INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of “sectioning” the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again--beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.

University Microfilms International
300 N. Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48106
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE
ARAB SHAYKHDOM OF BUISHIRE: 1750-1850

by

Stephen R. Grummon

A dissertation submitted to the Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Baltimore, Maryland

1985
ABSTRACT

A fundamental change occurred in the political configuration of the northern littoral of the Persian Gulf, primarily during the nineteenth century. Semi-independent Arab shaykhdoms and port city states on the northern littoral of the Persian Gulf succumbed to the political domination of the Persian government centered in Shirāz, Iran's most important southern provincial city. By the end of the century, Shirāz appointed governors (generally members of Shirāz's local, elite families) ruled in place of most of the local Arab shaykhs. The collapse of the Arab shaykhdom of Bushire in 1850 provides a textbook example of this process.

There were two basic reasons for the collapse of power of the Būshire's rule Arab family, the al-Muzkur. First, the Būshire shaykhs lost control of their hinterland security which was the principal source of danger to Būshire. Būshire could be attacked by a combination of the several interior khanates. It could also be threatened by Shirāz (often in conjunction with the local khans.) Whether a hinterland threat actually materialized depended to a large extent on the attitude of the Shirāz government.

In the nineteenth century the al-Muzkur were never able to form what might be termed a stable security
relationship with the Qājār dynasty. Prior to the establishment of that dynasty in 1794, Būshire had a symmetrical security relationship with the then ruling Zand dynasty. In the symmetrical relationship, the Būshire shaykhs and the Zands exchanged strategic services. The Būshire shaykhs sought such an alliance relationship with the Shirāz government as a means protecting their hinterland security. In return, the al-Muzkur used their navy to help expand Zand imperial interests in the Gulf.

Persian imperial interests in the Persian Gulf declined with the establishment of the Qājār dynasty. This development led to an asymmetrical security relationship and had profound implications for the Būshire shaykhs. The Qājārs did not have the vested interest in the al-Muzkur which the Zands had had; that is they did not have a strategic need for the al-Muzkur. Instead, the Būshire shaykhs were able to provide the Qājārs with only one asset: tax revenue. However, tax revenues could be collected by anyone which meant that in theory the al-Muzkur were expendable. In the final analysis, the shaykhs of Būshire were unable to solve the security problem that resulted from the asymmetrical security relationship or from being expendable.
The security of the al-Muzkur was threatened not only by the change in security relations among the major political actors of southern Iran. The revenue base of the al-Muzkur also came under pressure beginning in the early nineteenth century which was a development that had direct political implications for the al-Muzkur. First, customs revenues reached a plateau or actually shrank as a result of structural changes in the conduct of Persian Gulf trade (i.e. the transformation of Būshīre from port-of-call to port-of-transit, British commercial practices and the rise of port city competition). At the same time that maritime based revenues were declining, land based revenues were also under pressure. Granted that the process was irregular, nevertheless, the long run trend was one of decline in land holding and hence tax revenues. The net effect of these changes was to reduce the revenue base of the al-Muzkur.

Financial demands on the al-Muzkur increased, however. Specifically, the Shirāz government steadily increased its tax demands on the al-Muzkur. By 1850, the al-Muzkur were caught in a financial squeeze from which they were unable to escape. They were hemmed in by increasing tax demands, while at the same time, they were unable to generate additional sources of revenue. In a society where wealth was crucial for the maintenance and extension of political/military strength, the financial decline of the shaykhs of Būshīre was fatal to their political fortunes.
A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

I have followed the Library of Congress transliteration system for Arabic and Farsi vocabulary.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART I: THE SETTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>The Geographic and Economic Setting</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART II: THE POLITICAL PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III</td>
<td>The Rise of the al-Muzkur: 1734-1794</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV</td>
<td>The Collapse of the al-Muzkur</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART 3: THE ECONOMIC UNDERPINNINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V</td>
<td>Bushire and the Trade of the Persian Gulf</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VI</td>
<td>The Transformation of Bushire from Port-of-Call to Port-of-Transit</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VII</td>
<td>The Merchants and the al-Muzkur Family</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VIII</td>
<td>The Financial Resources of the al-Muzkur</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IX</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maps

- a. The Persian Gulf Region | 295
- b. The Bushire Region | 296

Bibliography | 297
CHAPTER I

Introduction

A gradual, but nevertheless dramatic, change in the political configuration of the northern littoral of the Persian Gulf occurred during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries. In the eighteenth century, the northern littoral was composed of a mosaic of essentially independent Arab shaykhdoms or Gulf port city-states. These city-states maintained independent military organizations, levied taxes and customs duties, entered into agreements with outside powers and made war and peace among themselves. In fact, these essentially independent and sovereign-like actions led the great eighteenth century traveler, Casten Niebuhr, to compare the Gulf shaykhdoms to the ancient Greek-city-states.\(^1\) As the nineteenth century progressed, however, the Qājār government reabsorbed these shaykhdoms into the Persian administrative system. They ceased to function as autonomous or semi-autonomous entities and increasingly behaved as outlying provinces of a more centralized state.

\(^{1}\) C. Niebuhr, Travels Through Arabia and Other Countries in the East, volume 1, p. 144.
This thesis traces the evolution of the port city of Bushire, which was one of the most important northern littoral shaykhdoms, from a position of relative political independence to complete subordination to the Qajar government. More specifically, it chronicles the rise and fall of the al-Muzkur, an Arab family who ruled Bushire from approximately 1750 to 1850. The study concludes that, over the long-run, the Bushire shaykhs failed to maintain their independence because they were unable to adjust to a fundamental shift in their security relationship with the government centered in Shiraz. An equally important factor contributing to the Bushire shaykhs' failure to manage successfully their security relationship with Shiraz was the precipitous decline of their economic fortunes beginning in the late 1820s. These two factors eventually lead to the ousting of the al-Muzkur from Bushire in 1850.

Prior to the establishment of the Qajar dynasty in 1794, Bushire had a symmetrical security relationship with the Shiraz (Zand) government. In the symmetrical relationship, the Bushire shaykhs and the Zands (the ruling Persian dynasty in the latter half of the eighteenth century) exchanged strategic services. The Bushire shaykhs sought such an
alliance relationship with the Shirāz government as a means protecting their hinterland security. In return, the al-Muzkur used their navy to help expand Zand imperial interests in the Gulf.

Persian imperial interests in the Persian Gulf declined with the establishment of the Qajar dynasty. This development led to an asymmetrical security relationship and had profound implications for the Būshire shaykhs. In the final analysis, the Qajars did not have the vested interest in the al-Muzkur which the Zands had had; that is they did not have a strategic need for the al-Muzkur. Instead, the Būshire shaykhs were able to provide Shirāz with only one asset: tax revenue. However, tax revenues could be collected by anyone which meant that in theory the al-Muzkur were expendable. From the al-Muzkur perspective, though, the basic security issues did not change with the change of dynasties. In particular, the problem of hinterland security (which the Shirāz government could influence dramatically) remained a critical issue. The shaykhs of Būshire were never able to solve the security problem that resulted from that asymmetrical security relationship or from being expendable.

Intimately linked to that political problem was the decline of the economic fortunes of the al-Muzkur
family. Without an expanding base of income, the shaykhs were unable to meet their financial obligations to the Qājārs. At the same time, the declining economic fortunes of the al-Muzkur made it difficult to maintain the political loyalty of the surrounding tribal districts. As a result, these tribes were more susceptible to the intrigues of the Shīrāz government, particularly in the two decades preceding the final collapse of the family.

II

Būshire is located approximately half way down the northern littoral of the Gulf. (See map on page 295.) Like all independent or even quasi-independent entities, the Būshire shaykhs ultimately were concerned with maintaining their privileged ruling position, i.e., they were concerned about their political security. Būshire, of course, was vulnerable to attack from the Gulf and, in fact, the port was threatened with naval blockades and marine attack on several occasions between the 1770's and 1820's. These naval threats were-by and large-ineffective, the historical record showing that the Būshire shaykhs were able to parry virtually every maritime threat.

The real danger to Būshire's security came from
the hinterland. Land forces successfully attacked and occupied Būshīre on several occasions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As the nineteenth century progressed, it became increasingly clear that the key to Būshīre’s security lay in manipulating or controlling the political configuration of the various hinterland forces, particularly the other shaykhdoms, khānates and tribes.

A complex security environment existed in the surrounding hinterland. In the coastal lowlands, three political entities could combine to challenge the Būshīre shaykhs. (See map on page 296.) Immediately behind Būshīre lay Dashtistān with its seat of political authority at Borāzjān. To the southeast lay the khānate of Tangistān with its political capital located in the town of Ahram. Finally, even further south lay the district of Dashtī. These khānates plus Būshīre were the principal political actors in central lowlands of the northern littoral beginning about 1770. Separated by religious, ethnic, and linguistic differences, these city-states generally found themselves in an almost perpetual state of tension, if not outright war. Hovering behind these lowland principalities lay the vast Iranian heartland and plateau. Hinterland political and military authority and power were projected on to the lowland by the Shīrāz
Shiraz government. From the perspective of the lowland entities, Shiraz had many of the attributes of a superpower.

The Bushire shaykhs were confronted by two intertwined security threats. First, the town might be attacked and looted by the surrounding tribes. Secondly, the shaykhs faced the ever increasing danger of being deposed by the Shiraz government. The al-Muzkur generally were able to protect themselves if they could organize a coalition of lowland khans and shaykhs to oppose hostile forays from Shiraz. On the other hand, if Bushire was able to maintain good relations with Shiraz (as it generally did during the Zand period), the lowland tribes could be held in check. However, the deadly combination for Bushire was a hostile Shiraz allied with one or more of the lowland, interior tribes. It was precisely this constellation of forces which the Bushire shaykhs were unable to prevent from coalescing as the nineteenth century progressed.

At first glance, the political configuration previously described has the appearance of being a miniature international states system—that is a system of sovereign, interacting states whose political leaders recognize no superior authority. Yet, the lowland principalities were not entirely
sovereign. They had to pay taxes to Shiraz (although it was often on an intermittent basis). Moreover, they would accept from the Shiraz government a khal'at (robe of honor), a symbolic gesture which confirmed positions of political authority. In fact, the northern littoral political configuration would be better characterized as a "suzerain states-system", a concept proposed by the late British historian, Martin Wight.\(^2\) Wight has identified several suzerain states systems. He has suggested, for example, that such a system existed in China during the Period of Warring States. During this era, "the independent Chinese principalities continued to recognize the shadowy authority of the Chou dynasty..." Wight also calls attention to Islamic history during the waning decades of the 'Abbásid rule: "As the Islamic empire decayed, its provinces became independent; but, self-made sultans and emirs...continued to apply to a titular caliph for a diploma of investiture..."\(^3\)

The lowland principalities seem to have recognized that in theory they were subordinate to

\(^3\) *Ibid*, p. 23.
the Iranian hinterland; however, in practice, they resisted (often successfully in the late eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries) Shīrāz's efforts to impose order upon them. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Qājār dynasty had destroyed—for the most part—the suzerain states system along the northern littoral.

Regardless of which state system prevailed, Būshire and the surrounding khānates were clearly small powers; within such a system, they were the weak in the world of the strong. Rothstein has defined a small power as "a state which recognizes that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so...."4

Small states face a perpetual security dilemma regardless of the international system within which they function, because they will never be the ultimate arbitrators of their fate. By and large they cannot depend on military defense as a final repository of security, but instead have to rely on options which the international system itself

provides. Building on Rothstein, it can be postulated that Bushire had three basic options for managing its security relationship with Shiraz and the coastal hinterland: neutrality and/or nonalignment, isolation coupled with appeasement, or alignment. Military security was an option only if a total political vacuum prevailed on the plateau.

During the Zand period, the Bushire shaykhs opted for an alliance with that dynasty. The policy generally was successful for it secured the hinterland and permitted Bushire to expand its maritime influence in the Gulf i.e., in Bahrein, for example.

Bushire's relationship with the Qajars was less clear cut. It had military forces, just as it did during the Zand period. However, its military strength was concentrated in ships. While the navy could be employed to project Bushire's influence at various points in the Gulf, the navy generally had a prescribed influence in protecting the port from a land attack. For example, naval weaponry was not powerful enough to deny to a hostile force the use of the territory immediately surrounding the port. In turn, this situation meant that Bushire was vulnerable to a land side blockade which would cut off both food and water supplies.
Modern naval power would have been able to defend Bushire much more effectively. But as Hamilton has pointed out, "modern weaponry (has) smudged the distinction between the use of force on land and its use at sea." Nineteenth century sea power could not penetrate the hinterland as deeply as it can today. Thus nineteenth century naval power, particularly a "native" naval force, was an ill-suited instrument for protecting the landward flank.

The navy did have one important function if Bushire came under siege from the hinterland: it provided the means by which the family and its retinue could escape until the danger had receded. In cases where the town was occupied for a prolonged period by Persian forces, i.e., 1807 to 1813, the family attempted to throw a naval blockade around the port. The blockade, however, had no decisive impact on the occupation forces and was not successful.

The Bushire shaykhs did have influence over some interior tribes which could and did act as a land-based militia for the town. Against a single opponent, these forces generally were effective.

However, they were no match against a combined force of lowland tribes, particularly if it was augmented by troops from the plateau. In that case, the only recourse for the Būshire forces was to retreat behind the town's walls (which meant that the town was vulnerable to landside blockade) or to take to the sea.

A neutrality or non-alignment policy was not a viable option for the Būshire shaykhs during the Qājār era. Rothstein points out that two critical factors must be present for a neutrality policy to be successful. First, there must be two or more great powers in the international system which are in relative equilibrium. In the nineteenth century, Great Britain certainly could have acted as a balancing great power for the Persian Gulf system. However, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the British attempted to avoid becoming embroiled in the interior politics of the Gulf. This policy had been in effect since the late eighteenth century. Moreover, the ill-fated British venture into the interior of Oman in the early 1820's reinforced this basic policy predisposition.


7. See J.B. Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, chapter 5 for further details.
Secondly, a small power must be strategically irrelevant or politically nonprovocative if it is to pursue a successful policy of nonalignment. Bushire, however, had strategic value, particularly as British pressure in the Gulf increased in the nineteenth century. For example, Bushire was a port of entree which offered direct access to Shiraz and the Persian heartland. While the British, in fact, had little interest in invading Iran, the Shiraz government could never be sure of that fact. Bushire was also Iran's principal Persian Gulf port which increased its importance. For these reasons, the Bushire shaykhs could not hope to pursue an effective neutrality policy towards Shiraz.

If non-alignment is not a viable option, the small power is thrown back into the world of great power politics. Under these circumstances, the small power is often forced to move to a balance of power strategy through an alliance policy. As indicated previously, this is essentially the strategy which the al-Muzkur pursued in the eighteenth century in their relations with the Shiraz government. However, the underlying asymmetrical relationship with the Qajars foreclosed this approach in the nineteenth century.

Given that Shiraz was a potential threat to all
of the lowland principalities, it would seem natural that some type of alliance system among these small entities should have developed. In this respect, Wight's comment about the ancient Greek system is enlightening:

Nothing seems to be a more constant feature in the history of the Hellenic states system than the inability of independent states to make an effective voluntary union so as to avert an imposed unification by force.8

The statement is equally apropos to the petty shaykhdoms and khānates of the nineteenth century. They failed to bury their differences in the face of the long-term security threat which the Shirāz vernment posed.

Since the shaykhs of Būshire and hinterland khāns have left no known written memoirs, one can only speculate as to why such a protective alliance failed to materialize. Liska's observations, however, probably provide some clues. He has noted that "alliances merely formalize alignments based on interests or coercion...The sense of the community may consolidate alliances; it rarely brings them about."9 In the nineteenth century, neither the shaykhs of Būshire nor any other lowland leaders had

the coercive ability which was required to fashion a grand alliance against Shiraz. Moreover, more often than not, there were not complementary interests.

Rothstein also sheds light on the problem when he notes that "like large powers, small powers can be satiated or revisionist." Rothstein also notes that a small power which is intent on changing the status quo generally has to do so by becoming a satellite of a Great Power.\(^{10}\) In many respects, the khānate of Tangistān acted as a "revisionist" power during the nineteenth century. The Tangistānis were in the forefront of the assaults on Būshire, particularly in the 1830's and 40's and true to Rothstein's generalization, they worked closely with the Shirāz government. Under these circumstances, there was no community of interests capable of uniting the lowland principalities into one grand alliance.

Whether by design or default, the shaykhs of Būshire developed an isolationist or "avoidance" security policy as a means of managing their security relationship with the Qājār dynasty. Essentially, the Būshire shaykhs attempted to avoid, to the degree possible, all political and military contact with the Shirāz government. The policy was characterized by

ostrich-like qualities and, as will be shown later, essentially was unworkable.

III

Thus far, the discussion has examined Būshire's security problem within the context of the "international" setting. However, Būshire's security was not solely linked to the composition or correlation of forces within that environment. Security was not exclusively a function of the external environment; internal factors also affected Būshire's external security. The financial strength of the shaykhs of Būshire was of critical importance to the town's security because wealth could be translated directly into military and political power in nineteenth century Persian Gulf politics. Therefore, a study of the economic resources of the Būshire shaykhs is also warranted.

It can be theorized that the shaykhs of Būshire lost control of their political fortunes, in part, because the "costs of protection" to which the family was subjected in the nineteenth century rapidly outstripped the income which the al-Muzkur generated in and around Būshire. The inability of the Būshire
shaykh to solve this problem meant that he had-in modern economic terminology—a continuing cash flow crisis. Before proceeding further, the concept of "protection" or what Lane has called "the economic consequences of organized violence" should be discussed.\textsuperscript{11}

Although the fact is often overlooked, violence producing, violence controlling organizations i.e., governments, provide the social community with an economic service which can be termed "protection" or security. This service directly affects the amount and distribution of material wealth in a society through the costs which the government incurs in security production and the prices it exacts from those paying for the security service. The violence producing/controlling organization provides its constituents with two types of protection: (1) protection from third parties i.e., a national government protecting its population from invasion by another state or (2) protection from the so-called protector, i.e., the population is forced to pay to

\textsuperscript{11} F. Lane, Venice and History. See especially the chapter on "The Economic Consequences of Organized Violence." This chapter originally appeared as an article in the Journal of Economic History, volume 18, 1958, pp. 401-17.
keep the protector away. In essence, the price of protection (rate of taxation) is that price which members of a society have to pay in order to avoid more severe losses of their material wealth.

