In most cases the history of the Gulf in the seventeenth and eighteenth century has been written as the history of the relationship between the British and the great Islamic powers Persia and the Ottoman Empire. This does no justice to the fact that most of the inhabitants of the coasts of the Gulf were Arabs.

In the period between 1602 and 1784 the evolution of Arab tribal states around the Gulf became visible to European observers. 1602 was the crucial year of the beginning of the breakup of the Portuguese-controlled Arab Kingdom of Hormuz that had controlled most of the coasts of the Gulf. There followed a period of great instability and contestations between Arab tribes, Persia, the Ottoman Empire, Portuguese, English and Dutch fought for a share. In 1784, after the conquest of Bahrain by the Al Khalifa, most of the now existing Arab states of the Gulf were present.

In the years 1602-1784 there were short spells of Persian supremacy, seemingly unconnected conflicts between Arab tribes and the great local powers as well as struggles for supremacy between the tribes themselves. In this period, states were born that exist up to the present date: modern Oman in two stages: 1650 and 1747, at least two emirates of the present UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar all are present by the end of this period. The Arabs of the Persian coast of the Gulf as well as those of Southern Iraq played a prominent part in the history of the Arab tribes of the Gulf, but in the end the proximity to major regional powers made it impossible for them to maintain the independence that they nearly achieved in the course of the eighteenth century.

This book is based on a great variety of sources. Contemporary local Arab sources are very rare. The historian depends on documents of foreign powers involved in the area and on incidental reports of European travellers. Although the quantity of this material is considerable, mentions of the Arab inhabitants in it are scarce. The present book increases the amount of data available not only by the use of some English, French, Italian or Portuguese material, but especially by a consistent use of the Dutch sources. Because of the predominance of Dutch presence in the Gulf between 1630 and 1766, Dutch archival material is the most consistent source for these years.

Dr. B.J. Slot is a historian and the archivist responsible for the archives of the Dutch East India Company in the General State Archives in The Hague. His special interests are the activities of the peoples of Western Europe in the Near and Middle East in early modern times. His publications include books on the history of the Ottoman conquest of the Greek Cyclades between 1500 and 1718, on the origins of Kuwait and on the voyages of discovery of Abel Tasman as well as a great number of articles on the history of the Near and Middle East.

Illustrations on the cover:

Nautical chart of the Gulf originating from the Dutch East India Company and dating from the second half of the seventeenth century (General State Archives, The Hague, VEL 220).

Arab women of the island of Qays, probably from the Al Ali tribe, as seen in an engraving in a Dutch edition of the voyage of the Englishman John Newberie ('Twee Reysen van Johan Newberie' in: Pieter van der Aa, Naukeurige Versameling der gedenk-waardigste Reysen, vol. 18, Leyden 1706, opposite p.10)

Both illustrations show how vague and often distorted much of the European knowledge of the Gulf could be.

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THE ARABS OF THE GULF
This book is dedicated to
Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi

THE ARABS OF THE GULF
1602-1784

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE EARLY HISTORY OF
THE ARAB GULF STATES AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE
EUROPEAN POWERS, MAINLY BASED ON SOURCES OF THE
DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY

B.J. SLOT

second edition
LEIDSCHENDAM
1995
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Nautical chart of the Gulf, second half of the
seventeenth century, originating from the Dutch East
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Engraving showing Arab women, probably of the
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Johan Newberie', in Pieter van de Aa, Naaukeurige
versameling der gedenk-waardigste reysen, vol. 18.
Leiden 1707, plate opposite p. 1).
Both illustrations show the inaccurate and often
fantastic image the Europeans of that time had of the
countries and peoples of the Gulf.

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edition a number of corrections, additions and illustrations
has been added. The pagination of the main part of the book
(p. 1-429) has remained entirely unchanged.

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Veusestraatweg 44
2265 CE Leidschendam
The Netherlands

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INTRODUCTION

This has to be a somewhat complicated book. The early modern history of the Gulf is much like an Italian opera of the golden age: many events, without much of a line in the story, a stage full of splendidly and exotically dressed players who make a lot of noise and display exuberant emotions. It only is a pity that it was so complicated that it was difficult to put it on stage again. What we mean is that only parts of the complex pageant have been represented in history-writing. It really is an adventure to try to piece all the separate parts together, but only this can give a right understanding of the history of the Arabs of all the coastal areas of the Gulf, which now belong to Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, in the period between 1600 and 1784. These Arabs were divided in many small units, all with their own history. Understanding and writing this history is difficult because of the scarcity of precise sources.

Maybe a good alternative title of this book would have been 'Tribes, Traders and Tollhouses'. Much of it revolves around these three themes. There are the tribes, and the permanent tension of the desire of nomads for freedom and the respectable attempts from different sides to unite them for a common purpose. There are the traders, as well tribesmen as foreigners. Maybe the tribesmen were ultimately more important, but it were the foreigners who in their writings give us the necessary information for writing a history. Finally, there are the tollhouses, in Portuguese Alfandega (from the Arab word Funduq), where the traders had to pay taxes. These tollhouses were period between 1600 and 1784 is marked by the development of Arab tribal states as regional powers in the area dominated by the former 'Kingdom' of Hormuz and by several attempts on the part of some European powers to gain a foothold in the area. This book's focus is on the people of the coasts and sea: Arabs and European traders, and not on the great Islamic continental powers, Persia and the Ottoman Empire.

For our knowledge of this period, we largely depend on European historical sources; the few relevant Arab and Persian sources
often lack sufficient precision for use independently of the strict chronological framework furnished by European documents. We have only been able to use printed primary Arab sources.

Unlike most authors on the history of the Gulf, we have used the Dutch instead of the British archives as our main source. This might at first sound unreasonable, but we must keep in mind that for most of the period covered by this book, the Dutch East India Company was the strongest European power in the area, and that its bureaucratic habits produced a huge amount of paper, while the English East India Company for a long time remained a much smaller body. Furthermore the Dutch sources, however rich, are not only written in the Dutch language, but in the case of references to local Arab affairs, they are hidden in large volumes devoted mainly to matters concerning the economy and to nautical data. It is important to make the material on Arab matters from these sources available to historians of the region. Dutch, British, Portuguese and French material from printed as well as unprinted sources, have also been used.

A problem with Dutch records concerning the Gulf in that period is that they were mainly business papers, not records of political or colonial administration. More general information may be contained in these papers, but its presence is often accidental. The Dutch East India Company was in the Gulf for commercial profit, not for territorial expansion. If local Dutch representatives deviated from this policy, they met with considerable opposition within Dutch ruling circles. The discussions on such occasions reveal the character of European interference in the Gulf in the pre-colonial phase of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There is a fundamental difference between the actions of the East India Companies of that time and the modern empire building that manifested itself in the Gulf in the early nineteenth century with the imposition of British control on the relationship between the Arab states in the area.

This book begins with the first chapter containing a description of the historical geography of the area covered. The second chapter describes the political, social and economic position of the powers involved in the area: Persians, Ottoman Turks, Arab tribes and Europeans. Then follows a historical account in chapters 3-10. This describes how the Portuguese were forced to make place for Arabs, Persians and Europeans, and how in the Gulf new political structures emerged in the encounter between Muslim peoples and Europeans. As far as the Arabs of the area were concerned, this all ended up in a situation which looked much like the modern one.

Fashion and views change in the writing of history as in everything else. Since some years, Europe has lost most of the pride it felt about its colonial past. European historians became more open-minded about the viewpoints of the nations that were at the receiving end of the doubtful blessings of European expansion. It began to be clear that the history of Asia between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries was not just the history of the European competition to get hold of its resources.

To a very large extent, European historians often came to agree with their Asian colleagues that the European interference was a marginal event in the history of Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some European historians of colonial expansion remained for a time more conservative than many other European historians, but even they were not insensitive to modern views.

The problem with the history of Arab tribes in the Gulf-area in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is that, because these tribes lived in too unstable an environment and left few records, one depends more than is the case elsewhere on the views of the representatives of the European expansion in the area for an account of the local events. This does not mean that these are typical views of colonial officials. The history of the European policy in the Gulf during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can hardly be considered as the history of European colonial expansion (except in the case of the Portuguese). Many Europeans present in the Gulf were officials of the Dutch and English East India Companies who had to pay a more humble part in an area where only trade and diplomacy, not colonial expansion was their goal. From time to time there might be a war between Europeans and local inhabitants, but this was warfare caused by trade conflicts. Neither the Dutch nor the English had at that time great ambitions to conquer an empire on the Gulf.

The limited availability of relevant local sources obliges the historian to observe the history of the Gulf through the papers of the Europeans. This means that in order to be able to get the right critical
approach to their reports, one must try to acquire an understanding of the kind of logic that directed their actions. This is why a study of the backgrounds of the European presence in the area and a socio-biographical study of the European representatives is important in order to correctly evaluate their reports on the events. In this book, a few summary excursions are made in these matters, in future, more detailed studies with more attention to these points will be necessary.

Old fashioned history writing, especially older English works, tended to consider the history of the Gulf as an introductory (and not very satisfactory) chapter to the real glory of the nineteenth century, while Dutch historians of the same kind were hardly interested in an area where their Company tried to avoid getting involved and acquired no military glory. That the area had been very important for a long time in the internal economy of both the English and Dutch Companies was not fully understood. This book has to be in some respects a return to the old style of European historiography. This is not because of inherent merits of this style. It is because the account of ‘Arab’ events in the area depends to such an extent on the information supplied by representatives of the Dutch and English companies that it is not always possible to confront this information with data from Arab sources. In this special case of a history covering the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, taking such a traditional viewpoint may not be too misleading. At that time, Dutch and other European viewpoints very often coincided to a very large extent with the interests of many Arab tribes.

Some of the earlier historians of the Gulf, especially the English ones, have been accused of partiality against the Arabs. This accusation is not entirely without justification, but one should consider the circumstances. Many of these historians were amateurs and colonial officials. They were trained to feel that their country had a mission to pacify the area and to keep the population from what they considered to be piracy. The English documents they used as sources often were written in a rather aggressive and emotional style like the document quoted in this book on p. #. Dutch documents were written by commercial representatives who tend to give relatively cool descriptions in merchant style. This made it easier to write this book in a more distant manner.

The scope of this book posed one great problem. In fact, there exists no earlier book which tries to sketch the history of the Arabian aspect of the whole of the Gulf. There also are, with the exception of some works on Oman, no accounts of the history of individual Arab states or tribal units of the area. It was our task to try to collect the small references in the sources and to place them in the general background of events in the Gulf which often are connected with events in a much larger area.

There are some basic facts which determined to a large extent what was happening in the Gulf. The two most important were the lack of firm borders in an area where tribes and conglomerates of population were separated by empty stretches of sea and desert. The competition for control over these stretches was an important cause of the many greater and smaller wars which continually disturbed the area. The empty spaces made the constitution of larger territorial units particularly difficult, and if they could be established they tended to be unstable. Another cause for the many conflicts in the area was that there existed a fierce competition for control of the principal local source of wealth in the area: the trade route between India and the Mediterranean through the Gulf. Tolls or customs duties were taken from this trade by the owners of ports which were involved in this trade or were so situated that, like Hormuz or Muscat, they could control a crucial point on the road. The Portuguese had first controlled the entire road from the strategic point of Hormuz. After the decline of Portuguese power, part of the trade was taken over by Dutch and English. During the period covered by this book, this part was not really disputed by the Arabs. The remainder was divided between different Arab groups and merchants from India, and this part was fiercely contested between Arabs and Surali merchants. To a lesser extent, the pearl banks were also a source of wealth and the control over the pearl banks was contested between Arab tribes. This competition for the trade and the pearl banks, together with the upheavals caused by the difficulties in shaping tribal conglomerates was the background of the turbulent history sketched in the available sources.
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

One gets the impression that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a period of economic and demographic crisis. Medieval sources seem to suggest that large areas were more populated and prosperous before 1600 than they were later, especially the coasts of the Arabian peninsula. The sources of the early parts of the eighteenth century seem to indicate a great emptiness there. Its causes are not clear. There may have been climatological changes. Small changes in climate have considerable effect in areas like the coasts of the Gulf which can only marginally support life. The peculiar circumstances (the frequency of extremely cold winters of the sixteenth and seventeenth century) which are recorded for other parts of the Northern Hemisphere may have been accompanied by variations in rainfall the Arabian peninsula, but no research has been made in this matter. The second half of the eighteenth century apparently was a period in which the Arab population of the coastal places of the Gulf was increasing.

This book will show the birth of Arab political structures, some temporary, some lasting. At the closing year of the period described in this book, several such structures had already become solid and the basic pattern of the actual political structure had been established. Oman, the nucleus of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait existed already, almost in their present form. The Ottoman district of Basra was reduced to its modern borders. On the other hand, there were some parts where the definitive structures were not yet found. The coasts of Najd and Al Hasa only found their final political structure in the present century. The more or less independent Arab units on the islands and the Southern coast of Persia became so much divided and impoverished that in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they could be absorbed by modern Iran. In this way, this book constitutes the early history of the modern Gulf States and of political units which failed to become so.

The first suggestions for producing this book were made by the Centre for Documentation and Research in Abu Dhabi. From the Centre I had much encouragement and help on many fields. Dr. Muhammad Morsy Abdullah, Director of the Centre, Mrs. Frauke Heard-Bey, Mr. Edward Henderson and Mrs. Marcia Owen-Jaroody looked through the text and made many helpful suggestions. The microfilm-collection and the library of the Centre helped me to much material. Of great importance was the help given by His Highness Dr Sultan bin Muhammad al Qasimi, Ruler of Sharjah. His expertise answered many questions, he helped me to microfilms of essential material, and he gave me the computer hardware and software which made it possible to make a book from the jungle of small references.

In Bahrain I could consult the microfilm holdings of the Historical Documents Centre and I received useful information from H.E. Shaikh Abdallah bin Khalid al Khalifa, President, and Dr. A. A. Hussain, Director of the Centre. In Portugal I owe especial thanks to Dr. Antonio Diaz Farinha of Lisbon University, Dr. Isao Santos of the Archivio di Ultramar. At the Arsip Nasional in Jakarta I received assistance from Mrs. Yunita Sitompul. Dr. Al Humaidan of King Saud University in Riyadh helped me with some difficult material. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris I had special help from M. Jean Bâbedat. In Leiden at the Netherlands Institute for the Near East I had the help of Dr. E. van Donzel. Finally, but I have to thank my colleagues at the General State Archives. Special mention should be given to the staff of the photographic department who made a great number of photographs and photocopies.
INTRODUCTION

Notes on use of chronology, terminology and transliteration.

Three calendars were in common use in the area. Arabs, Persians and Turks used the Islamic calendar. The Portuguese, the Dutch East India Company and the French used the modern Gregorian calendar. The English East India Company used the Julian Calendar up to 1752. All dates used in the text of this book are in the Gregorian style, with the exception of dates used for references in English sources before September 1752 in the footnotes. In this case, the Julian dates are used, marked with J.

