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effect cannot reach far from the shore, we must consider that this material is simply shingle which is pushed out into the water, and that the fine matter held in suspension behaves very differently. It seems natural to suppose that even when once deposited it is not finally at rest, but that, under the combined influence of currents and gravitation, a gradual movement out into the deepest parts would take place. Gravity then ceasing to act, there would be no tendency to further shifting. If the above explanation is correct, the shallowing at the lower ends of the lakes would be a natural corollary of their radiate arrangement, which, to some extent, involves a progressive widening of the drainage areas from the centre outwards. The idea also that the original form of the valleys is best preserved in the deep basins, is borne out by the fact that it is just here that the correspondence of the slopes above and below the water is most marked.

"The fact that the lakes as a whole reach just as far and no further than the beginning of the more level country which skirts the district, is in one way merely an extension of the principle of the shallowing at their lower ends. The same fact also shows that they are not held back by anything like a dam thrown across a narrow valley, for in some cases we should have to traverse the level country for miles before reaching a point as low as the deepest parts of the lakes, in several cases considerably below sea-level."

ANCIENT TRADING CENTRES OF THE PERSIAN GULF.

I. SIRÁF.

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

I THINK an account of this ancient city, which, in the tenth century, was the chief emporium of the trade with the far East, may be of interest. Its very name is now unfamiliar, the actual site was long forgotten, and it has been visited by very few persons. Dean Vincent, who has been followed by others, notably Sir W. Ouseley, supposed its site to be opposite the island of Kais, or Kis, where, however, no ruins exist. Morier refers to ruins at Tahiri (the actual site), and mentions sculptures with the Persepolitan character, which have not been found subsequently. He does not appear to have visited the place, but to have written from hearsay. Captain Brucks, I.N., the first surveyor of the Persian Gulf, calls them the ruins of a "Portuguese town." The first person who identified the site appears to have been Captain Kempthorne, I.N., who visited Tahiri in 1835, and gave an account of what he had been able to see, during a visit of a few hours, in the Bombay Geographical Society's *Proceedings* of 1856. It was next visited by Commodore Ethersey, also of the I.N., about 1855 or 1856, but he published no account of his visit. His notes on his discoveries are in my possession. It was next visited by Captain

Constable, I.N., and me, in the surveying brig *Euphrates*, on October 17 and 18, 1857, and the following description is compiled from the notes then made by us. We visited the whole of the ruins, as far as time would permit. Since that time it has, so far as I am aware, been only visited once, by the telegraph-ship, on which occasion one of the tombstones was brought away, and is now in the British Museum. A similar one, brought by Kempthorne, is in the Bombay Asiatic Society's Museum.

The modern village of Tahiri is a small village inhabited by fishermen, chiefly pearl-fishers, of Arab descent, 200 to 300 in number. It is an insignificant place, and has a small square fort on a little hill at the west end, which is in lat. $27^{\circ} 39' 36''$ N., long. $52^{\circ} 20' 40''$ E., standing on the shore of the Persian Gulf, at the foot of a range of mountains rising to a height of near 5000 feet, and running parallel to the coast. This range appears to form a great anticlinal ridge, and is composed of limestone with much gypsum. Between these and the sea is a lower ridge, from 500 to 600 feet high, of more recent strata which dip to seaward and end abruptly inland in a precipitous escarpment, having been apparently disturbed and broken through when the great range was upheaved. It is on the slopes of this lower range, which rise up from the coast, that the ruins are situated. This coast ridge has also been broken through by transverse precipitous ravines, due apparently to torrents from the high mountains, aided perhaps by fracture of the strata. These ravines are the passes into the interior, and two of them, at least, have been fortified by walls and towers, the remains of which are still to be seen. Farther up in the mountains some of these passes have to be climbed by the aid of ropes. The situation is thus very picturesque; small patches of cultivation and date plantations are scattered about the lower ground, but the great mountains are rugged and precipitous, and appear, from a distance, quite destitute of vegetation. On a nearer approach many shrubs and plants are seen scattered over their surface, especially in the watercourses, where they often grow thickly. The present inhabitants know nothing of the history of the ruins, and could not be persuaded we had not come to dig for and take away treasure.

The ruins of the old city of Siráf lie to the west of the village, and extend for perhaps two miles along the shore. They are mere heaps of rough masonry; foundations *in situ* are to be seen, especially where cut through by water-courses, or exposed by the action of the sea, for the ruins extend from the water's edge far up the slope of the foothills. The water-courses through the city have been walled in, where required. Among the *débris* are numerous ruined water-cisterns, constructed in the style still prevailing in the country—oblong chambers excavated in the ground, lined with cement or gypsum, and arched over to prevent evaporation. The arched coverings have mostly fallen in, and the cisterns are more or less choked up. There are also many wells among the heaps of

débris. The whole extent of the ruins is strewn with broken pottery, including many fragments of Chinese porcelain.