A monopoly is the most rational economic form for the production of security. Protection can be produced more cheaply in the monopoly form because of lower operating costs. Defense costs are low because there are no internal challengers. Germany during the Thirty Years' War or much of Iran during the eighteenth century are examples of countries where there was not a monopoly on the production of "legalized" violence. In both of these countries, rival violence producing organizations competed for protection payments over much of the same territory. Since operating costs were high, payments of a

12. This last situation is not unlike "the racketeer who collects payments for 'protection' against a violence which he himself threatens..." (Lane, Ibid, p. 414.) In theory, this type of protection should never loom large in the economic history of a democracy, because the government is controlled by its customers—that is the government is not in the hands of a separate class which has distinct interests from the masses and which would be willing to use the instruments of violence as a means of transferring material wealth from a subservient population to a ruling elite. However, most governments in history have not been democratic. Therefore, this second type of protection payment has had a profound impact upon the economic, social, and ultimately political history of many nations.
corresponding nature were demanded from the population by all "protection-producing" enterprises involved in those struggles.

By establishing a monopoly on violence production, the single legalized violence generating entity is theoretically in a position to lower its operating costs. However, as Lane has pointed out, lowered operating costs have not necessarily meant lowered exactions. Because of its monopoly position, the violence producing entity can keep up the "sales prices" or even raise (prices) to the point at which it encountered a kind of sales resistance... This resistance could take the form of peasant flight, peasant riots, smuggling, or in the case of a port city, migration of the merchant community.

For Lane, the concept of protection costs is crucial for an understanding of the nature and sources of profits derived from international trade in medieval and Renaissance Europe. Steengaard has

13. In theory, in a democracy the lowered operating costs would be passed on to the population in the form of lowered protection payments (tax rebates or cuts.)

taken the idea and used it to explain what he calls the Asiatic trade revolution of the early seventeenth century.\footnote{W. Steengard, Carracks, Caravans, and Companies: The Asiatic Trade Revolution of the Early Seventeenth Century. In particular, see Chapter 1.} The concept can also be extended to eighteenth and nineteenth century Persian history and employed to help analyze the political position of the shaykhs of Būshire vis-a-vis the local population (in particular Būshire's merchant class) and the Shīrāz government.

The ruling family of Būshire was a producer of protection. For example, the shaykhs of Būshire sought to attract merchants to the port by assuring that political stability prevailed in the territories under their jurisdiction and by assuring the merchants that they would not be subjected to unjust seizures of their goods or unduly harsh customs duties which, in essence, can be considered as charges for the protection service. The shaykhs of Būshire also attempted to protect agricultural and fishing villages from inland, as well as, marine raiders.

On the other hand, the ruling family was also a purchaser of protection. The shaykhs paid taxes to
the Shīrāz government which did not provide the Būshire shaykhs with any positive services, particularly in the nineteenth century. However, by paying taxes the al-Muzkur family was able to manipulate and control the wealth of Būshire and the surrounding hinterland.

There were five principal sources of wealth upon which the shaykhs of Būshire could draw: (1) Land revenues. These revenues would have included taxes collected from districts under the control of the shaykh and revenues from caravanserais and other properties of a similar nature. (2) Customs duties on imports and exports. Revenues generated from rāhdāri (road tax) stations which might have been under Būshire's domination would also be included in this category. (3) Gifts given to the shaykh for favors done or expected to be done. (4) Profit from the fleet when used in a commercial (shipping) capacity and (5) A head tax to which minority groups such as Armenians and Jews were subject.

The Shaykhs also had financial expenditures which would have included: (1) Protection payments to Shīrāz - a fact to which there has already been a previous allusion. (2) Payments to local supporters and tribes. For example, for several decades the Damukh tribe formed the mainstay of the shaykh's
territorial military force. The lands upon which the Damukh resided were not taxed, in return for which the shaykh received military service. (3) Maintenance of a navy, although admittedly the fleet could be used as a paying commercial venture. However, to the degree that Bushire was threatened from its Gulf side, the fleet tended to be an expenditure rather than receipt producing instrument and (4) the cost of maintaining Bushire's landward defenses. The cost was related primarily to the expense of keeping Bushire's landward wall was kept in good repair and defensible.

None of the sources of protection expenditure to which the shaykhs of Bushire were subjected was eliminated during the time frame of this study. However, the prices of the various protection expenditures did change: they steadily increased, especially from 1820 to 1850. The protection payments demanded by Shiraz constituted the greatest single increase.

In contrast, the sources of revenue to which the al-Muzkur had access shrank during the first half of the nineteenth century. In time, the al-Muzkur lost control of several territorial districts and customs revenues declined under the pressure of competition from ports such as Bandar 'Abbās and Muḥammara
(present day Khurramshahr). By 1850, the al-Muzkur family was caught in a financial squeeze from which it was unable to escape. It was hemmed in by increasing protection costs, while at the same time, it was unable to generate additional sources of revenue. In a society where wealth was crucial for the maintenance and extension of political/military strength, the financial decline of the shaykhs of Būshire was fatal to their political fortunes.

Following a chapter which describes the general economic and geographic setting of the central portions of the Persian Gulf's northern littoral, Būshire's political history will be examined and analyzed. Subsequent chapters will analyze the economic underpinnings of Būshire's political position, showing the close connection that existed between the economic and political fortunes of the al-Muzkur.
CHAPTER II

The Geographic and Economic Setting

The Geographic Setting

To an observer sailing up the Persian Gulf, the Iranian coastline appears to have only two geographic features: a narrow, ribbon-like, coastal plain which is dominated in the background by the vast ranges of the Zagros mountains. These lowlands (known as the "Garmsir" or warm country) begin in the alluvial plains of the Shatt-al-'Arab river basin at the head of the Persian Gulf and snake down the entire Iranian littoral, a distance of over fifteen hundred miles. Lying on a northwest - southeast axis, the Zagros mountains parallel the coastline, sometimes actually brushing the Gulf itself (south of Kāngān or Lingah, for example) or swinging inland forty to fifty miles (northeast of Bandar 'Abbās or around the Bushire/Bandar Rig area).

Closer examination of the Garmsir reveals that it is actually composed of three distinct geographical features: the coastal fringe, the coastal hills, and inland plains. These features the geographical basis upon which much of the political and economic activity of the region has been built.
The entire coastal fringe of the northern littoral is low, barren and monotonous. Mud and salt flats abound, with numerous intervening tracts of swamp and swamp-like land. In the nineteenth century, swamps were found behind Būshire, Nabend Bay and Bandar Lingah, and they stretched south of the River Mand for some thirty to forty miles.

The swamps have played a dual role in the life of the Garmsir. They have been the breeding ground for diseases (malaria, typhoid fever) which periodically ravaged the villages and port cities. But if the swamps were purveyors of death, they also acted as protectors or natural moats for ports such as Būshire. Waring commented that Shaykh Nāšir II, a member of the al-Muzkūr family, viewed the Mashileh (the swamp lying on Būshire's landward side) as "an insurmountable barrier against an enemy..." (i.e. the inland tribes and Shīrāz government) and thus refused to improve the road leading across it.\footnote{S. Waring, \textit{A Tour of Sheeraz}, p. 16.}

With one or two exceptions, there are no harbors on the Iranian coastline which compare with the vast natural basins of Bombay, Aden, or even Muscat. Ships anchoring at ports such as Būshire, Lingah, or
Bandar 'Abbās were (and are) exposed to the elements. Only at Kangān, located south of Būshir, could ships find a naturally protected place of refuge.²

At various points along the littoral, coastal hills and ranges crop up, cutting off direct communication between the inland plain and the coast. The Kūh-e-Bang dominates the southern province of Levari, while the Kūh-e-Mand (also known as the Kūh-e-Kar) and the Kūh-e-Kirang stretch across the districts of Tangistān and Dashtī for a distance of about one hundred miles. Further south, another range rises at Gavbāndī and runs intermittently to Bandar Chārak. Finally, Bandar 'Abbās is surrounded in the north and northeast by a series of coastal ranges.

The coastal hills have had a pronounced impact on port location and lines of communication. Between Baṣra and Būshir, port cities are spaced roughly thirty to forty miles apart. However, south of Būshir, where the coastal hills are more numerous, port location is usually determined by the beginning and ending of a coastal range. For example, the

² William Bruce, the East India Company (EIC) resident at Būshir, wrote that the harbor at Kangān "is a very good one for the vessels to lay in being perfectly secure and laying close to the shore..." Būshir Residency Records, R/15/1/6, 8 July, 1803.
first port south of Būshire of any consequence is the Bandar Dayyari/Kangān complex, located about one hundred miles from Būshire. Separating these ports are two major, intervening coastal ranges: the Kūh-e-Mand and Kūh-e-Kirang. A similar pattern exists between Bandars Nabend/Asselū and Moqam/Nakhilū and between Moqam/Nakhilū and Bandar Chārak.3

Lines of communication were often determined by the geography of the coastal hills. Where the ranges did not intervene between the coast and the Zagros mountains, important communication links ran at right angles to the Gulf or from the coast toward the hinterland. The Būshire-Borāzjān-Dālīkī axis or Bandars Dellem-Hindīyan-Zaitun-Behbehān route are examples. Not unexpectedly where the coastal ranges intervened, communication links ran parallel to the range and generally behind it. The Ahram-Khormūj-Kakī route in the Tangistān/Dashtī region is an example.

The coastal ranges also affected economic and human settlement patterns in the Garmsir. In those

---

3. Bandars Moqam and Nakhilu owe their existence to a break in the coastal range; they drain the long narrow valley which leads to the inland town of Rostaq.
regions where the hills cut off the inland plain from
the sea, agriculture dominated the economic life of
the province. Tangistān and Dashtī are the most
conspicuous examples. Local elites from both
provinces did not depend on revenues from maritime
activities (shipping, trading, taxes on fishing and
fishing boats, etc.) to supplement their income, even
though both districts have coastlines. The coastal
ranges also influenced human settlement patterns.
The Arab tribes tended to gravitate to those portions
of the coast which had unimpeded access to the Gulf,
although they did not necessarily have to live
directly on the coast. The Demukh tribe, originally
from the Arabian Peninsula, settled around the
village of Chāh Kūtāh, approximately twenty miles
from Būshire but directly accessible to it. On the
other hand, Persian speaking tribes, who had a
distinct aversion to the sea, settled the Tangistān
district which, because it is dominated by the
Kūh-e-Mand, hand an inland economic orientation.

The inland plains make up the third geographical
feature of the GarmSir. Where the coastal ranges do
not predominate, they begin five to fifteen miles
from the sea. Leaving Būshire, for example, the
traveler passes over mud and salt flats for about
twelve miles. At this point, the soil becomes more
fertile and the agricultural plains begin.

In general, the plains are flat and stretch uninterrupted to the Zagros mountains which rise up abruptly from the southern edge of the vast Iranian plateau. The plains are comparatively fertile, producing a wide variety of agricultural products: grain, fruits (dates in particular) and vegetables. (Even today in the spring, the traveler passing from Būshire to Shirāz will be greeted by an endless vista of ripening wheat fields and date plantations while proceeding toward the mountains). Animal husbandry also has been practiced extensively on these plains.

The Economic Setting

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, two economies existed in the Garmsir: a regional Gulf economy centered on maritime activities (coastal and inter-Gulf shipping, fishing and pearling), and agricultural exchange. Concurrently, an international transit trade between the Iranian heartland and the Indian Ocean basin passed through the various port cities of the Gulf.

Within the regional economy, maritime occupations dominated the economic life of the coastal fringe. Fishing was the most important economic activity,
given the abundance of marine life. Not unnaturally, fishing villages dotted both coasts. An 1880/81 Persian Gulf Administration report estimated that from Kuwait to Bandar 'Abbās approximately 5250 men (about 1170 boats) made at least part of their living from fishing.⁴

In addition to fishing activities, many of the men in the coastal villages were also employed as sailors. Merchant vessels based in the various ports such as Būshire, Kangān, Lingah, Bandar 'Abbās, etc. required sailing crews, most of whom were supplied from the ranks of fishermen who lived in and around the various ports. A rhythmic pattern, based on the prevailing winds, governed the oscillation between fishing and trading activities. In the spring and summer fishing predominated, while in the fall and winter, the occupational focus tended to shift toward commercial shipping.

Beyond the salt flats and behind the coastal hills lay the inland plains and the agricultural regions of the Garmsir. A wide variety of products was produced in this area. Barley and wheat which

were the most important cultivated grains were grown throughout the region. Date plantations could be found in most districts, but particularly around the towns of Borālzān and Dālīkī. Animal husbandry was also practiced. Goats, sheep, cattle, and donkeys were the most important animals raised. The first three animals were used primarily for food or clothing, while donkeys were bred for service on the caravan routes, as well as for local hauling. For example, as late as 1901 the area around Ahram was contributing up to one thousand donkeys a years for the caravans.

Some villages, although not all, may have specialized in either animal husbandry or grain production. Waring noted that a village which raised sheep or fowl was called a hushm, while one that had neither cows, sheep or fowls was called a deh. The area directly inland from Bandar Rīg (or northwest of Borālzān) contained several villages in which the word "deh" actually formed part of the name of the village—Deh Khalifeh, Dehdaran, Deh Kohnah; records show that this region was an important grain producing area.

There were also other regions which produced

5. S. Waring, Op cit, p. 16.
specialized products. For example, the plain of Gabendū, which roughly extends from Tombak (south of Kangān) to Ras al-Nabend was a flax producing district. Colvill commented that this district "...supplied most of the fishing villages with material (flax) for nets." Hamerun produced charcoal which was employed in the manufacture of gun powder. 6

There was also some mining activity in the Gulf region, centered mainly in and around the coastal hills and ranges. In the second decade of the nineteenth century, the khān of Dashtī mined sulphur, probably on the interior face of the Kūh-e-Kirang. Gach (a chalk-like building material used like plaster of Paris) was mined in the Kūh-i-Kar as late as 1900. Sulphur was also produced around the village of Bastanah, which is located about thirty miles up the coast from Bandar Lingah.

The Garmsir region was linked to numerous land and sea communication routes. In general, the most important land routes ran from the hinderland producing areas to the coastal ports. The agricultural surplus of Dashtistān, Tangistān, and

portions of Dashtī was drained by the 
Dālīkī-Borāzjān-Būshīre route. The inland roads of 
Hayat Davad district converged on Bandar Rig. 
Communications in the Levari district revolved around 
the Dellum-Zeitun road.

Some seaports were also connected by land 
communication. Such a route ran from Būshīre to 
Kangān via Ahram, Khormūj and Kakī. Commenting on 
this connection in 1803, William Bruce, East India 
Company resident in Būshīre, noted that "by 
land...camels...are constantly going from hence 
(Būshīre) backwards and forwards" to Kangān.⁷ An 
overland link also ran from Būshīre to Baṣra. When 
maritime disputes broke out, these routes assumed a 
prominent position.

Maritime routes linked the northern Gulf shore 
ports, as well as connecting these ports with their 
southern neighbors and the West Indian Ocean basin. 
Coastal shipping was vigorous and extensive. Colvill 
reported, for example, that:

the village of Jaynoat has several trading 
boats; Taheri has several trading boats of 
various sizes' Nabend has numerous small 
trading boats; Cheroo has a few trading boats 
as does Jella Aboe; Charrach has six bungalows 
and 20 smaller trading vessels.

⁷. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/6, 23 July, 
1803.
At Bandar Lingah at least forty to fifty coastal craft from "Mahshah, Dehlum, Busreh, Būshire, Dyer, etc." arrived annually with wheat and barley.\(^8\)

Small boats constantly plied between the fishing villages and minor ports such as Dellem, Rig, or Ṭāherī and between those ports and the larger "international" ports such as Būshire, Bašra, Lingah and Bandar ʿAbbās. Surplus agricultural goods and fish jammed their holds on a trip to a larger port, while imported goods made up the bulk of the return cargo. Curzon commented that grain, wool, cotton, etc. were shipped from Bandar Dellem in return for sugar, tea, cotton fabrics which were "brought mainly from Būshire."\(^9\)

It is difficult to determine which type of route—land or marine—was more important. The general assumption would be that the marine dominated. However, Braudel has noted:

competition between different means of transport is common to all ages. We...have often mistakenly assumed that a sea or river route automatically took precedence over a land route. A road challenged by a waterway we have at once dismissed as doomed to decline. In fact, wheeled vehicles and pack animals offered more resistance to competition than we have credited them with and were not ousted so easily.\(^{10}\)

---


Though marine routes undoubtedly were more important, it is worth noting that land routes were utilized. William Bruce's comments about the land route between Būshīr and Kangān have been mentioned. Moreover, in the 1820's, the Ottoman government in Baṣra requested that the British resident in Būshīr prevent Turkish subjects from landing their goods in that port because the goods were then being transshipped overland and smuggled into Ottoman territory. Such a request would indicate that the land route was widely, if not extensively, employed.

The northern and southern shores of the Gulf were connected by several major sea lanes. Bandar 'Abbās was tied to Muscat and Karachi; Bandar Lingah to the area now known as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrein and Muscat. Būshīr had direct links with Baṣra, Bahrein and Muscat.

Across these sea lanes flowed Iranian agricultural and manufactured goods. Southern Iran (and in particular the Garmsīr) was an important supplier of food stuffs for the Arabian Peninsula. Wheat was shipped directly from Bandars Rig and Dellem to Kuwait. Grain from Būshīr went to Bahrein and Muscat, while Lingah shipped it to the UAE area. Lingah was also an important sheep exporting center.
When Palgrave visited that port in the early 1860's, he noted that

"among the main articles of traffic at Linja (Lingah) are sheep, which are carried over in great quantities from Persia to Oman, where pasture land is comparatively scarce, and what exists is principally destined to the rearing of dromedaries."11

Up to two hundred head of sheep could be shipped at one time, according to Palgrave. Tobacco, carpets, arms, glass, dried fruits, etc., were also sent to the southern shores of the Gulf.

In return, pearls were exported from Bahrein, to Būshire, Kangān, Lingah and Bandar'Abbās. Specie was also an important export as were horses, although most of them went to Baṣra.