For reasons of consistency, we followed the prevalent use in the seventeenth and eighteenth century by using England and English, even where Britain and British could be used. While one should be aware of the difference between the Republic of the Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands (the federal state) and Holland (the province which was the principal member of the federation), it has almost no practical significance in this book, and Holland is used as a geographic expression in all cases where there is no explicit meaning of the federal state.

For terminology of the Ottoman or Persian administrations we have a small glossary; we tried to keep the use of exotic administrative terminology limited.

In the orthography of Dutch and English names we have tried to avoid the wild variety in the spelling of names which was common in both languages at that time. We tried to use the simplest version which is the nearest to modern use.

The orthography of Arab, Persian and Turkish words always is a matter of compromise between simplicity and accurate transliteration. For the sake of consistency, we followed the Encyclopaedia of Islam, but we had to make some concessions to the practical possibilities of the printing system and to common use. For esthetic reasons we did not follow the Encyclopaedia in its use of underlining of Arab characters given as double Latin consonants like Dh, Gh, Kh, Sh, Zh. Also, for technical reasons we were unable to follow the use of the Encyclopaedia in putting dots under characters for the distinguishing the emphatic Arab characters for t, d, h, s and z from the normal ones. In order to distinguish the kaf (which is pronounced in the Gulf area like a j) from the kaf (which is pronounced like a k), we used a q for the kaf. We replaced the rather exotic Dj of the Encyclopaedia with the more common J. The za is written as a dh, which is common modern use (like in Abu Dhabi). For a few names of better known places, of which there exists a form of spelling in common use, we used this form. So we wrote Bahrain instead of Bahrayn, Dubai instead of Dubayyi, Sharjah instead of Shariqah, and Muscat instead of Masqat. A special problem is the orthography of Arab names which are only known from contemporary transliterations in European documents and are not always easy to identify with certainty. We left these in there original spelling between quotes, e.g. ‘Colimdin’.
CHAPTER 1
HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE GULF

old maps and geographical descriptions

Up to now, not much study has been done regarding the details of the historical geography of the Gulf. The extent of our knowledge is closely connected with the navigational methods of the sailors of the time: we know the places along the customary shipping lanes rather well, but we have almost no knowledge of other parts.

The area we consider in this book is the coastal area of the Gulf upward from Cape Jask on the Northern shore and from Muscat on the Southern shore. The sailing route which was the principal link of this area with the outside world went through the middle of the Gulf of Oman up to the passage between Cape Musandam and the island of Larak. From there, the ships sailed along the coast of Qishm, sighted the islands of Tanb and Farur, then followed the outer side of the line of the islands Qays, Hindurabi and Sittuwar along the coast, passed Cape Naband and finally took a wide berth from Cape Bardistan. Even on the Northern coast of the Gulf, we have nothing but incidental mentions of most places. Only Bandar Abbas was visited on a regular base, while the islands of Qishm and Hormuz were described for military reasons. Of the other places we only have very summary references.

There are definitely fewer sources for the Southern coast. The great pearlbank made access to the coast between Bahrain and Ras al Khuaima very difficult. The European sailors did not know of the
existence of any way of approaching the coast to the west of Ras al Khaima. Dutch expeditions in 1644-1645 and 1666 explored the area between Ras al Khaima and Muscat, where the coast was accessible to European ships. Some old geographical descriptions of the Gulf have come to us. Most of them are very summary, especially the earlier ones. A problem with the earlier descriptions is that they give no demographic details. For these we depend on a few accidental references in historical documents. The oldest detailed and accurate geographical description is by the Venetian jeweller Gasparo Balbi of 1580. It contains a very good description of Hormuz and the mention of many names of places on the coast of the Arabian peninsula. The principal text from the first half of the seventeenth century is the description by the Portuguese Pedro Teixeira. Next come the logs and other texts connected with the Dutch expeditions to the interior of the Gulf and the Musandam peninsula of 1644-1645. The Dutch expedition to Oman of 1667 gives us a detailed description of the coast of Oman. These expeditions contributed a great deal to the cartography of the Gulf. The book by the French spy Carré is the first detailed account on the Arabs of the Northern coast of the Gulf.7 From the eighteenth century there are the description by the Dutch residents on Kharg Van Kniphagen and Van der Hulst (1756, in future we will refer to this description as the ‘Kniphagen report’) and the description by the Danish traveller Niebuhr, whose account seems mainly based on information given to him by the Dutch staff on Kharg. Finally, use might be made of later sources, if we take into account changes that have occurred meanwhile. Such newer descriptions can help with the interpretation of cryptic or summary references in older material.

The cartographic sources also deserve attention. They may give indications for the existence of places and for the geographical knowledge as it existed. We should first make a distinction between nautical charts and geographical maps. The former group has relatively few names of places - only known places on the coast - and tends to keep as much as possible to verified data. The second group is leaning heavily on early geographical manuals which tend to be far from accurate. They put names read in books in places presumed to be somewhere nearby. The result might be completely fantastic. Most of the names on geographical maps of coastal places on the Gulf are either ill-placed (typical is Qeshm, a Portuguese form of the name Qishm, but placed on the Southern coast near Jufar) or non-existent.10


4 ARA, Papers of W. Geelvynse de Jongh, nos. 280 and 280a (expeditions of 1644-1645 to the Musandam peninsula).


6 Examples are maps like the manuscript ones in ARA, Map department, VEL 220-222 and in Thornton, English pilot, 3rd book (behind p. 34: chart of the Gulf, based on Dutch charts).


10 The origin of this seems to be in the maps published by the Venetian Castaldi in 1561. Typical examples of this are the maps by the famous Amsterdam editor Blaeu which had a wide circulation in the seventeenth century.
The nautical charts will be discussed first. Charts of the sixteenth century are not of great value. The oldest Portuguese charts carry very few names of places. Yet there existed one school in Portuguese nautical cartography which gives a few more details and has had a large distribution thanks to the Dutch author Jan Huygen van Linschoten who published a map of this kind in his *Itinerario*. Van Linschoten received this map from a Portuguese cartographer in Goa. No original Portuguese version of this Linschoten map, which is of very high quality for its time is known to exist. The charts of the Dutch East India Company, produced in the seventeenth century, were kept secret by the Directors. They were distributed only within a very select circle. Captains had to return their charts at the end of their voyages and the charts were never printed. Some of these manuscript charts have survived. A comparative study shows dependence on Portuguese charts of that time with some improvements resulting from observations by Dutch captains.

The secrecy measures of the Dutch East India Company failed: data kept leaking out to publishers of printed nautical atlases. Charts like the one in Thornton’s famous *English Pilot* are clearly based on Dutch originals even if they do not reach the quality of those originals. For a long time the publishing of detailed charts of the coasts of Asia in Holland was obstructed by the East India Company but in 1753 the Dutch publisher Van Keulen printed a chart of the Gulf which was the most detailed nautical chart of the Gulf ever published. It was based on seventeenth century manuscripts of the Dutch East India Company but it did not yet reach their geometrical precision. A Dutch manuscript chart of 1761 may show some new details but is not up to the level of accuracy of the older ones. A strange phenomenon on these charts is the fact that, while Van Linschoten’s chart shows Qatar as a peninsula, this knowledge seems to have been lost after some time. It is not on the charts of the East India Company, nor is it on other maps or charts between the 1660’s and 1820. In fact, the English chart published in 1820 was the first really innovative nautical chart since the seventeenth century.

Geographical maps were made for use by scholars and interested amateurs. Accuracy was less essential in these maps than it was in nautical charts. Geographical maps usually were more speculative and less accurate than nautical charts, but they can not be entirely ignored as historical sources. The first detailed geographical map of the Gulf was the map of Arabia published by the Venetian Gastaldi in 1571. It has many ill-placed or fictitious names on it. This map was imitated with a few gradual improvements by all the famous mapmakers of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the Belgians Ortelius and Mercator and the Dutchmen Hondius and Blaeu. A peculiarity of many of the maps of this type is the duplication of place-names: the large island of Qishm may be more or less on its correct place, but is also found on the coast of the Arabian

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11 Jan Huygen van Linschoten, *Itinerario* (first edition, Amsterdam 1596), map of the Indian Ocean opposite p. 10. Tibbetts, *Arabia*, pp. 54-56, attributes this map to Langren who only was the engraver of the printing plate.

12 Some manuscript charts of the Gulf of the Dutch East India Company are now in the map department of the ARA, VEL 220-222 and 864-866. Another chart is in the Leiden University Library (printed in Hotz, ‘Roobacker’, map 5). The oldest known Dutch chart of the Gulf, dating from the expedition of 1645 is in the Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe, Artus Gijssels papers no. 478. A small Dutch atlas with several charts of parts of the Gulf of c. 1650 is in the British Library Additional Manuscripts 34184. This atlas seems to have belonged to a director of the Dutch East India Company, and derives from Portuguese examples, like the chart by Teixeira Albeniz printed in A. Coreoteño and A. Teixeira de Mota, *Tabularum geographicarum specimen*, plate XXIX.

13 Thornton, *English pilot*, 3rd book, chart of the Gulf behind p. 34, and the manuscript version of it in De la Roncière, *Les Portolans*, plate 99, show in the soundings around Qishm and near the Musandam peninsula a depend-

14 Johannes van Keulen, *De nieuwe lichtende Zee-façel*, vol. 6 (Amsterdam 1753), chart of the Gulf. The atlas was reprinted in 1966, the chart is also reproduced in Slot, *Origins*, plate 28.

15 Manuscript-atlas De Haan, vol. 2 (ARA, VELH 156), chart 138 (entire Gulf with a detailed view of the bay of Muscat and Matrah).

16 *A chart of the Gulf of Persia... of Captain Wainwright*, published by the Hydrographic Office in 1820. A copy in ARA, MICAL 4174.

17 A facsimile of Gastaldi’s map is printed in Tibbetts, *Arabia*, p. 45.
peninsula in the form of Queximi. In the second half of the seventeenth century, partly inspired by nautical charts, partly by the reference to geographical works like those of Teixeira and Balbi, maps containing slight improvements were produced by the Dutchman Vingboons and the Frenchman Sanson. Later geographical maps, like those by the Dutchman Frederik de Wit and the Frenchman De l’Isle, came even more close to the nautical charts, containing fewer names of non-existing places. Homann and Ottens basically used the maps by De Wit and De l’Isle, but brought some improvements. The large map of Persia and the Ottoman Empire by the Ottens brothers is the best product of the traditional European cartography of the Gulf before Niebuhr. It is not innovative in technique, but it is a very complete compilation of available geographical knowledge. These later maps show a marked amelioration in the shapes of the coasts. Most of the coastal place names have been taken from the nautical charts while the interior has become less fabulous thanks to some early travels to Mecca. Tibbetts, in his history of the cartography of Arabia, gives much praise to the French map by d’Arville, but this is not completely justified as far as the coastal area of the Gulf is concerned: for this area d’Arville mostly copies older maps. In the second half of the eighteenth century the

map by Niebuhr appeared, which claims to be based on English nautical charts which manifestly in their turn were based on manuscript Dutch nautical charts. Niebuhr’s map also mentions the names of many tribes living on the coasts of the Gulf.

the population pattern

The countries along the Gulf were very sparsely inhabited. It was a poor area, there was little land for agriculture. Because of these meagre economic prospects, most people living there had to lead a nomadic way of life. The Western part of the coast of the Arab peninsula, a desert with salt marshes, scarcely offered occasion for stable places of habitation apart from a few inland oasis. On the coast, there were temporary camps of pearl fishers, many of which later developed into permanent settlements. To the East, where the mountain range of Oman approached the coast, there were a few valleys ending in small bays where places of permanent habitation for peasants and fishermen could exist. These were humble little towns or villages. Some of the larger of them had stone houses and a small fortress for the local Shaikh. The poorer places only had palm-frond huts and a mud fortress. It seems that especially around the Musandam area, some coastal places were more prosperous in the sixteenth century than they were in later periods.

On the Northern side of the Gulf, the situation was not much different. There were slightly more, larger patches of habitation and there was more prosperity. The small towns and villages were like islands, separated by sea, mountains or desert. Because of the lack of communications, they each had their own history, their own tribal life and a strong spirit of independence. Not knowing their neighbours well, they distrusted them. In their poverty and in the dangerous vicinity of the large neighbour Persia, they fiercely tried to

18 Ortelius, Theatrum (Antwerp 1570), map of the Ottoman Empire and Mercator, Atlas sive Cosmographia (Amsterdam 1607), maps of Persia and the Ottoman Empire. The maps of Arabia and Persia in Blaeu’s Atlas Major, vol. Asia (ARA, AKF 2) are the most elaborate examples of this type. Later Dutch editions of Mercator’s atlas seem to have used Portuguese maps and add some relevant place names like ‘Roccaluma’ which stands for Ras al Khaima: Janssonius and Hondius’s edition of Mercator’s atlas (Amsterdam 1636), map of the Ottoman Empire (Turcici imperii imago).
19 Sanson’s map of Arabia (Arabie pétée, déserte et heureuse...) appeared in 1652. Later editions bearing Sanson’s name often are compilations of different French and Dutch maps, like the ones in ARA, TOPO atlases no. 25-27. Vingboons’s map which is a Blaeu map with additions based on nautical charts is in ARA, VELH 619, map 10. Frederik de Wit’s map (like the one in ARA, TOPO atlas 3) is partly based on the Dutch tradition, partly on Sanson. De l’Isle’s maps became interesting after 1720, the first French editions of 1701 contributed nothing new.
20 A reproduction in Slot, Origins, plates 17 and 19.
21 Tibbetts, Arabia, pp. 31 and 166. On p. 165 a facsimile of d’Anville’s map.
22 C. Niebuhr, Beschreibung, tab. XIX.
23 Description of the ‘temporary villages’ of the fishermen in Balbi, Viaggi, p. 121.
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maintain their freedom of movement. When danger became too great the inhabitants took to their ships and left for a safer place. Nomads on ships or camels travelled between them, allying themselves first with one party, then with another. It must have been very difficult to get these small isolated tribes to cooperate for the common interest. Communications between them were difficult and borderlines in uninhabited areas were not clearly defined. This lack of fixed delimitations must have been a principal reason for the frequent conflicts between tribes.

The coastal area of the Gulf was inhabited by Arab tribes. On the Persian coast, there were only a few patches of Iranian population, mainly around the principal ports and in Tangistan. The Mandaeans (Subba) minority of Lower Iraq, a group of a few thousand, were the only autochthon non-Muslim population. Christians from Europe and a few Christians from Portuguese India were only temporary residents. The European establishments attracted some native Ottoman and Persian Christians, who served as interpreters and brokers. The number of Christian churches in the area was small. There were some churches in the principal Portuguese colonial establishments. Basra was the only town which throughout the centuries had a (mainly Armenian) Christian population. The Catholic church on Kharg during the period of Dutch rule served a community of refugees from Persia and Iraq and had no stable local basis. The Protestant powers never tried to establish a religious organization in the area during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.25

24 Kniphausen report, fol.1-1v (=Floor, 'Description', p. 165).
25 Systematic details on most of the Catholic churches of the Gulf are given in Chronicle, vol. 2, pp. 1029-1065.

