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Geography of Southern Arabia

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grandson, so that an actual dynasty was now acknowledged in numismatology. These kings must have ruled during the whole of the first century A.D. Very little had been known about them hitherto, or about the country. Some twenty years ago a Turkish general who had commanded an expedition there, gave him a description of the district; and Captain Burton's account now verified the accuracy of the description.

2. *Geography of Southern Arabia.* By the Baron VON MALTZAN.

HAVING in former years travelled in Central Arabia, and accomplished in 1860 a pilgrimage to Mekka, the author's attention has been of late particularly drawn to another part of the peninsula, viz. the extreme South. Wrède's travels had left a great part of Southern Arabia unexplored. They, in fact, only comprised the country between 48° and $49^{\circ} 30'$ E. long., reaching from the coast to about 15° N. lat. Another valuable addition to our knowledge of the southern part of Arabia was made in July, 1870, by the excursions of Captain Miles and Mr. Munzinger. It may in fact be said that these gentlemen continued the work of Wrède. Thus a space of nearly three degrees of longitude and about two of latitude of Southern Arabia might be called more or less explored. The author spent the winter of 1870-1 at and near Aden, and first investigated the language of the Mahrah tribes. He was enabled to draw a grammar of their interesting language, which is evidently a dialect of the now nearly extinct old South Arabic idiom, closely connected with the Ethiopian and even with the modern Tigré dialect. Part of these researches have already been published by him in the German 'Oriental Review.'

For his geographical researches he chose the territory to the north of Aden between the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb and 48° E. long. Here he had also a vast extent of nearly virgin soil, it being a most extraordinary but, nevertheless, true fact, that during the 32 years that Aden has been an English colony nothing had been done for the exploration of the interior of the neighbouring country. The nation which furnishes the most intrepid of all travellers has left a country so near its own possessions unexplored. He commenced by some excursions in the neighbourhood of Aden. These he afterwards extended to some of the neighbouring little states of independent sultans. But he soon found that the information he obtained on these occasions was very limited. He therefore began another system—gathering as much information about it as he could at Aden.

He began a systematic research, receiving every day a certain number of Arabs from all parts of the interior, and questioning

them on the names and positions of the different topographical points and genealogical divisions.

He had his doubts as to the exactness of his information. But fortunately on this point he was not without means of proof. He had an Arabic work on the geography of the whole peninsula, written by el-Hamdanee, an author very little known in Europe, who died in 335 of the Hejira. Of this work, called 'Jareeret-el-Arab,'* of which there exists only a single manuscript in Europe, he luckily found a second copy at Aden. It is the only work giving information on the southern part of Arabia, on which *él-Yakût el-Edreesee*, *Aboolfeda*, and the other geographers, are almost silent. In this book he found the full confirmation of all the Arabs had told him, and nearly all the names mentioned by his informants and their positions indicated just as they had given them. This was a great satisfaction.

The conformation of the surface in all this part of South Arabia is very irregular. Plains near the sea are the rule; yet in many places we find high volcanic rocks, such as the *Jebel Shamsham* (or *Shamsân*) at Aden. But these mountains of the coast are isolated, and have no communication with those of the interior. The plain is resumed behind them, as it is to their right and left.

In the eastern part of the country we first find the *Wahidee* states. Here are volcanic rocks near the coast, then a desert with only a few oases stretching as far north as *el-Hauta*. In the east and north of this desert there are long chains of low hills perfectly barren, very narrow valleys, and in them the vegetation of an oasis—palms, a little corn, sesam-oil, and tobacco. The scenery changes before reaching *Habban*, capital of the Upper *Wahidee*, situated in an elevated country. Here there is greater fertility, owing to the tropical rains that fall in this region.

Everything in South Arabia, as in most tropical countries, depends on this, whether a country receives the regular summer rains or not. No part of this half of Southern Arabia is doomed to utter and hopeless sterility by its geological formation alone, there being here no real desert like the *Rabat-el-Khalee* in the more central part of Southern Arabia. Even on the volcanic rocks at Aden, I have seen herbs growing after rain. It is a curious phenomenon that in Southern Arabia, though being a tropical country, the interior alone receives the tropical rains; not so the coast, which seems to stand under the influence of the Red Sea climate and only the very irregular winter showers. It is true the

* The orthography of proper names is left as given by the author, who has preferred the form suiting English pronunciation.

winter rains are sometimes abundant. Even at Aden, that driest spot of the whole peninsula, an overflowing of the cisterns has been witnessed. But these showers are by no means to be reckoned upon with any certainty; and, on an average, it may be said that out of three or four years only one has sufficient rain, and in consequence favours fertility. Thus the whole of the coast is barren with the exception of a few valleys, such as Lahej and Abian, which have a rivulet that receives the tropical rains in its upper course, and, bringing down their waters, fertilises this otherwise barren country.

