENT: It has been a very great joy to those of us who have had to remain in London during the war to see these men who have been doing work for us out in the far parts of the world coming back to town once more. Those of us who have had to deal with wild peoples must know that the difficulties of officers have been enormously increased by the uncertainty that there has been ever since the Armistice was signed as to the future destinies of the countries in which these officers have been working. You have been able to hear from what these officers have told you that there is this uncertainty as to whether Kurdistan is to come under British rule, or go back to Turkish, or to become part of the Armenian State of the future. Until that matter is definitely decided the work of our officers out there must be conducted under enormous risk and carried through with the greatest difficulty. We can well appreciate the difficulties which our officers have had to encounter. I think that in listening to the lecture of Major Mason the chief thought which has struck us was the fact that the dreadful desolation and horror which we have heard described came about through no fault of the people themselves. These unfortunate people have had their homes wiped out and the population of the country has been decimated through no quarrel of their own, but through a quarrel between Europeans far away in the centre of Europe. From Major Mason's description and from the excellent slides which he showed us, the country seems extraordinarily dry and desolate, and at the present time there does not seem to be very much in the way of communications. Nevertheless, the lecturer ended his address on a note of hope. He thought it would make an excellent hill-station for our troops if we retain garrisons in Mesopotamia. He spoke of the possibility of growing trees there—possibly fruit trees,—of growing vines and cereals, and cotton and tobacco, and I think he mentioned that there might be coal and oil there too. So after all there may be some future for this unfortunate country, and we may hope before long that it will be settling down for solid reconstruction. It only remains for me to ask you to return a very hearty vote of thanks to Major Mason for his most instructive and informing lecture.

MISSING LINKS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANCIENT PORTUGUESE CARTOGRAPHY OF THE NETHERLANDS EAST INDIAN ARCHIPE- LAGO

E. C. Abendanon

THROUGH my studies on the historical cartography of Celebes* I have been carried temporarily on scientific ground not my own. On this occasion I have been struck by the missing links in the develop-

* *Voyages géologiques et géographiques à travers la Célèbes Centrale* (Leyde, 1918), vol. 3, chap. xxii.