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interior of Persia, first by a marshy zone and then by a desert which stretch eastward from the Shatt al Arab for about 100 kilometers up to the start of a mountain range which runs along the coast. This longitudinal range is only broken up by a transverse valley in only a few places, permitting narrow roads to ascend upwards to the heartland of Persia. Such valleys permitted merchants and soldiers to move from the interior to the coast, but during the period covered by this book, only three such roads were practicable. The most Western road rounded the head of the coastal range near Bushahr and then crossed other ranges before reaching Shiraz. The other roads inland were situated far to the East. The first started at Linga and Bandar Kong, opposite the western extremity of Qishm Island and crossed the mountains to Lar, and from there went to Shiraz. Two roads started opposite the island of Hormuz at Bandar Abbas, one, running through a valley behind a range of coastal hills, then joined the road from Bandar Kong to Lar, the other going up to Kerman. Finally a road parallel to the coast joined Bandar Abbas to Minab and Jask.

The coastal mountain range made all overland transport along the coast impossible. Transport from the interior to the coastal area was difficult because the roads through the desolate mountain ranges were liable to be blocked by guerilla warfare. Themountainous part of the coast had many small inlets which could not easily be reached overland. Populations of sailors and fishermen could develop there without much interference from central authorities. In the Eastern part of the Gulf, a string of islands stretches from the 53° meridian along the Northern coast. These islands were populated by the same Arab tribes as the coast, and were difficult to reach by the Persian central authorities who usually lacked naval means of their own. For ventures in the Gulf, the Persians had to borrow means of transport either from Arab tribal chiefs or from the European nations established at Bandar Abbas.

The top of the Gulf is an area highly susceptible to physical and political changes. The course of rivers has changed, the coastline has been shifting to the South-East because of depositions of silt, and the border between Persia and the Ottoman Empire has also moved between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries. In the seven-
In the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century, the border between Ottoman Iraq and Persia ran considerably more to the East than now: instead of the Shatt al Arab, the Karun-i Amiye (or Shatt al Ama) and the Khor Musa were the border rivers. This means that the islands of Khidr between the Shatt al Arab and the Bamishir (on which the modern port of Abadan is situated) and Quban between the Bamishir and the Karun-i Amiye were Ottoman territory.

It is not clear when the Shatt al Arab actually became the border river. During the seventeenth century the Bamishir and not the shallow Shatt al Arab was the principal road for shipping between the Gulf and Basra. The Bamishir at that time got its water from the upper Shatt al Arab, not from the Upper Karun as is the present situation. The waters of the Upper Karun ran at that time independently to the Gulf by way of the Karun-i Amiye and the Khor Musa.

27 Hotz, ‘Roobacker’, pp. 342-348. The map by Roobacker in Badische Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe clearly shows the Shatt al Arab closed by shallows and the Bamishir as the route for shipping.


29 A chart of 1753 (J. van Keulen, Zee-facten, chart of the Gulf) shows the Shatt al Arab as principal way of access to Basra.

30 The English Basra Diary vol. 197, pp. 371 (9-4-1767) mentions that Quban [Dawraq island] is Ottoman territory. Dawraq [Fallahiya] has always been Persian.

31 In 1623, according to a Portuguese document published in Cordeiro, Deis Capitans, p. 87, the Ottomans defeated a Persian attack on their border fortress of Dawraq on the island of Quban. A later reference to Dawraq as an Ottoman stronghold in ARA, VOC vol. 9099, Dutch Basra diary of 18-9-1725.

recognized Dawraq as being Ottoman territory as late as 1767. 33 After 1760, there were many conflicts between the Ka‘b and the Ottoman government of Basra. This tribe became a naval power in the Gulf and threatened the shipping of Basra. In the cause of this conflict the Ka‘b, seeking Persian help, gradually became Persian subjects. 34 When the border between the Ottoman Empire and Persia was finally drawn in the nineteenth century, the tribal allegiance of the Ka‘b to Persia was an important factor in the considerations.

Inland in the country around the Karun, the area of Huwayza (Ahwaz) was a powerful Arab principality. This principality, which officially was a Persian province, was ruled by the independently-minded Al Mushasha family. It acted as a buffer-state between Persia and the Ottoman Empire. 35 Huwayza barely reached the Gulf. The Persian coast of both the Upper and Lower Gulf usually constituted one large province, Faristan, the capital of which was Shiraz. At other times, there were several smaller provinces with Governors residing in Bushahr, Lar and Shiraz.

On the short coastal stretch belonging to Arabistan on the Northern side of the Khor Musa, somewhat above the location of the actual Bandar Shalpur (probably a relatively modern settlement) there is Bandar Mashur which is mentioned on maps of the eighteenth century. Kniphausen remarks on it in 1756 that it had been inhabited by ‘pirates who marauded in the Basra-river’, but they had been chased away and it was nearly deserted in his time. 36 The next place

33 EBD vol. 197, p. 22 (9-8-1767): letter by Karim Khan.
34 EBD vol. 197, p. 371 (9-4-1767) ‘The Ka‘b is originally a subject of the Turk and has for many years possessed a considerable territory within their dominions bordering upon the Persian Empire... After the death of Nadir Shah in the trouble...he also got parts of territory in Persia and now is subject of both powers’. The change of allegiance by the Ka‘b is discussed in Perry, Karim Khan, pp. 161-16, but not always correctly because Perry did not use the English Basra diary in the Bombay archives.
35 W. Caskel, ‘Die Wall’s von Huweze’ Islamica 6 (1934), pp. 415-434; Lockhart, Fall of the Safavid-dynasty, pp. 53-554, 132-134.
36 ARA, Amw. 1e afd. 1889, 23b, fol. 9v; English translation in Floor, ‘Description’, p. 175.
37 Kniphausen report, fol. 9v (= Floor, ‘Description’ p. 175). It is mentioned in Thévenot, Suite du Voyage, pp. 301-302, halfway the seventeenth century, as a place belonging to the Persian Khan of Shiraz.
38 Dutch atlas of about 1650 in Bl, Add. mss. 34184. Portuguese charts in Cortesão, Monumenta vol. 4, p. 397.
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Ottoman document of 1701. The Utub, a tribe of pearl divers which had migrated from the Arabian peninsula, lived there at the end of the seventeenth century before moving again and founding Kuwait. Kniphausen described them in 1756 as poor fishermen and pearl divers. There was not much trade because of continuous disturbances caused by discord between the local Shaikhs. One of the three Shaikhs of the place, called ‘Taan,’ was a trader and was trying to put some economic life into the area.

Beyond Daylam, a mountain range near the coast called Kuh-i Bang was an important landmark to European sailors. Ganaveh, about 75 km. down the coast from Daylam on a small creek, was first mentioned by Kniphausen. It was inhabited by a tribe of Persian peasants, and Kniphausen did not like them; he calls them ‘a very perfidious and rapacious nation’. In Kniphausen’s time, the Arab ruler of Ganaveh, Qayd Hathir, was trying to divert trade from Bandar Rig to Ganaveh. He owned some ships and he played a certain role in naval policy in the Gulf in the 1750’s.

Beyond Ganaveh on a distance of about 30 km. lies Bandar Rig, the first important port on the Northern bank of the Gulf. Its inhabitants belonged to a tribe of Omani origin, the Zaaab, who also lived on the Southern bank of the Gulf on the Jazirat al Hamra near Jufar. Already in the seventeenth century, the European trade companies were thinking about trade there. In Rig, wheat might be bought which could be sold at a profit elsewhere. The English arrived there as early as 1645 and the Dutch in 1688. About 1700 it seems to have been a prosperous place, but then it declined. In the 1750’s the English again planned a settlement in Rig. The fortunes of the place varied greatly. Sometimes it took advantage of a favourable international situation, at other moments, local trouble caused a marked decline. Its ruling family was subject to bloody vendettas, which were detrimental to the prosperity of the place.

The two islands of Kharg and Khargu belonged to the Ruler of Bandar Rig. Kharg was inhabited by a tribe of sailors who acted as pilots to European ships on the channel to Basra. European travellers visited Kharg since the sixteenth century, but their remarks about the place usually are very summary. When, in the later half of the eighteenth century, the towns which still kept some economic interest for Europeans (Basra and Bandar Abbas) began to grow unsafe, the Europeans showed interest in establishing themselves on the island. The Dutch did so in 1755 and built the fortress of Mosenstein, the ruins of which were until recently clearly visible. After the Chief of the Zaab had conquered the Dutch fortress in 1765, the English and the French showed some interest in settling there, but this never happened. Khargu was small and insignificant.

Down the coast from there is an area of considerable importance for the economy of the Gulf. From this area runs one of the two roads which connect the interior of Persia with the Gulf. For a long time during the seventeenth century, this road had only a limited economic function. It served for the transport of goods which were then forwarded to Basra. As long as Basra remained a semi-independent principality, this trade went on, while the European trade with Persia used the Oriental road to Bandar Abbas. In the course of the eighteenth century, when Bandar Abbas went into decline, the western road also became important for European trade and it was, from the middle of the eighteenth century, the main outlet of the international trade of Persia. There were two towns in this area: Rishahr and Bushahr. Rishahr on a cape was an old town, which

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43 There are references to the vicissitudes in the Dutch reports from Kharg, and especially in the Kniphausen report, fol.7v-8 (=Floor, ‘Description’, pp. 172-174). The history of the English settlement in Amin, British interests, pp. 35-38.
45 The history of the Dutch settlement of Kharg will be treated in chapters 9-10. The English plan in IOL FR 29/7 p.30 (9-10-1750). The French plan in ANP AE B1, Correspondence Consulaire, Basra vol. 1, fol. 259-259v.
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declined in the course of the seventeenth century. On the Portuguese maps of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Rishahr is shown as the only large place to the northwest of Hormuz. In 1632 it was still mentioned as a centre of pearl diving. Its Governor tried in 1645 to arrange the establishment of a European company in his district.46

A little to the west of Rishahr, Bushahr became the most important port of Persia in the course of the eighteenth century. It was an Arab settlement. The English planned an establishment in Bushahr as early as 1727.47 The Dutch Company settled there in 1737 and the English Company opened a residence in 1763.48 According to Kniphhausen, the inhabitants of Bushahr belonged to an Omani Arab tribe, the ‘Abu Mehair’ (who came from beyond Muscat). Niebuhr is more specific (but as usual, we do not know if his data are fully accurate). He refers to three tribes: ‘Shambe’, ‘Aumher’ (the Abu Mehair of Kniphhausen) and Matarish. Niebuhr writes that the former two had lived for so long in Bushahr, that their origin was unknown, but that the Matarish had migrated recently to Bushahr from Oman and took on the government of the place.49 In reality this was not so very long before the visit of Niebuhr to the Gulf in 1764: Shaikh Madhkur, the father of the Matarish Shaikh of Niebuhr’s time is referred to in Dutch documents as the local authority in Bushahr as early as 1736. Possibly, the two settled tribes may have

46 An example of Portuguese maps with ‘Rixel’ as a large town is the atlas of Sebastião Lopez, printed in Cortesão, Monumenta, vol. 4 p. 397. References to Rishahr as a centre of pearl diving in ARA, VOC vol. 1113, fol. 225v. According to the diary of the Dutch expedition to Basra of that time, Dawud Khan, the governor of Rishahr was trying to attract European trade to his town: ARA, Geleynssen de Jongh papers no. 280c: Dutch Basra diary on the date of 16-8-1646. Correspondence of the Dutch with Dawud Khan in ARA, Geleynssen de Jongh, no. 100.

47 ARA, VOC vol. 2088, fol. 3413v.


49 Kniphhausen report fol. 6v-7 (=Floor, ‘Description’, p. 170). Niebuhr, Beschreibung, pp. 315-316.
are some small ports on this coast which were ruled by Arab shaikhs; the oldest mentions of Arabs of these places are usually to be found in Carré's voyage. Proceeding from East to West on this mountainous coast we first find Kangun, a rather large place, which developed into a trading town of some importance after 1750. It is already mentioned on a manuscript Dutch nautical chart of the middle of the seventeenth century. It had a population of quiet traders and pearl divers of the Nasur tribe who did not often take part in disturbances in the Gulf in the eighteenth century. These Nasur were the most Western tribe of a group called Huwala.

The Huwala, frequent mentions of whom can be found in sources of the eighteenth century, were a group of tribes of the Northern coasts of the Lower Gulf. They were marine nomads, sailors and fishermen. The name Huwala seems to have been a common denominator used by outsiders to indicate certain Arab tribes of the Lower Gulf. These tribes were different in their religious affiliation (some were Shafi'i Sunnis, but most Hanbali Sunnis) and also divided by tribal feuds. This may suggest that the name Huwala was just an easy way to indicate a group of very different Sunni tribes living on the Lower Gulf. Nevertheless, there existed a clear consciousness of belonging to the Huwala or not. For instance, the Banu Ma'in, who lived between the Huwala, did not consider themselves as Huwala. It should be stressed that during the eighteenth century, the term Huwala was used in a different sense than it is now. The eighteenth century Huwala were Sunni Arabs, strongly attached to their customs and liberty, who had migrated from the Arabian peninsula to the Persian coast of the Lower Gulf. In present times, the name Huwala is used in the Gulf States for all kinds of immigrants from the Persian Southern coast who may have little to do with the original Huwala. In this book, the term Huwala is exclusively used with its old meaning. In the early nineteenth century a legend was recorded which suggests a common origin of these different tribes: a monster named Hul was said to have had four sons with a daughter of an Arab fishermen of the area of Bandar Abbas. The sons were called Qasim, Nasir, Ahmad and Sabuhil. All their descendants together were called 'Ben Hul'.

East from there, in Tahiri, lived a very powerful Huwala group, also called Nasur. According to Niebuhr, these Nasur were a branch of the Al Haram, a Huwala group which lived more to the East. The Nasur of Tahiri were not related with the Nasur of Kangun. Their leaders played an important part in the events during the period of the collapse of Persia in the first half of the eighteenth century. The European ships rarely approached these parts. Down to Cape Na-

55 The oldest map on which Kangun is marked is the chart made by the Dutch Basra expedition of 1645 in the Landesbibliothek of Karlsruhe (private papers of the VOC official Artus Gijzels no. 478). It is also on the maps following Sanson. A nineteenth century plan of Kangun can be found on the British admiralty map of the Gulf of 1820: ARA, MCAL 4714.
56 Kangun is best described in the Kniphausen report fol. 5 (Floor, Description, p. 170). Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 314 (a few words, literally derived from the Kniphausen report). Kangun first appears of maps of the Sanson tradition and remains on it through the De Wit and Ottens versions. The oldest mention of Arabs in Kangun is in Carré, Travels, vol. 3, p. 824.

