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European Territorial Claims on the Coasts of the Red Sea, and its Southern Approaches, in 1885.

By Sir RAWSON W. RAWSON, K.C.M.G.

Map, p. 136.

MUCH has been said, written, and ignorantly repeated concerning the occupation of various localities in the Red Sea, and at its southern entrance, but very little is generally known as to the real position of European authority in these parts.

Accurate information will serve to throw useful light upon this subject, which has acquired a special importance at the present time. It may also tend to dispel some misconceptions and some extravagant illusions, which have aroused some no less exaggerated apprehensions; while it will satisfy the desire, which all must feel, to possess some guide, by means of which to judge of the character and importance of the broken intelligence that reaches us from time to time from this quarter.

It is much to be hoped that one of the results of the Congress now sitting at Berlin will be the establishment of some rules with regard to the accomplishment and promulgation of the acquisition, or annexation, of unoccupied lands, or of lands occupied by more or less uncivilised races, under the sway of chiefs, whose authority is often as undefined as the limits of their territories, and whose rights of ownership are as little known as the nature of their interdependence, and their subordination to superior authority.

At all events, the proceedings of the Congress will help to familiarise the public with the wide difference, and many intervening steps, between occupation, protection, and annexation, between proprietary and territorial rights, between the recognition of private ownership and of national dominion, and with the necessity for discriminating between them, when endeavouring to acquire information as to the constantly shifting aspect of political geography, or when forming a judgment upon the actions of public men and Governments in connection with territorial acquisitions and changes.

To many, who have not had occasion to consider these matters, it may be useful to point out:—

1st. That the purchase of a tract of land in any country, uncivilised or partially civilised, by subjects, one or many, of a foreign nation, can no more give territorial rights to the purchasers, or to the nation of which they are the subjects, than it could in a civilised country.

2nd. That the purchase, or acceptance of the cession, of territorial rights by private persons does not constitute, or necessarily involve, annexation by the nation to which they belong.

3rd. That a local authority, subordinate to a central or superior authority, even if it should have power to dispose of its proprietary

rights in any of its lands, has no power of itself to cede territorial, or sovereign, rights over those lands.

4th. That the transfer of any proprietary, or territorial, rights from the subjects to the Government of a foreign nation, can confer no greater rights upon the latter than were legitimately acquired by the former.

The operation of these elementary rules will be amply illustrated in the following condensed narrative of the acquisitions of territory on the Red Sea by European nations, to understand which it is necessary to go back to the commencement of the 16th century.

On the 1st January, 1517, the Turks defeated and overthrew the Egyptian army in Syria. Within a few weeks they had entered Cairo, and dethroned, and ignominiously put to death, the last of the Mameluke rulers of Egypt. Thereupon the Sultan, Selim I., took possession of that country, divided it into twenty-four military provinces, and appointed a Bey over each, and a Pasha (Bassa or Basha, as it was written at that time) as Viceroy, over the whole. The limits of Egypt Proper at that date do not appear to have reached beyond the Tropic of Cancer, or about $23^{\circ} 40'$ N. lat. During the next century they were extended, by the addition of what was then called Turkish Nubia, to the 21st degree; and there can be no doubt about them at the present day, as the Porte, in its Firman of 13th February, 1841, by which it ceded, or delegated, its authority in Egypt to the Khedive and his descendants, fixed the boundary on the west coast of the Red Sea at the Bay of Roway (Raweyyah), in N. lat. $21^{\circ} 5'$.

But Turkey claims, and up to the second half of the present century has claimed without dispute on the part of European Powers, the whole of the western coast of the Red Sea, from the Bay of Roway "to beyond the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb," as described in its cession of this part of its territory to Egypt by the Firman of 27th May, 1866, confirmed by that of 8th June, 1873, and as far as the Port of Zeila, in lat. $11^{\circ} 20'$ N., ceded to Egypt by a Firman of 1875.

The grounds of its claims, as represented on its own behalf by the Egyptian Government, and the opposite view as represented by the Italian Government, which claims the liberty of assuming territorial rights on a certain limited portion of that coast, are set forth in the correspondence between the British and Italian Governments respecting Assab Bay, which was laid before Parliament in 1882.* From these sources, corrected by a reference to the original authorities, sufficient may be gathered to furnish the means of forming a tolerably accurate idea of the nature of those claims, as they affect past, and possibly future, acquisitions of territory on the Red Sea.

Dr. Beke, in an official Memorandum of 12th November, 1862, has, with almost unimpeachable accuracy, summarised the actual position of the question at that date. He says:—

* Parl. Papers, 1882, c. 3300.

"That strip of low country along the western coast of the Red Sea, from the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb northwards, belongs geographically to the adjacent empire of Abyssinia, which, however, appears not to have ruled over any portion of it for several centuries.

"Legally, the Abyssinian coast has belonged to the Ottoman Porte since the year 1558, when the Turks drove the Portuguese out of the Red Sea, and took possession of it, and all its harbours and coasts, in the name of the Sultan, in his character of Caliph, or head of the Mahommedan faith; though they, too, have only occupied the islands of Suakin and Massowah (Sawákin and Musawwá), with occasionally some adjoining districts on the mainland.

"Practically, these coast lands belong to the several native tribes inhabiting them, who claim to be independent; though from their defenceless state, as well as that of their country, they have to acknowledge the supremacy of Turks or Abyssinians, accordingly as the one or the other have the means of coercing them." *

The historical evidence in support of this statement is very interesting. The strip of which Dr. Beke speaks is the tract of low, almost waterless, desert land extending from the sea-shore to the base of the hills which have been the bounds of the Abyssinian, or Ethiopian, empire for centuries. The area is about 80,000 square miles, the population 400,000.

This strip at the northern end, in the neighbourhood of Massowah, at the northernmost boundary of Abyssinia, does not exceed 20 to 30 miles in width; it gradually expands; and towards the south, beyond the limits of the Red Sea, where it adjoins the lands of the Galla and Somal tribes, it attains a width of almost 200 miles. This is the territory now claimed by Turkey, or its representative, Egypt. It is a disputed point whether it ever belonged to Abyssinia, or even to the larger empire of Ethiopia; and there is no evidence of that country having exercised any authority over the nomad tribes inhabiting it greater than that exercised by Turkey since the middle of the 16th century.

Ludolf, speaking of Abyssinia, says that "towards the East it was formerly bounded by the Red Sea"; † but the evidence points to the probability of his remark applying solely to the northern province of Tigré, of which he says, "The most noble part of it lyes toward the Red Sea, and is called Bahr, the Sea, or Medra Bahr, the Land of the Sea, or a Maritime Province," ‡ through which the route lay, and still lies, to Arkiko (Harkíko) and the Island of Matzua, Massowah of the present day. In another place he states that "as for the Abyssines themselves, they are utterly ignorant of navigation; . . . nor have they any Ports

* Parl. Papers, 1868, Correspondence, Abyssinia, 1846-68, p. 214.

† Ludolf's 'History of Ethiopia,' l. i. c. 2.

‡ Ibid., l. i. c. 3.

upon the Red Sea."* With regard to Zeila, he calls it "a Port belonging to the Adelans, altogether unsafe because of the deadly hatred between them and the Habessinians."†

Certain it is that at the commencement of the 16th century the southern part of the coast was peopled by wild tribes of Mahomedans under the king of the Dankali (plur. Danakil), and that the northern part comprised that part of the more extensive kingdom known to the Abyssinians as Adela, or Adäl, which was called by the Arabs Afer (or Afar, signifying Men). Ludolf states that the Prince of the Dankali, who commanded the Port of Baylur (or Beilul), was a friend of the Abyssinians, but that the Adelans were "their ancient enemies."‡ After the Turks had vanquished Egypt, and some parts of the Red Sea, the Adelans, strengthened by their assistance, invaded Abyssinia under the leadership of the celebrated Granye (Gragne), and overran the whole country. This lasted from 1526 to 1540, and the land was brought to great misery. In these straits the Abyssinian king, driven to seek shelter in the recesses of the mountains, besought the succour of the King of Portugal, John the Third, who despatched to his aid Christopher Gamas, a son of the celebrated Vasco, with 450 musqueteers and six small field-pieces. Their arrival turned the tide of fortune for a time; but next year Granye defeated Gamas, and slew him and the greater part of the Portuguese, who were reduced to 120 in number. The Abyssinian king, having "had intelligence that the Turks were returned home, leaving only 200 behind them," attacked and routed Granye, who was killed by a shot in the battle.