After the Wahidee states (proceeding from east to west) are the states of the lower and upper Owlakee, reaching from the coast to about 15° N. lat. The land of the Lower Owlakee near the coast is a plain, rising gradually, and reaching to a mountainous country of middle elevation near its northern terminus at a place called Khubber. This whole land is poor and sterile, being a coast country, and consequently not receiving the regular rains, though it has a rivulet, the Wadee Howair, which, however, seems to lie entirely to the south of the region of tropical showers. The consequence of this is, that we find only a very poor people, the Baa Kaazim, inhabiting the valley of the Howair. To the north of Khubber the country of the Upper Owlakee begins. This is entirely different, owing to the regular summer rains. North of the mountains there extends a very rich plain, called Markha, rising gradually to the high tableland of Nisab, the capital of the Upper Owlakee. All this high ground is fertile.

A step further to the west we find the important Fudhlee tribe whose territory almost touches Aden. The real Fudhlee territory is hilly near the coast and mountainous in the interior. However, it is poor, having only the winter rains and no larger rivulets. Its capital, Sureeya (indicated in Haines' map as a village in the mountains without name), is in a hilly country in the east, not far from the sea. Shooghra, which is generally called the Fudhlee capital by Europeans, is only its seaport. The Owdalee territory, touching in the west the Yaafaiy, in the east the Owlakee, and in the north the Rezaaz states, is very elevated ground, the Jebel Kaur, one of the highest mountains of South Arabia, filling up nearly its entire space. It is also fertile, suffering no want of water. Its capital is Ghoder, situated at the foot of the Jebel Kaur. Besides this, it has the towns of Dhaker, Orfaan, and They're, all in a very elevated position on the heights of Jebel Kaur. This mountainland produces excellent corn, jowaree, wheat, tobacco, and sesam-oil in great quantity. At Ghoder there are forty oil-mills. But

besides their ancient territory, the Fudhlee possess the country of Abian, conquered from the Yaafaiy tribes about forty years ago. This, though being near the coast, is yet one of the most fertile parts of South Arabia, and celebrated as a first-rate cotton-growing country, owing to two rivulets, the Wadees Bonna and Hasan, in the midst of which it is situated.

The prosperity of Abian is also shown by its great number of towns, amongst which Maan, Maab (both situated on the Wadee Yeraanus), Rand, and Derjaaj, are the most important. Near the coast is also a once important town, called Asalah, which, before the conquest, was the capital and seaport of Abian. Now it has lost its sea-trade, the new masters, the Fudhlee, not allowing barques to take a cargo here, as they wish to draw all the commerce to Shooghra, the seaport of their ancient territory.

As to the consumption of coffee by the Arabs, it is an error generally indulged in by Europeans living at Aden, that the natives only use the drink called kishr, which is a sort of tea made out of the covering leaves of the beans. This is only the case in the hot plains near the coast, where the real coffee is considered too exciting. But Yaafaiy being chiefly a mountainous country, where the winters are cold, the real coffee is very welcome there for its warming qualities, and the kishr is only used in the lowlands. Coffee is often drunk with milk, as in Europe. As to the growing of the plants, it seems that, in Arabia at least, the tropical rains are absolutely necessary to it. No coast-country produces coffee, even if it has a rivulet, not even the otherwise fertile plains of Abian and Lahej, and Mokha never produced any. The coffee was only called after it because it was formerly the principal port for its exportation.

On three sides this coffee district is surrounded by the immense mountains of the Yaafaiy, which form the highest region of western South Arabia. Their most southern part is called the Lower Yaafaiy land.

The Upper Yaafaiy have no regular government, but are divided in different independent tribes, the strongest of which live at Atara and Mansita. The cold here is intense in winter, and the natives are obliged to cover themselves with sheep-skins.