57 Malcolm, Sketches of Persia, pp. 15-16.
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band, they steered clear from the coast to avoid the dangerous shallow water around Cape Bardistan. 58

In this area, there is some confusion on early European charts and descriptions concerning a place ‘Chiloe’. Near Tahiri, they recorded a place called ‘Chiru’, while more to the East, near Cape Naband, they charted a place ‘Shilau’. Also more to the East, there is a rather important place Nakihu. These seem to have been freely mixed up in old maps and descriptions. Carré calls ‘Chiru’ ‘Chitru’, ‘Shilau’ ‘Chejlo’ (the French ch is pronounced as sh and Nakihu ‘Kailo’). 59

Beyond Cape Naband is the territory of a tribe called Al Haram, who were active pearl divers. The Al Haram acquired the island of Bahrain during the first half of the eighteenth century. In the eighteenth century, their westernmost village was Shilau, while Asalu was their most important settlement. The name Asalu is already mentioned in a Dutch document of 1632 as the name of a pearlbank.

On a manuscript nautical chart of the Dutch East India Company of the late seventeenth century it is mentioned as a place, together with another place of the Al Haram, Nabon. Asalu was visited in 1672 by the French traveler Carré, who gives a description of the place. 60 One Portuguese source refers to this area as a tribe, hostile to them, which attacked their shipping, called Nutaqui. It is not clear which tribe is meant here, and some Portuguese sources put them much lower in the Gulf in the area of Jask. According to the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle, this tribe often used the island Laraq as their base. 61

The coast east of Cape Naband is steep, with few inhabitants. The next inlet is at Nakihu. In the eighteenth century, this place, together with the islands Sittau and Sakh Suaib belonged to a tribe of the Huwala group. The name of this tribe is not mentioned in our sources, but there can be no doubt that it is the Ubuydi. Nakihu was already an important port in the early seventeenth century. It is mentioned in some documents with the name Nicolo. Probably the ‘Chilao’ which figures as a large place on some Portuguese maps is to be identified with Nakihu. 62 It seems to have been one of the points where ships from Surat brought products destined to be carried by caravans to Syria and from there by ship to Western Europe. Possibly, its importance in the beginning of the seventeenth century was due to the blocking of the Basra-Aleppo trade road by wars between Persia and Turkey. Carré visited Nakihu in 1672. At that time, the Shaiks of the place had already ceased to acknowledge the authority of the Shah, which they only had recognized since the beginning of the seventeenth century. The inhabitants were then at war with sailors from Southern Iraq, Rig and Bushahr over the pearl bank. 63 It is mentioned in an early Portuguese source that when Persian authority began to extend to the coast, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, part of the population migrated to Sir on the opposite coast. 64

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58 Tahiri is mentioned as a dwelling place of Arabs by Carré (Voyage vol. 3 p. 824. More details in the Kniphausen report fol. 4 v (=Floor, ‘Description’, p. 169).

59 ‘Chiru’ as such is first seen on Ottens’s map in Slot, Origins, plate 18. In the early nineteenth century, it was already desert: Brucks in Bombay Selections, pp. xxiv, 591. It is not probable that Chiru is identical with the Chilu, which is a large place on early Portuguese maps, although confusion may have been caused by the difficulties the Portuguese have in distinguishing L and R.

60 Kniphausen’s report fol. 4 v (=Floor, ‘Description’, pp. 168-169). Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 314, is very summary but on pp. 330-331 some interesting but probably not completely reliable details about the history of the Al Haram rule over Bahrain. Carré, Travels, vol. 3, p. 832 is the most detailed early text on Asalu. VOC vol. 1113, fol. 225v. mentions Asalu as a centre of pearl divers, already in 1632. It figures on early Dutch maps: ARA VEL 220. The important place ‘Chilau’ on early Portuguese maps probably is not Shilau but Nakihu.


62 Some very early mentions of the port of ‘Nicolou’ are in Dunlop, Bronnen, pp. 147, 234 and ARA, VOC vol. 1113, fol. 225v. Early Portuguese sources mention already depredations by Nakihu sailors (apparently Arabs) against the shipping of Hormuz: Balbi (ed. Pinto), p. 222; Teixeira, Travels, pp. xx, 20-22, 62, 176, 177; Relações, pp. 232-333. It was visited by Carré who gives some details on the Arabics there (Travels, vol. 1 pp. 96-102).


East of the inlet of Nakhilu, the coast becomes steep again. There is a large inlet at Sharak. This place, with the nearby island Qays, was inhabited by a tribe called Al Ali. This tribe is the same as that living on the Southern coast of the Gulf in the territory of the present Emirates of Sharjah and Ajman, and according to some authors related to the Al Ali of Oman. The Al Ali tribe are mentioned on this coast in the first half of the eighteenth century, but they were already in the Ras al Khaima area early in the seventeenth century. Sharak was visited by Carré in 1672 (it was at that time an Arab place belonging to Persia) and it is mentioned on a Dutch manuscript nautical chart of the late seventeenth century as a place where ships could obtain fresh water, while the 1645 Dutch expedition to Basra reported that Qays was an island with palm trees where they saw a small town. It also appears on the early eighteenth century printed maps. The first reference to the Arab tribe there is by Carré in 1672. There are several later references. The place and the tribe are described in 1756 by Kniphaulsen and in 1765 by Niebuhr. There is a view of Sharak on the British admiral chart of 1820. Down the coast from Sharak there are the two small ports of Mughu and Ras al Jerd, which are mentioned by Niebuhr, the former is also mentioned in the Kniphaulsen report. According to this report, Mughu and the nearby island of Hindurabi were populated by a tribe which had been weakened at that time (1756) by long wars and were now subordinate to the Al Ali of Sharak. This tribe is not mentioned by name in Niebuhr or in the Kniphaulsen report.

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65 First mention of Sharak on ARA, VEL 220.
66 Ottens in Slot, Origins, plate 17.
68 Kniphaulsen report fol.3v-4 (=Floor, 'Description', p. 168). Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 314 only mentions that the Al Ali are the principal carriers of firewood and that they are the most valiant of the Huwala. A sort reference to Qays in Hotz, 'Roodecker' 362-363. Reference to the Al Ali in Oman in Scoville, Gazetteer, 172.
69 ARA, MCAL 4714.
70 Kniphaulsen report fol. 4 (=Floor, 'Description', p. 168); Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 314. Niebuhr remarks (Beschreibung, p. 328) that the inhabitants of Mughu withdrew to Farur when Mughu was threatened by enemies.

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East from there is a broad stretch of low land, which is separated from the Gulf by the long island of Qishm which runs for 110 km. parallel to the coast. A narrow passage, the Clarence Strait or on the Dutch charts Qishm channel, separates the island of Qishm from the mainland. Near the entrance of the passage lived the Marazik tribe which halfway through the eighteenth century had two places: Linga and the old trading town of Bandar Kong.

Bandar Kong gradually became deserted after the Omani had plundered it a few times in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Before the Omani attacks, Bandar Kong had been one of the most important ports on the Gulf. It then had a Portuguese establishment and even for a short time Dutch and English residences. During the seventeenth century, while Bandar Abbas was the focus of English and Dutch trade, most trade of non-Omani Arabs and people from India concentrated in Bandar Kong. One English source of the seventeenth century mentions that it was a better-built town than Bandar Abbas. Bandar Kong almost disappeared during the first half of the eighteenth century, while Linga later became an important place. Bandar Kong is mentioned in 1756 as a completely ruined place, which then belonged to the Shaikh of the Marazik, but Niebuhr observed ten years later that Linga belonged to the Shaikh of the Qawasim of Ras al Khaima on the opposite side of the Gulf. Kong was forgotten and later authors reading the Portuguese name Congo tended to confuse it with Kangan.

Already in the early seventeenth century, three places are mentioned on the island of Qishm, Basidu on the western end, Laft...
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halfway up Clarence Strait and Qishm or Broct on the eastern end opposite Hormuz. The Shah of Hormuz had rich possessions on the island. A Dutch report on Qishm of 1645 even mentions the existence of sixty small villages on this island. The Portuguese built a fortress on Qishm of which we have a good drawing in the archives of the Dutch East India Company. The town of Qishm itself, near the fortress, originally was a Hormuzian settlement, usually called Broct. Later, it was a Persian garrison town. In the eighteenth century the tribal situation on Qishm was that at first, the most powerful tribe was the Banu Ma'in, a large tribe of sailors and fishermen, who were based on Laft. In 1756, Laft was conquered by the ruler of Ras al Khaima, who settled members of the Al Haram tribe in the area. These were also sailors and fishermen.

Situated opposite Bandar Kong the westernmost town of Qishm, Basidu, developed about the year 1720 as a growing harbour and as a settlement of a very important Huwala leader, Rashid. According to a questionable and probably erroneous reference in Lorimer’s Gazetteer, this Rashid was supposed to be an Al Qasimi from Ras al Khaima on the other side of the Gulf. Maybe this Rashid had migrated to Basidu from Bandar Kong about 1720. According to Dutch sources, the economic importance of Basidu was brought about by traders from Bandar Kong, Ras al Khaima and Muscat who had established themselves there. Dutch sources imply that there was some kind of relationship between Basidu and Ras al Khaima. This and the fact that later Basidu and the opposite coast of Persia are known as the place where most of the Qawasim lived is insufficient support for the unproven assertion by Lorimer that Rashid was an Al Qasimi. Near Qishm, the small uninhabited island Hienjian was considered in 1752 for a fortified settlement of the English East India Company.

The rather barren island of Laranq had only one village where there was a Hormuzan or Portuguese fortress. A view of this fortress exists on an English admiralty chart, where it is mentioned as a Dutch fortress. There is a mention by a contemporary traveller that the Dutch had started to build a fortress on Laranq, but had stopped the works after Persian protests. Later the Persians completed this fortress. There is no confirmation for this story in Dutch documents. Another contemporary traveller mentions that the Dutch commander Wolebrand Geleysnse de Jong had a garden there in 1645.

76 The Dutch report on Qishm in ARA, VEL 866. This document also contains a detailed drawing of the fortress. A small engraving, showing the Dutch attack on the fortress, can be found in the memoirs of one of the participants in the expedition: Behr, Diarium, next to p. 70; description of the attack ibid. pp. 70-74. A small view of the fortress on the map of the Gulf in Kaempler, Annalitae Exoticae, p. 764, is connected with the Dutch conquest of it in 1681.
77 Aubin, 'Royaume d’Ormuz', p. 221.
81 Relaşiones p. 349.
82 The ties between Ras al Khaima and Basidu in ARA, VOC vol. 2016 (Persia part 1), fol. 109.
The island was inhabited by Shihuh, a somewhat mysterious Arab people which lived in the Musandam peninsula. The even more barren island of Hormuz was the centre of the widespread kingdom of this name which was, since 1514, a tributary of the Portuguese crown. Until it was conquered by a coalition of English and Persians, it was by far the most important centre of trade in the Gulf. It originally had, like all ports of such importance, a very mixed population of which Arabs were the main element. The island had no reliable supply of water, it depended on wells, either on the opposite coast near Bandar Abbas or on Qishm. After the fall of the fortress in 1622, the Persians kept it more or less in a state of defence but the town lost its importance for trade. In the eighteenth century, the island was dominated by the officers of the Persian garrison of the fortress. After Nadir Shah's death, it soon came under the domination of Arab officers of the Persian navy and was virtually independent and later it became a possession of the Banu Ma'in.

North-East from there, on the other extremity of the passage between Qishm and the mainland lies Bandar Abbas. Nearby is the place where in the early Middle Ages the old city of Hormuz was situated. Old Hormuz was deserted because of the dangers of attacks from the interior and a new city was re-established on the island of Hormuz. Originally there was, on the place of present Bandar Abbas, a Hormuzian fortress called Gamru (or Comorão in Portuguese). The Persians built some other fortresses there early in the seventeenth century. The big new town of Bandar Abbas was built since 1622, but the English and the Dutch kept calling the place by its original name: Ghamroon in Dutch, Gombooroon in English. This town had a very mixed population of Arabs (maybe for a large part people originating from Hormuz), Persians, Armenians, people from various regions of India and Jews. Several clear engravings and drawings connected with the Dutch East India Company exist of this place and of the Dutch establishment there. The oldest is in the travel of Pieter van den Broecke, the Dutch director in Surat who organized the first Dutch expedition to Persia in 1623. Artistically the best is the one by Cornelis de Bruyn of 1704. The original water-colour drawing of this is in the Dutch State Archives. The town had no really strong fortifications and in troubled times it was open to all kinds of invaders. After the death of Nadir Shah in 1747, the town changed hands several times until it was rented by the Imam of Muscat.

The interior of Persia behind the coast in the Lower Gulf was divided between two Persian administrative districts: Farsistan or the province of Shiraz, to which the area of Bandar Abbas and Hormuz belonged and Laristan which covered the area West of Bandar Abbas, even including Bandar Kong. Of the two, Laristan

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90 Boxer, Ruy Freyre, pp. xxi-xxii. A plan of the Portuguese fortress of Hormuz made by the Dutch in c. 1728 in ARA, VOC vol. 2091, fol. 4957.
92 Pieter van den Broecke (ed. Coolhaas) vol. 2 next to p. 333; Struys, Voyages view of the situation in 1672 between pp. 364 and 365; De Bruyn, Reizen, view between pp. 348 and 349 (the original water-colour drawing on which this engraving is based in ARA, Maps and Drawings Department, AANW, 1891 194a. Other views in Heydt, Schau- platz, beside p. 292 and in ARA, VEL 864. Two detailed plans of the Dutch establishment in Bandar Abbas of c. 1708 and c. 1728 in ARA, VEL 865 and ARA, VOC vol. 2091, fol. 4956. The Dutch establishment is still to be seen on modern plans in Schweizer, Bandar Abbas and Hormuz, beside p. 16.
93 Lorimer, Gazetteer, Geographical part vol. 1 p. 9.
also had in the interior a mixed population, with some Arab tribes not only on the coast, but also inland, who played an important part in the political disturbances in Persia in the first half of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{94}

The Southern area of Farsistan was inhabited by semi-nomadic elements who were not well controlled by the Persian authorities. Trade between the coast and the interior was much hampered by banditry.\textsuperscript{95} The inability of the Persian governors to control their own territory was harmful to the economy of the trading Arab society on the coast; the impoverishment caused by anarchy in the interior may partially account for the unrest among the Arabs. Persian authorities in Laristan often were more positive in their attitude to the economic activities in the coastal area than were the authorities in Shiraz. There are many complaints about extortions committed by Shiraz and Bandar Abbas authorities, compared with the more liberal attitude in Lar and Bandar Kong.\textsuperscript{96}

The coast to the East of Bandar Abbas was infrequently visited by Europeans. There were a few trading places. Minab, just East of Bandar Abbas was a place where there was some local shipping. All this area often suffered from attacks from nearby Baluchi tribes, who were, according to a mention on ancient charts a ferocious people ('gens ferox et bellicosus').\textsuperscript{97} The town of Jask on the Makran coast played a role in the early seventeenth century when the Gulf itself was closed to the English. For a few years the English had an establishment there which they left for Bandar Abbas when that town became the concentration point of the silk trade. Some views of the coasts of the area can be found in a Dutch manuscript of 1644.\textsuperscript{98} Smaller towns were Kuhistaq and Khor Ibrahim, the latter place declined after having been plundered by the Portuguese in the early seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{99}

the Southern Coast.