In the meantime the Gallas, till then neglected as an obscure nation, though they had invaded many provinces already laid waste by the Adelans, caused serious damage to the kingdom; and after a while, during the reign of David's successor Claudius, the Adelans, having repaired their losses, and awaiting their opportunity, again broke into Abyssinia under Nurus (Nour), their captain, overthrew the king in 1559, and put him to death. He was succeeded by his brother, Menas, who by his cruel conduct and misgovernment provoked a civil war, in which he was defeated with the assistance of the Turks, and put to death in April 1562, "to the great detriment," Ludolf says, "of Habessinians; for ever since that time the Turks have been masters of the coast of the Red Sea."§

His son, Sarza-Denghel, or Za-denghel, a brave and wise ruler, "first drove the Turks, who were masters of Dobarva, the metropolis of the maritime Province, out of Tigré. He would also have driven them out of the Port of Arkiko and the Island of Matzua, had he not been recalled to defend his upland dominions from the incursions of the Gallans."|| No further mention is made of any attempt to expel the Turks, or of wars

* Ludolf, l. i. c. 8.

§ Ibid., l. ii. c. 6.

† Ibid., l. iv. c. 6.

‡ Ibid., l. i. c. 2.

|| Ibid., l. ii. c. 6.

with the Adelans. Za-denghel was fully occupied with his struggles with the Gallas, and then with an internecine war, in which he was killed in 1579. There appears to have been no further recorded connection between the affairs of Abyssinia and Turkey affecting the position of the latter on the Red Sea, up to the middle of the present century.

That position at the end of the 17th century is fully described by Ludolf, whose work was first published in 1681.* After stating, as already quoted, that towards the east Abyssinia was formerly bounded by the Red Sea, he proceeds thus:—

“But now the Port of Arkiko, with the adjacent Island of Matzua being taken, all the coast obeys the Turk, who are masters of that sea. A sea that affords but little convenience for Harbors, full of Shelves and Quick-sands, and besides that the Islands which belong to it are untill’d, ill inhabited, and laboring under such a scarcity of water in the mid’d of the sea, that they neither afford accommodation nor security to strangers, for which reason they are but little visited. The mouth of the Streight is very narrow, and of so ill a fame for frequent shipwracks, that the Arabians call it Bab-el-Mandeb, the Port of Affliction.” †

Further on he writes: “The most cruel and bloody war which the Inhabitants of Adela waged in the foregoing century under the conduct of their Captain Grainus against the Habessines, so ruined their affairs, that they could never since recover their losses. From whence, as well the Turks as the Gallans have taken an occasion continually to vex them with wars and wastful inroads. And first, the Turks after they had possesst themselves of Egypt, and slain the King of the Mamalukes, sent a fleet into the Red Sea, to secure the Indian Navigation, which is vastly profitable to Egypt: for that the Portuguesees, to the intent they might enjoy the sole trade of India, took all the ships of the Saracens they could meet with, pretending a hatred of their religion. The Turks therefore to shut up all the Ports of that Sea, made themselves masters of Suaqena and Matzua, Islands that formerly belonged to the Habessines, which they might the more easily do, in regard the Habessines having their handsful by land, took no care of their sea affairs. But soon after they became sensible, how vast an inconvenience it was to have so powerful a neighbour; finding what potent succour of men and Fire-arms the Turks sent to assist their enemies, and those that revolted from them. Nor are they less frequently sensible of it to this day; in regard that neither men nor merchandize can be admitted into the Gulph, unless they request it from the Basha or his Deputies, with vast expenses of rich Presents.” ‡

* A translation of it was published in London in 1684.

† Literally, “Gate of weeping,” or, according to the Nubian Geography, Bab-alandab, i. e. “The dreadful Mouth,” Ludolf, l. i. c. 2.

‡ Ludolf, l. i. c. 16.

Heyd confirms this by the statement in his 'History of the Levant Trade in the Middle Ages,' that in the early part of the sixteenth century, the merchant vessels of the Musulmen moved about without any hindrance from a Portuguese fortress or a Portuguese man-of-war, so long as they confined themselves to the Red Sea, but that if they ventured into the Indian Ocean, they were sure to meet with destruction.* In 1539, however, Suleyman Pasha, Governor of Egypt, on his return from an expedition to Gujerat, made himself master of Aden and the province of Yemen; and again in 1569, one of his successors, Sinan Pasha, reconquered both the town and province, which had revolted. It does not appear consistent with this manifestation of the power of the Turkish Viceroy in Arabia, that they should have failed to place under subjection the tribes on the western shore of the Red Sea, of whose ports they held the keys.

With regard to Suakin, Ludolf observes casually, that the King of Sennar, or Fund (the Funj or Fung) "formerly a tributary of the Abessines, but now absolute," possessed a part of the ancient Nubia, "near to which adjoyn'd the kingdom of Balou; their king was formerly lord of Suaqena, and in friendship with the Abessines; now he only receives the half of the Maritime Tribute from the Turks,"† who were consequently masters of the port, and probably of the country, at that date.

With regard to Massowah, Mr. T. C. Plowden, publishing in 1868 the papers of his brother, late British Consul in Abyssinia, writes as follows:‡—

"The island of Massowah is now in the hands of the Turks, who have also a fortress on the mainland at Dohona (Arkiko), and who claim, by various titles, the sovereignty of the coast generally, from the sea to the highlands of Abyssinia; and they extract from the various tribes as much tribute as they can by means of the Naib, now their lieutenant on the mainland, but whose ancestors having been for some years independent rulers, possesses a certain influence over the scattered tribes.

"Massowah is an island situated at the entrance of a large bay which forms between it and the mainland a small but secure harbour, &c."

"At the bottom of the bay is the town of Dohona (Arkiko).

"The Turks at present occupy Massowah. The establishment consists of a pasha, a custom house, about 250 Nizam, and 200 Arnauts, or irregulars, with their respective officers. Massowah and the adjacent territory were first seized in the time of the Sultan Selim, when a fort was built at Dohona, whose ruins are still visible. Subsequently, when the Turkish power was still vigorous, a Naib (lieutenant) was appointed for the government of the mainland, and now lately of Massowah also,

* Heyd, vol. ii. p. 538.

† Ludolf, l. i. c. 16.

‡ W. Plowden's 'Travels in Abyssinia,' edited by T. C. Plowden, pp. 2 and 355.

on a salary of 1000 dollars per month. This family of the Naib is Teegray" (Tigré) "in origin, but having become Mahomedan, gradually separated this country and authority from Abyssinia, on the break up of the empire, probably about the time of Mohamed Gryne's (Granye's) invasion. They were the acknowledged chiefs of the country when appointed Naibs by the Turkish pasha of the Hedjaz" (in Arabia). "Subsequently the Turks almost entirely abandoned the colony" (on the mainland) "and indeed left only some 30 irregular soldiers as a guard of honour to the Naib, who became almost independent, and resided alternately, as the lieutenant of the Sultan, at Arkeeko and Massowah."

During the present century their power became restricted. Upon a family quarrel an appeal was made to the Pasha of Jiddah. He proclaimed and invested one of the rivals, who "became thenceforth the acknowledged vassal of the Pasha, and resided at Dohona, having power only on the mainland, under a certain surveillance cautiously exercised by the Kaimakan, or Governor, of Massowah. The country, however, shortly after (in 1846) reverted for a short time to the Pashalic of Egypt, and under the vigorous administration of Mahomet Ali soon made more effectual progress."

In the early maps of the Red Sea the upper part of the west coast is marked, as already stated, as belonging to Egypt down to about $23^{\circ} 40'$ N. lat.; thence at a later date as far as the Bay of Roway, $21^{\circ} 05'$, as Turkish Nubia, and the remainder as belonging to other kingdoms or native tribes.

In a map published by G. de Lisle at Paris in 1707, Egypt is marked as above; Nubia from $23^{\circ} 40'$ to Suakin in $19^{\circ} 30'$, which place is noted as belonging "au Turc"; thence to $14^{\circ} 45'$ a belt along the coast is marked "Côte de Habesh" (= Habessia, Abyssinia) and inland "Royaume Balous." Massowah lies in $15^{\circ} 45'$ N. lat. From $14^{\circ} 45'$ to $11^{\circ} 50'$ the coast is marked "Re des Dancali," and south of it the kingdom of the Gallas, which extends southward to 5° N. lat. Eastward of the Gallas is marked the kingdom of Adel or Zeila. The towns of Zeila and Berbera are placed in a province called "Barragian" (Barr Ajan, the Azania of the ancients). On the coast both Massowah and the island and port of Adefila (Amphilla, or Hamfilah) are marked as belonging "aux Turcs." In a map published by D'Anville in 1749, the country on the coast north of Massowah is marked as Turkish.

