peans. It must have been clear to any Dutch official that there was no chance of support for expansionist plans either from Holland or from Batavia.

Mulla Ali Shah may have taken a high-handed attitude towards the English, but he in turn came under increasing pressure of Nasir Khan who certainly wanted at the least payment of the promised taxes. Nothing was forthcoming and Nasir Khan moved. Mulla Hossan, one of Nasir Khan’s commanders, took Assin, an inland place belonging to Bandar Abbas, and his troops plundered the area under Mulla Ali Shah’s authority. Mulla Ali Shah seems at first to have been ready to bow to Nasir Khan’s power, but the arrival of Rahma bin Matar in the autumn of 1757 changed his mind.67

Mulla Ali Shah had become heavily dependent on Rahma bin Matar, but Rahma did not want a collision with the English. In the autumn of 1757, the Qawasim Shaikh visited the English Chief and told him that he would not have any trouble with Mulla Ali Shah any more and that the Governor would pay the sums Nasir Khan claimed from him out of other sources.68 Next, Rahma went on an expedition in the Minab area to exact for Mulla Ali Shah the money to pay Nasir Khan from the hapless population of this region. The local lords there planned to oppose Rahma with violence and Rahma withdrew.69 Meanwhile, Nasir Khan increased the pressure on Mulla Ali Shah. Mulla Ali Shah and Rahma retired to Hormuz when Nasir’s forces approached, but at the same time, Mulla Ali Shah seems to have reached some kind of accommodation with Nasir Khan because the Khan finally released the children of Mulla Ali Shah, who since the events of 1752 had been his hostages.70 Everything seemed to go well for Nasir Khan. Karim Khan came under heavy pressure by the Qajar pretender to the Persian throne, who had concluded an alliance with Nasir Khan and who was besieging Karim Khan’s forces in Shiraz.71

Nasir Khan now started to force the lords of Minab to pay him contribution. The Minab administration had no difficulties to agree with Nasir Khan on a reduced sum, because the latter was in a hurry to fend off an attack by forces of Karim Khan on Lar. Nasir Khan had hardly withdrawn, when the Minab people turned against him. It was said that Mulla Ali Shah had asked the Shaikhs of Julfar and Linga to help the Minab people against Nasir Khan.72

The general situation in Persia changed when in 1758 the Qajar forces were decisively beaten by Karim Khan. This meant trouble for the friends of the Qajars. Not unexpectedly, Mulla Ali Shah started an offensive against Nasir Khan in the early summer of 1758. He managed to chase Nasir Khan’s troops from the places they had taken from him two years ago and seemed to be preparing the remaining large ships of his navy to help his son-in-law Rahma against the Imam of Oman who had rented an English private ship and had advanced his strengthened naval force as far as Dabā.73 Shaikh Rahma had more problems: ships of the Banu Zaab chief of Rig, Mir Muḥanna, who had been chased from his country, captured merchant vessels from Shaikh Rahma’s country Julfar in the river near Basra.74

Mulla Ali Shah was in trouble also. One of Nasir Khan’s commanders, Mulla Hossan advanced and reached Bandar Abbas in July. According to the English version of the events, Mulla Ali Shah extorted a large present from the Dutch in order to satisfy Mulla Hossan, but this is not to be found in the Dutch accounts, and seems highly improbable. In fact, the Dutch were evacuating their establishment in Bandar Abbas and they left in 1759.75 Mulla Hossan soon retreated; this conciliatory attitude of Nasir Khan’s general towards Mulla Ali Shah may have something to do with the approach of an army of Karim Khan. Soon, troops of Karim Khan’s general Muham-

67 EGD 17-8-1757; 3-8-1757, 31-8-1757, 2-9-1757, 3-9-1757.
68 EGD 3-9-1757, 4-9-1757.
69 EGD 18 to 20-9-1757, 28-9-1757.
70 EGD 26-10-1757, 23-2-1758.
71 EGD 15-11-1757, 17-3-1758.
72 EGD 18-6-1758, 23-6-1758.
73 ARA, VOC vol. 2996, p. 8.
74 ARA, VOC vol. 2968, Gamron part 2, cf. EGD 19-7-1758.
mad Wali Khan approached Bandar Abbas and plundered the countryside. Now the English were frightened because they had always been the supporters of Nasir Khan. Their enemy Mulla Ali Shah, who kept good relations with Karim Khan, might be able to take his revenge on them if Nasir Khan were to be defeated by Karim Khan. The English were saved from impending trouble by the retreat of Karim Khan’s forces.76

In 1759, a most painful incident hit the English establishment in Bandar Abbas. On October 12th of that year, some large ships flying Dutch colours arrived at the anchorage. The English suspected no danger: they knew the Dutch habit was to arrive well armed. Clearly Dutch secrets were better kept than generally has been supposed because their decision to evacuate Bandar Abbas had been final and they were glad to have got away. This was not a Dutch squadron, but a squadron of French privateering ships, flying Dutch flags. This force, commanded by D’Estaing, had set out from the French island of Mauritius and had already captured an Omani ship on the way to Muscat and an English ship in the port of Muscat itself. The English ship was joined to the original French force of two ships. The French attacked the English factory of Bandar Abbas and captured it together with the only English vessel in port. Mulla Ali Shah made use of the occasion by plundering English properties.77

The growth of Karim Khan’s power could not help Mulla Ali Shah. It had become difficult to keep the eastern squadron of the Persian navy manned and seaworthy. Mulla Ali Shah, trying to stop the slow exhaustion of his base of power, tried another alliance, this time with Mulla Hossan, one of Nasir Khan’s commanders who

76 VOC vol. 2968 fol. 15-16 (there is a gap in the English Gombroon diary at that time so there is no report of these events there).


seems to have separated from his former master. Mulla Ali Shah gave one of his daughters in marriage to Mulla Hossan and this caused a conflict with Shaikh Rahma al Qasimi which would have fatal consequences for the unreliable father-in-law. The stage was set for a final fight for power in the area of Bandar Abbas.78

Upper Gulf events

Already during the lifetime of Nadir Shah, the economic focus of the Gulf had been shifting from the lower towards the upper parts. Nadir Shah had never been able to destroy Basra’s trade and had contributed to the economic growth of the Upper Gulf in his own way by attracting European traders to Bushahr while damaging the economy of Farsistan by his disastrous Oman war. Even in the Upper Gulf, Nadir Shah was unable to command loyalty: shortly before his death, the local Arabs had joined an uprising of the tribes in Dash-tistan. The rebels had acquired control of the Western squadron of the navy and Shaikh Nasir bin Mashkur of Bushahr had become a very powerful man and he had been able to chase the Huwala from Bahrain. Shaikh Nasir could not maintain his independence. Like most of the Arab leaders of the coast of Dashtistan, he had declared himself for Muhammad Husayn Khan Qajar, the pretender in Tabriz. This alliance brought him no profit and Shaikh Nasir became a prisoner. For the duration of his captivity, Bushahr was ruled by Nasir’s brother Sa’dun, but Karim Khan’s influence was predominant in the area.79 The ruler of Bandar Rig, like his colleague of Bushahr a Shiite Arab, tried in his own way to attract foreign trade to his place and to make it a rival of Bushahr.80

Events in the Upper Gulf were dominated by seven elements. There were five Arab elements: the Banu Khalid of Al Hasa, the Utub

78 EGD 18-1-1760; Saldanha, Persian Gulf Précis, vol. 1, p. 137.


80 Amin, British interests, pp. 34-36; Lorimer, Gazetteer, Historical part, vol. 1/1A pp. 111-112.
of Kuwait, the Ka‘b of the marshes east of the Shatt al Arab, the Zaab of Bandar Rig and the Matarish of Bushahr. There also were two non-Arab elements: the large portion of Persia dominated by Karim Khan Zand and Ottoman Basra. The Banu Khalid did not play an active role in the Gulf area. Their trading town, Qatif, seems to have profited from the fighting around Bahrain. The Utub of Kuwait had traditionally been subject to them, but in this period the Banu Khalid lost practically all influence over the Shaikhs of the Utub.

These Utub were becoming quite an important element in the Gulf. Their town Kuwait, at that time often called Grain, was becoming an alternative terminal, next to Basra, for the caravans from the Mediterranean coast. The Kniphausen report of 1756 is the most detailed source on the early history of Kuwait:

At the exit of the Euphrates near the Arabian coast is the island of Feltscha (Faylatka) and opposite on the mainland is Grien[Grain]. Both are inhabited by an Arab tribe ... called Etoobis. These are dependent on the Shaikh of the desert, to whom they pay a tribute although this tribute is very small. They possess about 300 vessels, but all these are very small, because they only use them for pearl-diving. This is, except the fishing in the bad season, their only trade. They are about 4000 men strong, who almost all have swords, shields and spears, but almost no firearms, they even do not know how to handle these. This nation is almost always in conflict with the Houlas [Huwala], whose mortal enemies they are. Because of this and also because of the small size of their vessels, their shipping does not stretch much farther than up to the Bahrain pearl banks on the one side and Bushahr on the other side of the Gulf. Several different Shaikhs rule them, who however live in relative harmony. The principal is Mobarak of Saback, but because this one is poor and still young, another, Mahometh ehen Chalifa, who is rich and has many vessels, enjoys at least equal respect with them... (Kniphausen report in ARA, AANW 1e Afd. 1889 23b, fol. 10-10r = Floor, ‘Description’, 175-176).

For the time being, the economic and political expansion of the Utub was still hampered by the fact that they lacked artillery and large ships, but the sheer number of their warriors and small pearling boats made them already a considerable power in the area.

81 Kniphausen report, fol. 8v (=Floor, ‘Description’, pp. 173-174).
82 Niebuhr, Beschreibung, pp. 341-342; Kniphausen report, fol. 10 (=Floor, ‘Description’, 175). On Qatif ibid. fol. 11 (=Floor, ‘Description’, 175).
83 ARA, LAT 382, letter of A. Pollard in Aleppo of 4-5 and 1-6-1750.

In the Upper Gulf, they could develop without encountering problems because they kept reasonable relations with the Ottomans and the Europeans. Their feud with the well-armed Huwala kept them from extending their presence beyond the Upper Gulf. At that time, the Utub seem to have been a federation, ruled by several shaikhs. The Dutch report of 1756 states that at that time the two most important Shaikhs of the Utub were Mubarak bin Sabah and Muhammad bin Khalifa. Mubarak belonged to the more prestigious family, but he was still young and rather poor, so that Muhammad bin Khalifa, who was rich and possessed many ships, had an authority equal to Mubarak. There are two important elements in this reference. The first is that apparently, the Al Khalifa were the shipping branch of the tribe. In fact, their wealth was such that twenty years afterwards, according to a contemporary English reference, an Al Khalifa seems to have taken over, although temporarily, the position of principal Shaikh of Kuwait. It is a logical consequence that it was later the Al Khalifa with their adherents who migrated with their ships to Zubara and the rich island of Bahrain. The second point is that Kniphausen’s account (the only real contemporary source referring to the Al Sabah in existence) gives some precise information concerning the Al Sabah ruling family of Kuwait. Before the discovery of Kniphausen’s account, our knowledge of the early history of Kuwait was only based on local tradition and later English documents. According to such tradition and documents, Kuwait was founded by Sabah I, c. 1756-1762, and Sabah was succeeded by his son Abdallah who ruled 1762-1812. This tradition is certainly wrong, Sabah must have died before 1756 and was succeeded by Mubarak.

84 Kemball, ‘Chronological table of events...with the Uottobe tribe’, p. 121; Loriger, Gazetteer, Historical part, vol. 1 B p. 1003, vol. 3, no. 11. The Kniphausen document implicitly (Mubarak son of Sabah) acknowledges the existence of Sabah I, who seems to have died before 1756, and interposes Mubarak bin Sabah between Sabah I and his successor. Whether this successor really was Abdallah I bin Sabah remains uncertain. Rush, Al-Sabah, pp. 185-189 and 193-198 tried to rectify the traditional views with the text.
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

The long history of the Mushasha dynasty of Huwayza ends shortly after 1750. During the troubles in the last months of Nadir Shah's rule, the Mushasha under Sayyid Muttalib had tried to recover the territory taken from them by the Shah. In March 1747 they regained Huwayza. After Nadir Shah's death, Adil Shah recognized Sayyid Muttalib as Governor of all Arabistan. The Mushasha now ruled an area larger than ever, but Sayyid Muttalib was confronted with rebellions, which he was unable to suppress. Finally the Mushasha committed the mistake of allying themselves with Azad Khan, one of the unsuccessful contenders to the Persian throne. Karim Khan took his revenge on them in 1752, and for a considerable time, the Mushasha disappeared from the scene.87

The position of the Mushasha was partially taken over by the Ka'b. This tribe, which is only incidentally mentioned in earlier sources, became of primary importance under its Shaikh Salman in the years following Nadir Shah's death. Officially, they were Ottoman subjects and originally they had been settled on Ottoman territory on the left bank of the Khor Musa. After Nadir Shah's death, they occupied adjacent stretches of Persian territory, while they wrested from the Ottoman government of Basra the area of Dawasir on the left bank of the Shatt al Arab. Shaikh Salman of the Ka'b established a quite well-ordered state in part of the area formerly ruled by the Mushasha. Karim Khan tried to bring the Ka'b under his control. Shortly before 1756, he chased them away from the lower Shatt al Arab. This action had no permanent results. Karim Khan sent another expedition against them in 1757, but his expedition failed.88 Once the Ka'b controlled the river between Basra and the Gulf, they started to claim some kind of payment from the ships passing through the river.89 This would soon bring them into conflict

with the Ottomans and later also with other trading powers of the Gulf. Wedged in between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, the Ka'b were vulnerable to interference by strong foreign powers. Unlike the Utub, they were unable to maintain a development towards independence.