Most of the Southern coast of the Gulf remained unknown territory to the Europeans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The entire area between Basra and Sir is rather low, just desert bordering to the sea, at many places separated from it by salt-marshes. Europeans hardly ever set foot on land outside the main ports; there is only one case known of an overland travel along the coast. As a consequence, information on the inland area is scarce.

Our description starts with Basra. Situated on both sides of a creek at the right bank of the Shatt al Arab at some distance from the Gulf, Basra probably was the largest town near the Gulf. On maps of the seventeenth century, the Gulf is sometimes called 'Gulf of Basra'.\textsuperscript{100} It was the point where the merchandise brought from India by Arab, Surati and European ships was loaded on caravans to Aleppo. Also it was an important concentration point for pilgrim caravans to Mecca. The town is described in many sources. The best Dutch description, with a plan of the town, is by Nicolaas de Graaff. Another plan of the town is in the map collection of the Dutch East India Company. Ottoman control over the town was not very effective: connections between Istanbul and Basra were often bad because the traffic on the rivers of Iraq was interrupted either by Arab tribes at war with the Sultan or by wars between the Ottoman Empire and Persia. The town and its direct surroundings were also a disputed area and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries changed hands several times: direct Ottoman administration, semi-autonomy under a local family, Arab tribal chiefs or the Persians. There sometimes was heavy pressure on Basra by more or less independent Arab tribes from the marshy area around it (the Ka'b

\textsuperscript{94} 'Lar, Laristan' by Jean Calmard in \textit{El}, vol. 5, pp. 665-676.
\textsuperscript{95} ARA, Hoge Regering vol. 877: report by Van Reede, chapter 8.
\textsuperscript{96} Reference to the difference in Foster, \textit{English Factories}(1661-1664), p. 31.
\textsuperscript{97} The mention on the Ottens map in Slot, \textit{Ortius}, plate 18.
\textsuperscript{98} Reports by English travellers in Purchas, \textit{Pilgrinages}, vol. 1, pp. 606-608 (by Alexander Childs). Drawings of the coastline in the logbook of the Zee-meeruw, ARA, Geelynsen de Jongh papers no. 280 and in the atlas by De Haan, VEL 156, chart 13b.
\textsuperscript{99} Ruy Freire, Commentarios, pp. 252-253; Boxer, \textit{Ruy Freire}, p. 194-195.
\textsuperscript{100} This name is first seen on a map by Sansson (L' Arabie pérée, déserte et heureuse, 1652) and from this map the mention is reproduced on Dutch maps.
in the East and the Muntafiaq of the North-West) and finally the Persians.\textsuperscript{101} When the situation at Basra was peaceful for some time, there was a considerable prosperity and much trade. For a long time, the Portuguese were the only Europeans who had a fixed establishment, but after 1640 the English, the Dutch and the French all had from time to time establishments in Basra. Merchants from many other nations visited the town, in Dutch documents there are mentions of Venetians, Greeks, Armenians, Indians and Georgians. An important point of stability for the Westerners was the monastery of the Carmelites, established there for the needs of the Portuguese merchants. With the Portuguese decline since the fall of Muscat in 1650, this monastery slowly came under French influence. At one time there was even a Dutch monk. The monks forwarded letters and kept possessions in trust when the merchants had to leave for some reason, even for the Protestant nations.\textsuperscript{102} After 1690, there were many conflicts between the Ottoman government and the Arab tribes, first with the Muntafiaq, later more with the Ka'b. During the first half of the eighteenth century, there was a third important Arab element in the events in Basra: the Shaikh of the tribes living South-West from Basra, on the border of the Arabian desert, possibly the Dawasir. This Shaikh Annis had a great influence in Basra, but his relations with the Ottoman government were less tense than those of other Shaikhs.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} On the Muntafiaq and the Ka'b see Otten, Voyage, vol. 2, pp. 191-196 and 199-201.

\textsuperscript{102} The monastery is mentioned with great frequency in most documents on Basra. It left its own historical sources in the form of a kind of chronicle, which gives a year by year account of events. There are several publications of part of this chronicle: the older part was published by H. Gollancz, Chronicle of events between the year 1623 and 1733 relating to the settlement of the order of the Carmelites in Mesopotamia (London 1927) and Continuatio domesticae Bassorae history ab anno 1733 'Anuntia ordinis Carmelitae zum Discalicetorum 8 (1933), pp. 46-69, 108-146, 204-228. On their activities in forwarding letters see Barendse, 'Long Road', p. 34.

\textsuperscript{103} References to this Shaikh Annis in ARA, VOC vol. 9099, 21 October 1725 (Dutch Basra diary mentioning a visit of the Dutch residents to Shaikh Annis at the occasion of the circumcision of his son) and in Gollancz, Chronicle, 429, 434, 441, 444.

In the seventeenth century, the Shatt al Arab seems to have been closed by sandbanks. As mentioned before, shipping used another river, more to the North, the Barish. The journals of the Dutch expedition of 1645 give a good idea of the considerable difficulties sailors at the time had in entering Basra.\textsuperscript{104} For a long time, most of the Southern coast of the Gulf was unknown territory to the Europeans. Large stretches remained unvisited and uncharted until far into the nineteenth century. Nautical charts give few data on the interior, while most geographical charts are almost completely fabulous.

To the South of Basra, in a marshy area, the Khor Abdallah constitutes the most Western, but completely silted up, connection between the Euphrates and the Gulf. South from the Khor Abdallah lies the island of Bubiyan, which by this name is mentioned for the first time on the Van Keulen chart of 1753. The area was visited by some Dutch ships in 1644.\textsuperscript{105} Beyond Bubiyan is the bay of Kuwait, in front of which lies Faylaka island. Faylaka is mentioned for the first time with this name ('Peluche') on French maps of 1740 (in the Neptune Oriental), and in the Kniphofen report of 1756 as Feldschah but it figures on older charts where it bears a Portuguese name 'Ilha de Aguada'.\textsuperscript{106}

The Kniphofen report of 1756 is the first text which gives some clear information about the Kuwait area. The evolution of Kuwait is reflected by maps and charts of the seventeenth and eighteenth

\textsuperscript{104} Hotz, 'Roobacker' pp. 363-369; ARA, Geleersten de Jongh papers nos. 280 a-d.

\textsuperscript{105} ARA, Geleersten de Jongh papers nos. 280a-d; journals of the first expedition to Basra and the map made by this expedition in Karlsruhe, Landesbibliothek, Artus Gijsels papers no. 478 showing the advance of the Dutch ships to an entrance South from 24 degrees 46 minutes latitude: apparently the creek between Bubiyan and the entry of the Bay of Kuwait, cf. Slot, Origins, pp. 16-25. The name Bubiyan is found on the chart of the Gulf in J. van Keulen, See fackel, vol. 6.

\textsuperscript{106} Faylaka as Peluche in the chart of the Gulf in Neptune Oriental and in several later maps and charts, cf. Slot, Origins, plates 21-23. The first text mentioning the island is the Kniphofen report fol.10 (=floor, 'Description' pp. 175-176). On Ilha de Aguada cf. Slot, Origins of Kuwait, p. 12.
centuries. From 1720 on, European maps have a small place on the coast, Kadhema or Cathema. On earlier maps, this name can be found also, but at first at some distance inland. Sanson’s map of 1652 is the first to mention it. This place, which we identify with Kazima in Kuwait, grew in importance on the maps. The Ottens map of 1740 shows it as a large place with the sea between Faylaka and ‘Cathema’ called ‘portus Cathemae’, harbour of Kazima.107

Also from the first half of the seventeenth century date the first references to the settlement of the Utub tribe in the area. Their main settlement was ‘Green’ or ‘Grain’, the old name for Kuwait. This place is shown for the first time on Van Keulen’s chart of 1753, while Niebuhr is the first to mention its name as Kuwait. The line of soundings on Van Keulen’s chart between Kharg and Grain shows that Dutch ships had visited Kuwait before 1753.108 In Kniphausen’s report it figures as a rather large place which was already in 1750 used as a terminal on the Gulf for caravans coming from Aleppo. The Utub were a large tribe of sailors and pearl divers, but their trading activity was limited for a long time as they only had small boats and could not penetrate beyond Bahrain out of fear of the large ships of their Huwala enemies.109

The coast of Najd between Kuwait and Qatif was almost empty of habitation. Several geographical maps of the seventeenth century show a number of names in the area, most of which are products of ill-digested and badly applied, vague or inaccurate information. It is practically impossible to identify any of these names. It is not before the appearance of the Ottens maps of c. 1747 that this situation changes. The names of coastal places on these maps, while still

107 The evolution can be seen in Slot, Origins, plates 12-20. Some early maps have the Gulf of Kuwait, but without a name of a place, ibid, plate 11, and Cortesão and Teixeira da Mota, Tabularum Specimen tab. xxix).
109 Description in Kniphausen report, fol.10v (=Flour, ‘Description’, pp. 175-176). Mentions of the use of Kuwait as a terminal for caravans from Aleppo instead of Basra for the first time in ARA, archives Dutch Embassy in Constantinople before 1811, no 382 (letter from Pollard in Aleppo, 1-6-1750).

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garbled, are partly identifiable. Apparently, some knowledge on the coast of Najd and Al Hasa had come at that time to Europe, but it remains an enigma where this knowledge came from. It seems that it is of French origin, maybe a French ship on the way to Basra drifted off to this coast. Between Kuwait (Kazima) and Qatif we find on the Ottens map the names of ‘Hadavisa’, ‘Armagia’, ‘Hahan’, ‘Al Kere’, ‘Meslehem’ (Ras Musallam?), Al Hasa and ‘Hems’.110 Ras Tannura is found on the oldest Dutch printed chart of the Indian Ocean by
Van Linschoten (1596). A Portuguese source mentions a small fortress there. Later it is found on the Dutch map by Vingboons (c. 1660) and on the oldest manuscript nautical chart of the Gulf of the Dutch East India Company kept in the Dutch archives, which was made shortly after the Muzkat expedition of 1667.\textsuperscript{111}

Qatif was always an important town. Until the early sixteenth century it had been controlled by Hormuz, but later it was occupied by the Turks. In the seventeenth century, the Pasha of Qatif, almost independent of Ottoman central authority, gradually lost influence to the Banu Khalid who finally took over the town itself.\textsuperscript{112} The Ottoman Sultan continued to claim the area and considered the Banu Khalid to be his subjects, but this was an empty claim. The Banu Khalid controlled most of the deserted coastal area between Qatif and the Shatt al Arab. Qatif had close economic links with Bahrain.

In the early seventeenth century, there was a massive migration from Bahrain to Qatif.\textsuperscript{113} Kniphausen gives some details on the large and stone-built town and describes how the principal Shi'ite merchants of Bahrain had left the island during the troubles of the first half of the eighteenth century for Qatif.\textsuperscript{114}

The islands of Bahrain and Muharraq can be found on all maps and charts, often with strange names. The true shape of the islands remained unknown to cartographers until about 1840. Bahrain always was a well-populated island with many villages. It had a rich revenue as well from the export of dates as well as from its pearl banks.\textsuperscript{115} Already in 1644 the Dutch tried to establish a residence there.\textsuperscript{116} Seventeenth century sources give extensive details about the pearl diving and the trade in pearls, while eighteenth century sources, like the English and Dutch plans for its conquest, give some details on the composition of its population.\textsuperscript{117} Bahrain was closely linked to Qatif on the mainland, there was much seasonal migration between the two places.\textsuperscript{118}

Qatar is mentioned, more as a city than as a region on nautical charts, clearly based on Portuguese examples and in the account by the English traveller Salbanke, who passed by Bahrain to Qatar and took a caravan from there to the Musandam peninsula.\textsuperscript{119} Only on a few Dutch charts of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries Qatar does appear as a very small peninsula, on other old maps there is no peninsula at all. The source of this is Jan Huuygen van Linschoten, who bases his chart on information received from an unknown cartographer in Goa, although I could not find any Portuguese map which shows Qatar as a peninsula: apparently the cartographic knowledge existing in Goa did not always reach Lisbon. Later charts make the Arab coast straight again until a (too small) peninsula reappears on the British Admiralty Chart of the Gulf of 1820.\textsuperscript{120} Qatar is mentioned as a town rather than as a country in many sources.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{111} Linschoten, Itinerario (ed. 1596) map near p. 10. ARA, VELH 619 map 10 (Vingboons); ARA VEL 220; Bocarro's Livro das Piantas in Braganca Pereira, Arquivo, tom. 4 (Historia administrativa) vol. 2 (1600-1699), pt. 1, p. 94.


\textsuperscript{113} Bulhão Pato, Documentos Remetidas, vol. 2, pp. 100-105 mentions the departure of more than 600 men from Bahrain to Qatif.

\textsuperscript{114} Kniphausen report fol. 11 (=Floor, 'Description', p. 176).

\textsuperscript{115} The best descriptions from the seventeenth century are in BNL FG 219 fol.
A Dutch document of 1675 mentions Qatar with Al Hasa, Basra and Bahrain among the principal outlets for Muscat’s transit trade, so there must have been something, probably in the shape of one or more coastal villages where spices and cloth were exchanged for desert products.\textsuperscript{122} It was not Niebuhr’s book which was the first European source to mention in the area the name of the Al Musallam tribe, but a Portuguese letter of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{123} Niebuhr’s map mentions in the area of Qatar two other place-names: ‘Hoevala’ = Huwala and ‘Adjesr’. ‘Adjesr’ may be the same as the ‘Aesser’ which in a Dutch document of 1756 is described as a small trading place between Sharjah and Qatif.\textsuperscript{124} Between Qatif and Sharjah, eighteenth century maps and documents mention a few places which we could not identify with certainty: Yusufie and Ferayhine on Niebuhr’s map and Guhar (between Sharjah and ‘Aesser’) in the Dutch report of 1756. The coastal stretch of Qatif opposite Bahrain is the area where most of these places mentioned in European sources are situated. In the same area, a small town called Zubar was founded by members of the Utub tribe migrating from Kuwait in the second half of the eighteenth century. Godo on Dutch nautical charts of the seventeenth century is almost certainly either Khor Dawn or Khor al Udayd on the border between Qatar and the Emirates.\textsuperscript{125}

For the area of the pearl bank between Qatar and Ras al Khaima, the Venetian traveller Balbi (1580) gives us the information that on the coast West of Julfar there was only one fortress, Kalba. This is also found on several maps and in Duarte Barbosa. We do not know area rather than a town: Cordeiro, \textit{Dois Capitales}, 116.

\textsuperscript{122} ARA, VOC vol. 1288, fol. 488-489, published in English translation in Floor, ‘Description of Musquet’, pp. 41-44.

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{As Cavetas de Torre do Tombo} vol. 4, pp. 357-359: mention of a sheikh Muhammad bin Musallam, powerful person in the area of Al Hasa.

\textsuperscript{124} Niebuhr, \textit{Beschrifung}, p. 342 and tab. XIX; Kniphausen report fol. 11v (=Floor, ‘Description’, p. 177).