Coexisting with the regional economy of the Garmsir was the international transit trade. A wide variety of imported and exported goods passed through the various port cities, bound respectively either for the Iranian hinterland, India, or the Arabian Peninsula, etc. Imports consisted of cloth, spices, colonial goods (sugar, tea), coffee, metals (iron, steel, tin) and other assorted items. Important exports included specie, agricultural goods (grain, fruit, wine, wool) drugs, opium, tobacco, and

carpets.

Though the Zagros mountains are high and rugged, there are several passes and hence routes leading from the port cities to the interior. Bandar'Abbās was connected to the central plateau and Khurasan via Yazd and Kirmān and to Fārs province via Lār. Bandar Lingah was linked to Shīrāz via the Jahrum/Lār axis. Smaller ports like Nahilū, Maqam, Asulū, Tāherī and Kangān all drained Fārs, particularly the tobacco region of Jahrum. However, the most important port for central and south Iran was Būshire which was connected to the plateau via Kāzerun.

Further north, the Behbehan region was drained by the ports of Dellem and Hindeyan via Zeitun, while the major port of the Karun river basin (which connected Isfahan via Shustar) was Moḥammera. Finally, goods could also reach the central and northern regions of Iran by way of Baṣra, Baghdad, and Kirmānshāh.

Which port city and route would be used by a merchant rested upon a combination of factors including:

-- The cost of security (customs dues) in the port. Since there was no uniform customs dues, local shaykhs could attempt to charge the highest possible price. However, it was
always possible that a shaykh could price himself out of the market and drive merchants and traders to other ports;

-- Demand in a specific interior region and the geographic proximity of a port. If, for example, the region around Kermanshah showed a sustained demand for imported goods, Bandar 'Abbas would not have been the logical point for disembarking goods;

-- Road security and tribal relations in the hinterland. Large areas of southern Iran were "policed" by various tribes. Regardless of the demand for imported and exported goods in a given area, tribal relations could prevent the use of the nearest port city route;

-- The political and military influence of a local shaykh. Through the use of military force and diplomatic finesse, a local shaykh could deflect trade away from one port and to his enclave; and

-- General political conditions in a given port city. Prolonged political upheaval and revolution could adversely affect trade.

Whether a given port was used depended on how these factors were combined. For example, in the early 1830's continuous political upheaval in Bushire
shifted trade to Bandar'Abbās and Mōhammera. On the other hand, the Karun River route to the central plateau, although cheaper in transportation terms that the Būshire link, was never fully developed in the nineteenth century because much of it lay across the territory under the control of the Bakhtiyārī who were generally hostile to the idea of opening a trade route across their lands. After the 1760's, Bandar Rig was not able to compete with Būshire because of the overwhelming strength of the shaykh of Būshire. Thus a number of variables -- economic and political -- affected the status and fate of a port.

To what degree did the international trade economy influence the Garmsir and its regional economy? Were the two economies intermeshed? In his book, *Muslim Cities in the Late Middle Ages*, Lapidus claims that the international trade passing through the late medieval Middle Eastern cities was merely a transit trade and that was only superficially related to the regional economy. Moreover, only a thin strata of society profited from the trade, and it did not affect the way the vast majority of people made their living.12

The Lapidus thesis seems broadly applicable to the Garmisir region in the early nineteenth century. Iranian exports to India and elsewhere consisted of specie and other plateau products (carpets, dried fruits, drugs and tobacco). But as the century progressed, the European world economy increasingly demanded the cotton, grain and opium of the coastal lowlands. Beginning with the American civil war (1861), cotton exports soared. By 1865, Garmisir grain was bought and sold on the London commodity markets with the price increasingly affected by that exchange mechanism. Therefore, while Iranian exports tended to be of non-Garmisir origin in the early nineteenth century, by the end of the century, products produced in that region were in demand overseas. As a result, the two economies became more and more interrelated.

This observation does not imply that prior to 1850 various segments of the lowland economy were not influenced by international trade. To the contrary, they were. Fishermen-turned-sailors could be found in ports such as Muscat, Bombay, Aden, etc. Small tenders and labor were needed to load and unload the buggalows (a large Arab sailing ship) and European vessels which anchored at a port. The inland plains supplied some of the animals where were used on the
caravan routes; villages which lay along those routes supplied animal feed, food and lodging for passing caravans. However, the general impression still remains that in 1800 there were two, essentially distinct economies operating in the region and that it was only after European demand for agricultural products increased that they tended to merge.

The Port of Būshire

The port of Būshire is located at the northern end of a twelve-mile long, three-mile wide, cylinder-shaped "island". In actuality, the "island" is a peninsula; however it is connected to the mainland by a grassy, reedy, quicksand-infested swamp which was known as the Mashileh. This narrow neck of land often flooded, completely cutting communication with the mainland.

The peninsula is low and flat, attaining a maximum elevation of only 150 feet in its center near the present day village of Imāmzadeh. Soil ranges from sandy close to the coast to arable in and around the center. Wheat, barley, dates, vegetables, and fruits have been cultivated for centuries in the small villages scattered over the peninsula. Just north of Būshire is a large bay, the width of which is about five miles. The bay is (and always has
been) shallow and filled with mud-flats and islands.

Bushire has never had a good, protected harbor—a fact which was continuously condemned by European visitors. In the past, two roadsteads (anchorage points) were used. The first was located about three to six miles off shore at a depth of about twenty-four feet. Ships were exposed to northwestern and southeastern gales, particularly in the winter months. A second roadstead lay just off of Bushire but could be used only by boats drawing less than eighteen feet of water. Although protected from the southeast by a sandbar known as the Rohilla Sands, ships were still fully exposed to northwesterly winds. Regardless of which roadstead was used, small tenders had to be employed to load and unload merchandise and supplies between ship and shore.

Bushire's physical appearance in the nineteenth century elicited a variety of often contradictory comments. Heude noted that "the building and bazaars in general may be pronounced inferior to those of

13. "Though Bushire is the Main port of Persia, it possesses nothing that could by the wildest exaggeration be described under present conditions as a harbor. The anchorage is in an open and unprotected roadstead at the distance of some three miles from shore, is much exposed to gales, and in bad weather is inaccessible." (G. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, volume II, p. 234).
Muskat and Bussara."\textsuperscript{14} In 1825, James Alexander described Būshire's appearance from the seas as "far from inviting. From a distance, Bushire resembles a city half built."\textsuperscript{15} At mid-century, Binning found "a considerable number of the houses in Bushire are partly or wholly in ruins, and the entire place wears an aspect of wretchedness and desolation...", although he did admit that at the time of his visit the shaykh of Būshire was rebelling against his Shirāz overlords.\textsuperscript{16} Later in the century, Stock found Būshire to be "the best built town on the Persian coast, and (it) shows some signs of care and improvement,"\textsuperscript{17} a view echoed by Lorimer.\textsuperscript{18}

Būshire's exact physical size cannot be determined with precision. At the end of the eighteenth century, it was said to be about two miles in circumference, although Milbourne claimed in 1811

\textsuperscript{14} W. Heude, \textit{A Voyage Up the Persian Gulf and A Journey Overland from India to England in 1817}, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{15} J. Alexander, \textit{Travels from India to England; 1825-6}, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{16} R. Binning, \textit{A Journal of Two Years Travel in Persia}, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{17} E. Stock, \textit{Six Months in Persia}, volume I, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{18} J.G. Lorimer, \textit{Gaziteer of the Persian Gulf}, volume II, part 1, p. 341.
that it was three miles "in circuit".\textsuperscript{19} Lorimer states that by the beginning of the twentieth century, the town had expanded beyond the old landward wall to the point that only traces of the old wall remained.\textsuperscript{20}

Two types of housing predominated in the town: the palm hut and the stone and chalk building. In 1779, many of the homes in Būshire seem to have been of the palm tree hut variety. When the tribes of Tangistān occupied Būshire in that year, they burned over 1000 huts which the resident indicated was a substantial part of the city.\textsuperscript{21}

When Morier was in the port (1808), he drew a sketch of it which showed much of the town built out of stone. (In fact, he estimated that there were four hundred stone houses and another four hundred "date tree" houses.) Moreover, in his sketch he drew nine very distinct wind chimneys or bādgīrs with the note that "a great man's dwelling (there are nine in

\textsuperscript{19} W. Milbourne, \textit{Oriental Commerce}, volume I, p. 128.


\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Bombay Public Consultations}, range 341, volume 46, 20 October, 1779.
Bushire is distinguished by a wind chimney." 22

About ten years later (1817), Heude noted that there were twelve to fifteen houses of a "consequent" size. He placed the number of stone houses "of inferior size at five hundred plus (numerous!) huts. 23

A decade later the number of stone houses had doubled. Buckingham states that there were fifteen hundred houses in Bushire, one-third of which were date palm huts. 24 By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were about 1400 stone houses most of which had an upper story. 25

In 1808, Bushire was said to have seven mosques (four of them Shi'a and three Sunni), two hammams (public bath houses), and two caravanserais. 26 Within ten years there was one additional hammam and

22. J. Morier, A Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor to Constantinople in the Years 1808 and 1809, p. 56-57. Morier described the Badgir as "a square turret on the sides of which are perpendicular apertures, and in the interior of which are crossed divisions, which form different currents of air, and communicate some comfort to the heated apartments of the house." (p. 57). The Badgir could be sixty to one-hundred feet in height.


two additional caravanserais; however only six mosques were mentioned. 27 Interestingly, in the mid-1850's, Binning says there was only one large caravanserai in the town. 28

In the early 1800's, there may have been several separate bazaars in Būshire. Heude used the plural when he referred to the commercial areas of Būshire, and in 1836 the resident referred to the "Shīrāz bazaar" in such a way as to imply that there was at least one other distinct bazaar. 29 By the mid-1850's, though, Binning refers to only a single bazaar.

Like other Islamic cities and towns, Būshire was (and is) divided into wards. In the nineteenth century, there were four such wards - the Behbehāni, Dehdastī, Khashshabī and Kutī. In addition, there were two or three sections for religious minorities.

The Islamic community occupied the first three of the above-mentioned quarters. The British Residency was located in the fourth, the Kutī, and apparently was the principal home of the European and Armenians

29. Secret Letters and Enclosures from Persia, etc. L/P and S/9, volume 54, 30 December, 1836.
communities, although some Moslems may also have lived there.

Within the Islamic community, various quarters tended to be identified with specific tribes. For example, in 1815, when the Qawāsim Arabs came to Būshīre at the request of Shaykh Māḥammad, brother of Shaykh Nāṣir II, they were asked to help plunder "the quarter in which the Behbany tribe resided". In 1827, Shaykh Aḥmad was turned out of power because he had proposed to seize hostages "from each tribe" in Būshīre "as pledges of their fidelity on the approach of the Prince (of Shīrāz)". 31

The Islamic community was also split along a religious axis as well. Shi'a and Sunni tribes could be found throughout the Garmsir and as already noted, in the early 1800's, there were both Shi'a and Sunni mosques in Būshīre. Each mosque was probably located in a specific mahalleh.

There were also quarters for the religious minorities. Lorimer lists two Jewish mahallehs. 32

The Armenians and Parsees also apparently lived in

30. _Bombay Political Consultations, range 384_, volume I, p. 5066-7, 8 November, 1815.

31. _Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/40_, 7 February, 1827.

specific quarters. These minorities also may have conducted commercial transactions from their own quarter, rather than from the main bazaar areas. There is reference in 1858 to a Parsee's home and shop which "is exactly opposite M(r.) Malcolm's house". (The Malcolms were Armenian merchants.)

The most striking feature about the size of Bushire's population is its stability over time. For over a century and a quarter, a period which covers trade expansion and contraction, Bushire's population fluctuated from between ten to twenty thousand persons.

In 1779, the Bushire resident estimated the population at ten thousand, a view echoed by Morier in 1808. In 1817, Heude estimated the total

33. There is a reference, however, in 1852 which suggests that Armenians and Jews may have been scattered throughout the city. "There are many Christian and Jews' houses in this town which command (in height) those of the Mussulmen around them..." (Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/133, 3 September, 1852.) However, the overwhelming evidence would point to a quarter living arrangement.


35. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/3, 30 August 1779. In 1766, it was stated that "in Bushire in an emergency two thousand or better (men) can be ready in an Hour's time." (R/15/1/1 - Part 1, 3 January, 1766). This would probably mean that the total population would have been anywhere from eight to ten thousand.
population at twelve thousand,\footnote{36 W. Heude, Op. cit., p. 43. Kinnier, who was in Būshār in 1811, figured the population at not more than 5000 (J.M. Kinnier, A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire, p. 70.) This figure seems to low.} and by 1828, the British resident Wilson, put the population of Būshār at "15 to 20,000 souls."\footnote{37 Būshār Residency Records, R/15/1/47, 2 December, 1828.} Buckingham, who was in Būshār about the same time, place the figure at less than 10,000. (J.S. Buckinham, Travels in Assyria, Media and Persia, page 349). However, since Wilson had been in Būshār for six years, his estimate probably is more accurate.

When Binning visited Būshār about twenty-five years later, he calculated the population at eleven thousand, a figure which reflected the political instability and declining economic fortunes of the previous two decade.\footnote{38 R. Binning, Op. cit., p. 143-4; R. Thompson "Report on the population, revenues, military force and trade of Persia", F.O. 60, volume 314, 20 April, 1868; G. Curzon, Persian and the Persian Question, volume II, p. 231; J.G. Lorimer, Op. cit., p. 343.} In 1868, Thompson put the figure at eighteen thousand, while Curzon (1888) and Lorimer (1905) estimated the population at fifteen thousand.

The composition of Būshār's population was heterogeneous and changed over the course of the
nineteenth century. Within the Islamic community, the population was divided between the Persian and Arab elements. In the early nineteenth century, Malcolm noted that "almost all of the inhabitants of Bushire and the surrounding region are Arab in race," with some Persians living in the city.\(^{39}\) This same basic dichotomy was noted by Alexander in 1825.\(^{40}\)

Until 1850, political and economic control of the town was in the hands of the Arab community. However, after 1850, the situation was reversed, as Curzon notes:

\begin{quote}
The change effected in the rulers of Bushire (sic) has been reflected in its population. Till the last twenty years the Arab element was largely in the ascendent, although, to a great extent, Persianized both in dress and religion. As trade, however, has increased, and purely maritime occupations have declined, the Persian ingredients have gained the upper hand, and now largely predominate, although the bulk of the people are still of Arab or mixed Arab and Persian descent.\(^{41}\)
\end{quote}

There was always tension between the two communities. When the East India Company appointed a Persian, Mehdi'Ali Khan, as resident in 1797, the Arab community, lead by Shaykh Nasir II, protested violently. Malcolm also commented on the tension


between the two communities. And as late as the 1870's, this tension still existed. When a Persian official severely bastinadoed two leading Arab merchants, civil war almost erupted in the town.

There were several minorities who resided in Būshire. The most important group was the Armenian community. Armenians were in Būshire in the 1740's (and probably even earlier), with some of them holding positions of influence in the port (e.g. Coga Mallish, the Armenian customs master). Būshire may have received another influx of Armenians after the sack of Tiflis (1797). At least one family, the Constantines, Georgian Armenians and important Būshire merchants by the 1820's, came to the town about the turn of the century.

The size of the Armenian community in Būshire is difficult to estimate. Buckingham (1828) said there were an equal number of Persian and Armenian merchants. In 1827, there were at least fifty important merchants in Būshire, while in 1830 ten Armenians were listed as being the elite of the


43. Malcolm alludes to this possibility in his Sketches of Persia, p. 78-9.

Armenian community. A rough estimate of the total community, therefore, might be about one hundred individuals (say about 20 merchants with 5 additional dependents). In 1867, there were said to be fourteen families, or a total of eighty individual Armenians in the port. Curzon estimated about one hundred Armenians were engaged in trade, while Lorimer put the figure at only thirty-five.

The wealth and influence of the Armenians in Būshire was vastly out of proportion to their population size. In 1822, two members of the Constantine family purchased bills of exchange valued at fifty thousand secca rupees. (A fifteen thousand rupee purchase generally was considered large.) The Constantines also owned a least one caravanserai in Būshire. The Malcolm family had land holdings around Kāzerun, Dalikī, and Būshire.

45. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/38, 23 June, 1827, and R/15/1/54, 17 February, 1830.


49. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/25, 22 July, 1822.
Alexander claims they "possessed great wealth" and had complete control over the sale (export) and manufacture of wine. Buckingham says they were wealthier than Persian merchants and that they controlled the Indian trade. (This claim is exaggerated -- Armenians by no means had complete control over the Indian trade -- but it does point up the fact that Armenians were important.)

Armenians were involved in the settling of political disputes between various factions in Būshīre and between Būshīre and other ports. Their role was particularly important and influential in helping to settle or smooth over disputes which involved the Būshīre government and the East India Company. For example, in 1827, when the resident withdrew from the town "it was then resolved (by members of the al-Muzkur family) that Mr. Arrathoan Constantine should be sent out to ascertain my sentiments..."50

The Armenian community was always closely associated with the British. They worked for the company as translators, buyers, or accountants. For example, Yacob Khān, father of Arrathoan Constantine, was a treasurer for several of the British diplomats

50. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/45, 1827.
who visited Iran in the early nineteenth century. Arrathoan, himself, worked for the company, while the Malcolm family represented Sir John Malcolm's Persian interests. (In fact they changed their name to Malcolm in the early nineteenth century.) As the nineteenth century progressed, the community sought and received British diplomatic and legal protection.

The Jewish community, although larger in size, was not as influential as the Armenian. In general, the Jews were small, local merchants who seem to have had little or no trading interests in India. However, they did have agents in various ports of the Gulf (Bahrein, for example). Compared to other Jewish communities in Iran, the Būshire Jews were relatively prosperous. According to Thompson, there were three-hundred and fifty Jews in Būshire in the late 1860's, a figure which had climbed to six hundred by 1900. 51 Other religious minorities living in Būshire included Parsees, Hindus, and Arab Christians. None of these communities was important in the economic or political life of the town.

The European community in Būshire was always small. Until 1867, the only permanent European

resident was an officer of the East India Company (later Government of India). In 1867, Paul, Gray and Company opened the first private European commercial house in Bushire. During the next thirty years, the European community grew slowly until it reached about 50 in 1900.

There were three major social classes on the Bushire peninsula: the local ruling family, the merchants, and the common people.