The two Arab towns of Rig and Bushahr suffered in their development from the presence of a strong neighbour. Here it was Karim Khan who since 1753 precluded any development towards independence.90

The Dutch in Basra and on Kharg

Since the death of Nadir Shah, the Dutch, the English and even the French had been able to expand their trade with Basra considerably.91 This may have been caused by the weakness of the economy of Oman which diminished Arab shipping and this gap was filled by the Europeans. This expansion was not without problems, especially for the Dutch. The monopolistic and bureaucratic attitude of the Dutch Company caused its representatives to attempt the forbidden private trade on a large scale (in their isolated outpost, the Dutch residents thought they could get away with considerable frauds). The Company, having the right of life and death over its employees, threatened them with draconic punishments on discovery. The Dutch representatives in Basra had quite a bad reputation with their principals. In the time of Nadir Shah, the Residents Dames Hey and Gutchi had been involved in shady financial dealings and heavy punishment was threatened.92 Frans Canter, resident in Basra from 1747 to 1750 seems to have had a bad conscience too. When in 1750, the High Government sent him a successor to Basra, Tiddo Frederik van Kniphausen, Canter did not want for Kni-

86 Caskel, 'Wali's', pp. 430-432; el, VOL. 7, p. 674.
87 Perry, Karim Khan, p. 31.
89 'Continuation', p. 218.
90 ARA, VOC vol. 2885, Kharg part 1, fol. 5-7 and Kharg part 2, fol. 21-22.
92 ARA, VOC vol. 2655, part Persia fol. 51.
phausen to arrive and take over his books, but he fled first to Kuwait and from there to Aleppo and finally Holland. There the Company was unable to call him to justice because the Burgomasters of Amsterdam refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the Company over one of the citizens of their town while residing under their protection. Of more interest to the history of the Gulf is the fact that the documents on Canter’s flight give for the first time explicit proof that caravans from Aleppo used Kuwait as an alternative terminal for Basra.  

Kniphausen, an Ostfrisian, has made a big mark on the history of the Gulf. During his stay in Basra, Dutch trade developed quite satisfactorily. However, he was a controversial man. His contemporaries gave a complicated image of him. They admired him as a man who, although apparently an intellectual, was able to use violence if needed. They disapproved of him because of his arrogance and immorality. It is difficult through all the emotional material written by his contemporaries to get a just appraisal of the man. Our impression is that in the case of Van Kniphausen, we are confronted with a rather unusual character in the history of European expansion in the 18th century. He was well-read and interested in the contemporary development of European thought as is shown in a list of books he ordered. This must have been the reason for his good relationship with Governor General Jacob Mossel, also a man of the Enlightenment. In another way he represents a rather interesting development in the relationship of certain European intellectual types with Islam. Generations before him, certain progressive persons had discovered Islam and sometimes preferred it to Christianity, mainly because they felt Islam left more space for freedom of thought and because its system of logic was more consistent. These people had accepted the despotic way of rule in the great Islamic monarchies of their time. Kniphausen’s generation was under the influence of early democratic thought, and Kniphausen clearly had an idealistic view of the way Arab tribes were ruled: by Shaikhs who may be replaced if they are not good and who have to consult their tribe. This underlying sympathy for the Arab way of life makes Kniphausen quite an interesting character, even if he is not completely original in this. Almost a century earlier one finds the same kind of remarks in Padbrugge’s report on Oman.

Kniphausen, a proud nobleman, did not have much patience with the Ottoman officials in Basra. His relationship with his English colleague was bad: apparently he could not stand the usual English claims for superiority, and this led to petty quarrels. Traditionally, the Dutch Company had tried to avoid paying customs in Basra. This may have been good for profits, but it was not conducive to an amicable relationship with the Mütesellim. Finally, the Mütesellim, stimulated by the English Resident, saw his chance to get rid of the detested Dutch Resident. The formal reason seems to have been the indiscreet way in which the Baron conducted his amorous adventures. The English Resident was not the person to accuse Kniphausen, he himself had a bad reputation. Upon instigation of the English Resident, the Turks took action. Kniphausen was unexpectedly arrested while at an audience with the Mütesellim. Then the

93 ARA, LAT 382 (several letters from the Dutch Consul in Aleppo of the year 1750, especially the letter of 1-6-1750); ARA, VOC vol. 2766 (part Basra); VOC vol. 2787 fol. 8; ‘Continuatio’ p. 113; ARA, Aanw. 1e Afd. 1930-5-48 (letter written by Canter in Kuwait: the oldest known letter written in that place); ARA, Aanw. 1e Afd. 1910 XVII 47: legal papers concerning Frans Canter.

94 Klerk de Reus, Historischer Ueberblick, appendix 9; ARA, VOC vol. 2787 (part Basra), fol. 24-25.


96 Ives, Travels, pp. 215-216. His intellectual abilities are also confirmed in Continuatio, p. 117.

97 Kniphausen-report, fol.5 (=Floor, ‘Description’, pp. 169-170): ‘the important thing to win their friendship is to treat them in a friendly manner. A sullen and proud face produces respect and awe with the Persians but hatred and dislike with the Arabs(...) Each chief is in his place and among his tribe not at all a despotic ruler. They may not undertake anything without the cooperation and consent of the eldest and most prominent’, cf. Padbrugge in ARA, VOC vol. 1288, fol. 441 (= Floor, ‘Description of Masqat’, p. 26).
hard bargaining began. At first, things went rather well for the Turks. Jan van der Hulst, Kniphausen’s deputy, was willing to cooperate, in paying a considerable fine for Kniphausen’s misbehaviour and to write to Batavia blaming Kniphausen. The solution would be to send Kniphausen in disgrace back to Batavia and to let Van der Hulst continue as Dutch First Resident. This would be a dangerous course of action for Van der Hulst to take, because accusations of insubordination and conspiracy could be brought against him by Kniphausen and his friends. In the end, the Mütessellem was duped. Van der Hulst paid him the fine but did destroy his original letters to Batavia which confirmed the Ottoman accusations, and Kniphausen was set free and set off forthwith to Batavia. On his way he passed some time negotiating with the Arab Ruler of Bandar Rig, Mir Nasr of the Zaab, who offered him Kharg island, which belonged to his family. In Batavia, Kniphausen seems to have had no difficulties in convincing the Governor General Mosssel that strong action should be taken and that Mir Nasr’s offer should be accepted. Mosssel did not ask for instructions from Holland, but sent three well-armed ships loaded not only with merchandise, but also with soldiers and equipment and building materials for constructing a fortress. Passing Bandar Abbas, Kniphausen caused some nervousness with the English who thought that he was going to occupy Bahrain: his force seemed to them sufficient to occupy the position the English were interested in for themselves.

When Kniphausen returned to the Gulf, Van der Hulst was able to get away from Basra by telling the Mütessellem that he had been appointed Resident in Bushahr. Together, Kniphausen and Van der Hulst quickly built a small fortress on Kharg and declared the island to be a free port, open to shipping and traders from all nations. Two ships were used to block Basra in order to oblige the Mütessellem to make restitution of the sums obtained from the Dutch. These ships soon caught two ships from Surat which carried a rich cargo and the Mütessellem could do nothing but squeeze the money, to satisfy the Dutch, from the local merchants in Basra.

The losers in this affair were the authorities in Basra. They apparently feared the competition of Kharg and sent expensive presents to Kniphausen on Kharg, urging him to return to Basra. The agent of the Pasha of Baghdad in Istanbul expressed the benevolent feelings of his master to the Dutch Ambassador there, but the High Government in Batavia decided to stay away from Basra. All contemporary commentators praised Kniphausen, except the Dutch East India Company itself. The Directors in Holland strongly disapproved of the whole affair: they did not understand why a prospering trading establishment in Basra was given up and a new establishment was constructed on an obscure island, which so far offered nothing but the dubious prospect of some income from a free port. The Company was in the eyes of its Directors in the first place a trading venture and expensive military projects far from the main base of Batavia were to be avoided. In their eyes the small income from a free port and the tiny trading prospects of Kharg itself could never compensate for the expenses already incurred by the operation, moreover maintaining this establishment by military means would continue to be expensive.

At first, things seemed to go well with the new Dutch establishment. Kniphausen converted two Arab gallivants into patrol ships and merchants started to establish themselves on the island under the protection of the Company. Kniphausen even allowed Armenians and Roman Catholics to build churches on the island, and the
Roman Catholic Bishop of Isfahan transferred his residence to Kharg.\(^\text{106}\) This brought Kniphhausen some problems with Protestant zealots among the Directors in Holland. The Catholic Bishop, the Carmelite Cornelius de St. Joseph, had been rather stupid in approaching the Directors in Holland through intermediaries for formal recognition of Kharg as his residence. This was against all rules of a Protestant state and a very angry letter was sent from Holland to Batavia. The establishment of the Bishop is proof that there was some migration of merchants to the island and that the concept of a free port was working.\(^\text{107}\) In the turmoil of the Gulf at that time, a safe harbour was an attractive proposition to all merchants. But Kniphhausen had larger plans and this shows that the Directors were right in their disapproval of the whole affair. Just as the English had done some years before from their difficult position in Bandar Abbas, Kniphhausen now started to direct greedy looks towards the island of Bahrain. This island was ruled by the Shaikh Sa’dun of Bushahr, because his brother Shaikh Nasir was still in captivity with Karim Khan after his shortlived alliance with Muhammad Husayn Khan Qajar. Shaikh Sa’dun’s rule over Bahrain was contested by several Arab tribes. Kniphhausen supposed that the income from the pearl bank was more than sufficient to support the costs of a military occupation, and that the old Portuguese fortress would be an excellent stronghold. In Kniphhausen’s view, the revenue from Bahrain would also in some years compensate for the old Persian debts. In fact, this would be the way to justify this action: the Dutch would temporarily occupy the formally Persian island of Bahrain to get these debts paid.\(^\text{108}\) From a military point of view, Kniphhausen was right in supposing that it would not be too difficult to conquer the island, and that the Portuguese fortress on an island with sufficient food would be a better stronghold than the small fortress on Kharg: an island with few resources.

Kniphhausen was able to convince the Governor General. He had also sent to his protector a detailed account of the Arab tribes in the Gulf, which strongly underlined the weakness of the local powers and the division among the Arab tribes, but also the fact that Arabs were a more sympathetic people to cooperate with than the Persians.\(^\text{109}\) Kniphhausen clearly had changed the whole outlook of Dutch policy, which was to be concentrated on the Arab tribes and not any more on the Persians or the Turks. But the Bahrain project met with strong opposition in the High Government, which had already received the disapproving remarks by the Directors in Holland on the Kharg adventure. The High Government voted against occupation of Bahrain and the leader of the opposition, the Director General Van der Parra, gave in a detailed account of his point of view, an interesting analysis of Dutch policy in the Gulf. Van der Parra did not believe in the great prospects of revenue of the pearl banks (in this he was probably very right), he thought that the Portuguese fortress of Bahrain was a ruin (this apparently was wrong because the Persians had until recently been using and maintaining it), that the Company had too many expensive establishments (a reflection of justified views of the Directors in Holland), and that by acting like a colonial power in the Gulf in the way the Portuguese had done, the Dutch would become hated like the Portuguese were hated.\(^\text{110}\)

The plan was rejected. Kniphhausen had also proposed to give up the establishment in chaotic Bandar Abbas. Here he seems to have come into direct conflict with private interests amongst opponents of the Bahrain project, and the establishment in Bandar Abbas was maintained. The formal reason given by the Director General in
Batavia for maintaining Bandar Abbas was that this place was a market for Dutch textiles. There were some private interests involved in the activities of the High Government. Certain members of the High Government were interested in the exportation of sugar were planning an extension of Dutch activities in the Lower Gulf area by sending ships to Muscat and Sind. Muscat had become interesting because of a letter of the Imam brought back by the ship Vietlust. The Vietlust had entered Muscat for refreshments and the Imam was impressed by this large ship. One of the rather interesting results of this expeditions is that we owe to it the text of the earliest known letter of Imam Ahmad bin Sa’id (to the Governor-General Mossel):

After preliminary high compliments and titles of honour.
Because it has pleased God to wrench Muscat again from the hands of the Persians, who cause ruin wherever they are, and to grant the town to me. Because of this it will be restored to its former glory and prosperity. Because of this I considered it necessary to notify Your Excellency that as I have always been a friend of the Dutch, I have now decided to resume my good will and benevolence requesting by this letter to Your Highness to send somebody here to continue the trade of the Company, and I will always grant all help and freedom, and I assure that I will give always free access to the Company’s ships in my harbours and that there will be no difference between Muscat and Batavia, because your servants will have here as much freedom as they have there.

