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Ancient Trading Centres of the Persian Gulf: VI Bandar 'Abbas

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Woodbine's successor in our present Council is Colonel Church, and most ably he fills that post. This evening he has nearly singed his wings on the burning question of arbitration. There can be no doubt whatever that when two countries do differ—although we are not allowed to refer to a political question here—on questions of boundary, it is an immense gain to geography. Atlases of the deepest interest and many volumes have been published in consequence of the arbitration between Venezuela and British Guiana, and we have no doubt a similar wealth of information will be derived from the arbitration between Chile and Argentina. Last year we listened to a most valuable paper, which was communicated to us by Dr. Moreno, from which we received much new information respecting the eastern slopes of the Patagonian Cordillera; and this evening I am quite sure you will pass a unanimous vote of thanks to Dr. Steffen, for having given us such an admirable description of the valley of the Puelo and the Baker or Las Heras river, taking up only two parts of the work of exploration with which he has been engaged; for I gather, from the beautiful slides which he has shown us of the scenery of that coast, that he has also explored the other rivers between the Puelo and the Gulf of Penas. I am sure you will all wish me to tell Dr. Steffen that you have passed a unanimous vote of thanks to him.

ANCIENT TRADING CENTRES OF THE PERSIAN GULF.

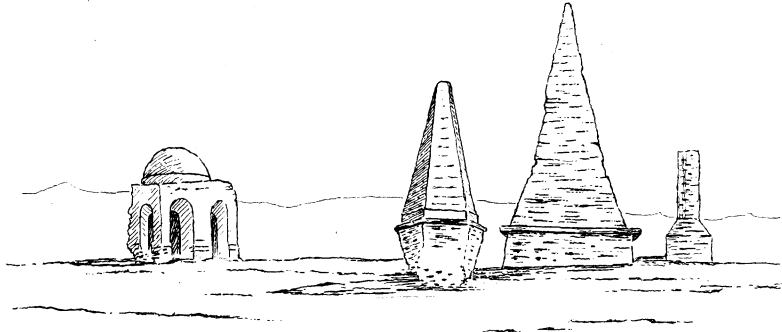
By Captain ARTHUR W. STIFFE, R.I.M.

VI. BANDAR 'ABBAS.

SOME interest attaches to this place, as the first commercial settlement of the English in the Persian gulf, who established themselves here after the fall of Hormúz in 1622. It is still the principal port of Karmán and Lar, and its trade is much increased since it has been a port of call for the Gulf mail steamers. The anchorage is commodious and safe, and of convenient depth and good holding ground. It is protected from heavy sea by the islands of Hormúz, Larek, and Kesm (or at-Tawilah). Above thirty large transports and steamers were lying here in November, 1856, it being the rendezvous for the expedition which in that year captured Bushire. There is good anchorage for any number of ships off the place. The water is shoal off the town, 3 fathoms' water being about a mile off shore, and 4 fathoms about twice that distance. It would be very easy to build a long pier to land at, but all the work is done in boats, and except at high water landing is unpleasant, as you have to be carried some distance. It is often called only "Bandar."

It stands on the Persian coast in lat. $27^{\circ} 10' 29''$, is fortified on the land side with a wall and round bastions, at the time of our visits very dilapidated, and contained then about 10,000 to 12,000 inhabitants, who mostly migrated during the hot weather. The land near is a great plain extending towards the foot of the great mountains 16 miles off in a northerly direction, which rise to a height of near 8000 feet. It is mostly uncultivated. The town has a frontage to the sea of near three-quarters of a mile, the only building of any pretension being the old Dutch factory, which is a large quadrangle, and fortified with a wall and towers. It was in fair repair, and used as the residence of the Chief. There are no date plantations near the town. The ruins of the British factory were pointed out some distance to the westward of the town, but little of it remains except the foundations. In the plain, about a quarter of a mile northward of the town, stands a group of tombs of the

European merchants (see sketch). These have been large and pretentious erections, after the fashion of those days, such as may be seen at Surat, etc. They are fast crumbling to ruin; the largest was about 30 feet high, many were mere mounds. No inscriptions could be found.* The place would become, under a civilized government, a place of considerable commercial importance, as it is advantageously situated for communication with the interior, and the whole eastern part of Persia. We were informed the caravans take twenty days from here to Karmán, and thirteen to Lar. The Governor is also ruler of the country adjacent. The



MAUSOLIA NEAR BANDAR 'ABBAS—THE HIGHEST ABOUT 30 FEET HIGH.

celebrated carpets of Karmán are exported from this place, also much sulphur from the mines at Khamir, which are worked in a rude, wasteful manner.

HISTORY.

It appears to have been at first merely a small fort erected by the Portuguese to protect their water-supply for Hormúz. It is called by Faria y Souza Comoran,† whence probably the old English name of Gombroon. Sir Thomas Herbert visited the place in 1627,‡ and gives the date of its erection as 1513. Captain Hamilton ('New Account,' etc.) says, "Gombroon had its appellation from the Portuguese in derision, because it was a good place for catching prawns or shrimps, which they call Camarong." Faria y Souza§ says it was taken from the Portuguese in 1614 by a Persian force of 14,000 men under the "captain" of Shiráz, after an ineffectual attempt in the previous year. It was only after its capture by the Persians that it received the name of Bandar Abbas, after the great king of Persia, who ousted the Portuguese from this place and Hormúz.