The al-Muzkur family ruled Bushire for approximately one-hundred years (1750 to 1850). Intermittently, they also controlled such diverse geographic areas as Bahrein, Banders Rig, Ganava, and Dellem to the north with more tenuous influence as far south as Aseleih. In the interior, they were able to dominate, on occasion, several towns and districts, including Ahram, Borajjan, Daliki. (An unsuccessful attempt was made in the early 1790's to move off the Gulf lowlands and up to the first level of the great Iranian plateau with an attack on the town of Khisht.)

Agriculture and fishing were the most important occupations of the common people in and around Bushire. Some peasant farmers actually resided in the port and would go out to their fields every day, while other lived in the small villages surrounding
Bushire. Date cultivation was probably the most important crop, although wheat and barley were grown. There was also some sheep and goat herding.

Fishing was another important occupation. Several small villages on the peninsula may have specialized in either fishing or date palm cultivation. For example, Lorimer lists the village of Zulmalal as a fishing village.

Throughout the nineteenth century, there was a small shipbuilding industry in the village of Jobri, a "suburb" of Bushire. When Sir John Malcolm was in Bushire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he noted that Shaykh Nasir II had commissioned the building of a ship. One hundred years later, Lorimer stated that Jobri was still a shipbuilding center.

Other villages on the peninsula specialized in transportation and cartage services. Water in Bushire was bad and had to be brought by donkey from wells located several kilometers away. Stone and mud, the principal building materials used in the region, were quarried on the peninsula and then brought to the town. In the village of Sangi, alone,

over four-hundred donkeys were employed in the transport trade in 1900.

Bushire had a large population of petty shopkeepers, blacksmiths, tailors, tinkers, dyers, cotton cleaners, and a cotton weaving industry (as late as the 1850's). In the 1820's "wages of all description of native artisans (were) very high."54

Three occupations in Bushire deserve special mention. Entering and exiting either the inner or the outer roadstead in Bushire required the special navigational knowledge of a local pilot. More than once, a ship attempting to sail into the port without a pilot ran aground. Ships traveling to Basra also required a pilot to navigate the Shatt-al-Arab river and would stop to pick up a pilot at either Bushire or Kharg Island.

The shaykh of Bushire determined who could work as a pilot and set the rates that pilot could charge. In 1813, there was a flat charge of 14.5 piasters for piloting a boat to either roadstead.55 By 1823, the procedure had changed. "The rates of pilotage at Bushire are 1 piaster per boat foot (of

54. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/33.

water drawn by a ship) into the inner roads and the same out."\textsuperscript{56} It is unclear whether pilots were selected from a special tribe of group.

Because anchorage was located in the open sea, this necessitated a second unique occupation: the tender. Curzon noted that, "every cargo has to be embarked or disembarked in native buggalows (tenders)..."\textsuperscript{57} In the early nineteenth century, the Armenians apparently owned many of the tenders. According to Mehdi'Ali Khān, the Company agent, they would receive three rupees for every run made. Boatmen were paid perhaps half of that sum. The Khān also indicated that they were able to control all of the supplies (water, vegetables, cattle, sheep) which were sent to the ships.

"...Should I endeavor to procure these articles by my own people in consequence of the influence and orders of these Armenians no one is to be found (meaning no boatman can be hired), nothing is to be had." \textsuperscript{58}

The importance of the local tender was undercut in the 1870's when the firm of Paul, Gray and Company (with the backing of a portion of the merchant

\textsuperscript{56} Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/27, September, 1923.


\textsuperscript{58} Bombay Political and Secret Proceedings, range 381, volume II, 21 January, 1799, p. 1939.
community), introduced steam barges at Būshire. These barges had a vastly expanded cargo capacity and were much faster than the small, sailing tender. They were used almost exclusively in unloading the steamers which rapidly replaced the sailing vessel as the dominant cargo ship in the Gulf.

The third common occupation deserving mention was that of mule driver or muleteer. All goods landed in Būshire and sent to the interior went by mule or camel, wheeled carriages being virtually non-existent throughout the country. The chief muleteer (charvadar) of a caravan was usually the owner of all of the animals. Generally, he had several assistants who generally were paid a daily wage by the charvadar. While there were muleteers who were lived in and around Būshire (in the 1820's the Company hired a "Kalby Gooloom, a muleteer of Būshire"), most charvadars seem to have come from Kāzerun or Shīrāz, which is not surprising since these two cities were the centers of the donkey and horse trade in southern Iran.

The price of hiring a donkey was determined by the distance to be travelled. In the 1850's, it cost one and a half tomans per donkey to go from Būshire to Shīrāz with the charvandar providing feed and
other requisitions on the road. In the 1820's, it was nine tomans from Būshire to Tabriz, and about six tomans from Būshire to Tehran. Prices for mule hire could fluctuate wildly. In 1827, there was a barley failure throughout the Garmsir, resulting in high feed prices. Mule hire correspondingly increased reaching a high of 10 tomans for carriage between Būshire and Tehran. The number of mules employed at any one time on the Būshire-Shīrāz route is difficult to estimate. Binning claimed that there were not less than 2500 mules continually employed on the route. As trade increased in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the opportunities for muleteers undoubtedly did also.

Būshire had one other unique characteristic. Throughout its history, Būshire was a place of refuge for those fleeing from political disturbances and repression. "From the circumstances of its situation and government, Būshire has always been remarkable, as the certain asylum of those...whom contending

60. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/45, 1827.
factions and adverse fortunes had compelled to flight. In 1751, the Turkish basha of Baṣra fled to the port. Thirty-eight years later (1789) Luṭf'Alī Khān was in Būshire after his army had revolted. In 1817, an 'Abd Allāh Khān and Sayid'Alī, "men of high rank in the Pashalik of Baghdad", found refuge in Būshire and in the 1840's, Parsees from Kirmān settled in the port to escape oppression from the provincial governor.

Chapter III
The Rise of the al-Muzkur: 1734-1794

In his monumental work Persia and the Persian Question, Lord Curzon claims that "Būshīre is a town without a history."¹ In a sense, Curzon is correct for, although Būshīre and the region surrounding it had been inhabited for centuries, prior to the 1730's little is known about the port, its ruling families and their political fortunes, or its economic history. It was only when Nādir Shāh designated Būshīre as the chief naval base for his Persian Gulf fleet in 1734 that the town's more formal history becomes discernible.²

The 1734-1794 period of Būshīre's political history can be divided into four phases: (1) the 1730's and 1740's which witnessed the rise of the


². L. Lockhart, Nādir Shāh, p. 92. There is reason, however, for believing that Būshīre had always stood out among the other neighboring Gulf ports. For example, Miles claims that when Sulṭān Akbar, son of the Mogul emporor, Auranzeeb, fled from his father's wrath, he eventually landed in Būshīre and received a royal welcome from Shāh 'Abbās. (S. B. Miles, The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf, p. 218; No source is given for this assertion.) He also states that in 1614, Būshīre, along with Muscat, Kūn and Jask, was surveyed as a possible site for the first English East India Company in Iran. (Ibid., p. 206. Jask ultimately was selected.)
al-Muzkur family and the parallel growth of Būshire into a long-distance trading port. The family's rise was essentially a process of centralizing the role of shaykh, governor, and shāhbandar (customs master) so that all three positions were held by one individual. (2) 1751-1768 – the outward thrust of Būshire's economic and political strength. (3) 1769-1782 – domination of the central Gulf region based on a fully matured Zand/al-Muzkur alliance, and (4) 1783-1794 – the beginning of a territorial contraction and the disintegration of the Zand alliance.

Nādir Shāh's selection of Būshire as the base for his Persian Gulf navy provided the catalyst leading to the port's development as long-distance, maritime trading center. The need for reliable communication with the interior assured that a semblance of road security between Būshire and Shīrāz would be maintained. In turn, a secure road attracted merchants and traders and provided them with an alternative route between the major producing and consuming areas of central and southern Iran and the coast. The Gambroon Diary, which was written by East

3. See A.K.S. Lambton, Landlord and Peasant in Persia, p. 132, for a general discussion on this point.
India Company (EIC) agents in Bandar'Abbás and which commences in 1701, provides the clearest supporting evidence for this analysis.

Bushire first is referred to on June 28, 1727, in connection with a proposed East India Company expedition to suppress "piracy." It is not mentioned again until 1738 and then only in reference to a visit of the beglerbegi (governor) of Fars province to the port. However, three years later (1741) (and approximately seven years after Nādir had selected Bushire as his naval base), the Diary contains the following entry:

The Sardar (local governor of Bandar'Abbás) by his choppur (messenger) yesterday from Boucheir (Bushire) learnt (of) the arrival of the Shalum (a private English merchant vessel) there (i.e. Bushire)\(^5\)

Apparently this was the first time that an English vessel—private or Company owned—had landed and traded at Bushire, for the Company resident in Bandar'Abbás was confronted with two policy problems. First, the Company had no treaty rights with the Persian government which would permit it to trade in Bushire. Secondly, there was no set Company policy about whether or how customs should be


\(^5\). Ibid., 16 January, 1741, pp. 54-55.
collected if private English merchants traded at Gulf ports other than Bandar'Abbās or Baṣra. 6 Eventually, the Company directors ordered the resident to levy Company customs on the Būshīre sales and on any other private transactions which might occur in the future.

Throughout the 1740's and 50's, there are references to English, French, and Dutch vessels trading at Būshīre. 7 Because the Gambroon Diary does not refer to any long-distance maritime commercial activity in the port prior to this time, it is possible hypothesize that it was only after Būshīre became an established naval port that long-distance traders (native and European) were attracted to it. More importantly, it can be suggested that the growth of Būshīre was part of a larger, northward shift in the Gulf's economic

6. Ibid., 4 May, 1741, p. 102. Private English trade in Asian waters was regulated by the Company and subject to Company customs duties.

7. See for example The Gambroon Diary, G/29/6, July, 1743, p. 56; May 8 and 9 p. 119; June 1, 1749, p. 126. Also G/29/7, April 29, 1752, p. 97; July 7, 1755, p. 157. Also G/29/16, June 26, 1753; and August 9, 1753. Ricks indicates that Dutch merchants were actually settled in Būshīre in 1747. "In mid-June (1747), the Dutch merchants in Būshīre had to pay 6000 tomans...to Muḥammad Qulī Sulṭān." T. Ricks, Politics and Trade in Southern Iran and the Gulf, 1745-1765. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Indiana, 1975.
center. For over a century, Bandar'Abbās had been Iran's principal "international" port, while Kirmān, with its wool trade, had been the inland province most intimately connected to the overseas trade. Although the Kirmān wool trade did not actually peak until the late 1750's, by 1750 new political and economic forces were emerging in the Gulf's central region and in Fārs province which would lead to an alteration of the major trade routes of southern Iran. On the plateau, the Zand dynasty gradually was eliminating political rivals and breathing new economic life into Fārs province, while around Būshire, an aggressive but politically astute Arab family—interested in trade expansion—had seized control of the port.

Nādir Shāh's dream of dominating and creating a "mare clausum" in the Persian Gulf began to flounder by the mid-1740's and collapsed with his assassination in 1747. Būshire, however, did not lapse back into obscurity. Traders continued to frequent the port and by 1762, Alexander Douglas, chief resident at Bandar'Abbās, wrote that "...at present Būshire is the only port on the Persian Gulf

---

8. See L. Lockhart, Nādir Shāh, and T. Ricks, Ibid., What was left of his navy was quickly expropriated by various competing shaykhs, including Shaykh Nāṣir I of Būshire.
shore that carries on any considerable trade."9

Several factors contributed to this phenomenon:

(1) Disturbances and governmental oppression in Baṣra in the late 1740's,10 (2) high customs duties in Bandar'Abbās which tended to divert trade to low tariff ports.11 (3) A period of tranquility for southern Iran, especially in the Shirāz area beginning in 1747,12 and (4) disturbances in the area stretching from Bandar Kangān to Bandar'Abbās beginning about 1750.13


10. For example, the English factor in Baṣra reported in 1749 that when a Moor ship from Bengal asked if it should proceed up the river to the port, he advised them it was best "to proceed to Bouchier." *The Gambroon Diary, Factory Records*, G/29/6, March 20, 1749, p. 62.

11. See T. Ricks, *Op cit.*, p. 220 where it is stated that customs duties amounted to 14% to 16% ad valorum in the early 1750's.


These factors were external in nature. Political developments in and around Būshīre were of equal importance in Būshīre's rise. A particularly important development was the emergence sometime during the 1730's or 40's of a remarkable Arab family who assumed control over the city and guided its fortunes for approximately one hundred years. Its paramount shaykh, Nāṣir I, laid the foundation for Būshīre's dominance as an economic and political power in the central Gulf during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The family's name was al-Muzkur and they were members of the Martarish Arab tribe. The exact geographic origin of the tribe is unclear. Niebuhr states that the tribe was composed of fisherman from Oman. Wellstead is more specific and claims that

14. C. Niebuhr, Travels Through Arabia and Other Countries in the East, volume II, p. 145. Niebuhr's contention that fishing was the family's principal occupation is substantiated by a statement which Hasan Fasa'i makes to the effect that in 1738, Nāṣir I moved from Rishire to Būshīre (Fārsnāma-e-Nasrī, volume II, p. 204). Rishire, formerly a Portuguese fort, and the villages around it have been and still are the homes of the fishermen of the Būshīre peninsula.
the Būshire Arabs originally came from what is now Abu Dahbi.\textsuperscript{15}

In the late 1730's or early 1740's, Nāṣir I began to expand his power base within the Būshire district. Ricks and Abu Hakima believe that Nāṣir had consolidated his position by 1736, and that by then he was the governor of Būshire.\textsuperscript{16} However, the limited evidence available would indicate that it was another decade before the al-Muzkur family had complete administrative control over Būshire—that is, before Nāṣir I had succeeded in consolidating the roles of tribal head, territorial governor, and shāhbandar.\textsuperscript{17} For example, Fasa'i claims that the al-Muzkur moved from Rishire to Būshire in 1738. This change could be interpreted as an attempt to move closer to the geographic center of political power in the Būshire region. Moreover, it is

\textsuperscript{15} J. R. Wellstead, \textit{Travels to the City of the Caliphs along the Shores of the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean}, volume II, pp. 133–36.

\textsuperscript{16} T. Ricks, \textit{Op cit.}, p. 178. Abu Hakima claims that Nāṣir helped Nāṣir Shāh's forces invade Bahrein and was rewarded with the governorship of the island. (Abu Hakima, \textit{History of East Arabia}, p. 34.)

\textsuperscript{17} T. Ricks, \textit{Ibid.}, See chapter 1 for further discussion of the general nature of these offices.
possible that the move coincided with or actually resulted from an alliance (cemented through marriage) which the al-Muzkur family struck with two prominent local families who had lived in the Būshire district "from time immemorial." The Gambroon Diary also stated that in 1743 the governor of Būshire was one, MuḥammadʿAli Ṣez, not Naṣir I.19

The period of confusion following Naṣir Shāh's death (1747) gave Shaykh Naṣir with the opportunity to establish what Niebuhr was to call an "independent state." Naṣir was aided by political conditions in Iran; first, during 1747 and 1748 the political and administrative affairs of Iran were in an almost continuous state of turmoil. A three-way struggle for power erupted between Ṭādil Shāh in Mazandārān, Ibrāhīm Mirzā, his younger brother in Isfahān and Amīr Aslan Khān in Tabriz. By October 1748, this struggle was reduced to two competitors: Ibrāhīm Shāh in Isfahān and a new actor Shāhrūkh Shāh, in Mashhad. Each of these men appointed rival provincial administrators to fill the same administrative posts.

Second, when Naṣir died, the shāhbandar of BandarʿAbbās was one, Shaykh Hatim, although in late

18. T. Ricks, Ibid., p. 98.
1747 he was replaced by Haji Muḥammad 'Alī Beg. Muḥammad 'Alī Beg quarreled with the sardār of Fārs, Ṣaleḥ Khān Bayāt, and in April, 1748, abandoned his position and the port when he learned that Bayāt intended to visit Bandar'Abbās. Thirdly, the shāhbandar of Būshire in 1748 (and perhaps earlier) was an Armenian, Coja Mellesk, who was a subordinate of the shāhbandars of Bandar'Abbās. With the collapse of 'Alī Beg's position, Mellesh was politically isolated and vulnerable to Nāṣir's growing strength.

Within this atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty, Shaykh Nāṣir I moved to deprive Mellesh of his position. Following a protacted quarrel, Nāṣir plundered the Armenian's home and then apparently declared himself shāhbandar of Būshire. It is not clear whether Nāṣir's actions were self-motivated or the result of orders issued by one of the conflicting parties on the plateau. Ricks states the ragams (royal orders or decrees) from Ibrāhīm Shāh were sent to Shīrāz, Būshire, Lār and Bandar'Abbās in 1748 appointing new officers and confirming old ones.²⁰

It is possible that Ibrāhīm Shāh had appointed Nāṣir to the post of shāhbandar and that Coja Mellesh had

---
refused to give up the position. (From the wording in the Dairy, it is clear that the Armenian occupied the position when the dispute occurred.) On the other hand, Mellesh's position may have been reconfirmed which in turn lead Nasir to "usurp" the office.

Events in 1749, however, would indicate that Nasir was not aligned with either conflicting party. In January, Ibrāhīm Shāh appointed new governors to Lār and Būshire in an effort to countermand Shāhrukh Shāh's appointees. Nasir clearly was not Ibrāhīm Shāh's appointee: In February of that year, The Gambroon Diary noted that a Persian ship "arrived (in Bandar' Abbās) from Bouchier (Būshire) which Moolah Ally Shair (who was the governor of Bandar' Abbās) sent there in hopes of getting his family out of the hands of the Shake (Nasir l)" This attempt failed, although Nasir indicated that he would release the family "after he has seen their (i.e. Būshire's) new governor appointed by Ibrāhīm Shāh who was expected daily."21 Nor does it appear that Nasir was exercising power in Shāhrukh Shāh's name for the above entry indicates that Nasir was not preparing to

resist the entry of Ibrāhīm's newly appointed governor.