The only building standing at the time of our visits was a large mosque of well-cut stone, in a ruinous condition, the roof or dome having fallen in. It appears to have been a handsome building, with pointed windows and doors, and it stands on the low hills near the sea. Under the building is a large chamber or cellar, now tenanted by crowds of bats.

Close to the mosque is one of the *kanáts*, or underground water-conduits, so common in Persia from time immemorial up to the present day. The shafts of this one are circular, about 4 feet in diameter, and 20 feet deep, distance apart about 50 yards. There was no water in it.

There are also many monolith tombstones or grave-covers of arched form, with Cufic inscriptions; they are in good preservation, and many are ornamented with carved knobs, borders, and flowers. I learn the date on the one in the British Museum, already referred to, is equivalent to A.D. 991.

These are the principal remains of the Mohammedan city. The following, I suggest, are referable to pre-Mohammedan times; they lie inland of the part described above. The precipitous faces of the ravines leading through the foothills are studded with excavated chambers, no doubt tombs, mostly so high up as to be inaccessible without ladders, but some of the lower ones could be got at by climbing. The entrances are small, about 3 feet by 2, but they widen out inside often into two or more chambers, so that one cave could be used for several bodies. Those we entered contained much fine dust and crumbling human bones; they had been cemented inside.

The most curious and interesting of the old remains are on the slope of the hillside after passing through the fortified ravine or first pass; the sketch attached gives an idea of the appearance of this part. It shows the hillside divided by a great cleft or ravine. The whole hillside appears to have been denuded for about half a mile square of the upper stratum of sandstone, leaving pillars *in situ* here and there (like the "deadmen" of modern excavating work), which show the thickness of the layer which has been removed. The sketch shows two of these pillars; the dimensions of the largest are 9 by 6 feet, and 12 to 14 feet high. On each side of the ravine a flight of low broad steps has been cut in the rock, rendering the ascent easy; and the hillside is honey-combed with troughs, either sepulchral, or in which the dead were exposed before burial. They vary from 9 to 2 feet in length, by $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 feet wide, and 1 to 3 feet deep, and lie close together, divided only by a thin partition of rock. No traces of any covers were found, but some of them had a small ledge left all round a few inches below the top, as if to support a lid. This rock is a coarse conglomerate. The sketch gives an idea of their arrangement and of the steps; the figures

give a rough scale. The largest pillar, in the foreground of the sketch, contained a chamber cut in the rock, evidently a tomb, the entrance about 2 feet square, giving access to a rectangular chamber about 7 by 4 feet. On the top of this pillar were some remains of masonry. There are many wells on this hillside, those higher up the hill being deepest. We sounded one of these, which was 204 feet deep, with 36 feet of good water. They are from 2 to 3 feet in diameter, and some are oblong, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ by 3 feet. They are smoothly cut, and I noticed notches cut inside, apparently for footholds, to enable a descent to be made. Some had a low parapet wall on the uphill side, to prevent soil being washed into



ROCK PILLARS AND TOMBS, SIRÁF.

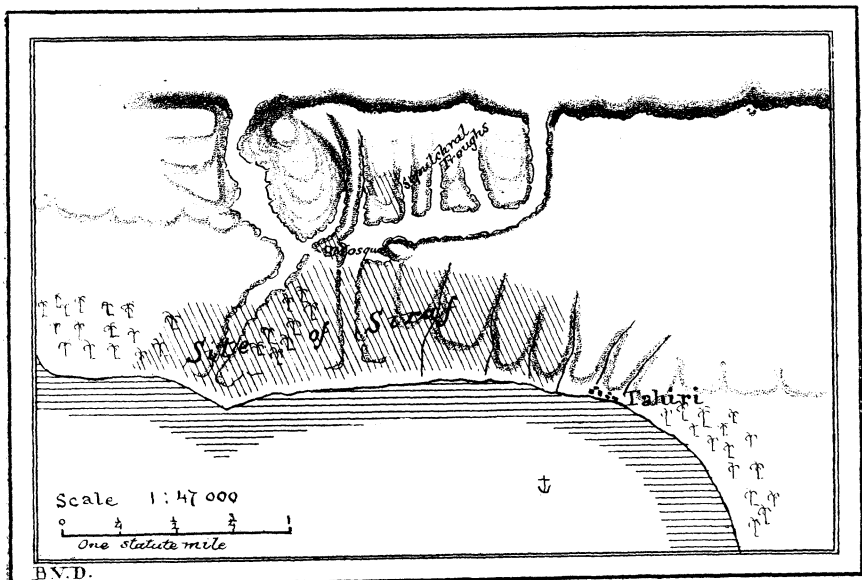
them. This wall is not built, but some of the upper stratum of rock has been left in the required position, and cut into shape at the time the rock was removed. No inscriptions or other remains were found in this part.