I request also that Your Highness will show me the friendship of sending me a ship of the same size as the Vietlust, with its artillery, anchors, ropes and all its equipment. Upon its arrival I will pay to any person appointed by you its price without delay.

In this time that the Captain of [the Dutch establishment in] Bandar Abbas has been here and has visited me, I considered it necessary to send Your Highness two horses as a present, so that he will not come empty-handed to you. He will have the honour to explain to you personally of my request. In the meantime I ask you not to look at the value of the horse, but to accept my friendship. With pleasure I would have sent two better horses from my residence, but the captain said that he had no time to wait, so I could not fulfill my intention.

I hope that Your Highness will think about my requests and that I will receive an answer... (ARA VOC 2885 (part Cammen), fol. 57-59; dated 24 January 1756).

The ship was too expensive and in the meantime, the Omanis had acquired a modern ship elsewhere, but in the following years more Dutch ships were sent to Muscat. Needless to say that this expedition became a commercial failure.

Mossel did not share the views of the other members of the High Government and was not very interested in the Lower Gulf, but he saw prospects in Bahrain. Kniphhausen sent to Mossel a report on the demographic, economic and military situation of the Arabs of the Gulf, showing that there was no risk in the Bahrain venture. This report (which has already been quoted several times in this book as the Kniphhausen report) is a very valuable source for our knowledge of the history of the Arabs of the Gulf. On Mossel’s advice, Kniphhausen then proposed his plans for Bahrain directly to the Directors in Holland and also to two powerful persons there, but of course these gentlemen had no sympathy at all with such projects and repeated their disapproval of the Kharg venture.

Kniphhausen tried various ways to make Kharg prosperous. He tried to modernize pearl diving by importing diving bells from Europe. He also tried to find another supply of sulphur now that the

111 Floor, ‘Bahrain project’, p. 133. The Directors in Holland did not agree and asked why Bandar Abbas was not closed, why an establishment was made on Kharg and they asked the Dutch in the Gulf to forget the old Persian debts to the Company: ARA, VOC vol. 334, letter of 13-10-1757.

112 On these expeditions see ARA, VOC vol. 2909 (section Muscat); VOC vol. 2937 (section Muscat), VOC 1010 (1756, July, letter to the Imam); VOC 1011 (1756, July, letter to the Imam), VOC 9101, fol. 99 and Floor, ‘Dutch trade’, p. 211.

113 Floor, ‘Dutch trade’, pp. 208-209 shows that this expedition resulted in losses. The Directors in Holland asked why two very large ships were sent to a port which was only a very minor market: ARA, VOC vol. 334, letter of 10-10-1758.

114 ARA, VOC vol. 2864 (part Kharg I), between fol. 52 and 53 there is bound the set of papers concerning the project for the occupation of Bahrain, cf. ARA, VOC vol.4447, proceedings of the Committee of Directors in The Hague (‘Haags Besogne’) of 13-7-1757 disapproving of the proposal resulting in a letter from the directors to the Governor General also disapproving the proposal of 13-10-1757 in VOC vol. 334).
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

mines in the area of Bandar Abbas were becoming deserted: he experimented with the exportation of sulphur from Kuwait.115

Maintaining the Dutch presence on Kharg was not as easy as Kniphausen had thought. Its weaknesses soon appeared. The first setback was that the High Government, in disapproving of the Bahrain project, had added the provision that the Resident on Kharg was not to intervene into quarrels between Arab tribes.116 This might have avoided the involvement of the Dutch in all kinds of wars, but their inability to make use of the divisions among the Arabs would certainly make it more difficult to defend the lonely outpost on Kharg. Worse was that Kniphausen’s best ally, Mir Nasr was assassinated by his younger son, Mir Muhanna. One source alleges that the motive of the assassination was that Mir Nasr had given a female slave loved by Mir Muhanna as a present to the warm-blooded Baron. Others claim that he disapproved of the donation of Kharg to the Dutch. The Dutch had to intervene by force in order to ensure that Bandar Rig came into the hands of Mir Nasr’s oldest son, Mir Husayn.

Mir Muhanna fled with his ships and began a private naval war against his enemies. Mir Muhanna’s character has been depicted everywhere in very black colours. There is little to be said in favour of a person who killed his father as well as his mother. It seems exaggerated to see him as a hero of Arab freedom against growing European military intervention in the Gulf. The fact remains that, whatever crimes he is alleged to have committed, he represented the desire for independence from Europeans, Turks and Persians in spite of the lack of support for this attitude from his fellow-Arabs.117

THE ARABS TAKE OVER

Mir Husayn’s position in Bandar Rig was weak. This did not only constitute a threat to the Dutch position, but it also posed some problems to the English. To the English it was clear that Bandar Abbas would not recover. In order to find another opening for the sale of their woollen goods in Persia, the English had opened an establishment in Bandar Rig. After a few months, the situation became tense in Bandar Rig because of the danger of an attack by Mir Muhanna. Kniphausen warned his English colleague, Shaw, about the danger. Shaw panicked and fled to Basra. Soon, Mir Muhanna captured Bandar Rig and killed his brother and his adherents. English sources accuse Kniphausen of having assisted Mir Muhanna.118 There is no firm proof for these accusations: support for Mir Muhanna would be contrary to the normal Dutch policy, and the changes in Rig were not in the Dutch interest. Kniphausen’s contract expired in 1759, he was succeeded by his deputy Jan van der Hulst. Van der Hulst was not a good administrator. After some time, he left Kharg without permission and because of this the Company started a criminal procedure against him.

The situation in the Upper Gulf was complicated by the proceedings of Karim Khan. This pretender to the Persian throne had been steadily expanding his influence. In 1753 already he had gained predominance over the Arab lords of the coastal towns, but he was too far away to get full control. Instead, he tried to dominate by profiting from the division among the principal local rulers; first supporting Bandar Rig, then again Bushahr. Because of the trouble in Bushahr (Nasir, the principal Shaikh of that place was kept by

115 Floor, ‘Pearl fishing’, pp. 212-213; ARA, VOC vol. 332, letter of the directors in Holland of 24-9-1761 concerning the diving bells; ARA, VOC vol. 2968 (part Kharg), pp. 10-11 concerning the sulphur. An English report, printed in Saldanha, Persien Gulf Précis, p. 99-100 gives an exaggerated and sometimes improbable image of the importance and scope of Kniphausen’s activities on Kharg. This report mentions a plan to establish Chinese on the island, which is too extravagant to be believed.

116 ARA, VOC vol. 785, Resolutions High Government 7-6-1755.

117 The story of the slave in EGD 3-8-1754 (not a completely reliable source in such matters). Perry, ‘Mir Muhanna’, p. 86, does not believe this explanation and sees more in a religious-nationalist motive with Mir Muhanna. The doubtful morals of Kniphausen are also mentioned in ‘Continuatio’, p. 117, 133 (mentioning problems with the Turks ‘quod Gluda deflorasset’). The story about the murder of Mir Nasr in ARA, VOC vol. 2864, fol. 10-11; EGD 3-8-1754; Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 523 (not accurate). That Mir Muhanna committed excesses when drunk is mentioned in EGD 4-12-1756.

118 Amin, British interests, pp. 36-38; EGD 21-7 and 24-7-1756; Perry, Mir Muhanna, p. 88.
Karim Khan in captivity) and Rig, trade declined in these places and activity shifted to other places like Ganaveh and Daylam.\textsuperscript{119}

During the years just before 1760, the situation in the Upper Gulf was temporarily in a precarious truce. It was clear that Karim Khan would intervene with force in the area once he had his hands free, but for the time being the Rulers of Bushahr and Rig retained a certain independence. The Dutch also kept quiet. The economic development of Kharg stagnated: decrees from the High Government had cut out all the risky projects for improvement. Potentially, the English could also have become a major power, but for the time being they were too busy in a war with France.

\textsuperscript{119} ARA, VOC vol. 2885 (part Kharg 2), fol. 21-22.

CHAPTER 10
THE DECLINE OF EUROPEAN POWER

the end of the Dutch adventure on Kharg.

The Batavia High Government had always had its doubts about the value of the establishment on Kharg. In the economic decline of the Gulf area, the free port never grew to expectation. It only served as a temporary means of escape for merchants from the surrounding places. The trade of the Company on Kharg and the small income from the port could never compensate for the considerable expenses of the establishment and its garrison.\textsuperscript{1} In the small cosmos of the Gulf, Kniphhausen had probably been right in considering that the best way of keeping the establishment thriving was to participate vigorously in local politics. With its wider view, the Batavia High Government was correct in opposing such projects and refusing to recreate the Portuguese type of imperialism in the Gulf. A proposal circulated that Kharg was to be closed and the fortress to be returned to the Ruler of Bandar Rig. The Company would restrict its presence in the Gulf to two trade agents, one on Kharg and the other in Muscat.\textsuperscript{2}

Most powers in the area had been willing to accept Dutch presence. Even their English competitors did not openly oppose the Dutch. The Dutch were much weaker than their adversaries suspected. The English had an exaggerated idea of what Dutch intentions were. In fact, most members of the Batavia High Government

\textsuperscript{1} The income of Kharg was discussed in the Batavia High Government: ARA, VOC vol. 792: Resolutions 11-3-1762. The trade balance of Kharg in ARA, VOC vol. 2998, fol. 332. Another cause of losses was the shipwreck of the Anstelvoan, a large Dutch ship of 50 m. long, destined for Kharg, near Cape Mataragi in Oman in 1762, cf. ARA, VOC 4936, p. 73 and VOC 3107, p. 138-140.

\textsuperscript{2} ARA, papers Van Hoorn/van Riebeeck, no. 64.
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

had in 1762 already come to the conclusion that all Company operations in the Gulf were to be terminated, and they had no intention of providing military support for new ventures. The Directors in Holland already wanted to terminate activities in the Gulf as early as 1760, asking whether the free port on Kharg was maintained for the Dutch or for ft reign traders.

The Residents on Kharg were tied to the instruction of 1755 not to get involved in Arab tribal politics. In reality they could hardly keep out of them. The Dutch Resident Buschman, who had succeeded Van der Hulst in 1762, at first managed things rather well. He was able to impress Mir Muhanna of Rig when this chief visited Kharg with some show of his military force. He was also able to negotiate some kind of truce with this most determined adversary, and for a few years the Dutch were able to sit back in relative peace and enjoy the spectacle of all the other parties in the Gulf being in trouble.

In 1763, Karim Khan, suffering heavy loss of income because of Mir Muhanna’s guerilla warfare, and having lost his erstwhile Dutch ally, now sought English support. He allowed the English to open an establishment in Bushahr. The Matarish rulers of that place now depended so much on outside support for the maintenance of their possessions that the English had a comparatively easy time there. As soon as the English were re-established on his territory, Karim Khan had pressed them for support against Mir Muhanna.

The English did not exert themselves greatly, and when the Persian army under Amir Guna Khan finally took decisive action against Mir Muhanna, it was without any naval support. From the land side, the Persians were able to capture Rig, but there was no way to prevent the escape of Mir Muhanna with his trusted followers in their boats.

Mir Muhanna and his Zaab force landed on the small island Khargu, near to Kharg, which was a legitimate part of their territory. Respecting his truce, Buschman did not intervene, although the presence of a lot of tribesmen with ships very near the Dutch establishment was not good for Kharg’s trade, particularly because these tribesmen were at war with practically every other trading nation in the area. Meanwhile the English finally decided to start naval action in cooperation with the Matarish. This was without any success, and the Matarish paid for it because ships of Mir Muhanna took some of theirs on the voyage to Bahrain. The English now contemplated landing on Khargu but the Persian Commander refused to assist with troops and nothing came of it.

Karim Khan’s desire to get the Zaab under control caused a new crisis. Concluding that English help was not sufficiently effective because the English had no troops, he tried to put pressure upon the Dutch to gain their assistance. This was not too difficult, Kharg depended for its provisions on Persian ports. Buschman had returned to Batavia because the term of his contract had expired. His successor Houting, fresh from Batavia, must have known of the intentions of the High Government to close down the establishment because of the very small profit (the High Government had sent a proposal for closure to the Directors in Holland in 1762). The only reason Batavia still had for maintaining a presence in the Gulf was to find some way to get payment of the old Persian debts. The matter of these debts had been the evil spirit which had paralysed Dutch policy in the Gulf, influencing them time and again in their decisions.