In June, 1749, Shāhrukh Shāh defeated Ibrāhīm Shāh at Qazvin. It was sometime thereafter that Nāṣir seized full control over the political destiny of Būshire. The precise date in unknown; however, by January, 1751, Nāṣir was the pre-eminent power in the port. During that month, Shāh Ismā'īl III sent thirty men to Būshire to collect taxes from the Shaykh. Nāṣir seized the men, threw them on board his ships, resolving "not to submit to the king..." 22

Ismā'īl's actions demonstrate that Nāṣir was now the effective political head of Būshire since Ismā'īl would not have sent his tax collectors to the shaykh had he occupied a lesser position. Nāṣir's response also indicates that he viewed himself as the head of an independent political entity.

Nāṣir's actions were actually part of a more generalized trend which was occurring throughout southern Iran in the wake of the collapse of Persian political authority: local elites unilaterally were expropriating administrative offices and districts and attempting to carve out independent political

22. Ibid., 4 January 1751, p. 81.
entities. This movement, which began with the Afghan invasion (1721), was checked by Nādir Shāh, but immediately resumed with his death. The action of Nāṣir Khān of Lār and Mullā'Alī Shāh of Bandar'Abbās were also examples of the same process. In each case, the Safavid administrative structure (in which offices were often held by separate individuals) was being dismantled by local elites, who did not consider themselves representatives of the distant plateau government, but rather individual political entities in their own right.

The Outward Expansion of Būshire. Throughout the 1730's and 1740's Shaykh Nāṣir directed his efforts toward seizing the reins of political power in Būshire. However, by 1750, there was a noticeable shift in the focus of his activities which now increasingly were directed toward an outward expansion of his political and economic influence.

Nāṣir maneuvered within a complex political environment. South of Būshire lay the powerful Ḥuwalah confederation composed of Arab tribes from Ras-al-Khaymah, Lingah, Ṭaheri and Kangān. By 1751, this confederation was locked in conflict with Bandar Charak and Bandar'Abbās in the southern sector of the Gulf and with Shaykh Nāṣir and Mir Nāṣir (of Bandar Rig) in the central Gulf region. North of Būshire, in
the area now known as Khūzistān, another powerful tribal unit, the Bani Ka'b, was emerging, while on the Arabian coast, the Bani Utub were establishing themselves at Zubora (Qatar). Although the two latter tribal confederations did not present Nāsir with any difficulties in the early 1750s, they remained a potential threat to Būshire and its economic prosperity, particularly after 1770.

In the more immediate area, a struggle for control of the plateau/central Gulf trade developed in the early 1750's between Būshire and Bandar Rig. Finally, Shaykh Nāsir had to monitor closely political developments on the plateau. In the early 1750's, the struggle for control and domination of the Iranian heartland continued with no emergent victor. The outcome of this struggle would have broad security implications for Būshire and the Garmsir region.

In the latter half of 1751, the Shaykhs of Būshire and Bandar Rig challenged the Huwalah's control of Bahrein. Bahrein, with its rich pearl beds and date groves, was a valuable prize. Although statistics and data about the island's economic resources and revenues in the mid-eighteenth century are almost non-existent, the Gambroon Diary does state that tax receipts from Bahrein amounted to
rupees 80,000 or about 4000 gold tomans.\textsuperscript{23}

Naṣir's growing wealth, political prestige and his access to military resources provided the base upon which he was able to project his influence into the region. For example, when a revolution occurred in Baṣra in late 1750, the Pasha choose Būshīre as his place of refuge.\textsuperscript{24} Also in late 1750, Shāh Ismā'īl attempted to tax all of southern Iran. Būshīre's assessment was 35,000 tomans, 5,000 tomans greater than Bandar'Abbās' and 10,000 more than Bandar Rig's.\textsuperscript{25} This tax assessment would indicate a wealthy community. Finally, when the interior

\textsuperscript{23.} Rupees 30,000 came from taxes on date trees, while the remaining 50,000 presumably were collected on the pearling industry and other land taxes. (The Gambroon Diary, G/29/6, 18 January, 1751, p. 91). According to Niebuhr in the 1770’s, the revenue which the Shaykh of Būshīre received from Bahrein amounted to Rupees 100,000 or 5,000 tomans. Quoted from Exacts from Brief Notes on the Persian Gulf, by Robert Taylor, assistant political agent in Turkish Arabia, 1818, Bombay Selections, V/23/217, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{24.} The Gambroon Diary, G/29/6, 4 January, 1751 and 1 December, 1750.

\textsuperscript{25.} The Gambroon Diary, Ibid., 4 January 1751, p. 81.
tribes of the Dashtistān learned of Ismā'īl's tax scheme, they turned to Nāṣir for protection and support.26

In August or early September, Shaykh Nāṣir and Mīr Nāṣir of Bandar Rig joined forces, and sailed to Bahrein where they laid siege to the island. The expedition failed and quickly retreated home.27

The Ḥuwalah then went on the offensive. First, they sailed to Bandar'Abbās hoping to persuade Mullā'Alī Shāh to participate in the proposed attack on the two ports as a punitive measure.28

Mullā'Alī Shāh was reluctant to become involved but eventually sent a small force to join the campaign which sailed for Būshire on October 28, 1751. The Ḥuwalah were as unsuccessful at Būshire as Shaykh Nāṣir had been at Bahrein and by December, 1751, the attacking forces "finding themselves incapable of taking Bouchier" lifted the siege and


27. *The Gambroon Diary, G/29/6, 15 September, 1751*, p. 26. The Ḥuwalah "have gained a very signal victory over their enemies at Bheireen (Bahrein) so are likely to keep possession of that island."

returned to Bahrein, "where many of them (the Huwalah) have conveyed their families and effects, thinking it far secure than the Persian shore."\(^{29}\)

The Huwalah reasoning was far sighted. In May, 1752, the Būshire Arabs, "finding themselves stronger than Shaykh Hatim" (a leader of the Huwalah and shaykh of Bandar Tāhīrī) sailed to Bandar Tāhīrī to collect an old debt.\(^{30}\) Ricks has suggested that the debt in question was most probably revenue lost by the al-Muzkur in their 1751 failure to take Bahrein from Huwalah.\(^{31}\)

The success of the May expedition encouraged Nāṣir to attack Bahrein again. This expedition which occurred sometime between the summer of 1752 and the end of 1753 was successful\(^{32}\) and al-Muzkur generally


\(^{32}\) It may have been as late as October, 1753. Ricks notes that during that month the Huwalah of Bandar Tāhīrī were openly fighting among themselves. (T. Ricks, *Op. cit.*, p. 276.) The Huwalah may not have been able to defend Bahrein as a result.
held Bahrein until 1783.\textsuperscript{33}

The Gambroon Diary implies that the al-Muzkur single-handedly conquered Bahrein. However, according to Niehbur, Bahrein was successfully occupied "by the Princes of Abu Schahhr (Būshire) and Bandar Ring (Rig) who conquered it together. The first of these princes drove out the second..."\textsuperscript{34}

Perry suggests that a third sequence of events occurred. He maintains that the sons of Mir Nāṣir, Mir Husayn and Mir Moḥanna, soon gained control of the island after the initial expedition. However, they lost control of the island to Ḥuwala who in turn were ousted again by Shaykh Nāṣir.\textsuperscript{35}

---

\textsuperscript{33} From time to time the Ḥuwalah and others did attempt to reconquer the island. In September, 1767, while Būshire was under siege, it was recorded that "by an express boat from Barren we have advices that the Hoolaw Arabs have attacked that island..." Būshire Residency Records, G/15/1/1 part II, 27 September, 1767. Moreover, Perry claims that the Bani Ka'b raided Bahrein in February, 1761, and that Mir Maḥanna seized it in early 1766 for an unspecified period of time. (J. Perry, Karim Khan Zand, pp. 157 and 163.)

\textsuperscript{34} C. Neibuh, Op. cit., p. 153. He goes on to say that Shaykh Nāṣir was then driven out by the Ḥuwalah and he only recovered the island in 1765. This date is inaccurate.

\textsuperscript{35} J. Perry, Karim Khān Zand, p. 151.
The truth probably lies somewhere in between all these versions. However, it does seem clear that at some point, Mir Nasir and Shaykh Nasir worked in alliance and that a falling out then occurred. That there was some sort of initial alliance is not extraordinary. In fact, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most Gulf shaykhs would undertake a major military operation only if they had alliance support. The seizure of Bahrein would have represented a major campaign effort and would have necessitated allies. However, under the surface there was intense competition between the two shaykhs for dominance over the Gulf's central region (see the following discussion); thus, there is little reason to believe that the two shaykhs would have been willing to share the economic and political wealth of the island once it was seized.

In 1752, Nasir's attention was also focused on concerns closer to home. The immediate problem was the developing rivalry between Bushire and Bandar Rig for control of the trade and trade routes of the central Gulf.

36. For example, before the Huwalah blockaded Bushire in 1751, they persuaded Mulla'Ali Shah of Bandar'Abbas to join them. In 1769, the Shaykh of Kuwait proposed a joint attack (with Bushire) against Bandar Rig.
The importance of the struggle between the two ports should not be underestimated. The wealth generated from trade could be translated into expanded political and military influence. This influence, in turn, assured greater security for the port and surrounding countryside which made the port even more desirable and attractive to the merchant community, thus generating even more wealth for the local shaykh.

From the last quarter of the eighteenth century and until World War I, Būshire was Iran's principal Persian Gulf port. In 1750, however, it had not achieved that dominate position. The town had an immediate rival in Bandar Rig and further down the coast at Bandar'Abbās. The struggle between Būshire and Bandar Rig turned out to be more important and decisive. With the collapse of social and political order in the Kirmān basin beginning in the last 1750's, Bandar'Abbās was unable to withstand the central Gulf challenge.

The most direct route to the Gulf from the city of Shirāz passed through the plateau towns of Kāzarun and Khist and thence to the lowland village of Dālīkī. From Dālīkī, the route could turn due west to Bandar Rig or continue in a south, southeasterly direction to Būshire. Either port could serve as the
marine terminus for the expanding Shiráz trade route.

Economic competition added to this geographic rivalry. In the eighteenth century, no single local power was able to impose a political hegemony over the Gulf region and divert trade to a single port city. Therefore, merchants and shippers were free to select which port they would land their goods; in essence, this situation meant that the various ports and rulers had to compete with one another to attract traders (by lowering tariffs for example). In the mid-eighteenth century, port selection was—to a large degree—a buyer's market. To illustrate the point in 1741, the English vessel, Shallum, landed a cargo of cloth at Būshīre. Enraged by the loss of customs revenues, the governor of Bandar'Abbās demanded that the EIC agent account for such "precipitous" action. The agent merely replied that "good treatment" would bring the English merchants back.37

The efforts of the shaykhs of Būshīre and Bandar Rig to attract a European factory to their respective port provides graphic evidence that competition existed between the two rulers. In 1752, Mīr Naṣīr of Bandar Rig wrote to the English agent in Baṣra

37. The Gambroon Diary, Factory Records, G/29/5, 16 January, 1741, pp. 54-55
requesting that the Company establish a factory in his port. In his letter, Mīr Nāṣir enumerated several privileges which he already granted to merchants who frequented Bandar Rig. (Unfortunately, the letter was not recorded in the EIC records so his specific proposals are not known.) There is, however, one piece of evidence which indicates that he was willing to go to great lengths to attract the EIC. In commenting on the request, the Baṣra resident noted that when an English vessel had sank near Kharg Island, Mīr Nāṣir had restored the property of the English—an act which the resident had interpreted as a sign of good will and friendship.38

Two years later (1754), Francis Wood, an EIC agent, met Shaykh Nāṣir and discussed the possibility of establishing a factory in Būshire. According to Wood, Nāṣir was interested in the factory, but he did have some reservations. Although willing to give the Company the privilege of trading customs free, Nāṣir opposed the Company demand that it also collect

38. Correspondence from India, Abstract of Letters Received from Bombay, E/4/451, Baṣra, 28 May, 1752. When a vessel sank, the salvage belonged to the local ruler.
customs duties. This additional duty "he feared would occasion the merchants to carry their goods to other markets." 

An English factory would have been an asset to either Mir Nasir or Shaykh Nasir. It would have assured that at least once a year (and probably more often) East India Company ships would come to the port. Furthermore, the Company would have acted as a magnet for private English traders and conceivably other Europeans as well. Also ships sailing under a company pass would have been attracted to the port where a company agent resided.

39. The Gambroon Diary, Factory Records, G/29/7, 9 April, 1754, p. 128. At Bandar 'Abbâs, the local governor was splitting all customs revenues with the Company. Apparently, Wood had requested that the same procedure apply in Bushire.

40. Ibid., p. 128. This statement supports the theory that there was competition among the ports to attract merchants and traders.

41. English shipping in the Gulf was important. In 1725 "half the country-shipping plying between Western India and the Persian Gulf was English, and nearly all the rest of it was Muslim shipping carrying the English Company's pass. As in the Red Sea, this Muslim shipping had about twice as much carrying capacity as the English shipping." (H. Furber, Bombay Presidency in the Mid-Eighteenth Century, p. 40.) The reduccion of Portuguese power on the West Coast of India in the late 1730's "served only to further enhance the country-shipping which doubled between 1724 and 1742 in terms of tonnage. (Ibid., p. 44.)
Moreover, the factory would have attracted inland merchants. They had to come to a port with an English factory to purchase woollen goods because the sale of woollens was a legal monopoly of the EIC. Also since Company ships carried in addition to their own cargoes the goods of Asian and European private merchants, the inland merchandise would have had another incentive to journey to those ports where the Company ships landed.

Finally, company expenditures in the local economy would have brought additional income into the port. For example, when the English finally did establish a factory in Būshir in 1763, the company rented an old caravanserai from Shaykh Nāṣir at a cost of 1000 rupees a year. Thus, a European factory would have stimulated commercial activity in the port and helped to expand the revenues of the ruling family.

The apparent ouster of the Mīr Nāṣir from Bahrāin almost certainly exacerbated the rivalry between the two ports; in all likelihood it was this event which lead Mīr Nāṣir to invite the Dutch to settle on Carrack (Kharg) island. Mīr Nāṣir may have hoped

42. Būshir Residency Records, R/15/1/1, 8 May, 1768.
that the Dutch would serve as his ally in a power struggle between the two ports.

In January, 1753, the Dutch agent of the Oostindische Companie (Dutch East India Company, OIC) in Baṣra, Baron von Kniphausen was arrested by Sulayman Pasha of Baghdad and charged with "criminal commerce" with a Turkish woman and deceitful business practices.43 The charges were dropped shortly thereafter, but Kniphausen who by then was "persona non grata" in the eyes of Turkish authorities was expelled and returned to Batavia (Jakarta).

However, later that year, the Baron reentered the Gulf, sailing directly to Būshire. It is not known whether Shaykh Nāṣir encouraged Kniphausen to come to Būshire or whether he simply went there on his own volition. Whatever the case, Kniphausen left shortly after his arrival because he became "jealous" of the intentions of Shaykh Nāṣir.44

The Baron then went to Carrack (Kharg) Island where Mir Nāṣir welcomed him. According to the English agent in Baṣra, Mir Nāṣir invited the Baron to stay because initially (or before the Dutch completed building a stockade and compound in August,

43. Ricks, Op cit., p. 223.

44. Factory Records, G/29/16, 1 April, 1754.
1754) the Shaykh could have easily forced the
Dutchman off the island.\footnote{Factory Records, G/29/16, 1 April, 1754.} Moreover, Muḥammad Nasīr
even went so far as to present to Kniphausen a
Georgian slavewoman, who belonged to his youngest
son, Muḥammad Nasīr.

In forming an alliance, Kniphausen and Muḥammad Nasīr
probably intended to capture the central Persian
Gulf/Iranian plateau trade. Independent of each
other, both parties were weak. The limited evidence
available—a smaller tax assessment in 1751,
displacement from Bahrein—indicates that Muḥammad Nasīr
was weaker than Shaykh Nasīr. For their part, the
Dutch were on the defensive throughout the West
Indian ocean basin.\footnote{On this point see P. Nightingale, Trade and
Empire in Western India, 1784-1806, particularly
Chapters 1 and 2.} In the Gulf, they were
particularly vulnerable to English pressure because
they had lost their factory in Başra (where the
English were firmly established) and they had left
Bandar'Abbas in March, 1751. The central Gulf was
exploitable, but the Dutch needed a local ally, and
as indicated earlier, Shaykh Nasīr had reacted with
hostility to the Dutch presence in Būshire.
Therefore, it was natural that Muḥammad Nasīr and
Kniphausen would have been attracted to each other. A trade route running from Kharg through Bandar Rig to Shiraz could be developed. Moreover, Mir Nasir would have been strengthened in his struggle against Shaykh Nasir, while the Dutch would be entrenched in what was becoming a thriving trade area.

Mir Nasir and Kniphausen also may have contemplated a joint expedition against Bahrein. On more than one occasion, the resident in Basra repeatedly expressed the opinion that the Dutch settled at Kharg in order to use the island as a base for an assault on Bahrein.

In 1754, it appeared that the struggle between Bushire and Bandar Rig for the control of the trade and trade routes was about to enter a new and perhaps more violent phase. While no known military clashes had occurred between the antagonists, that possibility could not be discounted in the future. However, in the summer of 1754, fate intervened and almost by default Bushire emerged as the principal port in the central region of the Persian Gulf.

47. For ships sailing between India and Basra, Kharg was actually a much more convenient port of call than either Bushire or Bandar Rig. A ship could save one to two days by avoiding the main coast line.

48. See for example, Factory Records, G/29/16, 1 April, 1754.
It has been noted that Mir Nasir gave Kniphausen a slavewoman belonging to his son, Mir Mohanna. Mir Mohanna retaliated by murdering his father. 49 For the next two and one-half years, affairs in Bandar Rig were in a state of turmoil and confusion. Mir Husayn, an older brother, seems to have taken charge of the government after Mir Nasir's murder, but his claim to the governorship was contested by Mir Mohanna. During the spring of 1756, the two brothers were locked in conflict which ended when Mir Mohanna murdered his brother.