Mention has been made of two trading ports on the west coast of the Red Sea. The Turks held both of these, Suakin and Massowah. There is a third, which was once of much importance, Adulis, now in ruins, which is represented to-day by Zulla, two miles distant from it, on the western shore of Adulis, or Annesley, Bay. This has been called "an Abyssinian port," on the alleged authority of Heyd. But Heyd does not call it an Abyssinian port. He says that merchant vessels

brought African produce from Ethiopia to India by way of, or through, the harbour of Adulis.* The trade of this port ceased early in the sixteenth century, with the disruption and decadence of the Ethiopian empire, and with the opening up of the direct route to Europe by the Cape of Good Hope. So that, thenceforth, up to the reopening of the Red Sea route by Alexandria and Suez in the present century, the Red Sea became, in fact, what Consul Plowden called it in 1854, a Turkish lake. "The Red Sea from Suez to Bab-el-Mandeb is a Turkish lake, and the Turks have possession of every harbour worth mentioning on either shore."†‡

Other places indeed exist south of Zulla which have been called ports, Amphilla, where Munzinger landed in 1869, Edd, which a French company bought in 1840, Baylur, where the Patriarch landed on his return from Portugal in 1625; but none of these possess, or ever possessed, any considerable trade, or sources of trade, or offer any shelter or accommodation for shipping. Both Tajura and Zeila are outside the Red Sea.

The above appears to complete the historical record of the possession and exercise of Turkish territorial rights on the west coast of that sea up to the close of the last century. It is impossible to say whether, among the "various titles" which Mr. Plowden states the Sultan to possess, the unpublished annals of the Porte may disclose other than those above described. The Egyptian Memorandum does not set them forth. After the opening up of the Cape route to India, and the stoppage of the Indian trade route through Egypt, which Lefebvre says was the effect, and not the cause, of the decadence of the Ethiopian Empire,‡ Europe took little or no interest in the commerce of the Red Sea; and whatever evidence there may be of the absence of constituted authority on either coast, there is none of the expulsion of Turkish forces, or the rejection of Turkish authority, on the west coast, such as is recorded on the opposite coast, where, in 1630, the Turks were expelled from the district of Yemen. Upon this point the Egyptian Government claims that the Turkish sovereignty was established in the sixteenth century; that this sovereignty, which has not been affected by any but temporary and unimportant interruptions, promptly terminated, has never been contested by any European Power, has never been alienated by the Porte in favour of any other authority whatever, until it was transferred by the latter to Egypt.§

* "Ganz ohne Rivalen waren die Perser bei ihrem Handelverkehr mit Indien nicht. Auch aus dem christlichen Königreich Äthiopien fuhren vom Hafen Adulis ab Handelsschiffe nach Indien, um afrikanische Produkte z. B. Wiehrauch, Cassia, Smaragde, auch Elfenbein welches Äthiopia in grösserer Menge besass, dort zu verkaufen und Indische Waaren als Rückfracht einzunehmen."—Heyd, vol. i. p. 12.

† Parl. Paper 1862, Abyssinia, p. 128.

‡ Report of the French Commission, 1839-43. Introduction, p. 87.

§ In its Memorandum of 17th May, 1880. Parl. Paper 1882, Assab Bay, p. 53.

There is, however, one other title referred to by Dr. Beke, which can only be stated, not discussed, in these pages, namely, the rights of the Sultan, in his character of Caliph, or head of the Mahommedan faith. It is a question for jurisconsults to determine what territorial rights his authority as Caliph would give him over the lands of peoples or tribes who admitted that authority; whether the *dominium* over the land could be separated from the sovereignty over the people. It is a fit subject, however, for inquiry, whether this authority was admitted by the tribes on the west coast, and as there does not appear to be any distinct evidence on this point beyond that already adduced, it must be left to the reader to form his own opinion on the subject. The preference of ecclesiastics and missionaries for one or other route, when desiring to penetrate into Abyssinia with the least possible risk in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, can afford no evidence; and the denials of Turkish authority by local chiefs, and claims to the right to dispose of their lands to foreign countries made in the present century, cannot assuredly be admitted as evidence of their true relations in past times to the Ottoman Porte. Neither can the observations of travellers, and still less the statements of interested agents, contribute much reliable testimony with regard to those relations.

As long as its authority was not disputed on the western coast of the Red Sea, Turkey appears to have deemed it unnecessary to manifest it by asserting it openly; but when, in anticipation of the opening of an overland route to India, European nations began to bestir themselves in these parts, it took action, but not immediately. When England took possession of Aden in 1839, Turkey had no occasion to move: it had ceased to have any claim upon Aden and the province of Yemen for two centuries. When Louis Philippe sent a scientific expedition into Abyssinia in the same year, Turkey did not deem it necessary to assert its claims. When, in 1840, a Nanto-Bordelaise company bought a tract of land at Edd, on the west coast (N. lat. 14°), it was treated as a private purchase, no question of territorial rights being claimed by the purchaser, or by the French Consul at Massowah, to whom the land was transferred. When England, in 1840, entered into an agreement with the Sultan of Tajura, and purchased the islands of Mussa and Aubad (so spelt in the Treaties of 1840 = Musha and Efat or Ivat), Turkey remained quiescent; they were all outside the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. When England in 1857 took possession of the island of Perim, and in the following year occupied the island of Kamaran, both on the Arabian shore of the Red Sea, the Porte had no ground for objection; they were beyond Turkish jurisdiction.*

But when, in 1859, France sent agents to Negussie, the temporary usurper of Tigré, one of the provinces of Abyssinia, and obtained from him the concession, not only of Arkiko on the coast, which Turkey had

* The circumstances of these transactions are detailed further on.

conquered in the sixteenth century, and had held without dispute up to the present time, but of the island of Dessi (Desei) at the entrance of the bay Adulis, and of Adulis on the shore of the same bay, of which, if they had ever belonged to Abyssinia, that country had lost possession at the same time as of Arkiko, the Porte remonstrated. The French Government did not take, or did not retain, possession of any of the places; and in 1862, on the 20th March, Consul Cameron reported that the Turkish flag had been planted at Dessi and Adulis, and further south at Edd; governors had been appointed at the two former places, and a sheikh of the country placed in power at Edd. In the same despatch the Consul wrote that the Turkish Government intended to extend its hold on the coast to Bab-el-Mandeb; that the Governor (Turkish) of Massowah meditated planting military colonies along the frontier; and that Theodore, the King of Abyssinia, entertained the determination of overrunning the "Turkish possessions on the coast."* These extracts show the relative position of the two Powers on the coast in 1862.

At that time Turkey had conferred sovereign rights upon Egypt only as far south as the Bay of Roway, 120 miles north of Suakin. But in 1866, by a Firman dated 27th May, it extended these rights over the Kaimakanates (Governments) of Suakin and Massowah. The bounds of these governments are not anywhere described, but they are shown in Stieler's map of North-east Africa (1883) and in Keith Johnston's map of Egypt and the Soudan (1884), from which they have been copied in the map annexed to this paper; and the Egyptian Government asserted in 1880 that they embraced "the whole of the west coast of the Red Sea, from the Bay of Roway (the limit of Egypt Proper under the Firman of 1841) to beyond the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb."†

The Egyptian Government affirms that in the autumn of the same year it took steps to assert its rights by hoisting the Egyptian flag at different places on the coast, and among them at Roheita,‡ south of Assab, up to which point, previously, in 1862, the Sheik Ahmed Amir, "appointed by the Turk Mudir and Governor of the Dankali coast," had planted the Turkish flag;§ and that again in 1871 Mountaz Pasha visited the coast from Massowah to Berbera, and hoisted the Egyptian flag at Zulla, Mak'Anli, Harena, Mogdar, Amphilla, Beilul, Roheita, Tajura, and Bulhar. At a later period it was hoisted at Berbera, Bandar (Ziy'ada?), Haloula (Aluleh), Fahouni (not marked on any map), Ali Besh-Quail, on the Somali coast, as far as Ras Hafun.|| It is certain that until Great Britain took steps in 1883 to induce the Egyptian Government to withdraw its troops from the Soudan and the country beyond, they

* Correspondence, Abyssinia, 1862, p. 209.

† Correspondence, Assab Bay, 1882, p. 53.

‡ Ibid., p. 61.

§ Ibid., p. 59.

|| Ibid., p. 61.

were in possession of Tajura, Harrar, Zeila, and other places, beyond the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, and that at the present day they occupy Zeila, under the Turkish Firman of 1875.