3 ARA, VOC vol. 334 (letter of the Directors in Holland of 30-9-1760); VOC vol. 792: Resolutions Batavia High Government 11-3-1762: a majority of the High Government decided to evacuate Kharg, but to wait with the execution of this decision for the approval of the Directors in Holland.
4 Resolutions Batavia High Government 7-7-1755 in ARA, VOC vol. 785.
5 Perry, ‘Mir Muhanna’, pp. 90-91: Mir Muhanna was received on Kharg with much military show by German soldiers and black African slaves; Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 325; Niebuhr Reise, vol. 2, pp. 182-183; ARA, VOC vol. 3092 (Kharg part 1), fol. 60-63.
6 Perry, ‘Mir Muhanna’, p. 91; ARA, VOC vol. 3092 (Kharg part 2), fol. 10-12; VOC vol. 3132 (part Kharg 1), fol. 5-7.
8 Perry, ‘Mir Muhanna’, p. 92; EGD 21-7-1765.
to give various types of assistance to the Persians against vague promises for repayment. Like his predecessors, Houting was duped by the promises of repayment of the debts. In cooperation with soldiers of the Shaikh of Bushahr, Houting went into action against Mir Muhanna.10

Dutch troops, supported by rather unwilling auxiliaries from Bushahr, landed on Khargu. After initial successes, they were ambushed by Mir Muhanna’s cavalry and had to retire. Mir Muhanna replied by capturing a number of ships in the anchorage of Kharg. His troops landed on the island and put the fortress under siege. Now, the Dutch were confronted with a serious problem. At the anchorage there was still a Dutch ship, but its commander could not communicate with the besieged fortress. Its Captain was confronted with the nautical problems posed by seasonal winds: if he did not leave soon for Indonesia, the winds would no longer permit him to make his voyage, and if he waited he would not only be confined for a long time in the Gulf, but he would also run short of provisions. The Captain decided to leave the fortress to defend itself and sailed away. The garrison of Mosselsteyn, 120 Arabs and 80 Europeans stood against a force at least three times as large. Houting stupidly left the fortress to negotiate with Mir Muhanna. The Zaab leader made use of this occasion and kept Houting prisoner. The fortress, without its commander, could do nothing but surrender. The Dutch were left to go free by Mir Muhanna, who was satisfied with the money and stores he found in the fortress. The arms and ship’s equipment must have been especially welcome to him for future use.11 The event is one of the first in the history of the Arabs of the

10 Niebuhr, Reise, vol. 2, p. 195; Resolutions Batavia High Government of 12-3-1762 and 6-4-1762 in ARA, VOC vol.792. The plans for closure of Kharg were based on a report of the visitor of the accounts which can be found in ARA, VOC vol. 2998, fol. 322-323, cf. ARA, Rademacher papers no. 531.

11 EBD vol 195, pp. 42, 44, 49, 54, 57, 76, 82; Chronicle, vol. 2, pp. 1093-1095; Perry, ‘Mir Muhanna’, 92-93 (Perry erroneously supposes that Mir Muhanna had also taken Bahrain); ARA, VOC vol. 3184 (part Kharg); Report by Houting for the investigation by the Batavia High Government in ARA, VOC vol. 3250, fol. 397-445. The news of the events reached Holland first through the French Consul in Basra: ARA, LAT no. 671 (letter of the French Consul to the Dutch Chargé d’Affaires in Istanbul).


13 ARA, VOC vol.797: Resolutions Batavia High Government 24-7-1767; ARA, VOC vol. 336: letters of the directors in Holland of 6-10-1766 and 28-9-1768 with their opinion on the events at Kharg.

14 Galletti, The Dutch in Malabar, p. 218-221; cf. ARA, VOC vol. 3668, fol. 265-342 (shipping list of Malabar 31-8-1782 - 31-8-1783: of the 245 ships mentioned, 28 were ships from Muscat)
Dutch Malabar for repairs. Maybe Risso is overestimating the importance of this Omani shipping in considering it the acquisition by Oman of a significant portion of the trade lost by Bandar Abbas and later also Basra. In the main entrepot Cochin, the capital of Dutch Malabar, Omani shipping accounted for little more than 12% of the movements of ships, and less for the movements of cargo. If Dutch private traders were interested in sending ships to the Gulf to export sugar, they also were free to do so: the Company itself had not much interest any more. Nearly every year, at least one Dutch private ship sailed from Batavia to Muscat, continuing the old Gulf-trade on a level that was not much less than it had been when the Dutch still had their expensive establishments there. In fact, it was one of these expeditions which brought from Muscat in 1781 the dramatic news of the declaration of war by England against the Netherlands, which ended all hopes of survival for the Dutch East India Company. Trade with Muscat remained of some importance for the economy of the Dutch East Indies during the last decades of the eighteenth century. Exportation of Java sugar and coffee to Oman brought much-needed cash money to Batavia. In 1787, the principal Dutch entrepreneur in Muscat trade was a man called Wiegman, who made a considerable profit. The Company was even thinking of taking half-shares in his expeditions. The Dutch never seriously thought about reopening their establishments, even later (until 1793), when a few invitations to that effect would be received from the Government of Basra.

15 Correspondence between Omanis and the Dutch Governor of Makabar in ARA, VOC 3436, Inheems dagregister fol. 30v-31, 43-44, 155-156; VOC 3460, Inheems dagregister fol. 181, 274-275v; Aanw. 1e afd. 1894.23 (original letter from the Governor of Muscat to the Dutch Governor of Cochin, asking for permission to buy wood in the Dutch possession).
16 Risso, Oman and Muscat, p. 81 and 100.
17 List of resolutions of the Batavia High Government concerning trade with Muscat in ARA, Hoge Regering Batavia no. 873; Floor, ‘Dutch trade’, p. 211.
18 ARA, LAT no. 1125.
19 ARA, Hope papers 8500.
20 The first such invitation came from the Pasha of Basra in 1771, ARA, VOC vol. 791: Resolutions High Government 27-5-1761. Another invitation, of c.1780 is in the archives of the Dutch embassy in Turkey, ARA, LAT no. 784. Another invitation from Basra of 1793 is mentioned in Resolutions of the High Government 8-11-1793, ARA, Oostindisch Comité no. 71. There is a considerable number of documents in the archives of the Dutch embassy in Turkey concerning the trade by local merchants in Aleppo with Basra during the later years of the eighteenth century ARA, LAT nos. 1125, 1266, 1291.
21 Amin, British interests, pp. 56-57, 70, 82-84; Wood, History of the Levant Company, 145.
22 ARA, VOC vol. 334, letter by the directors of 13-10-1757.
expanding. In 1758, they had acquired their first large ship, and by 1765 they owned 10 large ships and 65 smaller vessels. Shaikh Salman had been wishing to conquer Bahrain from Shaikh Sa’duhn of Bushahr and his Utub allies, but this failed. In the course of this conflict, blocking the shipping connections of Basra, he collided with the Ottoman government.23 The blockade of the Shatt al Arab below Basra became complete and this certainly could bring to an end the last remaining profitable trade the English had in the Gulf. The English took the matter seriously and on three occasions between 1761 and 1766, they gave military assistance to the Government of Basra against the Banu Ka‘b who were blocking the river downstream from Basra.24 The problems in the area co-incident with attempts by Karim Khan to extend his influence there. His general Zaki Khan had killed the leader of the Mushasha in 1762.25 With the Mushasha out of the way, Karim Khan’s influence could be felt in Lower Iraq.

The English intervention did not produce tangible results, they complained of lack of cooperation from their Ottoman partners. The climax of the conflict was in 1765. The Ka‘b had occupied all the territory between Basra and Haflar.26 Even Karim Khan temporarily entered the coalition against the Ka‘b.27 Shaikh Salman of the Ka‘b arrived at the conclusion that the English were his enemies and he started direct hostilities against the English ships. His forces captured three English ships. The English reacted by concluding a formal alliance with the Mülisellim of Basra against the Ka‘b. Bombay, convinced of the gravity of the affair, sent no less than four ships for the war against the Ka‘b. The weak point in the English position was the cooperation with the Ottomans, who showed themselves as rather reluctant allies. The English in the Gulf would have liked to use the four ships also against Mir Muhanna who after the conquest of Kharg had become quite a threat to English interests, but Bombay, not liking this adventurous spirit, explicitly forbade the use of the ships against Kharg.28 The operations against Shaikh Salman did not go well. The Turks were dilatory in executing their part of the deal (an overland attack against the residence of Shaikh Salman), while the English fleet could not approach Salman’s forces because the Barnishir river was too shallow. English troops were suffering from the summer heat and finally they tried a lone, desperate attack against the Ka‘b. This ended in quite a painful defeat with heavy losses: worst was the loss of their field-artillery, which in future might be used by the Arabs. English forces withdrew, maintaining a blockade of Dawraq until in 1766 when Karim Khan intervened, heavily bribed by the Ka‘b. Although Karim Khan at first had asked for English support for his own operations against the Ka‘b and subsequently ceased hostilities after a rather ignominious skirmish, he then claimed that Salman was his subject and made it clear that he would not tolerate English and Ottoman actions against him.29 After this, the Ottoman government had a short respite because both the Banu Ka‘b (their Shaikh died in 1768) and the Muntafiq had internal political problems.30 In 1769, the Ka‘b even offered the Turks their help against the Muntafiq.31

23 ARA, VOC vol. 3027 (part Kharg), fol. 4-5.
25 Perry, Karim Khan, pp. 163-164; Caskel, ‘Wali’s’ has no reference to the event with the last Mushasha.
26 EBD vol. 195, p. 66.
28 Amin, British interests, pp. 95-88; ANP, Correspondance consulaire, Basra I, pp. 52-58. On the basis of Carmelite information, there are some mentions of the events in newspapers: Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits January 21st 1766 and June 15th 1766.
29 The whole history of the conflict between the English and the Ka‘b is described in detail in EBD vol. 195-196. See also IOL, FR, G29/20 fol. 539 sq. (letters from the expedition); ARA, VOC vol. 3184 (part Kharg), fol. 8-9; Lorimer, Gazetteer, vol. 1/1B p. 1220; Niebuhr, Reise, vol. 2, pp. 229-235 (Niebuhr was not impressed by the English show of power of 1765); Amin, British interests, pp. 88-89; Perry, ‘Banu Ka‘b’, pp. 138-149; Perry, Karim Khan, p. 165; Saldanha, Persain Gulf Précis, vol. 1, pp. 209-211.
30 IOL, FR, G29/20, fol 440 and 488.
31 EBD vol. 200, p. 69.
If the English had at first been pleased when Mir Muhanna had conquered Kharg and had finished off their Dutch competitors, their pleasure did not last long. On two occasions, Mir Muhanna captured some ships which were covered by the English flag. As the English on their own were not strong enough, and there were no other European powers left in the area, they had to try to cooperate with people like Karim Khan or the Turks in Basra. Karim Khan had enough problems of his own, and never showed the least inclination to serve any interests but his own. His relations with the English Company had been rather tense for some time because the English had rather arrogantly claimed his responsibility in so-called acts of piracy committed by his subjects in the Lower Gulf. There had been for some years an English representative in Karim Khan’s residence in Shiraz, who was to negotiate privileges for an English establishment in Bushahr, but negotiations were rather difficult. Furthermore, there was still some tension between both parties because Karim Khan accused the English of having been the cause of the failure to capture Mir Muhanna at Rig in 1765. This tension was increased by the English operations against the Ka’b in the same year. The English disgust with Karim Khan was such that Moore, the English agent in Basra, even thought of concluding an alliance against him with Mir Muhanna. Once the Dutch were out of the way, Karim Khan was more in need of the only remaining European power able to give him naval assistance, even though the Persians were irritated by the close relations the English kept with the Ottomans. Karim Khan ordered the Ka’b to make restitution of the goods they had taken from the English, but with little insistence: the Ka’b did not react. On the other hand, Karim Khan gave the Ka’b large stretches of territory. This did not help to promote cooperation between the English and

Karim Khan and negotiations between them were difficult. Meanwhile, the Ka’b did as they liked, capturing ships of Kuwait as well as a ship belonging to Mir Muhanna. Anarchy in the Upper Gulf reached a peak when the Shaikh of Bushahr with the support of inland tribes prepared for war against Karim Khan. In this situation, the English were at doubt as to what to do. One time they contemplated the occupation of Bahrain, at another moment they tried a policy of balancing between the Ka’b and Mir Muhanna. Finally, in 1768, Karim Khan and the English agreed on an expedition against Kharg. This expedition again was a failure: no troops of Karim Khan appeared and when English forces attempted to conquer the island on their own they were repelled.

By now, the English representatives in Basra had had enough of Karim Khan. They went their own way, which was not without risks. Mir Muhanna captured another of their ships. The career of this adventurer was running to its end. Khalifa, the Shaikh of Kuwait, sent an envoy to Bushahr to propose a common expedition against Mir Muhanna as a revenge because the latter had disturbed the pearl fishing. In 1769, the inhabitants of Kharg chased away Mir Muhanna and his men from the fortress of Mosselsteyn. Their leader, Husayn, was appointed by Karim Khan as his admiral of the Gulf.

---

32 Lorimer, Gazetteer vol. 1/2, pp. 1787-1788, 1820; Perry, ‘Mir Muhanna’, 94.
33 See below, p. 390.
34 Lorimer Gazetteer, vol. 1/2, pp. 1788-1789; Amin, British interests, pp. 77-78.
35 Lorimer, Gazetteer, vol. 1/2, p. 1797.
36 EBD vol. 196, p. 312.
37 EBD vol. 197, pp. 19-30.
38 EBD vol. 197, p. 55.
41 Lorimer, Gazetteer, vol. 1/2, p. 1801.
42 EBD vol. 198, p. 367. This is the first mention of this Shaikh of Kuwait, who is not known in the traditional historiography of that place. Theoretically this Khalifa might be an up to now unknown member of the Al Sabah family, but it seems more probable that temporarily Kuwait was ruled at that time by the Al Khalifa, the second great family of Kuwait.
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

The English, believing that the booty of Mir Muhanna was still in the fortress of Kharg and in the possession of the new authorities there, blockaded the island demanding payment for the damages they had suffered from Mir Muhanna.45 They had gone too far. There were reports that Karim Khan was now planning to join forces with the Zaab and with the Ka’b against them. As a precaution the Bushahr establishment was closed down. This did not meet with the approval of their superiors in Bombay, and by this step it became difficult to re-establish relations with Karim Khan without loss of face. There was now almost an open conflict between the English and Karim Khan.