The third division, the Rezaaz, do not call themselves Yaafaiy, nor do the Yaafaiy call them by that name; but they undoubtedly are such from their origin. Their actual name is derived from the reigning dynasty, whose founder, about the year 1790, won the battle of El Orr, by which he made the country independent of the Upper Yaafaiy. The Rezaaz inhabit all the land to the north and

north-east of the Yaafaiy territory, and the country to the north of the Owdalee State. Their territory is formed by the northern slopes of the great Yaafaiy mountains, and also those of the Jebel Kaur. The descent from the highland is at first rather abrupt, then its valleys descend more gradually, and open on the large plains of Central South Arabia. The capital, Bayhaun, is situated in the lowland. The only commercial town, Baydha, stands at the northern foot of the Jebel Kaur, near the frontier of the Abdalee. The produce of the country is as varying as the elevation of the ground. The south being here the highest land, produces barley, wheat, sesam-oil, jowaree, tobacco, and excellent fruit-trees. The natives boast particularly of their peaches. In the middle region we find cotton, indigo, tobacco; and the lowlands are chiefly a date-growing country. The Sultan has absolute power only over the inhabitants of the commercial town Baydha. All the other natives merely acknowledge him as a military leader, but pay no taxes, and are not subjected to his justice.

Returning to Aden and directing our steps due north, we find the little Abdalee State, commonly called Lahej. This country, though near the coast, is yet very fertile, owing to the Wadee Tobbaan, in which water is kept nearly all the year round by a tolerably good system of sluices. The capital is generally called Lahej, but its real name is el-Howta, Lahej being that of the district in which the capital lies. It is also a common mistake of Europeans to call the Wadee Tobbaan by the name of Mas'dam; but this name, or rather Mehai'daan, is the designation of a large plain to the east of Lahej, which is not even touched by the river. Niebuhr and Wellsted first brought this wrong bit of information to Europe; but all the natives whom I asked, amongst them the Sultan of Lahej himself, declared that Tobbaan was the name of their river, and Mehai'daan that of a rather barren plain to the east.

North of Lahej is a vast but thinly inhabited territory, belonging to the Howshabee tribe, who are Bedouins. They have a Sultan, but are hardly subjected to his authority. This is chiefly a country of mountains and high table-lands, receiving the tropical rains, and consequently fertile where it is cultivated, as in the large plains about Raaha, the principal village, which is rich in corn.

Still further to the north is the State of the Ameers, with the capital, Dhalaa, a rich country of middle elevation, with a few high mountains. Politically, this is the best administrated State of all South Arabia, all its inhabitants being subject to Sultan Shaafel of Khotan, whose ancestors were governors for the Imaum of Sanaa, and declared themselves independent on the downfall of their

power. However, within this territory there is an independent oasis inhabited by the Shakeree tribe, which the Ameer have in vain tried to subdue.

North of this begins a mountainous territory, with the high peaks of Jebels Tchauf and Merraïs, inhabited by many small independent tribes, some of which, however, have of late years become subjects to the Doo Mohammed, the great modern conquerors of Yemen, who have spread their power over a great extent of the ancient provinces once belonging to the Imaums of Sanaa, whose mercenary soldiers they formerly were. There are also several independent towns, Raateba being the largest of them. It is situated between the high mountains of Tchauf and Merraïs. Here the cultivation of a tree called Kaat begins, whose leaves the Arabs chew, and which produce an agreeable exhilarating effect, but not obnoxious to health, like opium or hasheesh. The leaves of the Kaat fetch a high price all over South Arabia. The Sultan of Lahej told me that in his house the daily consumption amounted to ten dollars' worth. A Kaat country is consequently always comparatively rich.

To the west of Aden is the very small State of the Akrabee, having only 20 square miles of superficies. The principal village is Beer Ahmed, well known to the Aden sportsmen. The territory is barren and without water; not much better than Aden itself.

West of the Akrabee begins the large Subeihah country, stretching as far as Bab-el-Mandeb. It is nearly entirely barren, being a coast country, and having neither sufficient rain nor well supplied rivers. Near the sea, in a few places, there are isolated volcanic mountains; behind them the plains extend to the right and left. It is a curious fact that the only European who ever traversed this country and gave an account of it (a German, called Lutzun), should not have found a single village, a single river, or any locality having a name, on a journey of about eight days. Yet there are many villages, wells, hamlets, castles, mentioned both by my informants, and by the old geographer el-Hamdanee, who lived nearly a thousand years ago. It is true they are not very important, most of these villages consisting of some huts and one or two fortified castles. Only the town of Ghareeja seems to be a larger place, owing its importance to the tomb of a saint, commonly called the Radhee, which is visited every year by thousands of Arabs. The chief produce of the country seems to be an excellent breed of camels. The Subeihah have no government, but are divided into a great many little independent tribes.