Mohanna, however, retained control of the governorship for less than a year. During a tax collecting expedition in the Dashtistan (September 1756 to March 1757), Karim Khan Zand seized him and sent him to Shiraz. He then appointed Mir Muhammad, another brother, governor. Mir Mohanna remained in Shiraz until early 1758. Upon returning to Bandar Rig, he overthrew his brother and began to attack the Kharg-Basra shipping lanes and the Bushire-Shiraz

49. Ricks has interpreted this event as more than just a retaliation for Mir Nasir's "overgenerous offer to Kniphausen...the affair was more complex, having its origin in...the dispute over the leasing of lands to the Europeans, the fewer economic benefits accruing to Rig as a result of the OIC occupation of Kharg, the apparent OIC domination of Rig's political and economic affairs, etc." (T. Ricks, Op cit., pp. 317-18) This writer is not convinced that "fewer economic benefits (were) accruing to Rig." In fact, the opposite case seems more plausible.
caravan routes. These raids continued for several years.

Mir Nāṣir's death and Mir Mohanna's subsequent seizure of power had several important implications. First, these events almost guaranteed that over the long run Būshire would emerge as the principal port of the expanding central Gulf trading region. From the beginning, the turmoil in Bandar Rig adversely affected its commercial prosperity—a situation Nāṣir was able to exploit skillfully. In April, 1755, the EIC agent in Baṣra wrote that "Banderreeck still continues in a state of confusion and not a single merchant (resides) there, nor do that shipping now touch there as usual." In contrast, Būshire remained a peaceful haven for merchants and shippers. "...the Shik (of Būshire) having found it worth his while since Mir Nasser's death to deal fairly by everybody, many rich merchants have resorted to it, whereby the place is becoming a Mart for all commodity's proper for the trade of Persia." By way of example, a French vessel landed at Būshire and sold 90,000 rupees worth of goods in July, 1755.

50. Factory Records, G/29/16, 14 April, 1755.
51. The Gambroon Diary, Factory Records, G/29/7, 9 April, 1755.
52. Ibid., 7 July, 1755.
Nāṣir also reached a modus vivendi with the Dutch (still entrenched at Kharg) during the years 1758-60. For the Dutch such an arrangement was imperative. It was not enough for them to occupy the island. Their goods still had to go through some port located on the mainland in order to reach the centers of demand on the plateau. Būshire was the obvious choice and by 1762 it was considered "the principle mart for the imports from Batavia." 53

Būshire's unassailable economic position may have forced Mir Mohannā to take up "piracy" in the late 1750's and 1760's, since it would have been the only feasible economic occupation open to the dying port once the trade route was firmly established through Būshire. Certainly, the strengthening of Būshire's economic position precedes by only a few years the start of Mir Mohannā's piratical and raiding career.

Secondly, Mir Nāṣir's death assured that Būshire was the only port on the Persian coast to which the EIC could turn once it left Bandar'Abbās. In 1754/55, the Company had made an attempt to settle at Bandar Rig (primarily to counteract the Dutch influence). However, when the British left Bandar'Abbās (1763), there was no question about

53. Ibid., 7 July, 1755.
where they would relocate. Būshire was the obvious and, in actuality, the only choice.\textsuperscript{54} In this respect, it should be noted that it was not the British who transformed Būshire into a flourishing port-city. To the contrary, the British came to Būshire because it already was a thriving port. The British commercial presence helped increase Būshire's commercial prosperity, but it was not responsible for its initial development.

Though Nāṣir was actively involved in Gulf affairs in the years 1750-55, he was equally alert to changes in the complexion of plateau politics and to the resulting opportunities. Beginning about 1751, Nāṣir increasingly aligned himself with the rising fortunes of Karim Khān Zand.

The alliance was based on mutually perceived needs and interests. Karim Khān required allied forces, foodstuffs, and tax revenues all of which shaykhs like Nāṣir could supply. He also needed a port through which imported goods such as cloth for his troops could be supplied. Moreover, the Khān had expansionist ambitions in the Gulf. Such a policy required the friendship of some of the Arab shaykhs,

\textsuperscript{54} Admittedly, from time to time the Company had flirted with the idea of going to Bahrein. See Ricks, \textit{Op. cit.}, pp. 200-201.
for it was the Arabs who had the necessary naval skills and ships to support the Khān's ambitions. (Karim Khān, like Nādir Shāh before him, was almost entirely dependent on the Arab seafaring tribes for naval support.)

Shaykh Nāṣir was compelled to seek the support of Karim Khān. Expeditions to Bahrein, for example, were possible only if the rear flank was secure. Moreover, Karim Khān's support—or lack of it—could affect the security of Būshire itself as the raids of Mīr Mohannā (approximately 1758-1766) and the tax dispute of 1767 would show. Finally, in addition to his political role, Shaykh Nāṣir was a merchant. His ability to send goods into the interior or to sell to inland merchants in Būshire was dependent, in large measure, on his relations with the authorities in Shīrāz. Friendship with the Zands was essential for business.

The friendship between the two families coincided with Nasir's consolidation of power in Būshire. The initial catalyst for the alliance seems to have been the occupation of Shīrāz by 'Alī Mardān, Shāh Ismāʿīl III and the Bakhtiyāris in 1750-51 and their excessive tax policy. The occupation was a "sharp contrast to the Zand rule in Fārs and southern Iran so that those most affected by the Bakhtiyāris
supported the Zands most fervently."55

The Zand/al-Muzkur connection continued to thrive. For example, troops from Bushire participated in a crucial battle near Khisht on the side of the Zands in September, 1754, and by January, 1755, the EIC authorities reported that Nasir and Karim Khan were now in a "strict alliance." When it was reported in September, 1755, that Assad Khan was again threatening Isfahan, Nasir rallied to Karim Khan's call for help.

The alliance deteriorated between 1756-58 for reasons which are not clear. In 1756, the Qajars defeated Karim Khan at Gulnabadd in large part because of the desertion of the GarmSir Arabs.56 The Khan retreated to Shiraz and then invaded the Dashtistan region "wringing back taxes, tribute, presents, promises of loyalty, and hostages" from the peasants and tribal peoples.57 Bushire was assessed 3000 tomans, a price Shaykh Nasir reluctantly paid to the Khan.

With the start of Mir Mohanna's raiding activities in 1758 and their subsequent

55. T. Ricks, Ibid., p. 177.
56. T. Ricks, Ibid., p. 260.
57. T. Ricks, Ibid., p. 260.
intensification, the Zand/al-Muzkur alliance was renewed and strengthened. It became increasingly obvious that Shaykh Nāṣir was unable to counteract Mīr Mohannā's forays. In fact, during the years 1763-1765, Mīr Mohannā continuously plundered the Būshīre/Shirāz trade route and all but stopped trade between the two cities. Under these circumstances, Nāṣir had no choice but to turn to Shirāz for aid. Troops arrived in the Garmsir by January, 1765, and helped to stabilize the situation. For example, before the arrival, the price of mule carriage for:

Goods and Merchandise from hence (Būshīre) to (Shirāz) was 40 to 44 rupees per hundred mann-i-tabreze but since (the) arrival (of the Shirāz army) there (i.e. in the lowlands) it has at once fallen to 20 to 24.

By the end of February the price had fallen another four rupees.

58. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/1 part 1, 9 June, 1764. "He (Mīr Mohannā) has in a great measure put a stop to the trade of this place, no caffola (caravan) having ventured down here since the end of March..." Perry also notes that in October, 1765, Mohannā was blockading Būshīre. (J. Perry, Karim Khan Zand, p. 157.)

59. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/1 part 1, 30 January, 1765 and 20 February, 1765.
The raids continued on an intermittent basis; however, with Mir Mohanna essentially neutralized, the perceived interest of the Zands and the al-Muzkur tended to diverge, and in 1767 developed into outright hostilities over the issue of tax payments. The problem started in 1765 when Karim Khan sent tax collectors to the region "demanding payment of the tribute due for his possessions in the Kermesir (Garmsir)." The expedition was unsuccessful. However, the Khan was not deterred, and it was the knowledge that this pressure would continue which led John Beaumont, then resident at Bushire, to write:

Ever since the death of Nadir Shah, this family (the al-Muzkur) has enjoyed unmolested the revenues of this port and Bahrein without paying for 20 years past that tribute due on their phirmands...and for which some merchants do imagine they will be called upon to account for, nor will excuses or outward obedience any longer pass with the Khan without a present in proportion to the amount thought due to the Khan.62

Shortly thereafter, a two-part economic boycott was imposed on Bushire. First, Shiraz ordered that all merchants leave the port. "In consequence of

60. Mir Mohanna still remained a threat in the Gulf, a fact which lead to two Persian/British expeditions against him.


62. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/1 part 1, 23 February, 1767.
this order every merchants (in Shiraz) who has an
agent here (in Būshire) has recalled him and many
merchants who reside here have entirely left us." 
Secondly "by private accounts we hear the Khān has
also prohibited any merchant in future to carry
specie to Būshire on any pretense whatsoever."63

63. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/1 part 1, 23
May, 1767. Admittedly, the plan seems to have some
contradictions for which there is no readily apparent
explanation. Why should the Khān have forbidden the
export of specie, since he had ordered all merchants
out of Būshire, which in essence, means that all
trade would cease, including the export of specie.
If he had only wanted to stop the export of specie,
why would he have issued the first order? There is
one possibility which may help to tie the two orders
together. By prohibiting the export of specie, the
Khān may have thought that the East India Company
would turn against Shaykh Nāṣir for the following
reasons. First, there is evidence that the Company
had had some sort of dispute with Nāṣir and that it
may have gone so as far as to have tried to have him
removed. (Ibid., 2 August, 1766) Secondly, when the
Company came to Būshire, it had instituted a policy
of trading for specie only. Moreover, during the
first two or three years in Būshire, the Company had
enjoyed brisk and profitable sales. The Khān may
have reasoned, therefore, that with some resentment
toward Nāṣir already displayed and in order to
protect their sales, the Company might have been
willing to intervene in the dispute on his side. As
it turned out, the Company remained neutral.
A further comment should be made regarding the
order prohibiting the export of specie. This has
sometimes been viewed as an act which shows that
Karim Khān was aware of the balance of payments
deficit which Iran was running and that the order was
an attempt to reverse that flow. It could well be
that one reason that Karim Khān did issue the order
was in fact to improve what today would be called a
deficit on the current account of a balance of
payments sheet. Nevertheless, it should always be
kept in mind that Karim Khān was involved in a
struggle with Shaykh Nāṣir and it is equally possible
that the reason for the specie order was to humble
the shaykh and nothing more.
About the same time, the Shiraz government clarified its demands: an annual payment of 4000 tomans for retention of the governorship of Bushire and Bahrain.64

The al-Muzkur resisted this demand with the result that Karim Khan took up arms against the recalcitrant Nasir. However, the Khan personally did not lead any forces against the town; rather he made use of the already existing political tension in the Dashtistan region and encouraged the khans of Dashtistan and Tangistan to attack and besiege Bushire.65

In late August or early September, Nasir offered to pay Karim Khan 20,000 rupees (about 1000 tomans). The offer was rejected and by the end of October the situation in Bushire became increasingly desperate.66

64. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/1 part II, 1 August, 1767.

65. For example in the Bombay Public Consultations, it is noted that the Khan was willing "to let Ries Ahmed Shaw, governor of Dashtistan lay siege to Bushire." (Bombay Public Consultations, range 341, volume 31, 30 January 1768, pp 119-120) In addition, the Bushire resident recorded that "the Tankseer Government, countenanced by the Khan, have taken up arms against the Shaik." (Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/1 part II, 29 August, 1767)

66. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/1 part II, 24 October 1767. Food prices were "exorbitant" and the resident feared that famine and starvation were imminent.
Unable to break the siege, Nāṣir apparently agreed to meet most—if not all—of the Khān's demands by early December. The troops from Dashtistān and Tangistān subsequently withdrew and in January, 1768, Nāṣir's son was sent to Shirāz where he received a favorable reception. The resident commented that all differences between Shirāz and Būshire were to be settled in an amicable fashion.⁶⁷

This dispute is the last open breach between the al-Muzkur and the Zands until 1786. In 1768, Shaykh Nāṣir participated in a naval blockade of Bandar Rīg at Karim Khān's request and in 1769 he was reconfirmed as governor of Būshire and Bahrein. Karim Khān also gave him the added title and honor of daryabegi (admiral) of the Persian Gulf fleet.⁶⁸

The tax dispute of 1767 provides a graphic example of what was to become Būshire's fundamental security problem: an alliance between an unfriendly Shirāz government and the inland tribes of Tangistān and/or Dashtistān. The Būshire shaykhs were unable to withstand such a combination. Thus, the key to the city's security rested on the ability of its leaders to manipulate the composition of the inland

⁶⁷. Ibid., 7 December, 1767, and 9 January, 1768.
alliances in such a way that they did not pose a security threat to the port. In the nineteenth century, the family increasingly was unable to achieve that goal and the ground was laid for occupation and political upheaval most of which originated from the interior. In contrast, the port was never occupied successfully by a marine force.

Bushire's security dilemma provides the basis for a general observation about the security situation of the port cities of the Persian Gulf. On the northern littoral of the Gulf, the principal threat to the independent Arab shaykhdoms came from the interior. None of these shaykhdoms or tribes was able to solve this security problem and by 1925 they were all subordinated to the central plateau government. On the southern shore, the principal threat to the various port cities came from the sea--from Oman and later the British. In general, the interior of the Peninsula did not represent a security threat.69

69. The Wahabees in the early nineteenth century were an exception; however, Moḥamet 'Alī of Egypt eliminated that threat in the 1830's.
Perry has observed that the period of the late 1750's and 1760's was one of insecurity and disintegration for the Gulf and its hinterland. In the southern Gulf Mullā 'Alī Shāh of Bandar 'Abbās and Naṣir Khān of Lār came under intense pressure. The central Gulf was dominated by the Būshire-Bandar Rig struggle and the subsequent terror of the raids of Mir Mohannā. Finally, at the northern end of the Gulf, the Ottomans and the Zands began their first assaults on the quasi-autonomous Ka'b state. 70

This instability was a reflection of the basic fact that the Gulf was undergoing a fundamental shift in its political and economic equilibrium as the balance of political and economic power shifted away from Bandar 'Abbās toward the central and northern portions of the Gulf. The jockeying for position within that new emerging political order was intense and thus was an important factor which contributed to the region's overall instability.

Shaykh Naṣir, however, was able to take advantage of this chaos and expand both his political and economic influence. Būshire had emerged as the most important port on the Persian coast. Moreover, Bahrein had fallen under the control of the al-Muzkur

70. J. Perry, Karim Khān Zand, pp 156-7.
family, and a close working relationship had been developed with the Zands. Būshire was still not dominant over all of the ports and inland districts of the Dashtistān region as the raids of Mūr Mohannā and the tax dispute of 1767 demonstrated. However in the next decade, it would extend its control both inland and over much of the central Persian coast.

The Domination of the Central Gulf: In general, the period between 1770 and 1789 was one characterized by a close alliance with the Zands. In fact during the 1770's, Būshire was a spearhead for the extension of Zand imperial interests in the central Gulf. However, support for the Zand dynasty weakened in the 1780's and by the early 1790's, the al-Muzkur family had thrown its allegiance to the Qājārs.

In 1770, war broke out between Karim Khān and the Imām of Oman who was supported by an allied tribe, the Bani Ma'in. The Khān had attempted unsuccessfully to subdue the Bani Ma'in in 1767, and the post 1767 period saw a corresponding increase in cooperation between Oman and the Ma'in. Part of the basis of this cooperation was centered on the Bani Ma'in's sale of the ship "Rahmani" to Imām

Ahmad sometime in 1767 or 1768. Karim Khan objected to the sale on the grounds that the "Rahmani" had been built for Nādir Shāh's fleet and that since he was the heir to the fleet, the ship was rightfully his. In 1769, Karim Khan demanded that Imām Ahmad return the vessel and in addition demanded that Ahmad pay him the same tribute which Oman had paid to Nādir Shāh. Not unexpectedly, Ahmad refused both of Karim Khan's demands.

When hostilities commenced in 1770, Nāṣir supported Karim's efforts with occasional naval forays into southern Gulf waters. The fighting was inconclusive, but by 1774, the Imām sued for peace agreeing to pay Karim Khan a 200 toman present and an annual tribute.\(^{72}\) Nāṣir was appointed the Zand plenipotentiary in charge of negotiating a settlement with the Imām of Oman.\(^{73}\)

The lower Gulf war came to an end at an opportune moment for the Khan for by 1774 his interests had shifted to the northern end of the Gulf and to the city of Baṣra. A devastating plague had struck the

\(^{72}\) J. Perry, Karim Khan Zand, pp. 156-7.

\(^{73}\) J. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, volume 1, part II, p. 1822.
city and surrounding area, killing as many as 200,000 and leaving it weakened and vulnerable to military attack. Seizing upon this opportunity, Karim rapidly prepared to lay siege to Baṣra which he did in April, 1775.

Shaykh Naṣir supported the Persian siege by sending some twenty gallivats (large sailing vessels which could be armed) to Baṣra. However, it was not strict loyalty to the Zands that led Naṣir to participate in the siege. He had a vested interest in seeing Baṣra reduced for with that port under Persian control, the Shaykh may well have reasoned that Bushire would emerge as the most important port in the Gulf. Trade could be diverted to Bushire. However, if Naṣir had such hopes, they were ill-founded as events would show.

The Zand alliance did not assure Naṣir of Shirāz's automatic support in his struggles with the maritime Arab tribes such as those on the Gulf's southern shore and in the Kārun river region. In fact, he appears to have received little or no support from Shirāz in confronting these confederations. On the southern shore of the Gulf, for example, Naṣir had to face the rising strength of

74. Lorimer, Ibid., p. 1822.
the Utub. The Utub had migrated to the coastal town of Zubora in the late 1750's and by the 1770's, it was a flourishing port.\textsuperscript{75} According to Abu Hakima, the prosperity of Zubora aroused the hostility of Shaykh Nāṣir undoubtedly because trade was being diverted from Būshire and Bahrein.

Ironically, the Persian occupation of Baṣra actually increased Zubora's prosperity:\textsuperscript{76}

On the attack of Baṣra by the Persians, some merchants of that place and one of the Shaiks of Kowiet, with many of the principal people, retired to Zobara, and the power, wealth, and influence of the Beni Khaleefa rapidly increased.\textsuperscript{76} Nāṣir responded to this challenge by attacking the port on several occasions in 1776 and 1777, although all of his efforts to reduce the port were ineffectual.\textsuperscript{77} Relations between the Utub and Būshire remained hostile throughout the rest of the decade and open warfare erupted again in 1782.