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anything about a place named Kalba there. Kalba exists on the coast of the Gulf of Oman, but this place is far to the East of Julfar.\textsuperscript{126} In Balbi’s book, there is a list of places where pearls are found. Elsewhere in his book he mentions that on these places there are, during the pearling season, temporary settlements where people involved in pearling live. The list has the names of places from Qatar to Muscat. This list is a very important document for the history of the Eastern part of the Arabian coast of the Gulf. Among the names listed are the names of places which are important now and of which Balbi’s text is the first mention. Balbi does not mention permanent habitation on any of them, but it is interesting to see that names like Dubai, Ajman, Sharjah, Sir Banu Yas etc. go back as far as 1580. The list is not exactly what Balbi pretends it to be. Several of the names on the list, like Khor Fakan, are not the names of temporary villages but of permanent small towns and it is not really a list of names of places, but seems more to be part of a pilot-book. When one considers it closely, it seems to be a transliteration into Latin script, using (with some copying errors) Venetian and Portuguese phonetics of an Arab list, possibly a lost Arab pilot-book of the Gulf.\textsuperscript{127} We give here Balbi’s list with our remarks:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Latif [Catif: Qatif]
  \item Lasen [Al Hasa?]
  \item Barechator [Bahri Qatar: Sea of Qatar]
  \item Zesrislibar [jazira fil bahr: islands in the sea, this seems to be an introductory caption for the following 10 names]
  \item Alul [=Halul island]
  \item Seren [=Shera’ihi island]
  \item Disive [maybe Diyina island]
  \item Daas [=Das island]
  \item Emergencen [=Qarmin island?]
  \item Anzevi [=Arzanah island]
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{126} Balbi, \textit{Viaggi} (ed Pinto), p. 121, Duarte Barbosa, \textit{Libro}, p. 255 (a very vague text). These texts served as sources for most printed maps of the seventeenth century.

\textsuperscript{127} Balbi, \textit{Viaggi} ed. Pinto, p. 121. For identification one should bear in mind a few peculiarities of Venetian dialect (Z for Dž, Ch for K) and possible errors in reading old handwriting made by the printers of the book in Venice like a for u and u for n).
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HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE GULF

Daoim [Dihan]
Rasaechine [Ras al Khaima]
Sircoror [Khor al Khawir]
Casab [=Khasab]
Conzar [=Kamzar]
Mesenderendi [=Musandam]
Lima [Limsa]
Debe [=Daba]
Chorfi [=Khor Fakan]
Chelb [=Kalba]
Sharjat [=Suwar]
Suaiz [=Suiadi]
Mestar [not identified]
Baragiat [=Barqa?]
Tevril [=Tiwis]
Golat [=Qal'at]
Fur-Gaitule [Sur?]
Sam [from here on I could not identify the names]
Gamadu
Bacsha
Idu

The list runs from East to West so that it is not difficult to make a guess where the unidentified places are situated. Balbi is the only author who gives general information about the coast between Qatar and Musandam. Later sources at best have a few references to one or two of the most important places. Even the nautical chart of 1820 has a large unknown area, because European ships did not dare to enter uncharted shallow waters, where on land nothing could be found but desert.128

Practically none of the names of places on the coast between Qatar and Ras al Khaima occur in other sources before the end of the eighteenth century. The only exceptions are a few mentions of Sharjah on maps of the seventeenth century and single mentions of Umm al Qaiwain in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The occurrence of the island of Sir Banu Yas in Balbi's list is remarkable. The use of this name proves that this tribe was already in the area at that date. The Banu Yas are also mentioned in the Omani chronicle.

128 MCAL 4174: *A Chart of the Gulf of Persia ...* of Captain Wainwright (Hydrographic office 1820; copy used is ARA, MCAL 4174).
as being active in the early seventeenth century. It is not clear if the Banu Yas already had some kind of fixed habitation then. The town of Abu Dhabi was according to tradition founded in 1762, even if older temporary habitation existed very near it in the Cherizan [Qirqishan] of Balbi’s list. There is no reference to Dubai except a mention as one of the temporary camps of pearl divers in the same list.

There is some confusion about the geography of Sir, the area between Sharjah and the Musandam peninsula. Sir was mentioned in the eighteenth century as the habitation of a conglomerate of tribes which were under the authority of a shaikh belonging to the Qawasim, a branch of the Huwala. Sharjah is one of the few places in this area which is mentioned in a Dutch document. It is in Balbi’s list. The Dutch report of 1756 mentions Sharjah as one of the few inhabited places between Qatif and Ras al Khaima. Niebuhr mentions that Sharjah was in his time a small island under the rule of the Shaikh of the Qawasim. Niebuhr’s description of the area is confused. He mentions that the region takes its name Sir from the place of residence of the Shaikh of the Qawasim, which is not far from Sharjah, and that the Persian name of the region is Julfar, after Ras Julfar, where there is a simple village. Kniphausen, writing some years earlier, calls the residence of the Shaikh Zur and describes it as a walled town with stone houses. This place may be the same as a place called Zara which first appeared on a Portuguese map of the seventeenth century. Probably originating from this kind of Por-

129 Ross, Chronicle, p. 53; Badger, History, pp. 70-72.
131 Perry, Karim Khan, p. 152 has the unconfirmed mention that the Qawasim originate from one Shaikh Qasim of Sharjah.
132 Kniphausen report fol.12 (=Floor, ‘Description’, p. 177).
133 Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 329.
134 Library of Groote Schuur (Cape Town), a Portuguese map by Teixeira Albeniz of c. 1680. On this map there is a place called Zara, on the right place and a place Saragia much too far to the East (a photograph of this map in A. Teixeira de Mota, ‘Cartas Portuguesa antigas na collecção De Groote

tuguese maps, the mention of Zara appears on maps of the eighteenth century, one in a manuscript atlas of 1760-1761 by G. de Haan of the Dutch East India Company and one in a French manuscript atlas in Brest. The name is later printed on some of the otherwise rather primitive French nautical charts by R. Bonne. Niebuhr states that it is also called Zare on an English map. Niebuhr’s references indicate that there are three places, Sharjah, described as a small trading village by Kniphausen, Julfar near Ras al Khaima, in the 1760’s just a village, and a third in between. This third place was the main place in the 1750’s and 1760’s. It is called Sir by Niebuhr and Zur by Kniphausen. There are two possibilities: either Niebuhr is wrong and there are only two places, Sharjah and Sir (Julfar or Ras al Khaima), or he is right and then a possible identification would be Zara on the Eastern bank of the creek of Ajman, which would fit with both Niebuhr and Kniphausen and even with the mention of Zara and Saragia on the Portuguese map in Capetown.

Down the coast from Sharjah, Ajman is mentioned in Balbi’s list only while Umm al Qaiwain is, except in Balbi’s list, only mentioned by Duarte Barbosa (as Malquehoan) and on a French nautical chart of 1740.

East of Umm al Qaiwain, there is a peninsula, which became an island at high tide, the Jazirat al Hamra. In Kniphausen’s time, it was inhabited by the Zabab, the same tribe which possessed Bandar Rig on the Northern coast of the Upper Gulf. In 1756, these Zabab were under the authority of the Shaikh of the Qawasim. The best known place in the area was ‘Julfar’. This place, situated in the proximity of Ras al Khaima, is mentioned in a great many docu-

Schuur’, plate 10).
136 Slot, Origins, plate 25.
137 Niebuhr, Beschreibung, 307. Niebuhr may have meant Thornton’s map of the Gulf (English Pilot, 3rd book, behind p. 34), where an island ‘Saca’ is put at the entry of the Khor of Julfar.
139 Kniphausen report fol.12 (=Floor, ‘Description’ p. 177).
ments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Julfar is the place where the mountains from the interior approach the coast. At the beach there are many palm trees and the area is less desert-like. There is an estuary or Khor, but it was not easily accessible for large ships which just anchored off the beach as they did at Bandar Abbas. There has been some archeological research in the area, considerable amounts of pottery were found at different places, indicating a slight shift of locality in the second quarter of the seventeenth century. Julfar continued to be an important place until somewhere in the second half of the eighteenth century the town was moved to another, better defensible locality, at Ras al Khaima.\textsuperscript{140} After the Omanis had conquered it in 1632, they appointed a governor there.\textsuperscript{141} It became one of the most important trading towns of Oman. With Suwar and Muscat it was one of the few places on the Southern coast which had long-distance trade with India and Basra and its inhabitants owned larger ships.\textsuperscript{142} First mentions of the presence of the Qawasim Shaikh as ruler of Julfar and the region of Sir appear in the first half of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{143} The Dutch report of 1756 describes the Qawasim Shaikh Rahma as a powerful ruler whose town 'Zur' (Sir or Zora?) is an important centre of trade and who enjoys the loyalty of the surrounding nomad tribes of the desert.\textsuperscript{144} Niebuhr, whose text often follows Kniphausen's report closely, has the additional information that these tribes live in the area of Jau (Buraymi).\textsuperscript{145} According to the Dutch report of 1756, the entire Musandam peninsula up to a point not far from Suwar (according to Niebuhr, Khor Fakan) belonged to the Shaikh of the Qawasim.\textsuperscript{146} It is not clear when exactly the locality of Julfar was deserted for the modern settlement of Ras al Khaima. The name of this locality is mentioned as early as the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{140} The archeological findings are treated in J. Hansman, \textit{Julfar, an Arabian port} (London 1985). An old Portuguese mention is Barbosa, \textit{Libro}, vol. 1, p 73. Early in the sixteenth century, the town is mentioned by Varthema, \textit{Travels} (Hakluyt Society), p. 93. Aubin, \textit{Royaume d’Ormuz}, pp. 150, 219-221 shows that Julfar was the most important possession of Hormuz on the opposite side of the Gulf.

\textsuperscript{141} Badger, \textit{History}, p. 66; Ross, \textit{Annals}, pp. 51-52.

\textsuperscript{142} References to the trade of Julfar in Barbosa, \textit{Libro} (Hakluyt-edition), vol 1, p. 73; ARA, Geelenus en de Jongh no. 280e (Dutch Basra diary 9-12-1646), ARA, VOC vol. 1203, fol. 782 (letter to the Gentlemen XVII, 21-3-1654); Thevenot, \textit{Suite du Voyage}, p. 355; ARA, VOC vol. 1304, fol. 484; VOC vol. 1667, fol. 418-419 and Kniphausen report fol.12 (=Floor, 'Description', p. 177).

\textsuperscript{143} VOC vol. 2114, fol. 3528-3030 (Shaikh Rahma of Julfar’s actions in Hormuz); Badger, \textit{History}, p. 205.

\textsuperscript{144} Kniphausen report fol.111v (=Floor, 'Description', p. 177).

\textsuperscript{145} Niebuhr, \textit{Beschreibung}, p. 308. Probably, tribes like Banu Yasar and Banu Na‘im are meant.

\textsuperscript{146} Kniphausen report fol. 12 (=Floor, 'Description', p. 177); Niebuhr, \textit{Beschreibung}, pp. 307-308.

\textsuperscript{147} Hansman, \textit{Julfar}, fig. 2, pp. 6, 21; Duarte Barbosa, \textit{Libro} (Hakluyt-edition), vol. 1, p. 74 (as ‘Recoyma’); Balbi, \textit{Viaggio} (ed. Pinto), p. 112. On many maps of the seventeenth century it figures as ‘Roccalima’.
The next place down along the coast is the small town of Rams, mentioned in a Portuguese source as an apparently prosperous place in the early seventeenth century. A Dutch source of the first half of the seventeenth century also mentions it as a centre of trade. Rams is not mentioned in any later documents until the nineteenth century.

From there to the East, there was a landmark on the coast which is mentioned on practically all European nautical charts until well into the nineteenth century: a white tower, which was sighted by shipping turning from Bandar Abbas towards the Hormuz Strait. Sources are contradictory about the exact place of this landmark. Some (and especially all the more accurate nineteenth century nautical charts) place it near the actual Sha’am. The Bombay Selections mention a white patch in the mountains above Sha’am, just like a tower, but near the village of Sha’am there also is a mysterious hill on the beach, said to be a place of pre-Islamic worship, on which there formerly was a building. On the other hand some seventeenth century documents seem to indicate the monument on Ras Shaikh Mas’ud more to the North near Khasab. The Meerkat diary mentions a ‘white pagoda’ on Ras Shaikh Mas’ud. It cannot be determined today which of the two was the tower.

There are some islands in the middle of the Lower Gulf. Most were uninhabited, they belonged to the tribes of the Arabian coast. These are the three islands of Nabiu Farur (Nobelfleur on old European maps), Tanb and Tanb Nabi. They were sometimes sighted or visited by European sailors, they have Dutch names on the charts of the seventeenth century. Tanb, which served after 1622 as a meeting point between the Portuguese fleet and representatives of Arab places who paid them tribute is the only one which has been explored by Dutchmen.¹¹¹ Nearer the coast there was the island of Abu Musa, on European maps Bamosa. The first mention on it is on the Dutch map of 1645-1646. There it is called because of its shape Kappershoegen (Barber’s cap).¹¹² The island Sirri nearby was observed by Dutch sailors in 1646, it was given the name Rijsnburg after a Dutch ship.¹¹³ Al these islands figure with their Arabic names on French maps of the early eighteenth century.¹¹⁴ These islands seem to have been used by Arabs as places in which to hide when the situation became dangerous for them.¹¹⁵

The mountainous coast of the Musandam peninsula was explored at an early stage by European sailors: it was less dangerous to approach a rocky coast with inlets than a flat sandy coast. Most places are already mentioned in Balbi’s list of 1580. Dutch ships explored the coast just South from the deep inlet of Al Khasab in 1645 and visited the villages of Qidi and Bukha.¹¹⁶ To the North from there, deep into a fjord, is the town of Al Khasab, which belonged to the Portuguese until just after the fall of Muscat in 1650. The Dutch visited it in 1666 when the fortress had a garrison of the Imam of Oman.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Thevenot, Suite du Voyage, p. 354; ARA, Geleynssen de Jongh papers no. 280a mentions that Dutch sailors saw some inhabitants on Tanb.
¹¹² Badische Landesbibliothek Artus Giselspapier 578: nautical chart of the Gulf.
¹¹³ ARA, Geleynssen de Jongh papers 280e (Basra-diary, 26-27 December 1646). Later Dutch manuscript maps show a great confusion in the names of these islands, see the correct list below on p. 157-158.
¹¹⁴ ARA VEL 220. The first mentions of the islands of Sirri and Abu Musa as such is on maps of the tradition of the first map of the Gulf in Liebault’s Atlas, cf. Tibbetts, Arabis, pp. 157-160.
¹¹⁵ The habit of Arabs to escape from their enemies to uninhabited islands is mentioned in the Kniphofen report fol. 3v (=Floor, ‘Description’ p. 168). According to a Portuguese document, Sirri was at one time used by the Shaikh of Basidu on Qishm to hide his treasure there: BNL FG no. 485 fol.10.
¹¹⁶ ARA, papers of Geleynssen de Jongh, no. 280a (journal of the Zemceval).
¹¹⁷ Khasab is already mentioned in c.1541/1543 in Aubin, ‘Royaume d’Ormuz’, p. 219, which gives its revenue. ARA VOC vol. 1259, fol. 3367 (visit of 1666.
The Musandam peninsula is inhabited by Shihuh tribes, a population different in language and customs from the other Arabs of the Arabian peninsula. The first mention of the Shihuh is in the Omani chronicle. About the origin of this population there are some wild theories. They have been supposed to be a mixture of Portuguese and Arab elements, but this seems unlikely. The Shihuh might as well be the part of the population of a wider area who remained allies of Hormuz and the Portuguese and slowly retired to the most inaccessible places (there were considerable tribal groups supporting the Portuguese against the Ya'ariba Imam: it is significant that later the Shihuh supported the Arab opposition against the Ya'ariba after the Portuguese had left). Some connection with the old state of Hormuz is also indicated by the existence of a Shihuh population on Larak island. According to Bertram Thomas, the dialect of the Shihuh is a compound of Arab and Persian elements, with a considerable amount of words with an unidentifiable root. According to this author, the structure of the language seems to be nearer to the Persian, but the connection is not with the modern Persian of the area, but much farther away. We are unable to judge the value of the remarks made by Thomas. It seems to support the supposition of a link with the Kingdom of Hormuz, politically Sunni Arab, but with strong Persian cultural and linguistic influence.