In further confirmation of the Egyptian statement the British Government applied to the Porte in 1867 for leave to cross its territory at Annesley Bay, before the expedition against Abyssinia; and in 1869 Munzinger found a Turkish flag-staff planted before the chief's house at Amphilla, and a Turkish tribunal established at that place,* which in G. de Lisle's French map of 1707 is marked as belonging to the Turks. This brings the evidence of the Turkish and Egyptian claims on the west coast of the Red Sea down to the date of the latest transaction bearing on this question. In September 1884, Admiral Sir W. Hewett negotiated a treaty with the Negus (king) of Abyssinia, whereby, in consideration of the restoration to the Negus of the country called Bogos, and the buildings and stores therein, now belonging to the Khedive, the Negus declares there shall be free transit through Massowah, to and from Abyssinia, for all goods under British protection.

With regard to the east coast, much need not be said. Turkish authority, as it has existed from the time of its first supremacy in Arabia, has not been called in question. The Sultan's rights as Caliph are admitted by the natives, and he holds the ports on the coast in the provinces of Hedjaz and Tehamah down to the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, including the cape of that name. The southern tribes in the province of Yemen outside the strait do not admit his supremacy; and when, in 1872, he was disposed to assert it, advancing in the direction of Aden, the English Government objected, on the ground that all the tribes in that neighbourhood were in alliance with Great Britain and under its protection. Turkey did not advance further, but at the present day it maintains a garrison at, or near, Sheikh Syed, at the extreme southern end of the east coast, where a French company bought an extensive tract of land in 1868.

Reverting now to the time when the attention of the nations of Western Europe was first drawn to these parts by the anticipated opening up of the overland route to India, via Alexandria, Cairo, Suez, and the Red Sea, it appears that England, which had by far the largest stake in the new route, lost no time in seeking and acquiring a suitable port near the entrance of the Red Sea, where she could establish a coal depôt, and provide for the refitting and victualling of her shipping.

Before entering upon this part of the subject it may be desirable to give some idea of the extent of the area and population of the territories which have been under examination, with those of their immediate neighbours. The following figures are taken from the latest volume

* 'Journal of the Royal Geographical Society,' 1869, pp. 190, 214.

of the 'Géographie Universelle' by Reclus. They can, of course, only be approximate. Those of Somali-land are not given.

	Area. Square miles.		Population.		Inhabitants to the square mile.
Abyssinia—Tigré, Amhara, Gojam, &c.	77,220	..	2,000,000	..	26
Shoa	15,440	..	1,500,000	..	89
Country of the Bogos, Mensa, Beni-Amer, &c.	27,030	..	100,000	..	3·6
Massowah and Shoho country	9,650	..	50,000	..	5·2
Country of the Afar, Obock, and Assab	38,610	..	200,000	..	5·1
Country of the Issa (Eesa), &c.	5,800	..	60,000	..	10·3
Harrar and neighbouring countries ..	7,720	..	1,200,000	..	155
Galla States of Southern Ethiopia ..	61,760	..	3,500,000	..	56
Total	243,230	..	8,610,000	..	35

The difference in the density, and presumably in the character and habits, of the population on the low grounds upon the shore of the Red Sea, as shown in the above statement, is very marked. Munzinger states that in these parts there is no village of more than twenty houses, and that between the settlements there are many miles of desert.

Aden.—The experience of centuries pointed to Aden, on the southern coast of Arabia, in the native province of Yemen, 95 miles from the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, as the fittest place for the required purposes.

In early ages it had been a place of great commercial importance, with a large population. But after the discovery of the route to India by the Cape of Good Hope, it had rapidly declined, and fallen into decay. In 1539 it was captured by the Turks under Suleiman Pasha, who then extended their dominion over the whole province of Yemen. In 1630, however, they were expelled, and the native Arab chiefs resumed possession of the town and province.

The ruler, or Sultan, of Aden was the Sheikh of Lahej, with whom negotiations were commenced by the Indian Government in 1831. It was not, however, until February 1839, that, a treaty having been concluded with him, and subsequent difficulties having arisen, the town was attacked by the English, and taken by force. Treaties were subsequently entered into with the Sheikh, by which England annexed the town and harbour of Aden, with a limited rayon of 35 square miles, 15 miles in circumference, and from three to five miles in diameter, and the Sheikh became a pensioner of the Indian Government. In 1868 the promontory of Jebel Hasan, or Ihsan (or Little Aden), on the opposite side of the harbour, was purchased from the chief of the Akrahis.

Aden under British rule has recovered its ancient greatness. Its population is stated to have been 37,000 in the 16th century. It then successfully resisted the Turks, and also the Portuguese under the celebrated Albuquerque. After two centuries of native occupation, deprived of the European commerce which had formerly created and

maintained it, the following quotation from M'Culloch gives a description of it at the time of its annexation by England:—"About 100 houses, with some wretched huts and three or four minarets, the mosques belonging to which have fallen, are the only buildings remaining to Aden; the rest of its area is occupied by heaps of rubbish, tombs, mounds, and the roofless walls of older dwellings." Its population did not then probably exceed 800, of whom more than a third were Jews and low caste Indians. Its population now exceeds 35,000, and the value of the import and export trade in the year 1882-3 amounted to 3,482,170*l*.

The following is the value of the trade of Aden with the coasts of Africa and Arabia in the previous year, 1881-2:—

	Imports.		Exports.		Total.
	£		£		£
Abyssinia	24,567	..	63,036	..	87,603
East coast of Africa ..	193,683	..	186,849	..	380,532
Arabia	333,793	..	302,636	..	636,429

Aden was declared a free port in 1850. It is attached to the Presidency of Bombay. The neighbouring tribes extending over a considerable area are in alliance with England and under British protection, for which reason England has opposed any interference of the Turks with them.

Tajura.—In 1840, Captain Moresby, R.N., acting on behalf of the Indian Government, entered into negotiation with the Sultan of Tajura, a local chief on the northern shore of the bay of that name, which lies on the African coast, at a short distance outside of the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, and concluded with him a treaty, dated 19th August, 1840.

This treaty was one simply of peace, commerce, and protection, but by the 4th Article the Sultan bound himself "not to enter into any other treaty or bond with any other European nation or persons, without in the first instance bringing the subject to the notice of the Government authorities at Aden, so that the same may in no way prove detrimental to his friends the English, or their commerce."

Island of Musha.*—In the same treaty the Sultan confirmed the sale to the Indian Government of the Island of Musha, which lies at the entrance of the Bay of Tajura, and commands its approaches. This island is situated in N. lat. 11° 40' and E. long. 43° 12'. It is 18 miles from Ras-el-Bir, which is the extreme point at the northern entrance of the bay, and six miles from the corresponding point on the southern side of the bay. It was unoccupied when purchased, and has continued so. The Government took formal possession of it in 1858.

Island of Efat or Ivat.†—In the same year, by an agreement dated

* Called in the Treaty Mussa.

† Called in the Treaty Aabad.

3rd September, Captain Moresby purchased from the Governor of Zeila the Island of Aubad, or Efat, or Ivat, which lies eight miles north of the Port of Zeila, on the Somali coast, and 27 miles south-east of Musha Island. Its position is $11^{\circ} 30'$ N. lat. and $43^{\circ} 28'$ E. long. It was, and continues to be, unoccupied. This and Musha Island are said to be valuable for their guano deposits.

Edd, or Ayth (Eid).—In 1840 MM. Combes and Tamissier, on behalf of a Nanto-Bordelaise Company, bought from certain native chiefs the port and territory of Edd, or Ayth, which lies on the Dankali (west) coast of the Red Sea in 14° N. lat., about 140 miles from the southern entrance of the Red Sea, and 90 miles south of Massowah.

Part of the purchase money was paid, but a dispute arose among the local chiefs as to the right of the vendors to sell the land, and the purchase was not completed. The company having failed, transferred it to the French Consul at Massowah. In 1850 he offered it to the British Government, apparently in a private capacity, after he had ceased to hold office, and described it as a province, 90 miles in length. The Government "did not think it necessary to take any notice of the proposal."* He subsequently, in 1857, sold it to a French company of Marseilles and Alexandria, from whom the Egyptian Government bought it in 1867. The Turkish flag was planted there in 1862, and since 1867 the place has remained in the undisputed possession of the Egyptian Government. It has no recommendation as a port or a trading place.

The scheme of constructing the Suez Canal, and its commencement in 1858, gave a new impetus to the acquisition of territory in the Red Sea and on its approaches.