In the latter half of the 1770's, Nāṣir also became embroiled in a trade dispute with the Bani Ka 'b who lived in the Kārun river region. As a


\textsuperscript{76} Chronological Table of Events of the Uttooobee Tribe of Arabs, Selections from the Records of the Government of India, 1856, U/23/217, p. 140.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p. 140. and Factory Records, G/29/17/part 1, 1 February, 1775, p. 74.
result "no boat belonging to that place (Bushire) can pass to Bossorah." While differences may have been shelved during the siege of Basra, by 1777 tension had surfaced again. In August, the Bani Ka'b seized the property of several Bushire merchants, although by February, 1778, the property had been returned, indicating that relations may have been somewhat improved. 78 However, when Bushire was seized by the Khan of Tangistān in 1779, Lorimer claims that the Bani Ka'b started to sail to Bushire to support Tangistāni efforts to hold the city against Shaykh Nasir's counteroffensive. 79

Braudel's observation on sixteenth century maritime practices in the Mediterranean may provide a clue about the nature of the dispute between the two shaykhdoms. According to Braudel, shipping in the sixteenth century:

was a matter of following the shoreline... moving crabwise from rock to rock... The owner of land on the coast might exact tolls from all passing boats which might be justified if the sum corresponded to a real service in the port. 80

78. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/2, 15 February, 1778.


In general, ships seem to have followed the coastlines in the Gulf during the eighteenth century, much as they did in the sixteenth century Mediterranean. For example, EIC logs indicate that British vessels sailed close to the coasts (there are continual references to the visibility of capes, coastal islands and coastal mountain ranges.)

Thus the Ka'b may well have been attempting to impose a toll on Būshīre based boats as they made their way between Būshīre and Baṣra.

Another point can be developed. It has been suggested that the primary cause of many of the local wars and much of the "piracy" in the eighteenth century Gulf resulted from disputes over who would control the Gulf's shipping lanes. The general impression given (although not explicitly stated) is that these wars were an attempt to exclude all parties from a given shipping lane. However, the real dispute in these wars may have been over who had the right (i.e. enough politico-military strength) to charge a toll on ships passing by a given territory,

81. See, for example, Ships Logs, L/Mar/B/ID/DD, Būshīre, 1763; L/Mar/B.454C,D,E,K, Būshīre, 1778; or L/Mar/B/425, E/O, Būshīre, 1782.

rather than on the right to exclude completely all other parties from a shipping lane. Thus, the term "control" should be construed to mean that a local shaykh had the privilege to impose a duty on passing shipping.

The actions of Imām of Muscat provide a concrete example which supports this conclusion. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Imām attempted to divert to Muscat all ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz on the grounds that because he had "cleared" the lower Gulf of pirates, he had a right to charge a security tax. The Imām, however, had no intention of forcing shipping from Būshire or any other port off the Gulf. He only demanded that he be compensated for "services" rendered.

On March 2, 1779, "that dreaded event" occurred as John Beaumont, the British resident in Būshire described it: the death of Karim Khān Zand. The period following the death of any monarch in Persia generally has been characterized by confusion and disorder until a new, strong individual emerges and is able to check the centrifugal forces set in motion by the death of the preceding authority. Karim Khān's death was no exception. All over southern Iran, disturbances occurred as provincial leaders began to realign themselves with the various feuding
princes of the Zand dynasty.

When the Khan died, Bushire was in a "defenseless state...since two of their (Bushire's) Gallivats (ships) are at Bussora while Shaik Nassir is absent with the third at Jeddah." Also the town wall, which defended the landward exposure was only half finished.83

The principal threat to Bushire and the surrounding country-side came from Baqer Khan of Tangistan. Tension had always existed between Bushire and Tangistan—in part because the Tangistanis were of Persian extraction and because of their raids on the coastal regions.84 The first hint of trouble came when Baqer Khan "recalled about 100 of his people that resided here (in Bushire)" on March 14 or 16, 1779.85

83. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/2, 16 March, 1778.

84. The Bushire Resident noted that hatred between the regions was such that "the Arabs and Dashti people thirst so much after their blood as to butcher them (the Tangistanis) wherever they are found, one of whom fell by an Arab in cold blood this very morning in Bushire." Ibid., 28 August, 1779.

85. Ibid., 16 March, 1779.
For several months thereafter, Bāqer Khān was in Shirāz where he sided with the Zand prince, Zaki Khān, who was later assassinated (June, 1779). Sadoo Khān then assumed control of the capital and at this point, the Tangistānī chief sensed that his political fortunes rapidly were declining for "Reis Baqur Khan had incurred Sadoo Khan's displeasure."  Bāqer fled south attacking and seizing Būshire on June 30, 1779. (Apparently, he felt that Būshire was safer than Tangistān.)

Bāqer Khān was able to hold Būshire for only twelve days. Local Arab tribes from the Būshire/Dashtistān region rallied to the al-Muzkur and began raiding deep into Tangistān. Bāqer Khān's position also was complicated by the fact that the Shirāz government refused to legitimize his seizure of Būshire. (He had written to Shirāz asking that he be acknowledged as Būshire's new governor.) Also by then Shaykh Nāṣir had reentered the Gulf and was rallying various Arab tribes as he approached Būshire.

Realizing that he had over extended himself, and that he might be cut-off from his home base, Bāqer

86. Ibid., 4 July, 1779. According to Lorimer "Bāqir Khān had been Zaki Khān's instrument in ill-treating Sadoo Caun's women..." (Lorimer, Op. cit., p. 1846.)
Khān prudently decided to evacuate Būshire on July 11 and return to Tangistān. His retreat quickly was followed by a counter offensive of the combined forces of Būshire, Bandar Rig, Dashtistān, Ganava, Verdīsṭān, and 'Asalū. Bāqer Khān ultimately was killed and the two principal fortifications in Tangistān fell to Nāṣir.

The Tangistān raid reveals the extent to which Shaykh Nāṣir's strength and prestige had grown in the years since the tax dispute of 1767. In short order, Nāṣir was able to rally the coastal Arabs between Ganāva and 'Asalū to his cause, a feat he had not been able to accomplish in 1767. Moreover, the Tangistān raid demonstrates that the alliance between the Zands and the al-Muzzkur was still intact. In fact, Lorimer claims that Bāqer Khān's actions were so strongly resented that the Shirāz government prepared to send troops to Tangistān to help Shaykh Nāṣir and his allies. The Zand support also demonstrates that Būshire's security was not threatened materially by Tangistān alone. In the final analysis, the inland tribes posed little problem without the backing of Shirāz.

Finally, the Tangistān raid helps clarify the composition of alliances in the Gulf in the late 1770's. The area from Gaṅava to 'Asalū supported Nāšir's cause. However, Bāqer Khān was not without his coastal allies. The proposed support of the Bani Ka'b has already been mentioned. The Ḥuwala of Bandar Tāhirī also aligned themselves with Bāqer Khān, showing that the emnity between Bandar Tāhirī and Būshire still existed.

The early 1780's may well have been the golden years of Būshire's political power and prestige. Shaykh Nāšir exerted a strong influence—if not outright political control—over much of the central region of the northern littoral of the Gulf and Bahrein Islands. Morier claims that in these years, when much of southern and central Iran was in a state of political turmoil and confusion, the Dashtistān was stable and prosperous because of the influence of Nāšir.

Nāšir's political strength began to slip in 1783. It was on the peripheral regions where the process began, or more specifically in Bahrein. As noted earlier, the Utub of Zubora had increased their political and economic influence during the past two decades. To counter this development, Nāšir had attempted to reduce that port. In the fall, 1782,
the Utub retaliated by attacking Bahrein, although they were unable to seize the island. Shaykh Nāṣir then set out (unsuccessfully) to punish the Utub for the attack, assisted by the Shaykhs of Bandar Rig, Ganāva, and others.88 A stalemate ensued until July, 1783. Taking advantage of Nāṣir's absence, the Utub launched another attack on Bahrein and successfully occupied it on July 23.

Shortly after the fall of Bahrein, Nāṣir dispatched a fleet to the island, although the attack failed to dislodge the Utub invaders. However, Nāṣir was not intent on regaining control of the island and on October 12, 1783, the resident reported that 'Alī Murād Khān, then ruler in Shirāz, promised to send 6000 men to help reduce Bahrein and Zubora. "In the meantime it is reported that Shaik Abdulla of Ormuz and Shaik Rasid of Julfar (Ras al-Khameh) will proceed to Assula in order to meet Shaik Nassir."89

Rashīd arrived in Bushire on October 14, "but the report of Shaik Abdulla's fleet being with (him) proved premature..." Rashīd eventually grew

88. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/3/, 5 October, 1782.

89. Ibid., 12 October, 1783.
impatient and sailed to Başra (for commercial purposes). In the meantime, the 6000 men promised by 'Alī Murād Khān did not materialize and by the end of the year, the resident observed that Naṣir apparently had "dropped his design of making a second expedition to the Arab coast at least for the present." ⁹⁰

No known expedition was undertaken in 1784, in part, because of the continuing political instability on the plateau. By December of 1784, though, 'Alī Murād Khān had declared himself king. Naṣir responded to that event by sending the new king "presents to a very considerable amount", partly in hopes of receiving material support for another proposed expedition to Bahrein which was expected to occur "shortly". ⁹¹

The Būshire shaykh left on February 12, 1785, for Kangān where Shaykh ʿAbdallāh and Rashīd were to join him. However, the proposed expedition was again unable to organize itself and the invasion was cancelled. This was the last serious effort by the al-Muzkur family to retake Bahrein.

**The Disintegration of the Zand Alliance.** With 'Alī Murād Khān's death in January, 1785, a new power

⁹⁰. Ibid., 31 December, 1783.

⁹¹. Ibid., 31 December, 1784.
struggle broke out among various Zand princes which was finally settled in favor of Ja'far Khan Zand. Whether Naşir had a preferred candidate in the struggle is not clear, but limited evidence indicates he was not favorably disposed toward Ja'far Khan. According to the English traveler, Franklin, in 1786, Ja'far Khan punished Shaykh Naşir for his failure to pay the annual tribute and because he had harbored Riza Qulî Khan, a Qâjâr supporter and the brother of the governor of Kâzarun.92 Franklin says that the dispute was finally settled when Naşir-bowing to pressure-agreed to pay a lac (one hundred thousand) of rupees or about 5000 tomans to Shiráz.93

When Ja'far Khan was murdered in Shiráz in 1788, his son, Luṭf 'Ali Khan Zand, was in Lâr with part of the Zand army. The army revolted and Luṭf 'Ali and a few loyal followers barely escaped with their lives. Luṭf'Ali to Bûshire where he was welcomed by Shaykh Naşir who promised to help restore him to the

92. Riza Qulî Khan became governor of Kâzarun. He was later blinded by Luṭf 'Ali Khan and removed from the governorship, but with the Qâjâr victory he was again reappointed governor of Kâzarun.

93. W. Franklin, Observations made on a tour from Bangal to Persia in the years 1786-7, p. 139. The Bûshire resident noted that when Ja'far Khan was in Kâzarun in the fall of 1786, Shaykh Naşir sent him a "considerable present." Bûshire Residency Records, R/15/1/3, 25 October, 1786.
throne. According to Harford Jones (then resident at Bagra), Naşir's influence in the region was so great that within three months he was able to raise a "formidable force" for Luṭf 'Alī.⁹⁴

Before this force left Būshire, Shaykh Naşir I died on April 11, 1789. Unlike the Zands, the al-Muzkur family was able to arrange an orderly transition of power and Naşir's son, Naşir II became paramount shaykh of Būshire. According to the EIC resident in Būshire, Charles Watkins, Naşir II continued to help Luṭf 'Alī and actually accompanied him when he began his victorious sweep to Shirāz.⁹⁵ However, this was the last time the al-Muzkur would campaign for the Zands.

Between 1789 and 1791, Naşir II reversed his allegiance and actively opposed the Zands in their struggle against the Qājārs. When Luṭf 'Alī Khān was betrayed by Haji Ibrāhīm (a leading Shirāzi personality) in 1791, he again fled south eventually making his way to Bandar Rig where he regrouped and prepared to launch a counteroffensive. Outside of Bandar Rig, Naşir II and an army of two or three

⁹⁴ H. Brydges, The Dynasty of the Kajars, pp. CXIX-CXX.

⁹⁵ Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/4-5, 12 April, 1789 and 10 September, 1789.
thousand men confronted Luṭf 'Alī. Easily defeating Nāṣir II, Luṭf 'Alī marched to Khisht which was governed by an ally, Zul Khān. However, as Watkins noted "Shaik Nasir has done and is still doing everything in his power to thwart the Khan...He publicly avows his allegiance to the usurper (Haji Ibrahim)." 96 In fact, Watkins claimed that Nāṣir II had been privy to the conspiracy.97

There are several reasons why Shaykh Nāṣir II may have betrayed the Zand family. In July, 1791, Luṭf 'Alī Khān had written to the Baṣra residents, Samuel Manesty and Harford Jones, suggesting that the EIC establish a factory on Kharg Island. As an enticement, he offered to lower customs duties. 98 At that time, Mīr 'Alī Khān of Bandar Rig governed the island. Nāṣir correctly perceived that if the EIC factory moved out of Būshire, it would weaken his economic strength, reduce Būshire's port status, and possibly pave the way for a revitalized Bandar Rig.

Secondly, Nāṣir may have seen an opportunity to expand his political control in the region at this


97. Ibid., pp. 573-76.

98. Manesty and Jones to Bombay Council, Ibid., 4 March, 1792, p. 224.
critical juncture. With the collapse of the Zands, a regional political vacuum would be created which Nāşir may have hoped to fill. In the winter and spring of 1791 and 1792, Charles Watkins reported that Shaykh Nāşir "has lately taken the field to endeavor to establish his authority in the province of Dashtistān and the neighboring ports." Mīr 'Alī of Bandar Rig, was unable to resist Nāşir and that port and Kharg fell to the al-Muzkur. Nāşir also attacked Khisht and its pro-Zand ruler, Zul Khān, though his offensive ended in defeat.

Nāşir also must have harbored enmity toward Luṭf 'Alī. According to Waring, Luṭf 'Alī Khān had confiscated much of Shaykh Nāşir's I wealth after his death. Finally, Nāşir II, like his father, may have sensed, at a critical moment, which direction the political winds were blowing and switched sides to assure a favored political position in the new, emerging political order.

It is now clear why Luṭf 'Alī Khan turned east and to the city of Kirmān in his final flight in

100. S. Waring, A Tour of Sheeras, p. 7.
1794. All of the northern and central Iran was in the hands of the Qājārs. Much of Fārs province had turned against the Zand family. Kāzarun, for example, was in the hands of the pro-Qājār, Riżā Qulī Khān, and the Dashtistān and Būshire were securely under the governorship or influence of Shaykh Nāṣir II. Thus, the only direction Luṭf 'Alī could turn was to the East and away from the southern mountains and Gulf plains which in the past had so faithfully served the Zands.

To preserve the independence and security of Būshire and the rule of the al-Muzkur family, Shaykh Nāṣir I pursued two interrelated policies. First, he manipulated the inland tribes in such a manner as to prevent a coalition of unfriendly tribes from uniting against Būshire. For most of his career he was successful in this effort. In the early 1750's, the inhabitants of Dashtistān looked to Nāṣir for protection, while in the late 1770's Nāṣir was able to unite the tribes of Dashtī, Rig, and Dashtistān into a cohesive front against Tangistān.

This balance of power configuration, however, was delicate and its equilibrium could be upset by the actions of the Shirāz government. Shirāz could tip the scales against Būshire as the tax dispute of 1767 showed. In that case, Tangistān was joined by the
tribes of Dashtistān in an alliance against the port.

Yet twelve years later during the Tangistāni raid (1779), the same Dashtistāni tribes would align with the al-Muzkur. The decisive factor seems to have been the attitude of Shīrāz. Therefore, a second policy of Nāṣir's was to maintain a close alliance with the Zands. The alliance had a price—regular tax payments to the Shīrāz government. But in return, the al-Muzkur had free access to the wealth of the region and were secure in their government.

The secure world of the al-Muzkur collapsed with the coming of the Qājārs. The Zand/al-Muzkur relationship was based on complementary or symmetrical needs. However, the Qājār relationship was asymmetrical and it was that security problem and the implications which flowed from it which the al-Muzkur never successfully solved.

101. The alliance also could dictate that on occasion the Būshir shaykh would have to enforce a policy that was detrimental to his own interests. For example, during the siege of Baṣra, Karīm Khān ordered an embargo on all grain exports as bound for Muscat a means of striking at the Imam of Muscat who had sided with Baṣra during the siege. This order enforced in Būshir by Shaykh Sadan, bother of Nāṣir. However, by enforcing such an order, the al-Muzkur were losing customs revenues (exports were taxed) and profitable shipping revenues.
CHAPTER IV
The Collapse of the al-Muzkur

The Iranian effort to establish a strong presence in the Persian Gulf dissipated following the Qajār victory over the Zands. In theory, the Qajār withdrawal from the Gulf should have put the various shaykhdoms and port cities on the northern littoral on a more secure and independent footing. While it is true that the port cities did in fact retain their independence, they were by no means more secure because the Qajārs did not totally withdraw from the Gulf area. The result was that this partial withdrawal put relations between the plateau and the Garmsir on a new, and over the long run, less secure foundation, at least from the perspective of the local shaykhdoms.

Early in his rule, Shaykh Naşir I realized that his hinterland security was best protected by an alliance with the Zand dynasty. Through the alliance, Naşir essentially was able to neutralize any threat that might develop from Tangistān and/or Dashtistān. With his hinterland secure, he was then free to conquer and garrison Bahrein and engage in maritime expeditions against the Huwalah, the Utub or the Ka'īb. The Zand connection also helped assure
that Būshire would become the dominate port of the central Gulf.

The alliance, however, was not one sided. If Nāṣir needed the Zands, so also did the Zands depend on Nāṣir. As suggested in the previous chapter, Zand imperial goals in the Gulf were out of reach without the support of the maritime Arabs—support which the al-Muzkur willingly provided. Therefore, the Zand/al-Muzkur relationship was complementary or symmetrical in nature.

The gradual collapse of the Zands signalled a change in the plateau/lowland relationship. Zand imperial aspirations dissipated, while Qājār interests turned northward, except for their continuing demands for tax revenues.