North of them is a mountainous country of middle elevation,

inhabited by the independent tribe of the Mokteree, who have no towns, but good large villages and several strong castles. The tropical rains fall here, and consequently the country is fertile. It produces coffee, cotton, tobacco, indigo, and sesam-oil in great quantity. The Mokteree state touches the vast mountainous region of the Hojree, once a strong tribe, but now in great part subjected to the Doo Mohammed. Only a few tribes, such as the Benee Hamad, have kept their independence. This country is rich and fertile, produces coffee and cotton; the highlands may be called the home of the Kaat-tree, this precious plant growing here in greater abundance than anywhere. Here there are also mineral baths, of whose power the Arabs tell fabulous things.

The Hojree territory touches the more or less known regions of Taur, Yereem, and Ibb, and my task comes to an end here as far as regards the description of the country. I shall only add a few notes on the inhabitants, as to their mode of life, religion, and manners.

The inhabitants of this part of Arabia nearly all belong to the race of Himyar. Their complexion is almost as black as that of the Abyssinians; their bodies are very finely formed, with slender, yet strong limbs; their faces are Semitic, noses generally aquiline, eyes full of fire, lips small, and mouths of very diminutive proportions. They are generally thin, and never fat; they have little or no beard, their hair is long, but curly, not woolly.

They hardly wear any garments, nothing except a large loose cloth reaching from the waist down to the knees, and a small turban. The women have a skirt and sort of shawl. In the western district they also wear black trowsers, and in the towns a bit of cotton all over the face, without holes for the eyes.

Their only luxuries are their weapons, the long musket with the two powder-horns, and the Janbiyyah, a sort of dagger richly-ornamented with silver. Some also wear the straight sword called Nemusha.

They live in large castellated and fortified houses, three or four stories high, with towers, fortified terraces, and loopholes. The common people, however, inhabit huts of straw or palm-branches.

As to religion, the inhabitants of this part of Arabia all belong to the orthodox sect of Shafaiy. They detest the heterodox Zidiyyah of Yemen, who so long oppressed them, and the Doo Mohammed belonging to this sect. The hatred against them is general, and it is looked upon as the greatest calamity when a country is conquered by them. I cannot understand how Wellsted could believe that the inhabitants of Lahej were Zaidiyyah. They are just the

most fanatical haters of this heresy, as they call it. A curious custom exists here as regards circumcision, which is operated on both sexes, and at the very early stage of the seventh day of life, just as it is prescribed in the Mosaic law.

The Zaidiyyah sect in this part of Arabia begins to have frequent worshippers, only north of el-Kautabah. Er-Radaah—a good town in a fertile country—is about the first Zidiyyah town we find, proceeding from north to south from Aden.

The PRESIDENT, in explanation of the remarks on Aden made by the author of the paper, said that wherever our frontiers in India came into contact with independent States extreme jealousy naturally existed of all exploration or survey beyond our borders. This, no doubt, applied to Aden. But when Baron von Maltzan accused the English of indifference to Arabian exploration, it was sufficient in reply to notice the presence at that meeting of Mr. Palgrave and Captain Burton; the former of whom had travelled from the north through the Nejd country to the Persian Gulf, while the latter had actually performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.

MR. PALGRAVE said the southern portion of Arabia was of remarkable interest, because it appeared to be the cradle of the pure original Arab race. Up to the present time, the person who had most explored that district was the celebrated Niebuhr, father of the historian. For himself, he only skirted the northern and eastern frontiers of Yemen. When the information obtained by Baron von Maltzan was published, he should be extremely happy to see how far it agreed, not only with the data given in known works, but also with what he himself had learned and seen. In the first fervours of Mahometanism, everything in the shape of symbols of the ancient Arab worship was totally destroyed; but recently an idol had been discovered which, perhaps in consequence of its smallness, escaped the general destruction. This idol was brought to Aden, and was shown to Dr. Millingen, son of the celebrated Dr. Millingen in whose arms Byron died at Missolonghi, and Dr. Millingen sent him a representation of it. It was a very remarkable one, and in some respects elucidated the ridicule thrown by the Koran upon the Arab idolators because they worshipped a female deity. The image was certainly partly female. He hoped that some account of this idol would appear in the papers which would be sent to the Society, and should be glad to render any assistance he possibly could in the matter, but he would be still more glad, should it ever be his good fortune again to put foot in those regions and examine the land.