Island of Perim.—In 1857 England, unwilling that Perim should fall into the hands of any other nation, and possibly become a danger to British commerce passing through the Red Sea, took permanent possession of that island, lying close to the coast of Bab-el-Mandeb, at the entrance of that sea, and then unoccupied. She had previously twice occupied it temporarily in the years 1799 and 1801. The area of the island is about seven square miles, and it now contains 150 inhabitants. The passage between it and the Arabian shore is not more than $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. On the Egyptian side it is 10 to 11 miles from the shore. It is 95 miles distant from Aden, and is under the control of the Government of that place. It is fortified, and possesses a small garrison. A light-house has been established on the highest point on the east side of the island since 1861.

Island of Kamaran.—In 1858, the English Government having decided that it would be inconvenient to establish a station connected with the line of submarine telegraph cable to Bombay on any part of either of the shores of the Red Sea, took possession for that purpose of the island of Kamaran, in N. lat. $15^{\circ} 20'$, about 180 miles north of

* Correspondence, Abyssinia, 1862, pp. 44 and 58.

Perim. This island was temporarily occupied by Albuquerque after his unsuccessful attack on Aden in 1513, but had not since been occupied. It is about 12 miles long and from two to four broad. The northern part is swamp and jungle; the remainder is rock and sand, with a few patches fit for cultivation. The population consists of poor fishermen occupying seven small villages containing a few miserable huts.

Up to the past year England did not acquire, or seek to possess, any further territory within, or near, the Red Sea. It will be seen that her object was not to acquire dominion, or to interfere with other nations, in these parts, but to provide a coal depôt, and protection for her commerce and telegraphic communication.

France, which was the only other country of western Europe having a material interest in the commerce of the Red Sea, was not idle on her part. In 1839 Louis Philippe sent a scientific expedition into Abyssinia under Lieut. Lefebvre, who, after a stay of five years in the country, made a voluminous report on it in 1845. In 1849 the French Consul at Massowah, M. Rolland, wrote to his Government on the 7th November: "Tôt ou tard, on doit l'espérer, il se construira un canal à Suez, et alors sans contredit la Mer Rouge sera un des points du monde les plus importants. Dans cette prévision, vous voudrez à coup sûr, M. le Ministre, y assurer à notre pays un établissement commercial et politique convenablement situé." The scientific commission of 1839 had made its report, and the French Government was doubtless fully impressed with the importance of the measure recommended, but was too much engaged with home and European affairs immediately to attend to it.

Island of Dessi (Diseï); Adulis; Zulla (Zula).—In 1859 it charged M. de Roussel to negotiate a treaty with Negussie, the rebel chief of the Abyssinian province of Tigré. M. de Roussel was much struck with the importance of the Island of Dessi at the entrance of the Bay of Adulis, or (as since called) Annesley Bay, and through the influence of M. Jacobis, a Catholic missionary in Abyssinia, obtained from Negussie the offer of both Dessi and Zulla, as well as of Arkiko. The Porte objected, on the ground of its ancient territorial rights, extending, as it alleged, to the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb; and although M. Gilbert, the French Consul at Massowah, is reported to have obtained the consent of the Hazerta chiefs, to whom Dessi was supposed to belong, it does not appear that the French Government took steps to establish its authority at any of the places, or to annex the territory.* Arkiko had been under the Turkish Government since the 16th century; and in 1862 the Porte took steps to manifest its authority at Dessi and Adulis by hoisting its flag at both places. In 1867, when England was preparing its expedition against the Abyssinian emperor Theodore, she applied to the Porte, and received

* It is stated in *L'Exploration* of 11th October, 1884, that to counteract the French, the English in October 1861 annexed the archipelago of Dahlak lying outside Dessi, and commanding it and Adulis, but there is no trace of such occupation.

its permission to cross, and for a time occupy, its territory at Annesley Bay.

Obock (Obokh).—The French sometimes write this Hobok, on the ground that the Arabs aspirate the initial vowel. In 1859 M. H. Lambert, the French Consul at Aden, visited the west coast, with the view of selecting a fit site for a French establishment, and is said to have selected and purchased Obock. M. Lambert, however, lost his life in the same year, by accidental drowning on the Somali coast, when crossing in a native boat from Hodeida to Tajura, as affirmed by Dr. Beke, or by assassination, as reported by his rival and successor, Sheikh Shermacki, to the French, who sent the corvette *La Somme* towards the end of 1860 to Zeila, to investigate the matter, and to demand compensation. Eventually the Porte consented to make over to the French Government the revenues of that port until the sum of 30,000 dollars, the estimated cost of the mission of the *La Somme*, should be paid.

In April 1862 the French aviso *Le Curieux* visited the Red Sea, with M. Schaefer, first Oriental Interpreter to the Emperor, on board, who, after carefully surveying all the Dankali coast from Massowah to Zeila, selected as a site for a French settlement Obock, on the northern side of the Bay of Tajura, and purchased it of the native Governors of Tajura and Roheita, or of one of them, for the sum of 10,000 dollars, taking formal possession of it in the name of the Emperor Napoleon.

There is no evidence to show within whose territory Obock was situate. Tajura is 27 miles further within the bay of that name. Roheita is on the Dankali coast, in lat. 12° 46' N., 50 miles in a direct line from Obock.

That place is, or was, a village of a few huts, six miles from Ras-el-Bir, the extreme point at the northern entrance of the Bay of Tajura, which lies at a distance of 37 miles outside the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. M. Goltdammer, writing in 1877, after his return from a stay of some months at the place, states that "Obock is a village of little importance, containing a few dwellings. The territory is insignificant in extent. One finds there palm-trees and the flora of equatorial Africa. In the environs are found limestone, potters' clay, red ochre, and sulphur." Elsewhere it is stated that coal is to be found in the neighbourhood.*

According to the latest accounts the limits of the new colony are considerably extended. M. Denis de Rivoyre described them in 1880 as containing an area of 25 kil., or less than 10 square miles. In May last they are stated to have been fixed at 100 kil. or 62 miles of coast, and 38 kil. or 24 miles in depth, containing about 1470 square miles.†

The exact position of the proposed port is N. lat. 11° 57' and E. long. 43° 15'. It is under six miles from Ras Bir, 16 miles from the British island of Musha, at the entrance of the bay, 58 miles from Perim at the entrance of the Red Sea, and 115 miles from Aden.

* *L'Exploration*, 11th October, 1884.

† *Id.*, 18th October.

The harbour was surveyed by Lieut. Salmon in the French steam aviso *Surcouf* in 1864. It is moderately sheltered by low cliffs on the north, and by the low ground on the west; but it is exposed to the south and south-west, from which quarters the wind blows fiercely at times, rendering the anchorage very dangerous. Further details are supplied in the plan on the map annexed to this paper. It appears to share the common want of all places on these shores, viz. a good supply of drinkable water. The commandant has sent home for distilling apparatus, and a plan has been contemplated of obtaining water from a distant river by means of a canal.

The survey was published in 1865, but the French Government took no further action for several years. Private enterprise was not altogether inactive, but met with little success. In 1872 Mr. P. Arnoux, a French merchant, formed a company to trade with the interior, but after a few months he was assassinated. In 1880 applications were made to the French Government for concessions within this territory, upon which the following official notice was published on the 25th December of that year.

“Des demandes de concession de territoire de Hobok, Mer Rouge, étant fréquemment adressées au Département de la Marine et des Colonies, nous croyons utile de faire connaître au public le sens des réponses invariablement faites à toute ouverture de ce genre. Le Traité de Mars 1862 portant cession de ce point à la France ne contient aucune indication sur le périmètre de notre possession, et de plus nous n'avons rien fait jusqu'ici pour assurer notre souveraineté sur cette contrée.

“Il serait donc impossible d'indiquer le sol susceptible d'être cédé, et moins encore de le délimiter. Dans ces conditions le Département de la Marine ne saurait faire des concessions. Il ne peut que laisser aux personnes qui tenteraient de former un établissement à Hobok toute responsabilité de choix de l'emplacement à occuper par elles, sous la réserve que cette occupation essentiellement précaire et révocable devra cesser à la première réquisition. Il est bien entendu d'ailleurs qu'aucune indemnité ne sera due aux intéressés en cas de déplacement pour cause d'utilité publique ou d'intérêt militaire.”*

In January 1882 M. Paul Soleillet arrived at Obock from Senegal, and soon after opened up the road to Shoa, where he is said to have obtained important concessions from King Menelik, the ruler of that country. These were—(1) an extensive tract of arable land in Shoa; (2) the right of grafting the wild olive trees in the country; (3) the right to construct a horse tramway between Hobok and Fared (not marked on any map) and the cession of any other railroads to be made in the country.†

In August 1882 M. Soleillet obtained from Sultan Mohammed Loita a concession of the so-called port and roadstead of Sagallo, near the head of the bay, 11 miles beyond the town of Tajura, and 37 miles from

* *L'Exploration*, 1881, vol. ii. p. 716.