The little plan shows the site of the ruins and the modern village.

I will now add the little I have been able to trace of the history and trade of this wonderful place. In the 'Bibliothèque Orientale' it is stated that Siráf was founded by "Caicaous" of the Caianian dynasty, supposed to be cotemporary with David. The first account of the place I have found, is in the fragment of two Mohammedan travellers of 851 and 867 A.D.* (The misprints and mistakes of names in the English translation of 1733 are numerous.) In this it is referred to as

* Translated by E. Renaudot in 1718, from an incomplete manuscript written in 1173.

a long-established centre of traffic, and I propose to quote the account at some length, although it has been often commented on. The first of the two, Soleyman, was a traveller by sea and land, and by internal evidence, such as some of the habits of the Chinese—the wine made from rice, etc.—had probably visited the places he describes, and was an intelligent observer. He notes, for instance, *inter alia*, the connection of the tides with the moon. The distances he gives in the gulf are fairly accurate, as from Siráf to Basrah,* “whence the goods come that are shipped at Siráf,” 120 leagues, and to Maskat as about 200. Taking a league as 3 statute miles, the distances are really about 118 and 188 respectively. He describes the voyage to China. On the voyage from



SITE OF SIRÁF.

Siráf to Maskat, he mentions, on the east coast of the sea, a place called Naff Bani al Safak, which I cannot identify, and an island called Ebn Kahowan, an old name for that now known as Kishm. He then says, “In this sea are two rocks called Oman, and a narrow strait called Dordur, between two rocks, through which ships often venture to pass, but the China ships dare not. There are also two rocks, called Kossir and Howair, which scarce appear above the water’s edge.” These names I do not recognize, but the description refers to the islets off Cape Musandam, and the strait there known as the Fakk-al-Asad. They then come to a place called Shihr Sahar Oman, evidently Sohar, in the country of Oman, formerly an important place, and thence to

* Basrah was built about 636 A.D.

Maskat. This place he correctly describes as in the "extremity of the province of Oman," and says "the ships take in water there, which is drawn up from wells, and are here also supplied with cattle." This would do for a description of the present day: the small cattle of Oman are celebrated. From Maskat the ships stood apparently straight for India, across the sea, first touching at Kulam-Malay (this name is misprinted in 'Kerr's Collection'), evidently Quilon, "which is a month's sail from Maskat with a fair wind;" and thence proceed to China, where the Siráf merchants had been long established, as it is not spoken of as a new route. I do not follow the route beyond Maskat, but it is an interesting question whether they were provided with the compass, or merely guided by the direction of the monsoon winds and by the stars.

The second "Mohammedan," Abu Zeid, or Sayyid (either 867 or 877), is a commentator on the first; he appears to have been a merchant living at Siráf. He states that Siráf traded with the Red Sea also, and that the ships did not go further than Jedda, "whence their cargo is transferred to Cairo by ships of Kolzum, where the sea ends." Kolzum would appear to be Suez, as he continues, "The sea at this place is divided by a strip of land, which God hath fixed as a line of separation between the two seas."

Ebn Haukal, called al Istakhri, who wrote in the first half of the tenth century A.D.,* gives an account of the place. He says it is one of the greatest cities of Fars, well peopled, and about as large as Shiraz, from which place it is distant 60 farsang (about 200 miles). "Siráf has three oratories; here are wealthy merchants, who expend 30,000 dinars [about £12,000] on their houses. There are not any trees immediately about Siráf, the climate is warmer than any of those other towns (in Fars). Fruits and water are afforded by a mountain on the east of the city called Jem." (While at Tahiri we were told that supplies are still brought from a place beyond the mountains called Jem.) "It is so lofty that the air on its summit becomes like the climate of the cold region (Sardsir). In its valleys are found stones like a ruby, but liable to changes of colour. The people of Siráf devote their whole time to commerce and merchandize. I saw myself at this place persons who possessed four thousand thousand dinars [say £1,500,000], and there were some who had more, and their clothes were like those of hired labourers. A merchant of Siráf had passed forty years at sea, never leaving his ship during that time (!). At Siráf they abound in marine productions and commodities brought by sea, such as aloes, ambergris, camphin, pearls, canes, ivory and ebony, pepper, sandal; and various kinds of drugs and medicines are sent from that place to all quarters of the world. The houses are built of teak-wood or wood from Zanguebar, and of several stories,"

* 'The Oriental Geography of Ebn Haukal.' By Sir W. Ouseley. 1812.