The Bombay Presidency was unhappy with the situation and tried to re-open the establishment in Bushahr. The Court of Directors in London did not approve of this.46 Meanwhile, Mir Muhanna’s checkered career had come to a bloody end. From Kharg he had taken refuge in Basra. There he had at first negotiated with the Ottomans, offering them help for the protection of shipping, but he was arrested and executed by the Turks, who threw his body to the dogs.47 Most European sources paint a very black image of the character of this ‘arch-pirate’. He indeed had blood on his hands (although he did give the Dutch of Kharg permission to leave freely), but who did not at that time and place. Nevertheless, all powers in the area had been thinking of concluding alliances with him. It would be exaggerating to make him a hero and an early Arab nationalist: he murdered a large part of his family and he was ready to conclude alliances with Europeans. Among his contemporaries, Rahma bin Matar on the Lower Gulf fits better in this part. Rahma does not have a bloody reputation, he never allied himself with Europeans and he was able to establish something more durable.

After Mir Muhanna’s disappearance, Kharg was ruled by its own people, not any more by the Zaab of Rig. Sometimes, there were projects to follow the Dutch example and occupy Kharg: there was a rather interesting proposal on this subject by the French Consul in Basra. This project was rejected by the French Government with the argument that the Arabs of the Gulf would never permit Christian rule in their region and that against Arab opposition, large military forces would be needed which would make an establishment unprofitable.48

Karim Khan’s wars with Oman and the Ottomans

Oman was because of its trade relations a natural ally of Ottoman Basra and had cooperated with the Banu Ma’in of Hormuz, who had supported Karim Khan’s competitor Nasir Khan in the Lower Gulf. In 1769, the Persian navy captured some Omanis ships, which gave the Omanis a reason to prepare for war, but there was not much action at first.49 In the meantime, Karim Khan turned against the English, who also supported the Ottoman government of Basra. In 1771, several English ships were detained by Persian subjects such as Husayn (or in some sources Hasan) Khan, the leader of the popular movement on Kharg which had chased away Mir Muhanna, and who was now Karim Khan’s Governor of Kharg. The English then planned to send a squadron into the Gulf to destroy the Persian navy and to obstruct the pearl fisheries of Bahrain.50 On paper the

44 EBD vol. 199, p. 318.
46 IOL Factory Records XVI, 1006; correspondence Bombay presidency 7-3 and 20-5-1769 Husayn Khan was not always unfriendly to the English, he had even invited them to establish themselves in Bandar Rig: IOL, FR, G29/20 fol.489; cf. ARA, Consulaat Smyrna no. 109.
47 EBD vol. 199, pp. 250, 318; Perry, ‘Mir Muhanna’, 94, IOL, Factory records XVI, 1006; Bombay Correspondence 32 (20-5-1769); Chronicle, vol. 1, p. 670. IOL, FR, G29/20 fol. 433 mentions that Dutch newspapers wrote about Mir Muhanna’s death, I could only find a reference to his flight from Kharg to Basra in the leading newspaper Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits, of 24 June 1769.
49 EBD vol. 200, pp. 178, 238, 160.
50 EBD vol. 201, pp. 5-7; Saldanha, Persian Gulf Précis, vol. 1, pp. 268-275; Lorimer, Gazetteer, vol. 1/2, pp. 1802-1805.
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

Persian fleet consisted at that time of four squadrons: twelve vessels under Husayn Khan of Kharg, seven or eight from Bushahr, twelve of the Banu Ma'īn of Hormuz (of very questionable loyalty because of the usually friendly relations between the Banu Ma'īn and the Imam of Oman), and fourteen or fifteen of the Banu Ka'b. It would be very difficult to get the units commanded by semi-independent rulers to cooperate. Karim Khan ordered his ships to attack the English wherever they could be found, while the Ka'b attacked Basra again.

In the winter of 1774–1775, Karim Khan changed his priorities and his allies. He turned to the English and the Ottomans for help in an expedition against Muscat. In the case of the English, Karim Khan’s approach was tantamount to blackmail. The expedition however did not reach Oman. Karim Khan could not get a sufficient force together because the Ka'b were dilatory in sending their ships. Zaki Khan, Karim Khan’s brother and Commander of the expedition, got caught in a cat and mouse game with Shaikh Abdallah of the Banu Ma’in. This Shaikh was a most unreliable subject of the Persians, who finally drew a Persian army into an ambush on an island, where it was then brought under siege by the Omani navy.

Forgetting Muscat, Karim Khan now wanted to send his forces against Basra. The Persian navy had been unable to achieve anything in the Lower Gulf: the units were fighting each other. There now came a plan for a general reconciliation. Shaikh Nasir, who had returned from Persian captivity as Ruler to Bushahr was to be sent as envoy to Khor Fakan to restore peace on the Lower Gulf in negotiations with the Shaikhs of Jufar and Hormuz and the Wakil of Muscat, but this meeting never took place. The Ka'b caused a temporary complication by plundering Qatif which could have caused an upheaval among the Arabs. Karim Khan was furious and for a moment it even seemed that the armies he had recruited for the

51 The former commander of the Lower Gulf squadron, Mulla Ali Shah, had disappeared from the scene at that time.
52 EBD vol. 201, pp. 7, 160, 170.

THE DECLINE OF EUROPEAN POWER

war against Basra would be used instead against the Ka'b. In the winter of 1774–1775, operations against Basra started.

A Persian attack on Basra should not be too difficult. After all the internal conflicts and devastating epidemics, Ottoman Iraq was in a state of crisis, although the Banu Khaled and the Muntakiq were willing to help the Turks against Karim Khan. The English had decided to assist the Turks, but soon repented and left Basra. Instead, they reopened their establishment in Bushahr. Karim Khan obtained some support of Shaikh Khalifa of Kuwait, but on the other hand, the rulers of Bushahr, Rig and Garaveh refused to help. After a siege of a few months, Basra was taken by the Persians. Just before the town fell, the English establishment was evacuated, but this meant that they had lost their most profitable establishment on the Gulf. If the English wanted to go on trading there, they could do nothing but reach a reconciliation with Karim Khan. The Shaikh of Bushahr was mediating in this, as it was of course in Shaikh Nasir’s direct interest that trade would resume to a full extent in Basra as well as in Bushahr. At that time, Shaikh Nasir had become closely linked to Karim Khan. His possession Bahrain was considered in 1775 by a rather inaccurate English observer as Persian territory.

The English establishment in Basra was reopened in 1776, but relations with the Persian authorities there remained tense. The

55 Perry, Karim Khan, p. 170; Saldanha, Persian Gulf Précis, vol. 1m p. 296.
56 EBD vol. 203, pp. 45, 61, 93.
57 EBD vol. 203, p. 133.
58 EBD vol. 203, p. 153 (Shaikh Khalifa gave two Turkish ships to the Ka'b and sent 200 men to Karim Khan for support),167.
59 Chronicle, vol. 2, pp. 1209-1210; EBD vol. 203, passim; Perry, Karim Khan, pp. 175-183; Lorimer Gazetteer Historical part, vol. 1/2, pp. 1811-1812; Amin, British interests, p. 110; One of the most detailed sources is Parsons, Travels, pp. 155-182; ARA, DLH no. 165 containing letter of 16-6-1775 from Aleppo with a newsletter from Baghdad about the siege.
Court of Directors in London even decided to give up the establishment in Basra, but their order in this respect was not executed by Bombay because the threat of an imminent war with France was enough to motivate Bombay to give great importance to Basra as a station for the forwarding of overland mail to England. The Persian government of Basra was considered to be the worst imaginable, even accounting for the generally unfavourable opinion on the part of European sources of that time regarding local administration in the Middle East. It was very unpopular. After some Persian atrocities, the inhabitants called the Muntafiq, who ignominiously defeated the Persian army outside the town. In the battle many Persian notables died. The Muntafiq did not continue their advance, so the Persians were able to maintain themselves in Basra, which by then had become a ghost town.

Karim Khan's death in 1779 started a new series of upheavals in the Gulf. The Persian commander Sadiq Khan, who was in Basra, evacuated the town and marched in the direction of Shiraz, where he wanted to attack a competitor for supreme power in Persia. In this way the Ottomans regained control over Basra. The English were able to maintain their establishment under the Ottoman administration in Basra without serious trouble. In Persia, a new period of chaos started. Persian warlords exercised heavy pressure on the Arab population of the coast. These events are beyond the period covered in this book.

---


62 Account by the English traveller John Capper in Makintosh, Voyage, vol. 2, pp. 347-350. Perry, Karim Khan, pp. 196 has a slightly different version. This author states that the Muntafiq were just reacting to Persian attempts to make them pay taxes.


64 Perry, Karim Khan, p. 120.

---

the last years of Mulla Ali Shah in the Lower Gulf

The history of the Lower Gulf continued to be a very complex matter after 1760. A problem in writing the history of this period is that sources concerning the Lower Gulf at that time have several gaps, because of the disappearance of the Europeans from the Lower Gulf. While elsewhere Karim Khan's supremacy was established, Nasir Khan could still maintain his position in Lar for some time. As before, there were four important competitors for the domination of the Lower Gulf: Mulla Ali Shah in the area of Bandar Abbas, the Imam of Oman, Nasir Khan of Lar and the Al Qasimi Ruler of Sir, Ras al Khaima or Julfar (the last name was not used any more). These four contended for the support of several semi-independent Arab tribes. The balance of power between the four contenders was highly unstable. Much depended on temporary alliances with lesser powers, especially the Shaikhs of the Arab tribes of the Southern coast of Persia. Although these Shaikhs were changing allegiance frequently, a certain pattern may be distinguished: the Banu Ma'in, usually in alliance with the Al Ali of Sharak were against Mulla Ali Shah. The remainders of the Al Haram and the Marazik of Linga were always allies of the Ruler of the Qawasim. Last, but not least, events in the coastal area were influenced by local powers in Laristan challenging the power of Nasir Khan. As was to be expected, Mulla Ali Shah's power, having no stable base, was crumbling.

Nasir Khan made in 1759-1760 a last attempt to gain control over the coast of the Lower Gulf. He started in 1759 by trying to occupy the area between Lar and the coast. This first venture had to be ended abruptly because an army of Karim Khan was approaching. Before achieving anything substantial, Karim Khan's army had to be drawn back because of trouble in the interior. Nasir Khan, remaining in control over Laristan, sent his brother Ja'far Khan as governor to Bandar Abbas.

Mulla Ali Shah was aware that he would be finished if Ja'far Khan were able to take over Bandar Abbas. He tried to improve his
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

delicate position by offering one of his daughters in marriage to one of Nasir Khan’s military commanders, Mulla Hossan. This may have strengthened his position towards Nasir Khan, but it put him at odds with his other son-in-law, Shaikh Rahma bin Matar Al Qasimi of Sir. In December 1759, Rahma seized the fortresses of Hormuz and Bandar Abbas and plundered the latter place. Rahma also captured the Fath Rahmmani, the largest ship of the Persian navy. This conflict between Mulla Ali Shah and Rahma bin Matar had serious consequences for them both. Hormuzian soldiers, adherents of Shaikh Abdallah of the Banu Ma’in, overran the fortress of Bandar Abbas on 16 February 1760, captured the last big ship of the Persian navy, the Fath Rabani, and took Mulla Ali Shah prisoner. Most of Mulla Ali Shah’s troops fled to Qishm and asked the Al Haram Arabs, who had been settled there by Rahma, for help. Of course, Rahma had wished to teach his amorous father-in-law a lesson, but the disasters which hit Mulla Ali Shah had become a threat to Rahma himself. His forces tried to recover the fortress of Hormuz, but had to give up because Ja’far Khan sent the Banu Ma’in and the Al Ali against him. The Hormuzians now gave the captured ship Rabani to the Al Ali. An attack by the Arab allies of Ja’far Khan against the Qawasim stronghold on Qishm failed, while the Hormuzians did not take too firm a stand on the side of Ja’far Khan: they refused to deliver Mulla Ali Shah to him, probably because they feared the revenge of the Qawasim. The Qawasim now mounted a counter-attack, there was a naval skirmish between the two ships Fath Rahmani (which was in the hands of the Qawasim) and the Fath Rabani at Linga. At some moment in this sequence of events, Shaikh Rahma disappears from history. He must have been an old man, and may have died of old age. His brother and successor Rashid bin Matar continued his policy, and was able to survive the crisis caused by the collapse of Mulla Ali Shah’s power. At first, Rashid tried to consolidate his position by making an agreement with Nasir Khan, but he quickly went back to war against the old enemies of his tribe when, by a stroke of luck, Mulla Ali Shah managed to escape from prison on May 15th of 1760. After some time, Rashid and Mulla Ali Shah concluded peace with the Al Ali. Mulla Ali Shah was now totally dependent on Shaikh Rashid because he had lost all his ships.