† *Id.*, 11th October, 1884.

Obock.* This place lies on the road by which caravans pass from Shoa to its chief place of export at Tajura, and is therefore that much nearer to Ankober than Obock. Doubtless goods could be conveniently conveyed between the two places by boats, but at the cost of transshipment.

Having achieved these important results, M. Soleillet went to Paris, with a letter from King Menelik to the President of the Republic, and the Government appear to have been convinced of the value of the new settlement, and of the expediency of creating it with public funds.

In December 1883 they contracted with a French steam navigation company to establish a regular packet service to the Persian Gulf, touching and coaling at Obock, on the understanding that they would form an establishment there for refitting French vessels. A dépôt of coals had been formed there in April 1884. Three thousand tons of coal are said to have been deposited, and three military transports to have been supplied, up to a date not named.

On 22nd May, 1884, a caravan which left Obock on the 23rd March reached Shoa.

In the same month the limits of the colony were defined, as above described.

M. Bremond, the chief of the expedition sent to Shoa by the Society of French Factories, states that the king, Menelik, dreams of seeing his country traversed by railroads, uniting his capital, Ankober, with the utmost parts of his dominions, and of the establishment of a regular service of steamers on the river Hawash down to the Lake Aussa, into which it runs. He has allowed one engineer, M. Henon, to explore that river. He also employs a French doctor; has built him a house, and given him land on which to cultivate cinchona. He purposes to build a hospital, in which a certain number of young Abyssinians may be taught surgery. A mining engineer, M. Aubrey, is about to explore the country of the Gallas and Tigré.

Among other symptoms of advancing civilisation in Shoa, it is mentioned that M. de Soleillet, finding that King Menelik corresponded with Queen Victoria in English and with King Humbert in Italian, represented to him that French was the only authorised language among civilised nations, and that if he wished not to be considered a barbarian, he should adopt it, which the king has done, and M. de Soleillet was about to take out a printing press and materials.

In June 1884, M. Lagarde was appointed Commandant of the establishment. He has been active, especially in the matter of annexation, but his proceedings in laying a tax on native shipping frequenting the port have provoked animadversion and discontent.

In July the Government obtained a credit of 82,000 fr. (3280*l.*) for the second half of the year towards the erection of a fort, dépôts, warehouses, and tanks, and the payment of the expenses of administration.

* *L'Exploration*, 11th October, 1884.

A lighthouse, and a landing-place on piles, 1140 feet in length, are also mentioned as works in contemplation.

In November last it was reported from Aden that on the 18th October Sagallo, ceded by special treaty to France, upon being evacuated by the Egyptian troops, had been occupied by a detachment of French marines, and a post established above Tajura at Ras Ali.

On the 19th and 21st October the French flag was hoisted on territory ceded by the Sultan of Tajura, and M. Lagarde having visited all the coast and organised the new ports, returned to Obock, accompanied by the two sultans, of Tajura and Sagallo, who would not leave him. The former expressed a wish to visit France.

In the next month it was reported that the French man-of-war the *Seigneley* had planted the French flag at Sagallo, and had done the same at Tajura as soon as the Egyptian troops retired from it.

The above statements, which seem to offer bright prospects for the new port, and which inspire the editor to call it the "Singapore" of Africa, are taken from *L'Exploration*, written in sympathy with, if not under the inspiration of, M. Denis de Rivoyre, one of the promoters and warm advocates of the port. But the picture has a reverse. In one of the recent numbers of that journal appears a letter from a correspondent at Aden, discussed and contradicted by the editor and M. de Rivoyre, in which, referring to a recent visit, he writes in the following terms: "Obock n'est, à vrai dire, qu'une plage sablonneuse, à un kilomètre de laquelle s'élèvent quelques plateaux, au bas desquels les indigènes ont construit des huttes en roseaux. Le port offre certainement quelques avantages, mais que sont ces avantages à côté des inconvénients que présente le débarquement sur une plage mouvante et découverte pendant les basses marées?" Another correspondent complains of a want of water, cattle, vegetables, and even conveniences for coaling. All this is to be expected in a port which has been officially occupied but half a year. It has been proposed to bring water by a canal from the river Hawash; but that river runs into a brackish lake, called Lake Abhebad, at a distance of 65 miles from Tajura, and the stream issuing from that lake terminates 36 miles from Tajura. Cattle may be brought from Somaliland. With a supply of water, vegetables may be grown. But the real difficulties of Obock are, first, the situation and character of its harbour, which may be seen in the plan attached to this paper; secondly, its distance—of 50 or 60 miles—out of the route of vessels bound via the Red Sea to and from India and the East; and thirdly, the improbability of the export trade of the interior of this part of Africa contributing sufficiently within many years to the maintenance of an artificial harbour, and an expensive Government establishment.

Assab (Asab).—This bay, situate in N. lat. 13°, 45 miles from Perim, with all the islands lying within it, and the coast-line, for a depth varying from two to six miles, from Ras Darmah, the eastern point

of the Bay of Beilul, in N. lat. $13^{\circ} 14'$, to Ras Sintiyar, the south-east point of the Bay of Assab, in N. lat. $12^{\circ} 53'$, which had been purchased by Prof. Sapeto, the representative of MM. Rubattino & Co., of Genoa, with all rights both of possession and sovereignty, was bought from that company, and formally annexed by the Italian Government in the year 1882. The history of the purchase, or rather of the successive purchases, made by Prof. Sapeto, is very fully set forth in a Report made to the Italian Parliament, and subsequently published, in that year, and deserves a detailed notice.

In October 1869 the Chamber of Commerce at Genoa represented to the Italian Government the expediency, with reference to the opening of the Suez Canal, of establishing an Italian agency in the Red Sea, possibly near Sekeira (Sheikh Syed), for the convenience of Italian shipping. This place, and Khur-Omera (Khor Umairah), a small bay about seven miles east of Bab-el-Mandeb, were rejected, as interfering with other Powers. Signor Rubattino, then, with the approval of the Italian Government, employed Prof. Sapeto, who had a thorough acquaintance with the Dankali and Somali tribes, acquired during a long stay among them, to select a suitable site for an establishment, who, after rejecting the Bay of Ras Dumairah, near Roheita, fixed upon Assab, "belonging to an independent tribe of Danakil." The several treaties which he concluded with the local rulers on that coast are given at length in the Italian Report.

On the 15th November of the same year, 1869, he purchased from the brothers Hassan-ben-Ahmad and Ibrahim-ben-Ahmad, for the sum of 6000 thalers, "the territory comprised between the mountain Ganga (shown on the small plan of Assab Bay annexed to this paper), Cape Lumah, and their two sides," with sovereign rights over it.

On the 11th March, 1870, Prof. Sapeto and Captain Buzzolino, as representatives of MM. R. Rubattino & Co., purchased from the Sultan Abdallah Shiahim and the Sultans Hassan-ben-Ahmad and Ibrahim-ben-Ahmad (the two latter being the contracting parties in the former treaty), for 8,100 Maria Theresa thalers, "the tract of country and of sea extending between Ras Lumah and the inlet called Alala and the mountain Ganga," with absolute sovereignty over it. By virtue of this treaty the Italian flag was first hoisted on the west coast of the Red Sea on the 13th March, 1870.

Nearly ten years later, on the 30th December, 1879, Prof. Sapeto, on account of MM. Rubattino, concluded a treaty with Berehan-Dini, Sultan of Roheita, for the purchase of "the Islands of Omm-el-Bachar, Ras-er-Raml, and the Darmackié group," all islands nearest to the coast acquired by the preceding treaty, for the sum of 2000 rupees, and a further sum of 1000 thalers as the rent of them during the previous ten years, in accordance with an agreement made between the same parties on the 16th March, 1870, for the lease of those islands.

It is mentioned, in a note to this treaty, that the Sultan of Roheita

at that date was ready to sell these islands for 6000 thalers, on the condition that the purchaser would protect him from any attack of the Turks by sea (showing evidently that he anticipated the opposition and resentment of the Turks), but Prof. Sapeto being unable to ensure him this immunity, arranged for leasing the islands for ten years at the rate which he afterwards paid to the Sultan.