Yakút (al Rúmi), whose book was written in A.D. 1218,* visited Siráf, which had then declined, and says that it was formerly the port of the merchants coming from India, and that they call it Shila. This latter name is now that of a village about 4 miles to westward of Tahiri, and is obviously a modification of the old name. He saw at Siráf "remains of remarkable edifices and a fine mosque," and says, "it lies in the hollow of a high mountain, has no port, and vessels have to go to a place called Nabad, two farsakhs distant." This is doubtless Naband, about 17 miles to the eastward, where there are also some ruins, which were not visited by us. He then quotes Abu Sayyid, the "second Mohammedan," and observes, "Such it may have been in his lifetime, but since the isle of Kais has been colonized, Siráf has fallen from its ancient splendour." He then quotes al Istakhri, the author last referred to, almost verbatim, and concludes, "It is difficult to admit as true the description of this author, but God knows the truth." This last remark implies polite disbelief on his part, and it is strange that in less than two centuries the place had so decayed that its history and greatness were alike forgotten and discredited. As he visited the place himself, we may accept his account.

Abulfeda † (1274-1331) places Siráf on the coast between Jannabah (Ganáwah) and Najiram (? Gerun, the old name of Hormuz Island), and quotes the account of Ibn Haukal, apparently as if it referred to a state of things then existing, instead of to a long-past period. He does not give it as a quotation, but the statement in his account of the "merchant spending 30,000 dinars on a house" seems to point clearly to that source. He does not say he was ever there, and I mention his account only to discredit it.

Ibn Batúta ‡ (1325-54) visited Kais, which he confuses with Siráf, and gives no account of the latter place. He describes correctly the pearl fishery as carried on now, but states that there are some who remain under water one or two *hours*, which one may charitably hope is a slip of the pen for *minutes*. Further on I hazard a conjecture as to the reason of the mistake. The above are the only references I have found to this once flourishing place. Sir William Ouseley says Siráf § decayed after the close of the Dilamite Government, at which time Keish (Kais) became predominant. This would fix the middle of the eleventh century as the date of its decline. There is a curious legend about the island of Kais, which I hope to deal with in the history of that island; but it appears to me very probable that, in the civil wars after the close of that dynasty, under the Siljuks, or still more possibly

* 'Dictionnaire geogr. de la Perse.' By C. Barbier de Meynard. Paris: 1861. (From Yaqout.)

† 'Geogr. d'Abulfeda,' traduit par M. Reinaud. Paris: 1848.

‡ 'Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah.' Translated by C. Defrémery. Paris: 1853.

§ 'Travels, etc., in 1810-12.' London: 1819.

at the Tartar conquest in 1202-26, which was accompanied by such widespread devastation, the inhabitants of Siráf may have been driven to abandon their city *en masse*, and establish themselves on the island for safety, which would account for the rapid rise of that island to importance, and perhaps for Ibn Batúta's account.*

There appears no doubt that from the remotest date they traded with Zanzibar, the Red Sea, India, and even China. Cosmas (530-550 A.D.) mentions an ambassador from the Persian king arriving at Ceylon in a ship from Persia. As regards the "ships" used in those distant voyages, I gather from various references that the planks were fastened with coir, no nails being used, a practice still common with small vessels in the Gulf. They carried one large lateen sail as in the present day, and were only partially decked. Colonel Yule, from the Chinese annals of the seventh and eighth centuries, says that the Chinese ships then came as far as Siráf and the river Euphrates, where they lay at Hira, near Kufa, a long way above the place where Basrah now stands; also that this trade fell off about 878 A.D., owing to dreadful civil wars in China.

THE SOURCES OF THE EUPHRATES.

By WILLIAM FRANCIS AINSWORTH, F.S.A.

It has been hitherto accepted, as an established fact in geography, that the main trunk of the river Euphrates is formed by the confluence of two rivers, to both of which the name of Frat has been occasionally applied, but which are more generally known—the westerly one as the Kara Su, or Blackwater; the easterly as the Murad Su; and the latter, having a longer course than the Kara Su, has also been hitherto looked upon as the most remote tributary, and therefore as comprising the sources of the great river.

But if it could be shown that a second and lesser Kara Su, or Blackwater, and a tributary to the Murad Su, having its origin from a crater-fountain at Nur-shin, and that that fountain is the outlet of Lake Van, it would establish that the more remote tributaries to that lake would constitute the true sources of the Euphrates.

These tributaries have their sources in the Dumanlu and Tendurek Taghs, and although it is difficult to determine, even with the assistance of Captain Maunsell's admirable map, which of the several tributaries

* Such migrations are on record, as when the inhabitants of Hormuz, the city on the mainland, abandoned their city, and migrated to the island afterwards called by the same name. This happened in the beginning of the fourteenth century, and was owing to the ravages of the Tartars. In 1859 the large town of Kongún, on the Persian coast, was abandoned by the chief and all the people, who took refuge on the island of Shaikh Shoaib, in consequence of a feud with the Deshti chief. The town on the mainland remained deserted for some years.