Pietro della Valle || arrived "at 'Combru,' called Port Abbassim since King Abbas took it from the Portuguese," in September, 1622. He says the streets and even the bazaar are narrow and small, and shops badly supplied. Without counting those left in Ormuz fort (which place had just been taken), there were here seventy or eighty pieces of ordnance, of which some had been given to the English; some

* These tombs, visited by J. B. Fraser in 1821, are described by him as then much in the same state as at present ('Narration of a Journey into Khorassan,' etc.).

† 'The Portuguese Asia.' Translated by Captain John Stevens. London, 1695.

‡ 'Some Years' Travels into Africa and Asia the Great.' London, 1677.

§ *Ante.*

|| 'Travels of. into East India,' etc. London, 1665.

were large, nearly all made in the last five or six years, and marked with the arms and name of the King of Spain, weights of gun and shot, and charge of powder. On some were the names of the Viceroy. The fort, which he was not able to enter, was not that built by the Portuguese on the shore, but a new one, further inland, square, walls double but poor, no angles or outer defences except the inner wall, which had little round flanking towers, crenellated on top; the guns were mounted in a row, facing seawards, outside the gate. Our author next visited Hormúz in January, 1623.

In 1638, John Albert de Mandelsloe* arrived at Gambroon from Lar, very ill. He says, "it is not many years since it was a village, but since the reduction of Ormuz, the English, Dutch, and Indian ships have found out the conveniency of the harbour and trade. . . . The entrance of the haven is defended by two strong castles and a square redoubt, with some artillery. The houses are of burnt brick, with good mortar. The Sultan's palace and the warehouses where the English and Dutch are lodged are the houses of state." He refers to the great heat, and says, "there is no grass or plants except what is produced in some gardens with incredible labour. It is chiefly provided from Kischmisch (Kesm). The chief time for trading was from October to May, when the caravans arrive. The English pay no duties, but ought to get half the customs, but are forced to be content with about a tenth part. No Portuguese were allowed to come to Gombroon, which is the occasion they live in open hostility with the Persians, take their ships," etc.

John Nieuhoff† went from Vingorla to 'Gamron' in 1662. He describes it between two castles, and defended on the sea side by three stone bastions, on which are mounted good store of iron cannon; on the land side was only a stone wall much decayed. The houses had wind-towers, and were of sun-dried brick whitened outside with lime. There was scarcity of water, and he mentions good Persian wines. He also mentions the great heat, owing to mountains at the back, and says it was only habitable for Europeans from December to March. Once a year caravans trade to Schiraz et. Posts were very expeditious between Gamroon and Ispahan.

John Struys‡ went from Lar to Gamron in March, 1672, "called Bendar," and describes it with two castles, built after the old manner, a reasonable strong wall towards the country, and without, has, at a convenient distance, several redoubts, also one on the coast. It has become a famous emporium frequented by Moors, English, French, and Hollanders. He speaks of the unhealthiness and great heat, "which is almost past after October."

Tavernier,§ in 1665, travelled from Shiraz *via* Lar to Bandar Abbassi, but does not say much except that the town was built with the ruins of Hormúz, and that "while the Portuguese kept Ormus, though they lived in the city, all the trade was at Bandar Abbassi, as being the most secure landing-place on all the coast."

Chardin|| visited Bandar Abbassi in 1674 and 1675; describes it as surrounded by walls on the land side, with two little forts, and 1400 or 1500 houses. The strand (quai), or sea-front, is more than a mile long. The houses of the French, English, and Hollander companies are the most commodious. The Governor's palace is in the part most distant from the sea, and built with stones and marble from Ormus. He mentions the wind-towers on the flat roofs, says it is only a

* Harris' Collection, 1744.

† Churchill's Collection, vol. ii. 1704.

‡ 'Voyages and travels of —.' London, 1684.

§ 'Collection of travels of Tavernier . . . and other great men.' London, 1684.

|| 'Voyages de Chev. Chardin en Perse.' 1735.

roadstead, and ships load quickly by boats (as they do at the present day), he says, of cocanut wood (?) sewn together without any iron. He mentions the bad water and the large banyan tree, which attracted the attention and wonder of most travellers. It is still conspicuous, and stands some 3 miles east of the town, at a small village called Naband. He mentions that the English claim half the customs here, as the Portuguese the half at Congue. In 1675 news came to Ispahan from Congue that a Portuguese squadron had seized three native vessels with pilgrims to obtain their arrears of customs. They got tribute from even the smallest boats, and permitted no trade with India except in their own ships. They gave passports to ships under very stringent conditions and limitations.

Thevenot,* who went from Lar to Bender (-Abbassi) in 1684, says, it scarcely deserves the name of a good village. Half of the customs belong to the English, "but they receive not the fourth part, the Persians giving them but as little as they can." There is only "one public gate, a bazaar, and a small fort on the seaside, which chiefly consists in a square platform of about 4 fathoms each face, and some 2 fathoms high, with portholes for five or six pieces of cannon, but they have no more but two. The English and Dutch have each of them their houses, very well built by the seaside."