Mulla Ali Shah may have lost his power, but his ally the Qasimi Shaikh Rashid was in a much better position. The latter was seriously trying to get overall control over the Straits of Hormuz. It was to be expected that the Imam of Oman would not like to see this development and would combat Qawasim expansion with all his force. Ja’far Khan tried to bring together an alliance between the Banu Ma’in, Oman and the English to attack the Qawasim. But this alliance did not show as much initiative as Shaikh Rashid and Mulla Ali Shah did. Shaikh Rashid and Mulla Ali Shah mounted a large scale attack on Bandar Abbas. Ja’far Khan’s garrison was not very effective in hindering the plundering of the Eastern part of the town by the Qawasim and Mulla Ali Shah, but the Persian troops were able to hold the fortress. A counter-attack by Nasir Khan against Rashid’s ally, the Shaikh of Linga was defeated by Qawasim forces.

Since the temporary French conquest of their establishment in 1758, the English had been very hostile to Mulla Ali Shah and had placed their hopes on Nasir Khan. In the heat of the summer of 1760 and with the misfortunes Nasir Khan’s forces had suffered, the English did not feel happy about their exposed situation in Bandar Abbas, where Mulla Ali Shah’s power seemed to be recovering. They were looking for a safer place in the Gulf to establish themselves. They believed that the Dutch too were planning some coup in the Gulf and they made plans to occupy Hormuz in order to

65 EGD 18-1-1760.
67 EGD 16-4-1760, 21-4-1760.
68 EGD 18-1-1760 is the last mention of Rahma, ibid. 29-4-1760 is the first mention of Rashid.
69 ARA, VOC 3027 (Kharg part 2), fol. 4; EGD 17-5-1760.
70 EGD, May-June 1760.
71 EGD 26-6 and 27-6-1760; Saldanha, Persian Gulf Priests, vol. 1, p. 139.
72 EGD 23-6-1760, 26-6-1760.
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

forestell a Dutch move. It remains a mystery how they came to this wild idea that the Dutch wanted to occupy Hormuz. The Batavia High Government was planning to retire completely from the Gulf, it would be against its policy to start adventures on an island without fresh water. There would be reason for the suspicion that the English, unhappy in their dangerous establishment in Bandar Abbas, invented a Dutch plan in order to give themselves a reason to some adventure. This cannot have been the case: the rumours about Dutch plans did not come from Bandar Abbas, but from Bombay. Bahrain was another English ambition. Great profit was expected there from the trade in English cloth. Transit trade through Bahrain to Persia might in the view of the English in Basra be more profitable than the transit trade which the Russia Company made between England and Persia by way of Russia. None of these plans came to execution.

In the autumn of 1760, there were consistent efforts to reach a peace between the powers in the Lower Gulf. There was a reconciliation between the Qawasim and Oman, but similar efforts for a peace between Julfar and the coalition of the Al Ali and Banu Ma'in failed. During the spring of 1761, there were new rumours that Shaikh Rashid was planning to attack Bandar Abbas. This danger blew over because of plans for a general meeting of all warring tribes and the Omanis in Daba in May. There was even a temporary reconciliation between Karim Khan and Nasir Khan. An improvement was that the inept Ja'far Khan left Bandar Abbas, appointing Ali Muraqi (a kinsman of Shaikh Abdallah of the Banu Ma'in and apparently a rather quiet person) as his successor.

In the autumn of 1761, the short period of quiet was over. Shaikh Rashid tried to regain a foothold on Hormuz, and this brought the old coalitions to life again. The Julfar forces were superior, but the Omanis came to the rescue of Shaikh Abdallah. There were several naval fights between Omani and Julfar units. Peace returned when the alliance between the Banu Ma'in and Oman broke up. Nasir Khan was busy fighting Karim Khan, and so the coastal area was for a short time free from outside interference. Bandar Abbas had had a spell of peace under the administration of Ali Muraqi, but during the summer of 1762, Nasir Khan apparently needed money and Ja'far Khan returned as his deputy to the town. Nasir Khan seems to have had a plan to revive Bandar Abbas: he sent a deputation to the Dutch to invite them to return there. However, the English considered the measures taken by Nasir Khan concerning Bandar Abbas could only contribute to more disorder. In the eyes of the English, Ja'far Khan was simply a brigand- leader. Apparently his futile coup in Bandar Abbas in 1759-1760 had left bad memories.

The English finally decided that the time had come to leave Bandar Abbas.

The English departure from Bandar Abbas did not pass peacefully. They wanted to recover old debts from the local government and the naval force which was sent to evacuate their establishment in Bandar Abbas was also used in an attempt to obtain payment. With some difficulties, the English were able to occupy the residence of the Na‘ib, but they found no money there. They had no means to attack Mulla Ali Shah, who had lost Larq island to the Banu Ma'in in September 1762 and was in any case too poor to pay. Finally, an English attempt to capture the Fath Rahman from the Qawasim at Laft failed miserably. The departure of the English from Bandar Abbas was no great event. The economic and political significance of the English establishment had dwindled too much to be of any

73 EGD 15-6 (intelligence from Bombay about Dutch plans with Hormuz), 17-6, 20-6, 12-7 and 16-7-1760; Saldanha, Persian Gulf Précis, vol. 1, pp. 139-140.
74 EBD vol. 197, p. 116.
75 EGD 3-8-1761.
76 EGD 27-8, 20-9, 6-10, 13-10, 14-10, 7-11, 14-11 and 18-11-1761.
77 EGD 9-3-1762.
78 EGD 26-6-1762.
79 EGD 13-2-1762.
80 Resolutions Batavia High Government 27-4-1764 in ARA, VOC vol. 794.
82 Saldanha, Persian Gulf Précis, vol. 1, pp. 159-162, 165; ARA, VOC vol. 3123 (Kharg part 2), fol. 5-7; Dutch report on the departure of the English from Bandar Abbas; Lorimer Gazetteer Historical part, vol. I/1A 94-95. The Banu Ma'in had occupied Larq on 27 September 1762: EGD of that date.
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

significance. The merchants who conducted international trade had already left the almost deserted town some time ago.

The one who suffers most from these events is the modern historian: from 1763 on he lacks the regular reports of European representatives in Bandar Abbas, and depends on scanty references to the Lower Gulf in reports by English and Dutch representatives in the Upper Gulf.

Laristan under control of Karim Khan

The situation in the Lower Gulf became less complicated after 1763 because two principal actors would soon disappear from the stage. Early in 1763, Mulla Ali Shah, the Banu Ma’in and Shaikh Rashid had reached an agreement. This agreement had no long life, because in 1764, Niebuhr found a different situation. At that time, Mulla Ali Shah was again ruling in Hormuz, but that he had lost Bandar Abbas, which was for a short time under the control of Nasir Khan who in 1765 had become subdued a little and had declared himself to be a subject of Karim Khan. This situation did not last, and at the end of the same year Bandar Abbas was governed by Shaikh Abdallah of the Banu Ma’in. The Banu Ma’in had now a considerable territory consisting of Bandar Abbas and part of Qishm. After Niebuhr’s visit, there is no more mention in the sources of Mulla Ali Shah, and Hormuz became a possession of Shaikh Abdallah of the Banu Ma’in. The Banu Ma’in did not enjoy their prominent position for a long time. Karim Khan’s power was rapidly expanding in the South-Eastern region. Nasir Khan had disappeared from the stage and in 1765 a certain Zakaria Khan was mentioned as governor of Laristan. In 1766, Karim Khan’s troops

occupied the coastal area of Laristan and his general Amir Guna Khan punished the faction of the Huwala which had been supporting Nasir Khan. Several Huwala Shaikhhs were taken prisoner and treated ignominiously, their beards were cut of. In 1767, another of Karim Khan’s generals, Sadiq Khan, destroyed Kangun, the westernmost Huwala town. A more reliable Arab leader, Shaikh Muhammad Siyad of Gamir, a place not far from Bandar Abbas, which he had earlier captured from Mulla Ali Shah, and where in better times European ships had charged sulphur, was left in control of the latter town, which had become a backwater.

In the following years, events in the Lower Gulf were determined by the fluctuating relationship between four powers. There was Karim Khan, but he could only interfere by sending costly military expeditions over a long road. The second element was Shaikh Abdallah, who was now nominally Karim Khan’s subject, but traditionally the Banu Ma’in had been adversaries of Karim Khan and he was by far the most unreliable of Karim Khan’s subjects on the coast. The situation was complicated by a tradition of common interest between the third element, the Qawasim (who always had been Abdallah’s competitors for control over Hormuz and Qishm) and Karim Khan, dating from their common hostility with Nasir Khan. The Qawasim were distracted from too much activity by their conflict with the Imam of Oman, the fourth regional power, about the ill-defined borderlines between them and competition in shipping to Basra. They tried to settle these matters to their advantage

83 Saldanha, Persian Gulf Prices, vol. 1, p. 158: Laft and Hormuz belong to Banu Ma’in, revenues of land on Qishm divided between the three.
84 Niebuhr, Beschreibung, pp. 312, 328.
88 There is some uncertainty on the state of affairs in the conflict between the Banu Ma’in and the Qawasim. The Banu Ma’in seem to have made some progress on Qishm on the Qawasim in the early 1760’s, cf. Lorimer, Gazetteer Historical part, vol. 1/2, pp. 1802, 1824-1825, but by 1764 the Qawasim had recovered their losses. The borders between the Qawasim and the Banu Ma’in of that time are given in Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 329: Basidlu belonged to the Banu Ma’in, while Laft was a common possession of Mulla Ali Shah (who also held Qishm fortress) and the Qawasim.
by making use of internal problems in Oman and of conflicts between Oman and Karim Khan. This situation created a community of interest between Karim Khan and the Qawasim. They made use of each other's military ventures, but did not arrive at more formal alliances. The Banu Ma'in had been traditional allies of Oman against the Qawasim and Mulla Ali Shah. With the new situation in Persia this alliance broke up, but old ties made that the Banu Ma'in were not very loyal to Karim Khan in his conflicts with Oman. The English had a vague kind of cooperation with Oman, prompted by common interest in the wellbeing of the Ottoman government in Basra and the safety of navigation between Basra and Muscat. They were too much occupied in protecting their interests in the unstable situation in the Upper Gulf to be able to make effective interventions in the Lower Gulf, although they made some attempts to interfere. The situation could develop towards a conflict with the Qawasim, but this conflict developed at a much later stage. The Shaikhs of the smaller Arab tribes of the Huwala played no part in the events any more.

In 1767, there came an English intervention as a consequence of an incident which had occurred in 1765. Arab crewmen of the ship Islamabad (a ship from India which carried the English flag and had some European officers), overpowered the ship at Mughu in 1765 and sailed it to Qays, where the Al Ali Shaikh returned the ship and kept the cargo, of which the Chief of their tribal coalition, the Banu Ma'in Shaikh Abdallah of Hormuz, received a considerable part. The English finally replied in 1767 by sending a fleet with orders to force Abdallah to restitution and a heavy fine and to occupy Hormuz either for the English or for any nominee to be appointed by Karim Khan. The plan for this mission is a typical example of the confusion in English policy. On the one hand, they were hoping to acquire a good stronghold in the Gulf, just as they had planned years ago to acquire Bahrain, Hormuz or Kharg. It seems rather wishful thinking on their part to expect that Karim Khan, with whom they had a quarrel just at that moment, would freely grant them Hormuz or appoint there somebody agreeable to them. Blackmailing Karim Khan after a possible seizure of Hormuz does not look to be a viable proposition: Hormuz was too far away and Bandar Abbas too important to suppose that Karim Khan would suffer from a blockade of the ports of the Lower Gulf. Fate spared the English further embarrassment: one of the English ships blew up by accident off Qishm and the expedition was cancelled. Shaikh Abdallah maintained his rule over Hormuz, but not easily. He had no need for big warships and sold the Fath Rabani to the Imam of Oman.

Bombay had not learnt much from past experience. In India, a grand expedition to clean up the Gulf was planned after Persian subjects from Bushahr had plundered some English ships. This was a singularly ambitious adventure with very small chance of success: to bring all the different potencies of the area to heel and to clear undesirable elements from all small ports of the Gulf, many of which were still uncharted, would have been downright impossible. Some more intelligent English representatives in the Gulf managed to slow down the execution of this grand plan up to the moment in 1770, that the Directors in London could send a message to forbid this madness.

Karim Khan caused considerable unrest in the area by his war of 1770 against Oman. He had wanted to regain similar authority over Oman such as Nadir Shah had had and he was angry because of the sale of the big warship Fath Rabani to the Imam by Shaikh Abdallah of Hormuz. Karim Khan's plans to regain control over Oman brought some former enemies together: the Imam, the Qawasim and Shaikh Abdallah of Hormuz all had reasons to fear a new concentration of Persian power in the Lower Gulf. Shaikh Muhammad

---


91 Perry, *Karim Khan*, p. 159: by some error, Perry always refers to the ship of Oman as Ramani (the Rahmani belonged at that time to the Shaikh of Julfar).