On the 15th of the following March, 1880, Prof. Sapeto bought from the same Sultan, then signing himself Berehan-ben-Mohammed, and styling himself "sovereign, absolute master and proprietor of the territory in the neighbourhood of the country of Assab, now Italian property, by force of a traditional and uncontested right," "all the islands without exception lying in the great Bay of Assab and between the parallels of Ras Sintiyar and Ras Lumah (N. lat. $13^{\circ} 2'$), together with all the shore extending between the said capes, and a tract of the mainland, forming a belt of two marine miles inland from high-water mark all along the coast from the Bay of Buya to Sheikh Duran, and a similar belt of four marine miles along the coast from Sheikh Duran to Ras Sintiyar," with full possession and sovereign rights over the whole.

Lastly, on the 15th May, 1880, Prof. Sapeto made a similar purchase for 1500 thalers, from Hassan, Ibrahim, and Raghe-ben-Ahmed, the two former being the contracting parties in the first two treaties, of the Island of Sannabor (N. lat. $13^{\circ} 5'$) and the mainland extending between Ras Darmah (N. lat. $13^{\circ} 14'$) and Ras Lumah to the depth of six marine miles from high water.

Italy has thus acquired such proprietary and sovereign rights as these local chiefs, signing themselves sultans, had the power to convey, of the coast, and a belt of land along the shore, varying from two to six miles in depth from Ras Darmah to Ras Sintiyar, a distance along the coast of about 35 miles. The latter cape is 10 miles from Roheita, the abode of the Sultan of that name.

Between 1870 and 1879 an expedition from the Geographical Society of Italy, including the Marquis Antinori, MM. Beccari and Issel, visited and reported favourably on these ports. In September 1870 MM. Rubattino started a line of monthly packets between Italy and Bombay. In 1873 the Italian Parliament voted a subsidy in aid of this line running its vessels to Bombay and Calcutta. A Royal Commission in 1876 recommended the establishment of another line of packets from Genoa to Singapore and China. In 1876, Italian shipping passed through the Suez Canal to the extent of 82,024 tons. Between 1873 and 1877 much discussion arose in the Italian Parliament as to the use to be made of Assab. It was admitted that it was not fit for an agricultural colony, on account of the nature of the soil, nor for a penitentiary establishment for various political and other reasons, but that it was exclusively and admirably adapted for a commercial station.

In 1879 Prof. Sapeto, in his book on 'Assab and its Critics,' and the
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Geographical Society of Italy, replying to inquiries from the Government, pointed out that the port, if established, lying within seven hours from Mokha, and 15 from Hodeida, on the Arabian shore, and being in a central position as regards the export trade of Abyssinia and Shoa, would attract the trade alike from Massowah and Suakin on the north, and from Zeila on the south.

In the same year the geographical expedition of Martini and Giuglietti was despatched to Shoa, and in September the Italian Government despatched Commandant de Amezaga to examine and report on the maritime fitness of Assab Bay. In 1880 it appointed Signor Bianchi Consul for the Red Sea and Commissary Civil at Assab, with instructions to ascertain the prospects which that place offered of becoming a convenient port and depôt for the trades of Abyssinia and Arabia.

Meanwhile, as soon as it became apparent in 1880 that the Rubattino Company was about to take renewed action at Assab, the Egyptian Government interfered, claiming sovereign rights over the coast in question, by virtue of the cession made to it by the Porte in 1866. In 1871 a correspondence had commenced between the Egyptian and Italian Governments on the same subject, but it was dropped, as the Rubattino Company seemed unwilling at that time to carry out their plan.

The views of Her Majesty's Government are expressed in a despatch from Earl Granville to Sir A. Paget, dated 8th June, 1880, in which his Lordship says, that to a representation of the Italian ambassador he had answered, "We considered that the Egyptian Government held the sovereignty of the country, of which the bay formed part, and that we protested against the exercise, or assertion, of any right of sovereignty on the part of Italy." *

A long diplomatic correspondence ensued, in which the contradictory evidence of the Italian and Egyptian Governments was laid before Her Majesty's Government, and the Italian Government urged upon the latter the sufficiency of the assurances given in the instructions to the Commissioner at Assab, to the effect, that they have not the intention of founding at that place anything resembling a military establishment, or an establishment destined for the use of the Italian Navy; that they will never make use of Assab to found there a convict establishment; that "it is necessary, finally, to let all the world know that Assab, in our hands, is not, and never will, become a rallying point for any action which has for its object injury, or menace, to the possessions of Her Britannic Majesty." †

In the end, in June 1882, Signor Mancini laid before the Italian Parliament a draft of a law for taking over the Rubattino purchases, and the works and improvements executed on them up to date, for the sum of 416,000 lire (16,640*l.*), annexing the territory, and making a grant of 60,000 lire (2400*l.*) towards the expenses to be incurred during the

* Parl. Papers, 1882, Correspondence, Assab, p. 13.

† *Ibid.*,

remainder of that year in commencing the organisation of the colony, and carrying on the works commenced in it, which sum was raised to 109,112 lire in the next year. Correspondence on the subject of the Minister's statements upon introducing this draft concludes the latest papers laid before Parliament in 1882.

Since then the correspondence has not ceased, and little progress has been made in developing the new establishment. In April or May 1881, Signor Giuglietti, the Secretary to Signor Bianchi at Assab, was killed by the natives, with twelve companions, at a distance of four days' journey from Beilul, while attempting to penetrate into the interior of Abyssinia. On the other hand, Count Antonelli was successful in reaching Ankober, the capital of Shoa, and establishing friendly relations between King Menelik and the Italian Government.

Signor Bianchi complained, in a letter from Assab, written two years ago, that Italian merchants were not giving much support to the place. In the first quarter of the year 1883 the entries inwards were 84 native sambuks of 1210 tons, and those outwards were 85 sambuks, of 1217 tons.

The population of the settlement at the close of 1881, exclusive of 266 sailors on board the boats in the harbour, was 917, distributed over five villages, viz. Buya 177, Assab 100, Maacaca 140, Atali 250, and Margableh 250.

The latest news is very deplorable. Signor Bianchi, the intrepid traveller and intelligent officer of the Italian Government, has been murdered, with two companions, on his return journey from Abyssinia, within a day's march of the frontier of that kingdom. The expedition had been undertaken for the purpose of obtaining the liberation of Captain Cecchi from the Queen of Gherra, in which he had succeeded; and his murder is an additional evidence of the difficulties and dangers attending the attempt to open up the interior of this country; for he had already four times successfully traversed the country between Massowah and the Gallas across Abyssinia. From Rome it is reported that the Italian Government is about to despatch without delay a strong military force, of several hundred men, to the coast, with what specific object, and with what hopes of attaining it, does not appear. The result of their efforts to obtain justice in the case of Giuglietti was most discouraging.

The same letter which brings this melancholy news from Assab contains a very unfavourable report of the appearance and character of that place. It is written by the Alpine traveller, M. Frasca, who went out from Genoa accredited by the Society of Commercial Exploration in that city, and accompanied by the Alpine guides, the two brothers Carrel, who made the ascent of Chimborazo with Whymper. He writes on 17th November to a merchant in Genoa:—

"Excellent ami,—Je vous écris de cette colonie, sur ce coin de terre aride, brûlante, qui n'a jusqu'à présent ni importance commerciale, ni

végétation, ni aucune route pour pouvoir ouvrir un trafic quelconque avec l'intérieur."

There is much testimony to the same effect. It would therefore appear that the commercial prospects of Assab are on a par with those of Obock. Assab has the advantage of being on the direct line of the route to India; while Obock possesses that of being at the end of one of the old-established lines of caravan route from the interior to the coast. But the existence of the two ports in such close proximity to one another must be mutually prejudicial, not only as regards the inadequacy of the trade to supply business to both, but, which is more important, as creating a rivalry in the markets of the interior, which is likely to diminish the profits of business, and to lead to dangerous consequences in dealings with the wild tribes frequenting them.

Sheikh Syed.—This is neither a port, as it has been sometimes incorrectly called, nor an inlet from the sea, as it is represented in many maps. The only anchorage in this neighbourhood is an open roadstead to the south-by-east of Ras Sheikh Syed, extending for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile from that point to Sheikh Malu, or Oyster Island, which is at the foot of Cape Bab-el-Mandeb. The apparent inlet is a large lagoon, about $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles to the north-east of Ras Sheikh Syed, about two miles in length and about half a mile in width at the middle, said to cover 3000 hectares (7400 acres), and with water in the centre from one to four feet. It communicates with the sea by a narrow channel a few yards wide, and the mouth, facing westward, is almost closed by two banks, which dry at low water.