He did not proceed to India, as the Dutch could not take him, and there was danger from pirates.

Commodore Roggewein,† who sailed round the world in 1721-3, also refers to the multitude of pirates in those seas, mostly Europeans. He mentions the Dutch factory at Gombroon or Bender-abbassi, on the coast of Persia, where the director has an opportunity of making a vast fortune in a short time. The Dutch have by far the best factory, and have fortified it effectually. He also mentions an attack in 1701 by the Balloches, with four thousand men, who were beaten off.

From Mr. F. C. Danvers' ‡ report, I gather the following particulars regarding the English factory. There was some beginning of trade there shortly after the fall of Hormuz, and the agents agreed in 1631 to take from the king silk to the value of about £60,000 per annum, to be paid for one-third in money and two-thirds in goods. The rivalry of the Dutch seems to have been much felt, and the civil war in England also depressed the trade. In 1645 the company's property at Gombroon was all shipped to Basra for safety, so precarious was their position. Then follow intrigues, war with the Dutch, and negotiations, and fluctuations of trade of no great interest. In 1726, owing to the Afghan conquest of Persia, trade greatly declined. The factory at Bandar Abbas was under the Ispahan agency until 1750, when the latter was finally closed and the English retired to Gombroon. The end was not far off. In 1756 advice was received at Gombroon of war having been declared against France. On October 12, 1759, a French squadron of four vessels (one of seventy-four guns), under Comte d'Estaing, entered the roads of Gombroon, and on the following day they landed to the westward of the factory with two mortars and four pieces of cannon, and commenced an attack on the place, in which the vessels joined. The factory was in no position to defend itself against such odds, so the chief and council agreed to a capitulation, under which the factory and all its contents, including a large sum of money, were to be handed over to the French. The agency retired to the Dutch factory. The French, before withdrawing to their ships, set fire to the factory, in which they had placed explosives to ensure its complete destruction. They also burnt the company's ship *Speedwell*.

* 'The travels of M. de — into the Levant.' Newly done out of French. London, 1687.

† Kerr's collection, vol. ii.

‡ 'Report on the India Office Records relating to Persia,' etc.

After the retirement of the French, the people of the country completed the destruction of the factory.

A temporary establishment was kept on until 1763, when the agency was removed to Bushire, owing to the unsettled state of the country. In 1770 the agency was temporarily re-established, under orders from the Court of Directors, but was soon abandoned.

The Maskat Arabs occupied the place for near one hundred years, but were dispossessed by the Persians in 1854, after a siege. They appear to have paid some tribute to Persia, in acknowledgment of her over-lordship.

DR. JOVAN CVJIĆ'S RESEARCHES IN MACEDONIA AND SOUTHERN ALBANIA.*

A PRELIMINARY communication made by Dr. Cvjić to the Proceedings of the Hungarian Geographical Society enables us to supplement the short account of the Professor's work in the Balkan peninsula which appeared in the April number of the *Journal* (vol. xv. p. 417).

Prof. Cvjić made his first journey in Macedonia without the advantage of special recommendation on the part of the Sublime Porte, and on that account was not always free to carry out his scientific labours at will. Travelling the next year with an open order to the Valis of Salonica and Monastir, supplied by the Ministry of the Interior, he met with nothing but courtesy from the authorities, being often received with the oriental politeness shown to one recommended as friend ("dost") by the higher powers. This dignified courtesy and the open character of the Turks permit a traveller with such credentials and possessed of any degree of tact to pass through Turkey without any unpleasant experiences so far as the Turks themselves are concerned. The Arnauts of Northern Albania—small clans known by the general designation of "Gheg"—are, on the contrary, quick to anger and suspicious. They must be treated with deference and bound by the well-known "Bessa"—their pledged word—which forms, in fact, in conjunction with the vendetta, the sole guarantee of public security. With this aid, however, travel is possible even in Northern Albania. The southern Arnauts, known as the Torkas, are totally different in character. They have been to some extent civilized by Greek influence, and have retained the chivalrous qualities of a race of mountaineers while apparently losing the less estimable traits. At all events, Dr. Cvjić draws a picture of their hospitable manners, which presents them in a most amiable light. The Slavs of Macedonia, who consider themselves as either Serbs or Bulgarians, were found by the traveller to be very distinct in character from the other Slavs of the Balkan peninsula. Their national feeling is less strongly developed than is the case with the rest of the southern branch of the race; they are industrious and frugal—even grasping. Yet there are marked exceptions which seem to prove that these qualities are not natural to them, but have been acquired under the stress of circumstances. The traveller needs to show prudence and determination in his dealings with them.

The Macedonian towns possess an old form of civilization, which presents few attractions to Europeans; still cleanliness is not a rarity, especially among the Christians. The monasteries, however, abound in dirt, and likewise the villages, so that, when spending the night at them, Dr. Cvjić was usually compelled to

* Communicated by Dr. K. Peucker, of Vienna.