Captain BURTON said that Aden was the very worst place in the world to start from for an exploration of Southern Arabia. Some time ago, Captain Miles made an exceedingly good journey from it; but his efforts had never been appreciated as they ought. Lieutenant Cruttenden, I.N., also went up the Yemen country in 1836, and laid down the latitude and longitude of Sana'a, its capital. When he himself was at Aden, he found it extremely difficult to do anything in the way of exploration, because Indian officers were threatened with court-martial every time they left the walls. He risked his commission half-a-dozen times by dressing like an Arab and driving camels, but under the circumstances it was impossible to obtain any correct geographical information. Baron von Wrède also went to Hadramaut. He disagreed with Baron von Maltzan about the word "Hadramaut." In Genesis (x. 26) it was Hazarmaveth, from the son of Joktan; this was, in fact, the classical name of the whole district. Baron von Wrède was attacked by the Arabs; the whole of his notes were destroyed, whilst some of his clothes, and to some extent his person, were rather injured. On his return to England, he boldly

wrote out the whole account and got it recommended to the Geographical Society.

Dr. VAUGHAN said he had resided in Aden nine years. He thought Baron von Maltzan had spoken rather unadvisedly with regard to what the English had failed to do, because there could be no doubt that Aden would be the place of all others least suited for an exploring expedition to start from. He himself travelled as a doctor for the purpose of vaccination, and managed to get off free; but of the next company of officers that went, one was killed.

The PRESIDENT said that, besides Captain Cruttenden, Lieutenant Wellsted and Dr. Houghton had made explorations on the coast. The whole of Southern Arabia was very interesting from its archæology. So vast a quantity of inscriptions and tablets had been sent home that the Himyaric literature had now become a recognised branch of archæology. The inscriptions already received could be numbered by hundreds. One convoy brought over upwards of one hundred and fifty copper plates. It appeared that the ruins of all the towns of Southern Arabia contained these native tablets, which gave an account of the origin of the country, and its history, with many curious details with regard to agricultural statistics. The subject had already been studied by several Continental scholars, and further researches were going on at the present day. This made the exploration of Southern Arabia a matter of still greater interest, and he trusted that the inquiries of Baron von Maltzan would be verified by the actual observation of some travellers, English or German.

Third Meeting, December 11th, 1871.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR HENRY C. RAWLINSON, K.C.B., PRESIDENT,
in the Chair.

PRESENTATION.—*Dr. R. Heinemann.*

ELECTIONS.—*Dr. J. B. Gonsalvez Campos; Henry Cope, Esq.; Thomas Dyer Edwardes, Esq., Junr.; Philip Capel Hanbury, Esq.; Dr. R. Heinemann; F. Leigh Hutchins, Esq.; Lieut. F. W. Jarrad, R.N.; Alfred Jenoure, Esq.; Sir John Lubbock, Bart., F.R.S., &c.; William Macdonald, Esq.; Daniel Macpherson, Esq.; Charles A. J. Mason, Esq.; Charles Hoskins Master, Esq.; Henry Mercer, Esq.; J. Young Messam, Esq.; James Mowatt, Esq., M.A.; Edw. Wates, Esq.*

ACCESSIONS TO THE LIBRARY FROM THE 27TH NOVEMBER TO THE 11TH OF DECEMBER, 1871.—‘*Handbuch der Geographie und Statistik.*’ Von Dr. J. E. Wappaus. Leipzig, 1855–1871. 8 vols. Donor the author. ‘*At Home with the Patagonians.*’ By G. Chaworth Musters, R.N., 1871. Donor John Murray, Esq. ‘*A History of the San Juan Water Boundary Question.*’ By Viscount Milton. 1869. Purchased. ‘*Observations of Comets from B.C. 611 to A.D. 1640, extracted from the Chinese Annals.*’ Translated, &c., by John Williams. 1871. Donor the author. ‘*Redogorelse for en expedition till Grönland år 1870.*’ Af A. E. Nordenskiöld. Stockholm, 1871. ‘*Recherches sur les Monnaies des Indigènes de*