The territory of Sheikh Syed, which has attracted some public attention of late years, is a tract lying between the lagoon and Cape Bab-el-Mandeb, and said to include both, and to contain 165,000 hectares (400,000 acres). It was purchased in October 1868 for a Marseilles firm, now represented by MM. A. Rabaud-Bazin, from the Sheikh Ali-Tabatt-Dourem, at the price of 50,000 francs (2000*l.*). It was anticipated that an admirable harbour might be constructed on the site of the lagoon. The place was surveyed and plans were prepared. It was proposed to deepen the lagoon, to unite it with the sea by a canal $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile long, and to run out a breakwater 3300 feet into eight fathoms water, giving a depth alongside of 13 to 36 feet. The tides are said to be regular. Fresh water was procurable only at a considerable distance.

In 1870 the French Government established a small coal dépôt here, half-way between the two capes, for the use of their transports, and a two-storied building, marked as a barrack in the Admiralty chart, was erected. A military guard was maintained at the time. But the whole was abandoned after a short occupation, and there is at present no sign of a hut or of an inhabitant in the whole territory.

MM. Rabaud have since pressed the French Government to take over the purchase and annex the territory; and lately rumours have

been spread of negotiations with a German and a Russian company. But there is one sufficient reason why no government is likely to purchase the territory. It lies in that part of the province of Yemen which was reconquered by the Egyptian forces in the present century, and in which Turkish authority has been re-established, and Turkish troops are maintained at the present time. It is not likely to tempt any private company, as it possesses no natural advantages of any kind, and the construction of an artificial harbour would be very costly, and could not possibly prove remunerative, considering that Perim harbour is close at hand as a port of refuge, and that a harbour here would have to compete with the long-established ports of Aden and Mokha on each side, and with the new ports of Obock and Assab, all of them within less than a hundred miles of it, while this part of Arabia offers no export trade of any description.

The great advantage of the position, as represented by *L'Exploration*, is, that the heights on the mainland would entirely command Perim Island, which is only $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile distant.

Somali-Land.—Haggenmacher, in the account of his journey in Somali-land in 1874,* states that the Portuguese on their first journey to Abyssinia under Ch. de Gama found the coast-line between Tajura and Cape Guardafui a powerful kingdom called Adel, ruled by Mahomedan princes, and conspicuous enemies of Christendom. This kingdom is marked in the old maps as Adâl, or Zeila. Their hostility to the Abyssinians, and the ruin which they carried into that country have already been narrated. There is therefore some ground for the assumption of authority claimed by the Sultan as Caliph, if not as Sovereign, on this coast, and which the Egyptian Government asserts had been transferred to it by the Firmans of 1866 and 1875, and had been admitted by the English and French Governments,† as far as Ras Hafun, 90 miles south of Cape Guardafui, when they some years ago contemplated the erection of a lighthouse on that site, and also by the English Government in the Convention of September 1877.‡

As far as the records go, the British Government entered into two treaties§ with the Somali tribe occupying this coast, at Berbera and the neighbourhood, in the years 1827 and 1855; and it has already been mentioned that in 1871 the Egyptian flag was hoisted in six places on it, extending from Berbera to Ras Hafun, and at Bulhar, between Berbera and Zeila, constituting thus an assumption of authority along the whole coast.

Berbera (Berbereh).—In 1873 Berbera was occupied by Egyptian troops. In 1875 the port was closed by the Khedive, but reopened in the

* Published in Petermann's 'Mittheilungen,' 1876.

† Correspondence, Abyssinia, 1862, p. 61.

‡ Ibid., p. 60.

§ Hertslet's 'Treaties,' vol. xiii.

following year as a free port. On 24th September, 1884 it was evacuated by the Egyptian troops, when their place was taken by British troops, who now hold it. Berbera has long been one of the chief sources whence the port of Aden has derived its supply of sheep, goats, and cattle, which are bred in large numbers on this coast. In 1881-2 it imported 60,385 sheep and goats and 2477 head of cattle from Somali-land. Berbera is an excellent and capacious harbour, free from all danger, having 11 to 13 fathoms of water at the mouth, which decreases slowly to five fathoms at 400 yards distance from the town. It affords good anchorage, and shelter from all winds but the westward. During the annual fair, or trading season, lasting from October to March, the natives from the surrounding country flock in with their produce to the number of 10,000 to 15,000.

It is 140 miles distant from Aden, and 120 from Zeila.

Berbera is one of the outlets of the trade of Harrar, whence it is distant 286 miles, or, according to Major Hunter's recent experience, 22 days' (156 hours) journey.

Zeila.—This port lies 75 miles outside the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, 25 miles south-east of the Bay of Tajura, and 60 miles south-west of Aden. It is the principal port for the trade of Harrar, whence it is distant 182 miles, or 13 days' (83 hours) journey.

Lieut. Cruttenden, R.N., who visited it in 1848, and described it in the 'Journal of the Royal Geographical Society,'* stated that it was under the dominion of the Turkish Shereef of Mokha. In 1875 the Porte transferred it to the Khedive of Egypt, since which time it has continued to be occupied by Egyptian troops. Some British troops were there up to a recent date, but have been withdrawn, after the establishment of a British Consular Agent on the spot. The population in 1848 was about 750; it is now reckoned at 4000. The town lies on a low sandy point, and a vessel of 250 tons cannot approach within a mile of it.

Harrar (Harâr).—According to Major Hunter's recent report upon the Province of Harrar, of which an abstract is published in the present number of the 'Proceedings,' p. 121, this province includes all Egyptian territory outside the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, extending from the town of Harrar to the coast of Zeila, and onward as far as Ras Hafun, embracing in fact the whole of the territory in Galla and Somali-land, as far as the latter place, over which Egypt assumed authority, by virtue of the Firmans of 1866 and 1875. The province of Harrar proper lies in a circle, with a radius of about 40 miles.

The town of Harrar, which has been called the "Timbuktu" of Eastern Africa, is one of those remarkable places which has maintained within its walls a distinct race, speaking a tongue not understood by its neighbours, for many generations. Its area is about 200 acres; it contains 4500 domiciles; the population within the walls is 30,000, with

* Vol. xix. (1849).

6000 residing in the suburbs, of whom perhaps only one-third are natives. Of the whole number two-thirds are women, and not half a dozen Europeans. It has been the centre of trade for the surrounding country for centuries, despatching caravans to Tajura, Zeila, and Berbera. Burton gives a full account of the town and its inhabitants in his 'First Footsteps in East Africa,' to the accuracy of which Major Hunter bears testimony.

Island of Socotra.—It only remains to mention the treaty made with the Sultan of Socotra on 23rd January, 1876, by which that potentate binds himself, in consideration of a payment of 3000 dollars a year, "never to cede, to sell, to mortgage, or otherwise give for occupation, save to the British Government, the Island of Socotra, or any of its dependencies, the neighbouring islands," which are numerous. It is further stipulated "that the stipend imposes upon the Sultan the obligation of rendering assistance to any vessel, whether belonging to the British or any other nation, that may be wrecked on the island or on its dependencies, the neighbouring islands, and of protecting the crews, the passengers, and the cargo thereof, for which act of friendship a suitable reward will also be given." *

In conclusion, I venture to hope that, whatever imperfections may be found in this attempt to give a sketch of the past history of the occupation of the Red Sea littoral, the information which has been brought together, and the accompanying map and plans will be useful in giving the Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society a clear and impartial view of its outline, and in enabling them to appreciate and form a correct judgment upon passing events in that part of the world.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

Mr. Arnot's Journey in South-Central Africa.—Mr. F. S. Arnot, whose adventurous journey last year from Natal to Bihé was mentioned in the 'Proceedings' for December last (vol. vi. p. 743), has sent us, through his brother Mr. N. M. Arnot, a sketch-map of the most interesting part of his route, viz. from Shoshong to Bihé. He appears to have crossed the Zambesi a little above the Victoria Falls. Thence he followed the river the whole distance to Lialui, taking from that place a west-north-westerly direction to the great plateau on which Bihé is situated. We hope soon to be able to publish this map, together with extracts from the traveller's journal.

Progress of Major Serpa Pinto's Expedition.—According to the latest news from Mozambique, the Portuguese Central African Expedition had up to the first week in December scarcely made a start for the interior.

* Hertslet's 'Treaties,' vol. xiii.

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EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL CLAIMS ON THE COASTS OF THE RED SEA 1885.

Geographical Miles.
0 20 40 60 80 100

Soundings in Fathoms