Kamzor, a small Shihuh fishing place on the Northern point of the Musandam peninsula, was already in 1645 under Arab rule, but its Shaikh could communicate with Dutch visitors in Portuguese. East of the peninsula, Lima seems to have been of some importance during the seventeenth century. It is well described in the report of the Dutch expedition of 1645 (when it still had a Portuguese garrison) and in another report of 1666. Likewise, Daba, a small settle-
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comparatively large stone-built town. In Niebuhr’s time Suhar had lost much of its importance. Between Suhar and Muscat, several small places are mentioned in the Dutch report of 1666: Suadi, Subiye, Barqa and Sib, but there is an older reference only of Barqa and Subiye, where there were Portuguese fortresses. Barqa had some international trade in 1756.

Muscat was until 1650 almost entirely closed to English and Dutch ships. As long as Hormuz held the keys to the Gulf, Muscat was only a place of secondary importance. After the fall of Hormuz, Portuguese rule continued for several years in Muscat. The town acquired part of the trading business of Hormuz and was the base of a Portuguese flotilla which hampered the development of English and Dutch trade in the Gulf. Shortly before 1650, Muscat declined and the first Dutch expedition, in 1651, just after the Arab conquest, found it a desolate town. Its trade had stopped and the tribes of the desert which it had conquered it had not yet adapted themselves to their new position as rulers of a centre of international trade. After some initial problems, Muscat returned to its former prosperity. In 1666 the town was as large as Bandar Abbas, and it was, with Basra, one of the three most important towns of the Gulf. The wars of later years seem to have done more damage to the political structure of Oman than to the economy of Muscat. The Dutch report of 1756 shows Muscat as a centre of trade while the government of the Imam of Oman was still weak in the political and military sense. Matrah, near Muscat is mentioned in historical documents. Matrah is shown on the view of Muscat made by the Dutch expedition of 1666. East of Matrah there are Qarayat, which became quite insignificant after the Portuguese defeat of 1622, and Sur, also an old Portuguese establishment. The Dutch report of 1756 mentions the presence of some merchants of standing in Matrah and Sur.

the tribes of the Arabian peninsula

The Europeans were only interested in the coasts of the Arabian peninsula. They hardly travelled in the country outside the few main ports. Joseph Salbanke (1609) is the only European who is recorded to have travelled overland from Qatar to Musandam before the nineteenth century. The only source about the history of the tribes in the interior is the Omani chronicle. Unobserved by the European sources, the tribes played an important part: they determined whether Oman could conduct an active policy against Persian and Portuguese interests in the Gulf or not. They also had an economic function: they carried merchandise from the coast to the interior of Eastern Arabia. The Dutch report of 1756 mentions four coastal places as starting points for this trade: Aseer, Guhar, Sharjah and ‘Zur’. The French traveller Taverner mentions a project of 1641 for trade between Qatif and the Gulf of Oman through the mysterious places of Mascalat, probably in the area of Liwa or Buraymi, and Qalain near Ras al Khaimah, which, although mentioned on many

167 Description of the Portuguese fortress in Relação, pp. 11-12.
168 Boudaen report in VOC vol. 1188, fol. 544v-546v.

171 View of Matrah in ARA, VEL 156 vol.2, 13 B. Description of the Portuguese fortresses of Matrah, Sur and Qarayat in Relação, p. 10. Mention of merchants in the Kniphausen report fol.13 (=Floor, ‘Description’, p. 178); some details on the places on this coast in Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 297.
172 Salbanke in Purchas, Pilgrimages, lib 3, p. 237.
173 Ross, Annals, pp. 44-57.
174 Kniphausen report fol.11v (=Floor, ‘Description’, p. 177).
early maps, cannot be identified with certainty. Muscat itself seems mainly concerned with trade with the heartland of Oman and with places much farther away: Bahrain and Al Hasa.

The tribes of the interior gave the rulers of Ras al Khaima and Muscat the military power to fight their wars. Practically all contemporary information we have on them comes from the Omani chronicles. Sometimes, they operated together against the Persians and the Portuguese. At other times, Western tribes like the tribes of Buraymi, the Shihuh and the ruler of Jurfar or Ras al Khaima opposed the Imam of Oman. These tribes seem to have been already settled in their present place a long time: Balbi implicitly mentions the Banu Yas in 1580, a Portuguese document mentions an Al Qasimi chief in 1648. There seem to be no other early references by name to the Banu Yas in European sources other than in Niebuhr. Niebuhr refers them as an independent tribe, implying that their territory is so poor that their neighbours have no interest to attack it.

The tribes of the Qatar and Al Hasa area are also mentioned in the Omani chronicle and there is a reference to them in a Portuguese source. The Musallam tribe of Qatar seems indicated in a Portuguese document of 1545. The first direct mention of this tribe is by Niebuhr, who mentions the Al Musallam as a fully independent tribe. The Banu Khalid of Al Hasa are mentioned by Niebuhr and implicitly in the Kniphausen report of 1756, but there are several references to their activities in the seventeenth century in the Omani chronicle and other Arab sources. The Utub seem to have lived somewhere near Bahrain in the late seventeenth century, but left the area soon afterwards for Kuwait. There they are mentioned in European sources shortly after 1750.

There are some indications of tribal ties between Arabs from the Northern bank of the Gulf and those on the Southern coast. The reference to the Al Qasimi ruler of Ras al Khaima as ‘al Hula’ indicates such ties. A case of migration of Arab elements from Nakhlul to some place west of Ras al Khaima is known for the early seventeenth century. On the other hand, people from Jurfar migrated to Basidu on Qishm in the early eighteenth century.

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175 Tavernier, Voyages, vol. 1, pp. 236-237. The places are described in Dapper, Naukenrige Beschryvinge, part Arabia p. 41, but this is no more than an elaboration of Tavernier’s mention. On the interpretation of these names see below, pp. 147-148.
176 ARA, VOC vol. 1304, fol. 488-489 (=Floor, ‘Description of Masqat’, 41-44), ibid. fol. 479 (not in Floor).
177 Badger, History, pp. 67, 70, 71-73, 105; Ross, Annals, pp. 52-54, 68-69.
179 Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 342; tab. XIX.
180 As Gazetas de Torre do Tombo, vol 4, pp. 357-359 (mentioning Muhammad bin Musallam as one of the most important chiefs in the area of Al Hasa).
181 Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 341; tab. XIX. Lorimer, Gazetteer, Historical Part, 1/1A, p. 787.

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183 First mention in an Ottoman document, printed in facsimile by Abu Husein, ‘Study’, p. 102, cf. Slot, Origins, pp. 70-61 (referring that the Utub have migrated from the centre of the Gulf to the Basra area); Kniphausen report fol. 6-6v, 10-11 (=Floor, ‘Description’ pp. 171-172,175); Niebuhr, Beschreibung, pp. 330-332.
184 VOC vol. 1913, fol. 411-413 and Badger, History, p. 111: Rahma ‘al Hula’.
185 Silva Figueirao, Ambassade, p. 383.
CHAPTER 2
FOREIGN AND LOCAL POWERS AND ECONOMIES

a survey of the political structures around the Gulf between c.1600 and 1784

One of the causes of the complexity of the history of the Gulf in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the number of powers involved in it. At the start of the seventeenth century, the situation was still relatively simple: the Portuguese vassal state of Hormuz dominated the sea space, opposed only by guerilla-warfare on the part of some small independent Arab shaikhdoms. Two of the largest empires of Asia bordered on the area: the Ottoman Empire and Persia. During the seventeenth century, the situation grew more complicated. The Ottoman Empire had great difficulties in maintaining its rather humble position in the area, while Persia, at first only an inland power, was trying to extend its influence to the coast of the Gulf. Persia tried to get help from England and the Netherlands to break the Portuguese power, and later also to acquire an overall domination of the Gulf. Neither the English nor the Dutch were fully willing to play the Persian game. They were out to break the Portuguese-Hormuzian trade monopoly, but did not seriously try to replace the Portuguese military power. The maritime weakness of Persia and the unwillingness of the Europeans to interfere more than their trade interests warranted, made it easier for the Arab coastal tribes to retain or acquire independence. The Arabs finally defeated the last endeavours of the Portuguese to regain power in the Gulf in the early eighteenth century. Persia collapsed in the course of the eighteenth century, while the Ottoman presence on the Gulf had become purely symbolic. Around the year 1760, the English and the Dutch retired from the Lower Gulf because of lack of economic interest. At the same time there was still some strong European interference in the Upper Gulf, but this did not last. The
Dutch retired completely, while the English presence was reduced to almost nothing. Towards 1780, the Gulf temporarily became an Arab lake.

The Kingdom of Hormuz

The seaborne empire of Hormuz had dominated the coasts of the Gulf from the Middle Ages. Historical knowledge of this state is rudimentary: one knows the list of the Shahs of Hormuz with some scanty biographical data and some vague figures on its economy from the time when Hormuz was already under Portuguese control.¹

The period covered by this book starts with the final breaking up of this Kingdom of Hormuz, which had been a Portuguese protectorate for many decades. For a description of the state of Hormuz during its time of splendour, we can refer to Aubin’s study on Hormuz in the early sixteenth century: an exemplary piece of heuristics. Our account will be limited to those facts which are relevant to the history of the Gulf after the collapse of the Kingdom of Hormuz.

The Hormuzian state was not a centralized body but more of a loose structure of autonomous cities in which one key official was appointed by Hormuz (somewhat like the podestà appointed by the principal city in the subordinate places in medieval Italian states). In the same way, the Portuguese Captain of Hormuz was a kind of Podestà controlling the government of the Shah of Hormuz on behalf of the King of Portugal.² The real territorial extent of the ‘Kingdom of Hormuz’ remains somewhat uncertain. From some sources, it might seem that at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, the Shah of Hormuz exercised his authority as far West as Kharg Island, as far East as Muscat and Makran and that he controlled a strip some 70 km wide between the Kingdom of Lar and the Gulf (Persia did not yet extend to the Gulf). Most ports of the Northern coast between Bandar Rig and Hormuz, and an enclave on the Arabian coast opposite Bahrain, were included also in the area of his authority.³ Towards 1600, of the outer territories, there remained only a precarious foothold in the area of Bandar Abbas, Qishn, Bahrain, and the coast of the Arabian peninsula between Muscat and Julfar.

Originally, there seems to have been no Portuguese presence in the Hormuzian settlements outside Hormuz itself, but the moment came when the Shah of Hormuz needed the help of Portuguese forces to keep his authority over his widespread possessions. A rebellion on Bahrain had to be put down with the help of Portuguese troops, and a Portuguese naval squadron had to keep the Ubaydli from Nakhlü and other Arabs from attacking Hormuzian shipping.⁴ Probably, there was also some pressure on the borders of the Hormuzian occupied area of the Musandam district and of Oman by Arab tribes.⁵ The population of Hormuz was a conglomerate of very different elements. The ruling dynasty was Arab and Sunnite;

¹ Aubin, ‘Royautés d’Ormuz’, Mare Luso-Indicum vol. 2 (1973), pp. 77-237 is the best description of the situation of the Kingdom of Hormuz at the time of the Portuguese conquest. A recent publication of sources about the early years of Portuguese intervention is A. Dias Farinha, Os Portugueses no Golfo Pérsico (1507-1538), contribuição documental e crítica para a sua história (Lisboa 1991). A good summary of the situation at the end of the Portuguese rule in Steensgaard, Asian trade revolution, pp. 193-208. A. Faroughy, Le royauté d’Ormuz is the only modern survey of its history although of less quality than Aubin’s work. A Portuguese source on the general history of the Shahs of Hormuz in Teixeira, Travels (Hakluyt-edition), pp. 153-167. The fact that this text has been abstracted in a document of the Dutch East India Company from the eighteenth century (ARA, VOC vol. 2105, fol. 175-190) shows the existence of a certain intellectual interest of the Dutch representatives in the Gulf.

² Some of the sources which give us an impression of the system of government are Balbi, Viaggi (ed. Pinto), pp. 118-119; Boxer, Ray Pregre, pp. 30-35, 115-116.

³ Aubin, ‘Royautés d’Ormuz’, pp. 104-121.

⁴ Relações, pp. 232, 237; As Câzetas de Torre do Tombo, vol. 4, pp. 357-359.

⁵ There are no reports about pressure by Omani Arabs on the Portuguese coastal settlements in this area, but the initially rapid collapse of the authority of Hormuz after the fall of the fortress in 1622 indicates that the Hormuzian hold over Oman was not too strong.
it seems to have originated from Oman. Persian cultural influence was strong in Hormuz, and Persia claimed some form of sovereignty over the island. In government and merchant circles, the Persian element seems to have been predominant, although the recorded tendency of some Hormuzian notables to pass summer in Khor Fakan or to have land in Juffar may indicate the presence of a strong Omani element. As is to be expected, the merchant colony was very mixed: one finds people from India, Jews, even sometimes a few Venetians. On the whole, Hormuz had the typical demographic structure of a trading society of the Gulf. There may have been some tie between part of the Arab population of Hormuz and the present Shihuh of the Musandam peninsula. After the Anglo-Persian conquest of Hormuz in 1622, the ruling dynasty retired to Suwar on the coast of Oman.

The economy of Hormuz was based on duties levied on transit trade and on the sale of permits for pearling. It was traditional policy to oblige all trade passing through the Gulf to call at Hormuz and to pay customs there. There were some weaknesses in this system: it was necessary that the state should have the naval power to force shipping to call at the Hormuzian ports and to keep interlopers from the pearl banks. In the sixteenth century, most of this force was furnished by the Portuguese.

Although its territory and power had been strongly reduced in the course of the sixteenth century, Hormuz was in its last years still a considerable economic power in the Gulf. The problem was that with the Persian occupation of Laristan in 1602, its military position became precarious. Hormuz had since then a strong land based power as a neighbour. After this neighbour was able to obtain the assistance of a naval power which was strong enough to challenge the Portuguese navy protecting Hormuz, Hormuz could not survive.