92 Lorimer, *Gazetteer Historical part*, vol. 1/2, pp. 1806-1807.

Siyad, who had acted as Governor of Bandar Abbas, also seems to have joined the enemies of Karim Khan. A Persian army under Zaki Khan was sent to Bandar Abbas in 1774, while a naval squadron was sent to Oman. The expedition of the navy was a failure: it returned after suffering considerable losses and without any result. The expedition of the army meant the end of Bandar Abbas as a centre of international trade: the last remaining merchants left. In the action, Karim Khan lost his grip on the situation: he had maintained this grip only because he held Shaikh Abdallah’s son as hostage. But Abdallah was clever: he duped Zaki Khan in believing that a marriage was being arranged between Zaki and Abdallah’s beautiful daughter Ayesha. In the course of the festivities, Abdallah took Zaki hostage and only set him free after getting his own son back. Karim Khan tried to solve his problems in a traditional way: he offered Bandar Abbas to somebody else. His new partner in Bandar Abbas was to be Hyder Ali, the Nawab of Mysore.

This does not seem to have worked out. It was a fact that Hyder Ali showed some interest in the Gulf, but he seems to have been looking for a more prosperous place: a few years later he was sending an envoy to Oman. While Karim Khan was unable to get an expeditionary force against Oman together, an Omani fleet made contact with Shaikh Abdallah and attacked the Persian forces assembled at Linga. They even burned some Persian warships in Bandar Abbas.

It looks as though Karim Khan hesitated to involve himself in direct military operations against Oman on a large scale: Nadir Shah’s history had shown the dangers of this. Instead, he tried to destroy Oman’s economy by putting an end to its main economic basis: trade with Basra. In this way Karim Khan was resuming the policy of the Safavi and Nadir Shah. The Ottoman position in Basra was weak and it was also possible to interest some of Basra’s Arab neighbours in an attack against the Turks. The conquest of Basra has been mentioned in the part of this chapter which describes the events in the Upper Gulf. In the context of this part of the book, it is of importance to point out that an Omani fleet with the Fath Rabani as flagship (after plundering Bahrain) was temporarily able to relieve Karim Khan’s siege of Basra by opening the way to receive supplies from the Gulf, but the way from Basra to Baghdad and reinforcements, remained closed and the Omanis did not stay, so Karim Khan could easily take the town after the Omanis left. The Omani expedition had primarily been a commercial venture. It was a better protected way of transporting the yearly batch of merchandise from and to Basra, and because of this, the Omani returned after finishing their commercial operations. This withdrawal was not much appreciated by local observers in Basra.

In 1776, the Omanis abducted Shaikh Abdallah of the Banu Ma’in, who had been switching fronts from time to time, so that both the Persians and the Omanis were angry with him. The Omani also had problems with the Qawasim, with whom they were in an intermittent state of war. The seapower of the Qawasim made the recovery of the former dominant position of Oman in the Gulf very difficult. There had been an important change in Sir: Shaikh Rashid bin Matar, who must have been a very old man, abdicated and was succeeded by his son Saqr whose wife was a daughter of Shaikh Abdallah of Hormuz. But Rashid still retained much authority as is shown by later events. From time to time, hostilities between Oman and the Qawasim flared up. In 1778, Khalaf bin Muhammad, Wall of Muscat and probably the most powerful man in Oman after the Imam, sailed with a fleet to Ras al Khaima. This expedition became a failure because the Omani ships did not dare to come far

94 EBD, vol. 202, pp. 96, 117, 167, 183, 202, 214; Perry, Karim Khan, pp. 160-161; Lorimer, Gazetteer Historical part, vol. 1/2, p. 1825. Risso, Oman and Muscat, p. 58, has a slightly different version, which she refers to as being based on Persian sources, although in her notes she only mentions Perry’s book which for this affair is based on British documents only.

95 Lorimer, Gazetteer Historical part, vol. 1/1A, p. 156; Al-Qasimi, Myth of piracy, p. 27; Risso, Oman and Muscat, pp. 81-82.


97 Lorimer Gazetteer Historical part, vol. 1/1B, p. 61.

98 Lorimer Gazetteer Historical part, vol. 1/1B, p. 839.
enough inshore between the shallows. The Qawasim also captured an English private ship that had committed the stupidity of showing an Omani flag at the encounter and so became lawful prize. English protests did not achieve more than the restitution of the ship, but the cargo was kept by the capturers.99 Oman’s attempts to recover its former power remained feeble. It had to regain territories from several powers which had made use of the downfall of the Ya’ariba. The attention of the Imam often was drawn away from the Gulf by trouble in the African colonies. Mombasa had become independent, and the population of the island of Kilwa had turned to the Portuguese for support to shake off the Omani domination. Kilwa came for some time under French influence, while Zanzibar was the only place in Eastern Africa where the rule of the Imam of Oman remained undisputed.100 Oman also had trouble in keeping its neutrality in the war between England and France which had started in 1778. In 1781, the French privateer Deschiens appeared in Muscat with two ships armed on Mauritius (which was at that time a French possession and was called Ile de France). Deschiens claimed from the Omani Government the delivery of an English private ship which was at that moment in the port of Muscat. The Imam was unable to do as the French wished because that would have constituted an act of war against England. Finally, the French captured the English ship on their own, while not sparing Omani shipping either. Deschiens captured the Omani ship Salih, causing considerable damage to Arab merchants in the Gulf. When later another French ship, under command of Captain De Kéradan, appeared in Muscat, it was detained pending negotiations between the Omani Government and the French. During these negotiations, there were even mentions of the possibility that one of the fortresses of Muscat would be given to the French.101 The events of this period show a high degree of volatility of the situation in the Gulf. The traditional great powers like Persia, England and Oman all have been weakened. As a consequence adventurers such as the French privateers could interfere. Other powers could also make use of the situation. A dhow from Bushihr carrying merchandise belonging to Europeans and subjects of Muscat and Bushahr was seized by Arabs from Khasab in 1781. Merchandise reputedly belonging to merchants from Khasab was impounded in Basra. The Ruler of Ras al Khaima, Shaikh Saqir bin Rashid Al-Qasimi, travelling with a fleet of armed dhows to Basra, claimed immediate restitution of this merchandise. In the negotiations on this matter with the local government of Basra, Saqir claimed a position of supremacy among the Arabs of the Lower Gulf, promising restitution of Basra property taken ‘by any of the peoples of the southern end of the Gulf’.102

The war of the Lower Gulf Arabs against the Utub

Possibly because the conquest of Basra had adverse consequences for the trade movements in the area, there were new tribal upheavals in the Upper Gulf. In 1766, part of the Utub tribe, active sailors and traders, had already left Kuwait, which may have suffered in its trade from events around Basra and established a new town in Zubara in Qatar. A new group followed in 1776. It seems that this part of the Utub, led by the Al Khalifa and al Jalalimah families, had broken somehow with the Utub tradition of the last decades of alliance with Karim Khan and his dependent, the Shaikh of Bushahr. Problems about the pearl banks of Bahrain may have caused this breach.103 In any case, Karim Khan almost instantly took action against Zubara, but the first attack in 1777 failed.104

99 Risso, Oman and Muscat, pp. 61-62.
100 Risso, Oman and Muscat, pp. 121-124.
102 Risso, Oman and Muscat, pp. 63-65.
103 Lorimer, Gazetteer Historical part, vol. 1/1B, p. 1000; Kniphausen report fol. 6v-7 (=Floor, 'Description', p. 172) mentions that the Al Khalifa sheikh had been the wealthiest sheikh of Kuwait, possessing many ships.
104 Lorimer, Gazetteer Historical part, vol. 1/1B pp. 788 and 839.
Arab chiefs of the Lower Gulf who had an interest in the pearl banks were confronted by the fact that the Utub, who for a long time had been their enemies, now had a strong position very near the heart of these banks.

In 1779, Karim Khan had died. This meant that Persia was unable to interfere in the coming struggle for power between the Arabs. Shaikh Nasir of Bushahr still had some ships, but he had few soldiers. Several members of Karim Khan’s family and other prominent personalities contended for power in Persia. None of them was able to assert himself and Karim Khan’s death only made the pattern of alliances in the area more complex. At first, Bagur Khan of Tangistan tried to extend his influence. He made an alliance with the Ka’b, with the Nasur of Tahiri, and with Mir Ali of Bandar Rig. He plundered Bushahr, but he was eliminated by an alliance between the Shaikh Nasir, Nasr, the Shaikh of Bahrain (probably Nasir’s cousin, son of Sa’du bin Madhkur) and Shaikh Saqr of the Haram. Shiraz was in the power of Ali Murad Khan, a nephew of Zaki Khan, another warlord, and he was able to obtain the cooperation of most Arab chiefs of the Northern coast, the most important of whom was Shaikh Nasir of Bushahr who controlled the largest squadron of the Persian fleet.105

Oman soon became as powerless as Persia. In February 1781 there was an internal quarrel in the ruling family. Two sons of the Imam Ahmed bin Sa’id captured the fortresses of Muscat. This gave the Qawasim a good occasion of trying to solve their conflicts with Oman. They marched into Oman, ostensibly in support of the sons, but they withdrew after having settled their disputes with the Imam to their advantage.106 Ahmed was then able to put an end to the rebellion, but he was an old man and did not display much energy any more.

In the central part of the Gulf, the power of the Utub was increasing. They went as far as to attack Bahrain and to plunder

106 Risso, Oman and Muscat, p. 95.

Shaikh Nasir’s stronghold at Manama. None of the chiefs of the Lower Gulf could accept such an extension of Utub power. The Persians also would lose all chance of income from the pearl banks if Bahrain were dominated by a tribe which was in no way bound to Persia and the Qawasim had their own interests in pearling. Ali Murad Khan of Shiraz ordered Bahrain’s lord, Shaikh Nasir, to assemble warriors from the tribes on the Northern coast and to attack Zubara.107 In 1782, a force of 2000 men under Nasir’s nephew Muhammad was brought together and the remainder of the Persian fleet blocked Zubara.108

Shaikh Rashid bin Matar tried to avoid a fatal conflict by mediating between the two sides, but he failed. A battle followed which had many victims: Muhammad himself, a cousin of Shaikh Rashid and several important persons from the Banu Ma’in were killed. A second attack of the Utub on Bahrain followed, and this time they took the fortress. The Utub had also cooperated with the Banu Ka’b and the Banu Khalid of Al Hasa in an attack on Basra.109 Rashid and Nasir failed in a later attempt in July 1785 to get a new army together to dislodge the Utub from Bahrain. There was no more support for this from the remnants of Persian authority; Ali Murad Khan of Shiraz had died in February of that year.110

These last battles, even when they might have been initiated by the orders of the Persian authorities, had become entirely an Arab matter.

Oman had no part in these events because it suffered from internal trouble. The Imam Ahmad bin Sa’id died in 1783. His son and successor Sa’id encountered considerable difficulties in getting his authority universally accepted. Again, there was the tension between the hereditary principle dictated by politics and family interest and the limited electoral principle advocated not only by the
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

Ibadhis, but often also by other prominent. The two younger sons of Ahmed bin Sa'id, who had earlier rebelled against their father, now turned against their older brother. Again they had the support of the Qawasim, who used the occasion to their advantage.\footnote{Risso, Oman and Muscat, pp. 94-97, 110. Concerning the intervention of the Qawasim, Risso quotes as her source Miles, Countries and Tribes, 189. (=ed. 1919, 281) Miles is a very secondary source, containing no references to sources and his account of this Qawasim intervention looks unreliable. As Omani places conquered by the Qawasim he mentions Sharjah, Jazirat al Hamra, Rams and Khor Fakan, which are places which belonged to the Qawasim already a long time.}

The Lower Gulf had become almost purely Arab. In the area of the Central and Lower Gulf there remained three principal powers: Oman, the Qawasim and the Utub. The Al Ali and the Nasur seem to have been reduced to purely local importance, and the Banu Ma'in were not much better shape. Much later, in 1795, the Qawasim would also gain control over the Banu Ma'in's stronghold of Hormuz.\footnote{Risso, Oman and Muscat, p. 175.} The Qawasim were weakened because against the increasing economic power of the Utub they had lost part of the considerable long-distance trade they had carried on before between India and Basra. The Utub, although they had gained naval control over the Upper Gulf, were still not strong enough to attack a power the size of the Qawasim. Finally, Utub expansion would be blocked by the conquest of Zubara by the Wahabis who appeared in the last years of the 18th century as allies of the Qawasim, and by a revival of the naval power of Oman.