Persian influence on the Gulf.

As long as the Portuguese dominated Hormuz, Persian influence in the coastal region of the Gulf was not strong. Most of Persia's sea trade was controlled by Hormuz, even if Persian seaports West from Bushahr may have had some trade with Basra of their own. The conquest of Laristan by the Persians in 1601-1602 brought the possibility of exercising some influence in the Gulf area. The Khan of Shiraz, Imam Quli Khan allied himself with certain Arab coastal tribes and at the start of the seventeenth century he was ready to attack the Portuguese sphere of influence. Persian policy in the Gulf was based on one main consideration: its conflict with the Ottoman Empire. Within the framework of this conflict, Persia wanted to block the Basra-Aleppo trade route. This could be done not only by attacking in Iraq, but also by trying to get the trade inside the Gulf under control so that no ships would come to Basra again. There were two possibilities: either to divert trade through Persia and Russia or to send Persian products with European trading companies along the Cape route to the West. Both alternatives were tried several times. The possibility of cutting the trade routes of Basra furnished the principal incentive to the Persians to get rid of the Portuguese-controlled Kingdom of Hormuz. Once the Portuguese had been driven from Hormuz, the Basra trade found an alternative route by diverting to Muscat. Persia tried from time to time to block this route, which soon came under Arab domination. This Persian
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policy became one of the most important destabilizing factors in the Gulf.

Persia was a very large country, but badly adapted to exercise effective influence in the Gulf. Troops despatched to the area had to cross long stretches of ill-controlled countryside. For transport of troops in the coastal regions, Persia depended either on friendly Arab tribes or on European powers. Cooperation with the Persians was not really in the interest of the Arabs. The Arabs could earn a lot of money on the trade route between India and the Ottoman Empire. Persian endeavours to block the route directly harmed the interests of Oman and of several coastal tribes. Usually the Persians appealed to the Europeans, promising in return for military assistance great advantages which came dangerously near to invitations for colonial establishment in the area. Neither the Dutch, nor the English went as far as completely identifying their interests with the Persians. The advantages offered were not large enough, and ultimately, a colonial establishment in the Gulf did not promise enough profit to divert a large military force to the Gulf at a time when in other parts of Asia more interesting military projects existed. Moreover, the English and Dutch governments in Europe attached considerable value to good relations with the Ottoman Empire (in connection with their Mediterranean trade) and did not allow their East India Companies to play games which could have damaging consequences for European policy just for the interests of trade in Asia.

The bad example given by Persia in offering semi-colonial establishments to the Europeans in exchange for military help was followed by certain Arabs in their struggle to maintain independence. We will see how Arab rulers of Oman, Bushahr and Bandar Rig all offered at some time or another to the Dutch or the English some territory or an establishment with almost extraterritorial status in exchange for military help or other advantages. But the results of

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this were usually short-lived because the simple fact remained that in the period covered by this book, profits offered in the Gulf were not sufficient to justify intervention by the English or the Dutch on the scale of the earlier Portuguese intervention.

Persia remained an inland power with little authority on its coasts. The Arab people of the shores of the Gulf were left to settle their own disputes and were able to trade freely between Basra and India as long as Basra was not temporarily conquered by the Persians.

the Ottoman Empire

It was difficult for the Ottoman Empire to display its power in the Gulf. Certainly, the town of Basra was at least formally a possession of the Ottoman Empire and the Turks sometimes claimed some kind of suzerainty over the area between Basra and Qatar. In reality, however, the Ottoman hold on Basra was not strong because it depended on Ottoman control over Mesopotamia. This was often disputed by the Persians and by Arab tribes on the riverside between Baghdad and Basra who were often at odds with the Ottoman administration and blocked the main route between Basra and the Empire. Further East, in Al Hasa, Ottoman authority was weak and completely disappeared in the course of the seventeenth century.

Ottoman control over Basra was almost reduced to nothing at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In 1615 an inhabitant of Basra, called Afrasiyab, bought the government of the town from an apparently desperate Ottoman Governor of Basra. Afrasiyab after that called himself Pasha of Basra as his Ottoman predecessors in government had done. His regime found sufficient support from inhabitants of the town and from a number of Arab tribes in the area.

13 Longrigg, *Four centuries*, p. 38 note 1 quoting the Turkish traveller Eviya Celebi who states that there was an Ottoman governor in Qatif, but that he had little authority and that there was not the normal Ottoman administrative subdivision in sanaks (a kind of military fiefs) in the area.
to maintain itself. For a large part of the seventeenth century, Afsarisyab and his descendants ruled over Basra as virtually independent princes, with their own foreign policy. One of the last Afsarisyab also tried to bring the other Ottoman district on the Gulf, Al Hasa, under his authority. The Afsarisyab and also the Ottoman governor of Qatif kept close connections with the Portuguese. In Qatif, the Portuguese received half the customs revenues. The foreign policy of Basra was a delicate matter. Because it depended on the caravan trade to Aleppo, it had to keep good relations with the Sultan as with the Shah who for some time dominated part of Iraq. Also, the Pasha of Basra had to keep a friendship with the Arab tribes on the river so that the roads would not be blocked. This demanded a lot of tightrope walking and bribery, and it is not surprising that this policy failed.

Several times, the Ottomans tried to re-establish direct rule over Basra, but it took a long time to achieve this. As a consequence, there was no Ottoman presence in the Gulf during the first part of the period covered by this book. Afsarisyab and his successors played their own games in regional policy. Their influence did not stretch very far because they had no power at sea. Most of the trade of Basra was with the Western coast of India, and at first, the Portuguese were the only Europeans to come there. During the second half of the seventeenth century, Ottoman influence over Basra increased and finally the descendants of Afsarisyab were replaced by ordinary Ottoman representatives. The Ottomans had also meant to regain direct control over Al Hasa, but nothing came of that. Basra was only partially able to exercise its function as gateway between the East and the West because transport of merchandise on the rivers of Mesopotamia was often interrupted by Arab tribes at odds with the Ottoman regional government and also from time to time by warfare between the Ottoman Empire and Persia. Nevertheless, the town quickly recovered from the devastating effects of periods of war and anarchy.

In peacetime, Basra was a prosperous town and shipping was busy. It is typical of the economic situation of the Ottoman Empire that much more than in Persia, trade was in the hands of Arabs, religious minorities and foreigners. Most trading was done by Armenians, Greeks, Jews and Georgians from the inland and by people from India, Muscat, the Arab peninsula and Persia.

The political structure in Basra was similar to that in other isolated strongholds of the Ottoman Empire (Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli or even Baghdad), there was an evolution towards political control of the town by the Janissary garrison which acquired ever more power over the local governor. The authority of the central government in Istanbul was not strong and tended to decrease. Of more importance was the authority of the Governor of Baghdad, himself a member of a local Janissary clique.

the Arab tribes

Most Arabs in the area lived in tribal structures. The Ottoman Empire and Persia claimed that several of these tribes were their subjects, but the authority of these Empires usually remained nominal. Sometimes even the tribes did not pay taxes, but rather received costly presents for the promise of 'good behaviour'. The pattern of tribes was not entirely without structure. Smaller tribes often recognized themselves as being subject to larger tribes in exchange for protection. Some multi-tribal states were taking shape during the period covered by this book, but these states were not very stable.

The tribes were governed by Shaikhs. This was not an absolute rule by divine right. The authority of the Shaikhs was based on consent: they were the most prestigious by ability or wealth in their tribe and were replaced if the principal members of the tribe were

16 ARA, VOC vol. 1144, fol. 90v (protest by the Dutch director in Bandar Abbas to the *Itimad al dasla* (the Shah's Prime Minister), 1644).
17 Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, pp. 115-122.
18 [Leupe], ‘Overlandreis’, p. 125.
not satisfied. This had the sympathy of Dutch observers, who saw in them free people like themselves, not slaves of despotic rulers. They observed in the Arab tribes more resemblance to the situation in their aristocratic republic than they could see in the despotic ways of Ottoman or Persian bureaucracy. Typical is the sympathy expressed in a Dutch report about the way a tribal leader, Nasir bin Murshid, had rebuilt Oman during the first half of the seventeenth century. Typical also is a remark by a later Dutch official, Kniphausen, in 1756, that Arabs should be treated in a friendly way while Persians and Turks should be treated with strength and pride. An Italian traveller also has a remark about the love for freedom of the Arabs of the Gulf: 'the Arabs do not suffer to being subject to anyone and put freedom above all.'

In the North-Western part of the area lived the tribes of the Mesopotamian delta and the bordering marshes of the Southern coast of Persia. Four groups were of importance to the events in the Gulf. These were the Banu Lam of the desert of South-Western Iraq, the Muntafiq, a federation of tribes upstream from Basra, the Ka'b downstream from Basra, and the Mushasha dynasty which ruled in the area of Huwaya or Arabistan in the East. The three Western groups were a turbulent lot, maintaining a virtual independence from the great powers by changing sides whenever necessary. The Mushasha were considered to be Persian subjects, but rarely showed any loyalty to the Shah.

The Arabs of the coast of the Persian side of the Upper Gulf were divided in a number of rather small groups. The most important of them, who were established in Bushahr and Bandar Rig, were dominated by tribes of Omani origin. The Shah had more power in the region of Bushahr and Bandar Rig than in any other area of the Persian coast, and the power of these groups in the whole of Arab politics of the Gulf was partly caused by their relation with Persia.

The Arabian side of the Upper Gulf, most of it a relatively empty desert area, was dominated by the Banu Khalid. This large tribal group was for some time under Ottoman authority, but had acquired de facto independence since 1662. They behaved as a land-based power, and only very rarely took part in the politics of the Gulf. Tributaries of the Banu Khalid were the Al Musallam of the Qatari peninsula and the Shia inhabitants of Qatif, important as traders but without much influence in the political and military sense. The Utub, a tribe of sailors, were also for a long time tributaries of the Banu Khalid. The Banu Khalid state was not very stable. In the 1760's, the Al Musallam of Qatar and the Utub of Kuwait were striving for full autonomy. The Utub were one of the most mobile groups in the history of the Gulf. A first reference shows them expelled from the Bahrain area by Arabs of the Lower Gulf and establishing themselves first in Daylam and then in Basra. Later, from their establishment in Kuwait, part of them migrated to Zubara in the Qatar peninsula and Bahrain.

The Huwala, a heterogeneous group of small tribes, all sailors, traders and fishermen, lived in the area between Kangun and Bandar Kong. In early times, at least some of them seem to have been opposed to the Portuguese or Hormuzian domination of the Gulf. It is difficult to find a common denominator between them, especially because this group was internally divided in competition, mainly for domination of pearl banks. Only when others tried to get a foothold on the pearl banks was there any attempt to operate in

19 Floor, 'Description of Masqat', pp. 26-27; Kniphausen report fol. 1v, 3-3v (=Floor, 'Description', pp. 167, 169-170).
22 Kniphausen report, fol. 5v, 7v (=Floor, 'Description', pp. 170, 173); Niebuhr, 19 The Arabs of the town of Bushahr usually were loyal subjects of the Shah, this is already remarked in 1718: ARA, VOC vol. 1913, fol. 314.
24 This tribe is not mentioned by name in European sources before c. 1740: Otter, Voyage, vol. 2, pp. 73-74.
25 Kniphausen report fol.11 (=Floor, 'Description', p. 176).
26 Slot, Origins, pp. 70-72.
28 Relações, p. 232; Baibl, Viaggio, p. 222.
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a foothold on the pearl banks was there any attempt to operate in some unity. 29 East of Bandar Kong, the large and relatively fertile island of Qishm was disputed between the Huwala and a local group, the Banu Ma‘in. 30 In the area of Bandar Abbas, also further inland, lived some Arab tribes of which little is known. Persian cultural influence was relatively strong here but some inland tribes at certain moments put up a fierce struggle for independence. 31 The Baluchis on the Northern coast of the Gulf of Oman were considered by European observers as Arabs of a kind. Anyhow, they were closely similar to the Arab people of the coasts of the Gulf in their way of life. They were much employed by Hormuz and later by Oman as soldiers and sailors. 32 The Southern coast of the Lower Gulf and of the Gulf of Oman, was dominated until about 1630 by the Portuguese, who had several fortresses there. They lost these fortresses between 1632 and 1650. Interior Oman was a highly unstable conglomerate of conflicting tribal units until the Imam Nasir bin Murshid brought some unity. He conquered most of the Portuguese coastal fortresses. The Western border of Oman, where tribes retained a considerable spirit of independance, remained undefined for some time. A unified Oman existed for a short time between 1650 and the beginning of the 18th century. This state broke up when in the later years of the Omani-Persian war of 1695-1720 a conflict appeared between the so-called Ghabiri and Hinawi groups. While there hardly can be drawn clear geographic lines of division between Ghabiri and Hinawi in Oman proper, there developed an independent political power connected with the Ghabiri on the Western border connected with the Qawasim in Sir, who were supported by the tribes of Buraymi. After 1747, Oman finally broke up in two parts. In Oman proper the Hinawi were strongest, although large

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areas were dominated by the Ghabiri. The Western allies of the Ghabiri gained full independence in the area comprising the territory of the actual United Arab Emirates and temporarily also the Musandam peninsula. 33 Between Oman and the Banu Khalid, the Banu Yas could maintain their independence from Oman without trouble because the independent spirit of the tribes of Buraymi and later the state of the Qawasim made it impossible for Omani troops to reach them.

the Portuguese

While very much is known about the history of the Portuguese presence up to the fall of Hormuz in 1622, much less is known of the following years. History tends to look at events through a telescope and so it seems to consider Portuguese influence in the Gulf as more or less over after 1622. If one reads the contemporary sources, it rapidly becomes clear that this is an erroneous view.

Between 1622 and 1729 there was an almost continuous commercial presence and from time to time also a considerable military presence of the Portuguese in the area. Until the fall of their fortress in Muscat in 1650, the Portuguese were able to bring considerable pressure to bear upon the shipping of their enemies who sometimes could have access to the Gulf only in strong convoy. Their economic influence regained momentum after the fall of Hormuz when they were able to reach an agreement with the Persians about the use of the harbour of Bandar Kong and about the payment of a tribute for Qishm by the Persian government to the King of Portugal. Also, they continued to do a considerable trade with Basra. Bandar Kong was, during certain periods of the seventeenth century of no less importance than was Bandar Abbas. All the trade between Persia and the other ports on the Gulf and most of the trade between Persia and the

30 Niebuhr, Beschreibung, pp. 328-329; EGD May 1755 and April 1760; Lorimer, Gazetteer, Historical part, vol. 1/2, p. 1765.
32 ARA, VOC vol. 1304, fol. 482v; Kniphausen report, fol. 2v-3v (Floor, 'Description', pp. 166-167).

33 The border between the Qawasim state and Oman c. 1750-1760 is defined as 'beyond [Eest from] Musandam' by Kniphausen and 'Between Musandam and Khor Fakan' by Niebuhr: Kniphausen report fol. 12v (Floor, 'Description', p. 178) and Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 307.