Oman was the only Arab power in the Lower Gulf which still kept up extensive political relations outside the Gulf. There were considerable dealings with the French, rather intimate relations with the Dutch Governor of Malabar and with Tipu Sultan. These three powers all were competitors of the English and the Imam could engage in profitable powerplay for some time.\footnote{Risso, Oman and Muscat, pp. 104-105, ARA, VOC 3436, native dairy fol. 30v-31, 43-44, 155-156, VOC 3460, native diary fol. 181, 274-275v, VOC 3850, 604-604v, 608.} Oman also held on to Zanzibar, which was to become the main source of income to the ruling dynasty at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Beyond the Western border of Oman the coast down to Qatar belonged to a number of independent Arab tribes: the Qawasim, the Banu Yas and the Musallam. The Qawasim show a political identity as a consequence of their conflicts with Oman and their interventions in Southern Persia. Of the Banu Yas, Niebuhr is the only source. Niebuhr mentions that they lived in a particularly inhospitable desert, but that just the poverty of their land gave them safety and independence. The Musallam had originally been subordinate to the Banu Khalid of Al Hasa (like the Utub had been), but Niebuhr relates that they were acquiring independence.\footnote{Niebuhr, Beschreibung, p. 341-344.}

In the background, just across the Arabian Sea, there was the increasing power of the English Company in India. It was inevitable that this superpower would try to spread its influence further. A primary interest of the English was the fact that they needed quick communications between Europe and India. Because the Ottomans did not permit European shipping through the Red Sea to Egypt, the Gulf was the only way to get letters quickly to the Mediterranean. Another cause for future English expansion was the great interest the Western part of India (where they now were the dominant power) had in trade with the Gulf. The quasi disappearance of European power was a temporary matter. When the English Company returned, there would be no more European competitors, and it would be able to impose its own rules.
CONCLUSION

Three elements determined the history of the Gulf Arabs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first element was that Persia became a power on the coasts of the Gulf with the downfall of the Arab-Portuguese Kingdom of Hormuz. The second was that the fall of Hormuz also opened the Gulf for the English and the Dutch, thus making it possible for Oman to recover its full territory. The third element was the weakness of the two great Islamic regional powers, Persia and the Ottoman Empire, which left room for the development of independent Arab states. This weakness was not caused by European interference (the European presence in the Gulf was far from strong with only a few hundred soldiers and some ships), but by structural weakness and internal mismanagement of both Persia and the Ottoman Empire.

The strife between the Arab tribes for the delimitation of territory and the possession of sources of income combined with temporary recoveries of Persia and the Ottoman Empire caused the failure of the Arabs of Southern Persia and Iraq to gain full independence. On the coast of the Arabian peninsula where the Persians could not interfere with sufficient power, some Arab entities maintained their independence. At the end of the period covered by this book, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman more or less existed in their present form. Situated between Oman and the Gulf, the Qawasim Emirate prevented the Omani from interfering in the coastal area of the Lower Gulf, whence the other Emirates which now make up the United Arab Emirates were forming, or already in existence.

The sources for the history of this development of Arab states are rare and vague. Most essential are the references in European documents, but these are remarks of observers who did not have much interest in the Arabs. It should be stressed that in this period Persia was hardly a Gulf power, the Ottoman Empire was not a Gulf power, and the Europeans were there for profit, using only such military means as they could afford to divert from other, more profitable pursuits. This means that the Europeans have had no real influence in the way the Arab political structures have developed.
CONCLUSION

It was the Arabs, with all their divisions, who made the map on the Arab side of the Gulf.

ABBREVIATIONS

AKF-Collection of atlases of the Dutch General State Archives
ANP-Archives Nationales in Paris, French National Archives
ANTT-Arquivo National de Torre do Tombo, Portuguese National Archives
ARA-Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague, Dutch General State Archives
BL-British Library in London
BNP-Biblioteca National de Portugal-Portuguese National Library
DLH-Directuren van de Levantse Handel, Archive of the board of Directors of Dutch Levant Trade (in the Dutch General State Archives)
DR-Documentos Remetidos da India, Documents received in Portugal from India (in the Portuguese National Archives)
EBD-English Basra Diary (in Bombay State Archives)
FG-Fondo Geral, General Series of Manuscripts (in the Portuguese National Library)
FR-Factory Records (in the India Office Library, London)
IOL-India Office Library and Records in London
LAT-Legatiearchief Turkije, Archive of the Dutch embassy in Turkey (in the Dutch General State Archives)
MCAL-Collection of maps of the Ministry of Marine (in the Dutch General State Archives)
PF-Propaganda Fide, Archives of the Congregazione di Propaganda Fide in Rome
SC-Scritture Riferite nei Congressi, Papers dealt with by President and Secretary of the Propaganda Fide (in the Archives of the Propaganda Fide, Rome)
SG-States-General, Archives of the federal government of the Dutch Republic (in the Dutch General State Archives)
SOCG-Scritture Originale Riferite nei Congregazioni Generali, Papers dealt with in the General meetings of the Propaganda Fide (in the Archives of the Propaganda Fide, Rome)
TOPO-Collection of maps of the Topographic Service (in the Dutch General State Archives).
SOURCES

A. THE GENERAL STATE ARCHIVES IN THE HAGUE

1. Archives of the Dutch East India Company: Gentlemen XVII and Amsterdam-Chamber.

a. The Resolutions of the Gentlemen XVII

In the proceedings of the Court of Directors of the East India Company there is only rarely a direct mention of affairs of the Gulf, except on some matters of trade (merchandise to be ordered from Asia) (ARA, VOC vols. 99-146).

b. Proceedings of the Commission of Directors in The Hague (Haags besogne)

Yearly, a commission out of the seventeen Directors met in The Hague to read all the papers received from Asia and to compose the reply and instructions to the Batavia High Government. In these proceedings there always is a chapter on 'Persia' (or Basra or Kharag). This is of a very general content and usually only of interest for the knowledge of the way in which the Directors in Holland thought about matters (ARA, VOC vols. 4455-4506).

c. Outgoing letterbook of the Gentlemen XVII

In this letterbook, the letters to the Governor General in Batavia contain a chapter concerning the Gulf with instructions concerning the general policy and trade there. The letters written by de Gentlemen XVII directly to the establishments on the Gulf are of little importance because the Gentlemen XVII only gave instructions to the Gulf through the Governor General (ARA, VOC vols. 314-344).


This series consists of yearly batches of miscellaneous documents received in Holland from the establishments of the East India Company. For this book, 3 kinds of documents are of special importance. Before 1660, these documents are arranged each year in a haphazard way; later the different kinds are separated in subseries.

First: the so-called Generale Missiven: letters by the Governor General and Council to the Directors in Holland containing a global survey of all current matters in Asia. Copies of sundry administrative documents concerning the establishments on the Gulf may be joined as annexes. The letters as well the annexes may each by very large, sometimes several hundreds of pages.

1 Abstracts from these letters are being published: Coolhaas, W. Ph., Generale
THE ARABS OF THE GULF

Second: the letters sent over the landroad directly from Bandar Abbas, Isfahan or Basra to Holland. In the yearly batches, they follow behind the generale missiven and their annexes and the papers of the High Court of Justice in Batavia.

Third: the registers of copies of incoming letters of the High Government. The Batavia High Government was obliged to send a copy of all letters received from its subordinated establishments to Holland. Usually there are one or more sections containing letters from the Gulf. These may only contain the reports by the establishments in the Gulf to the High Government, but often they contain many enclosures and may stretch sometimes to thousands of pages in the years when copies of practically the complete written administration of the Dutch establishment in Bandar Abbas were sent in this way to Holland. This complicated and inconsistent structure makes that the quantity of Dutch documentation on the Gulf varies strongly from year to year. For some years, there only are the letters of the establishment in Bandar Abbas to the High Government and to the directors in Holland, in other years there is much more correspondence between Bandar Abbas and subordinate establishments like Basra, diaries of Bandar Abbas and Basra, reports on expeditions, resolutions of the political council in Bandar Abbas, copies of correspondence with Persian authorities or even Arab Shaikhs.

Finally, it should be mentioned that in the yearly batches the parts containing papers from the Dutch establishments in Ceylon, Malabar and Surat (either those directly sent to Holland or the copies of incoming letters to the Batavia High Government) may contain important papers on the Gulf. This is for instance the case with documents concerning the first Dutch trading ventures in Oman which can be found among the papers of Ceylon.

e. The 'Overgekomen Briefen en Papieren van de Kaap.'

During two years, 1653-1654, batches of important papers concerning Bandar Abbas and Basra were sent to Holland by way of Capetown. They can be found in VOC nos. 3988 and 3990.

f. The Batavia outgoing letterbook and the Resolutions of the Batavia High Government.

The Batavia High Government was obliged to send copies of all the letters it sent to subordinated offices as well as of its proceedings ('Resolutions') to Holland. The letterbooks contain letters and instructions to the Dutch establishments on the Gulf as well as to Persian authorities (ARA, VOC, vols. 848-1052). The Resolutions


SOURCES

contain decisions taken concerning the Dutch policy in the Gulf. (ARA, VOC, vols. 659-847).²

2. The Zealand-chamber of the East India Company.

The archives of the Zealand chamber contain a series of 'Overgekomen Briefen en Papieren' of basically the same contents as those in the archives of the Amsterdam Chamber. This series is far from complete and ordered in a different way. Most (but not all) documents in this series can also be found in the archives of the Amsterdam Chamber.

3. Archives of establishments of the East India Company in Asia.

a. So-called archives of the Batavia High Government

This series consists of papers concerning areas outside Indonesia transferred from the archives in Jakarta during the last century. It mainly contains repertories and indexes on other series and some important reports. (ARA, Hoge Regering nos. 873-877.) The number 877 should be especially mentioned, it is a full report by Van Reede, a member of the Batavia High Government, on Dutch interests in the Gulf, with historical remarks on Persia and on the activities of other European powers, made in 1756.

b. Book-keeping of Batavia

This documentation falls outside the scope of this book, but from the account-books important and detailed data on the Dutch economic activity in the Gulf may be abstracted.

c. Archives in Indonesia.

The original archives of the Batavia High Government are kept in the Arsip Nasional in Jakarta. Most of the series concerning territories outside Indonesia have been destroyed. Most of the general series of administration have survived, but duplicates of the most important series are in The Hague, where they have

2 The published index on the resolutions Realla, register op de generale resolutien van het kasteel Batavia 1632-1805. Leiden 1882 covers the most important resolutions only and it of small use for serious research. The volumes in Holland only contain chronologic tables of contents, but in Indonesia there are full subject indexes ('korte notulen'), although this series has been damaged by tropical circumstances, cf. the item 3c.
suffered less from tropical circumstances. Some series are only present in
Indonesia. The Batavia Diaries is the most important of these series, for the most
important period it has been published.\(^2\) Of some importance are the ordinary and
secret minutes of a special committee charged with reading the reports of
establishments and making drafts of letters to establishments, the bezegens, and
indexes to the resolutions of the High Government (these resolutions are also
available in The Hague, but without full indexes.)


a. States General

Information on Basra can be found in the reports of the Dutch ambassador in
Istanbul in the archives of the States General (the nos. 6888-6996 contain a
chronological series of this correspondence). The number 12995 contains papers
concerning diplomatic relations with Iran of the early 17th century and original
letters of Shah Abbas and Shah Safi. Some other documents are also referred to in
the notes.

b. Dutch embassy in Turkey

Papers on Basra in the 18th century, correspondence and even Ottoman documents
can be found in several parts of this archive. There are also many references to the
relations between the Ottoman Empire and Persia in the diaries of the embassy of
the 18th century. Correspondence and papers concerning the Dutch
establishments can also be found in the correspondence between the Embassy and
the Dutch Consulate in Aleppo.

c. Secretariat of the stadholder

A small number of papers on Basra and Kharag in nos. 1155, 1180, 1230-1232.

5. Private papers of officials of the Dutch East India Company

a. Papers of Wollebrand Geleysnssen de Jongh

The collection of Wollebrand Geleysnssen de Jongh contains the papers collected
by this director of the Dutch establishment in Bandar Abbas in the 1640's. In it
there is documentation on many places on the Gulf in the nos. 97-300.

---

3 *Dagbegriften van Batavia gehouden in 't Casteel*, 31 vols. Batavia and 's-
Gravenhage 1896-1931. (covering the years 1624-1682).

---

b. Papers of the Radermacher family.

The Radermachers were important persons in the Zealand-chamber of the Dutch
East India Company. Papers on Basra and Kharag can be found in nos. 390, 529-531.

c. Papers of others.

Some other private collections which incidentally contain documents on the Gulf:
Hope (no. 8500), Nederburgh (no. 107), Hudde (no. 41), Cnoll (no. 13), Sweers,
Speex etc (vols. 5-7).

6. Private papers of Dutch diplomats.

The papers of the families Calloon and De Hoepied contain some papers on
Basra and Kharag. Part of the embassy-diaries of Istanbul, referred to before in (2)
are kept in the Calloon-archives.

7. Collections of sundry manuscripts and documents

Collection of Aanwijsten.

This collection contains some important documents of various origins like the
Kniphofslag-report and the oldest original Arab letter written from Muscat. The
items concerning the Gulf are 1865 B XIV, 1866 A XII, 1894 23, 1889 23B, 1899 XIII


Extensive use has been made of the manuscript maps in the collections VEL, VELH
and AANW, most of which originate from the East India Company, as well as of
the old printed atlases, maps and charts (collections MCAL, AKF, VEL and TOPO)
of this department.

B. PORTUGUESE ARCHIVES

A number of Portuguese sources has been consulted. The principal are the
'Documentos Remetidos da India' or 'Libros dos Monças' in the Portuguese
National Archives, a series of which the structure can be compared with the
("Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren" of the Dutch East India Company) and some
manuscripts in the Portuguese National Library.