Ironically, three long-term, negative implications flowed from the Qājār withdrawal. First, Shaykh Nāṣir II could now supply Tehrān with only one tangible asset—tax revenue. Ships, sailors and maritime knowledge and alliances were of little value to a government that was increasing preoccupied with the Russian threat. The Qājārs did not have the vested interest in the al-Muzkur which Karim Khān had had. As long as tax revenues were sent regularly north, it made little difference who ruled in Būshire. The relationship was asymmetrical.
The relationship between the Qājārs and the al-Muzkur rapidly evolved from one of initial support to that of tension and hostility. Shirāz became a threat and its behavior in the tax disputes of 1767 and 1807 is illustrative of this evolving difference. Though Shaykh Nāṣir's bid for tax freedom failed in 1767, the family was reconfirmed as Būshire's rulers and in less than two years, Nāṣir was given the title of Daryabegi (lord of the sea). Karim Khān had no intention of deposing the family.

In 1807, another tax problem arose. In this case, the Shirāz government, after accepting a bribe from Muḥammad Nebī Khān, then the vizir of Fārs province, permitted Muḥammad Nebī to seize Būshire and oust the al-Muzkur. For three years, Muḥammad Nebī ruled through his brother, Ja'far 'Ali Khān. The al-Muzkur eventually were able to regain the governorship in 1815, primarily because of the corrupt and cruel practices of the Persians increasingly led to their inability to collect revenues. However, although the Muzkur were restored, the lesson was clear: in the eyes of Shirāz, the family was no more than a conduit for tax collection and replaceable should another individual be willing to pay a high enough price for the privilege of trying to do so.
The changed nature of Būshire’s relationship with the plateau lead to the formulation of a new security policy toward Shirāz which can be summed up in a single word: avoidance. This policy of minimal contact with the Shirāz government had two component parts: First, the Būshire shaykhs attempted to avoid direct personal contact with the Shirāz ruling elite. For example, Nāṣir I participated in Karim Khān’s campaigns of 1754 and 1755 and he was with the Khān at Baṣra in the mid-1770’s. Nāṣir II’s behavior provides a startling contrast. When Aghā Muḥammad Qājār ordered Nāṣir II to Shirāz in 1792, the Būshire shaykh was reluctant to go.¹ In 1801, Mehdi ‘Alī Khān, EIC resident in Būshire, wrote that Shaykh Nāṣir had just set out for Shirāz for the first time in his life.² The principal fear of the Būshire shaykhs was that if they came into personal contact with the Prince of Shirāz, they would be deposed and imprisoned or worse yet murdered.

A second facet of the avoidance strategy was aimed at preventing Shirāzi troops from entering the Garmsir. Again this behavior contrasts with behavior


in the eighteenth century. In the 1760's Shirazi troops were received gratefully in hopes that they would put an effective stop to Mir Mohanna's raids. Twenty years later (1785), Nasir I anxiously awaited for Shiraz to send some six thousand troops to help retake Bahrein. Shirazi troops were not seen as a threat to Bushire's security.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the situation had changed: In 1802, Medhi 'Ali Khan reported that "by land the whole of the country is in disturbance, indeed the Caravans from here (Bushire) to Sheeraz are frequently plundered..." There is no evidence, however, that Nasir II requested support from Shiraz to help restore order in the region.

In another example in 1824, Husayn 'Ali Mirza, Prince of Shiraz, indicated that he intended to reassert Persian control over Bahrein. Bushire was designated as the port of embarkation for the Persian invading force, a fact which caused Shaykh 'Abd al-Rasul, the paramount shaykh at that time, infinite consternation. Rasul was fearful that once the Shirazi troops were in Bushire, he would lose control of the town. His solution to the problem was to buy off the Shiraz government "by a rather large

3. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/5, 14 August, 1802.
pecuniary sacrifice," which is probably all that the Shiraz prince wanted in the first place.\(^4\) 'Abd al-Rasūl's strategy is obvious: through tribute payments he hoped to forestall the deployment of military troops into the Garmisir.\(^5\)

A second, long term negative impact that resulted from the asymmetrical relationship was that the maintenance (and even expansion) of Būshīre's tax base became a concern of absolute and paramount importance to the family. The ability to raise enough revenue to keep Shirāz satisfied was imperative, for if the revenues could not be raised,

\(^4\) *Būshīre Residency Records*, R/15/1/33, 1 July, 1824. Stannus, then resident at Būshīre, commented on Ḥusayn 'Alī Mirzā's actions in the following manner: "These annual demonstrations against the Uttoobes have become a regular and essential part of the policy of the Shirāz government, as not only holding forth a plea for deductions from the usual remittances to Tehran, but also affording a pretense for extortions from its own dependencies (i.e. places such as Būshīre)." Also see Kelly, *Britian and the Persian Gulf*, p. 191.

\(^5\) 'Abd al-Rasūl's fear of the presence of Shirāzi troops in the lowlands was such that he was willing to put aside the policy of personal avoidance if necessary. Noting the Shaykh's visit to Shirāz in 1826, acting resident Rich commented, "It is supposed that the Shaik had strong reasons for suspecting that the Prince of Shiraz had nearly determined on personally visiting Būshīre and to prevent this, the Shaik immediately intimated his desire to pay his respects to the Prince. He left this (Būshīre) and carried up with him presents and money to a very large amount." *Būshīre Residency Records*, R/15/1/36, 13 January, 1826.
the family's position could be threatened. Unfortunately for the al-Muzkur, tax revenues declined in the nineteenth century, a process which will be detailed in a later chapter.

Finally, the changed relationship brought to the foreground the problem of how small city-states or principalities can survive with a hovering "superpower" just over the horizon. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the political configuration in the central region of the northern littoral resembled that of mid-thirteenth century Italy or of ancient Greece on the eve of the Persian invasion. In the case of Italy, there were four major city-states (Milan, Florence, Genoa, and Venice) and two hovering powers—the Holy Roman Empire to the north and the Papacy in the south, while Greece, divided into numerous political entities, faced the Archemedian Empire to the East.

In the central Garmsir, there were four important political entities: Būshire, Dashti, Dashtistān and Tangistān. The political security of each shaykhdom was linked to its ability to solve a two-fold problem: First, how could a balance of power equilibrium be maintained in the lowlands so that each area remained independent. Essentially, each region distrusted the other and was willing to expand
at its neighbor's expense.

A second and equally important consideration for the lowland powers was how to unite against the intrigues of the Shīrāz government which threatened their independence and hereditary control. Political survival, especially as the nineteenth century progressed, required that they balance the desire for freedom and autonomy with the necessary subordination of sovereignty required in some type of league or confederation which could protect them from the Shīrāz government.

The predicament in which several small, independent powers are threatened by their own desires as well as by a more distant "superpower" presents almost impossible policy alternatives. Given the intense desire of each city-state to maintain its independence and freedom of action, there is often a reluctance to unite and oppose the distant power. Within the small power configuration, there may be consciously or unconsciously, a movement toward a balance of power arrangement among the states; however, such an arrangement does not neutralize the threat of the Great Power. There is always the tempting possibility for one of the smaller powers to intrigue with the Great Power at the expense of the established order. This was the
state of affairs in Greece during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. (witness the Spartan/Persian connection). A parallel development occurred in the central Gulf in the nineteenth century A.D.

Even before the turn of the nineteenth century, Shaykh Nāšir II experienced the painful results of the new asymmetrical relationship with Shirāz. In April, 1798, Ḥusayn Qulī Khān, the Qājār governor of Fārs, revolted against Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh, the new Shāh, marched on Būshire, desposed Shaykh Nāšir II, and appointed Nāšir's cousin, Shaykh Khanum (who apparently was a willing accomplice in the revolution) as Būshire's new governor.6

The new regime was short-lived. In early August, Ḥusayn clashed with Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh north of Būshire; Ḥusayn's army deserted the rebel Qājār and the revolt was crushed. With Ḥusayn's demise, the stage was set for a counterrevolution in Būshire which duly occurred in September, 1798. A combined land/marine force was assembled with Nāšir's brother, Shaykh Muḥammad, leading the land forces, while Nāšir

6. The contrast with the Zand's behavior is striking. Luṭf 'Alī Khān staged his first counterrevolution from Būshire after his father was assassinated. Ḥusayn Qulī, revolting against the established authority, proceeded to alienate a possible ally.
commanded the navy. (The Bani Utub were active in this campaign and supported Nāṣir's cause by supplying ships and men.) After five days of fighting, Shaykh Nāṣir II's authority was restored.

If the Shirāz troop policy had not been formulated prior to the 1798 revolution, this experience must have demonstrated the importance of such an approach to Shirāz for the future. This was the second time in less than thirty-five years that the family had found itself unable to ward off a hostile Shirāz. (The first time occurred during the tax dispute of 1767.) If Būshire's landward security could not be preserved through military means, then it had to be bought—which was the fundamental principle underlying the avoidance policy.

The revolution of 1798 introduced a new, destabilizing element into Būshire's domestic politics: family factionalism. Available evidence suggests that in the eighteenth century the family's strength was not undermined by competing factions. (The 1789 succession was smooth, for example.) The events of 1798, however, demonstrate that one branch of the family was dissatisfied and that it may have had local support. (It took five days to recapture the town.) The problem of family factionalism was never resolved successfully in the nineteenth century
it was one factor which helped to undermine the strength of the al-Muzkur in the 1830's and 40's.

Nāṣir's concern over a possible Persian presence in the Garmisir shaped some of his actions in the 1790's and early 1800's. For example, in September, 1798, Mehdi 'Alī Khān, a Persian, was appointed EIC resident in Bushire. Mehdi 'Alī, originally from a wealthy Khorāsānī family, had worked for the Company for almost twenty years before assuming the Bushire post. The appointment, coming within two months of the "recapture" of the port, prompted Nāṣir II to complain to the EIC in Bombay about the Persian's presence in Bushire. The possibility that Mehdi 'Alī would flirt with the Shiraz government seems to have weighed heavily on the Shaykh's mind, although the Khān's subsequent behavior shows that such fears were ill-founded.

A year later, the Governor of Fārs and Soltān ibn Ahmad of Muscat made preparations for a joint attack on Bahrein. Soltān actually appeared in Bushire in anticipation of the expedition. At that point, the Bani Utub, in an overture to Nāṣir indicated that they would pay tribute to the Persians voluntarily, as well as place themselves under Persian suzerainty. Nāṣir secretly went to Bahrein to receive the tribute, an act which greatly annoyed the
Imām when he discovered what had transpired. Lorimer correctly observes that Soltān "considered himself to have been tricked by the Persians..." 7 As a result, the invasion failed to materialize. 8

Lorimer also comments that once the proposed expedition became known in Bahrein, "the Shikh of Būshire took advantage of the alarm of the people of Bahrein to extort from them an admission of dependence on Persia, together with an installment of tribute..." 9 "Extort" is too strong a term, for both Nāṣir and the Utub had strong reasons for sabotaging the expedition. The Utub motivations are obvious and need to comment. Nāṣir's reasoning is only slightly more subtle. A Bahreini expedition involving the Prince of Shīrāz meant that Shīrāzi troops would almost certainly embark from Būshire. 10

10. Lorimer states that a Shīrāz army was "encamped outside the walls of Būshire, in readiness to proceed on service to Bahrain." (Ibid, p. 1911.) However, there is no mention of Persian troops in the Būshire area in the Residency Records.
The events of 1798 demonstrated the possible consequences for the family if Persian troops reached the town. By claiming to be Persian dependents, the Utub were able to drive a wedge between Shiraz and 'Oman, a result which Nasir welcomed and for which he was willing to maneuver. The two parties had worked together in 1798 and it was to their advantage to do so in the present context.¹¹

Nasir II also undertook a punitive expedition against the port of Nakhilu to maintain stable, if not distant, relations with the Shiraz government. In 1803, two British ships, the Alert and the Hector, ran aground in the neighborhood of Nakhilu and were plundered by the local shaykh. The Bushire resident appealed to Shiraz for help in recovering the plundered goods (or for compensation); Shiraz, claiming that Nasir II was responsible for the actions of the shaykh of Nakhilu, ordered him to proceed against Nakhilu. For two years, Nasir

¹¹. The price (i.e. tribute and admission of subordination) that Bahrein had to pay was not high. Tribute payments to Shiraz for an extended period of time could only be enforced with the support of the maritime Arabs, a possibility which was unlikely to develop given the state of relations between Bushire and Shiraz.
but finally under constant British pressure and threats from Shirāz, he organized an expedition in 1805. The importance of stable relations with Shirāz must have been an important motivating factor in the decision to launch the expedition, for Nāṣir II had little to gain from it. He received no financial support for the expedition from either Shirāz or the EIC. (In fact, it cost him about 100,000 piasters. Moreover, Nāṣir could not "conquer" Nakhīlū. Geographically, the port lay beyond Būshire's sphere of influence; Nāṣir did not have the military capabilities to seize, hold, and exploit that region. Thus, he probably undertook the campaign to prevent a deterioration in his relations with Shirāz.

In April or May, 1807, Shaykh Nāṣir II died while performing the Haj to Mecca. A succession struggle ensued almost immediately. 'Abd al-Rasūl, Nāṣir's son, prepared to assume the governorship. However,

12. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/6, 26 November, 1803. For example, Samuel Manesty, the Basra resident wrote, "I have received such information from persons recently arrived from Būshīre as persuades me that Shaik Nassir (II) decidedly means to decline obedience to the orders received by him at Sheras to proceed to Nukheloo and that he has already formed rather plausible excuses for his intended conduct."

13. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/9/Part 2, 7 October, 1805.
Shaykh Khanum, who had deposed Nasir II in the Revolution of 1798 but who had escaped retribution for his actions, was in Shiraz "endeavoring to get possession of the Government of Bushire." The EIC resident commented that:

the contention will at all events I imagine for some time prove a source of profit to the Persian Government who will most probably prolong the election in order to extend the gratification of their own avarice.\(^4\)

The resident's prediction about the length of time it would take to reach a decision proved to be incorrect. Approximately, a week later, he reported that Shiraz had confirmed 'Abd al-Rasūl's claim to the governorship. However, he noted that "the young Sheik will no doubt be obliged to pay dear the honors about to be conferred upon him."\(^5\) This assessment proved accurate, for on the same day he was installed as Governor, 'Abd al-Rasūl approached the EIC for a loan of 10,000 piasters to help pay for his new office. The Company eventually loaned him 5000 piasters on the condition that it be exempted from all customs dues until the debt was repaid.\(^6\)

\(^{14}\) Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/10/Part 1, 7 June, 1807.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 18 June, 1807.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 1 July, 1807.
Although 'Abd al-Rasūl was now Governor, his troubles were far from over. In 1808, the Shirāz government demanded the repayment of a 28,000 toman debt. According to Morier, the Būshire government had borrowed previously in Shirāz in order to discharge its tax obligation. Now the Shirāz government (on behalf of the creditors) demanded that the debt be repaid and sent a representative, one Muḥammad Khān, "to enforce the immediate repayment of the capital and interest..."17 Once in Būshire, Muḥammad Khān arrested 'Abd al-Rasūl and "conveyed (him) with every indignity and contumely to Shirage."18

However, the real cause of Rasūl's fall lay in the intrigues of Muḥammad Nebī Khān. Muḥammad Nebī was the Persian ambassador to India from 1805 to 1807. When he returned to Iran, he was appointed vazir of Fārs and immediately set out to buy the governorship of several districts in the province. Jahrom rapidly fell under his control and Būshire soon followed. According to Lorimer, the Būshire governorship cost Muḥammad Nebī 40,000 tomans.19

17. Morier, A Journey Through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor to Constantinople in the Years 1808 and 1809, p. 20–21.

18. Heude, A Voyage up the Persian Gulf and a Journey Overland from India to England, p. 42.

For the next three years, Muḥammad Nebī and his brother reduced the region to desperate straits because of their harsh tax policies. However, in 1811, Muḥammad Nebī fell from favor and was stripped of all power. A new individual, Muḥammad Ja'far Khān, was appointed Governor of Būshīre, but like his predecessors, he too taxed the population unmercifully. In March, 1813, William Bruce reported that he had been removed and that the likely successor would be Shaykh 'Abd al-Rasūl.

Bruce's prediction was premature. Mehdī Qulī Khān Qājār, a first cousin of Fath 'Alī Shāh, was appointed Governor of Būshīre, as well as all of the central Garmṣir. Mehdī Qulī's governing ability was less than adept, for by the end of 1813, the low country was in a state of chaos. The Qājār did nothing to alleviate the region's depressed economy; in fact, he had increased taxes to help defray the cost of fortifying Būshīre's landward wall. Writing on the plight of the low country, William Bruce commented that:

20. See Lorimer for details on his fall. Ibid., p. 1913.

21. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/12, 13 March, 1813.
...the low country called Dashtee and Dashtistān (this would have included the Būshire/Bandar Rig area as well) has been and is at present in a very unsettled state, the different petty chiefs inhabiting this line of country having taken arms against each other.  

22

In 1814, Mehdi Qulī willingly relinquished the governorship of the low country and 'Abd al-Rasūl was reappointed governor in November of that year. After an absence of almost six years, the al-Muzkur had returned to their old home.

During its period of exile, the family was reduced to poverty. In 1811, Bruce wrote that the al-Muzkur were supported by the charity of the population, since they had lost access to all income producing assets such as land, caravanserias, and customs duties.  

23 There is evidence, however, that the family was able to maintain control over some of its naval assets. A brother of 'Abd al-Rasūl's, Shaykh Darvish, fled to the southern shore of the Gulf after 'Abd al-Rasūl was toppled. On the Arabian shore, he was assisted and joined by a party from the original tribe "from whence the Shaiks of Būshire had

22. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/11. No date is given, although the report was probably written in late 1813 or early 1814.

23. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/11, 14 April, 1811. In fact, in 1811 Muḥammad Jaʿfar Khān, the new governor, gave the EIC the Shaykh's house for use as an additional warehouse.
sprung and migrated from." From this base, Darvish attacked and plundered shipping from Būshire, murdering all Persians whom he captured.24

Darvish's actions, while an obvious inconvenience, did not undermine or even threaten Muḥammad Nebi's grip on Būshire. In fact, Shaykh Darvish's activities generally were ineffective and provide additional support for the proposition that the key to Būshire's security lay on its landward side.

During the Persian occupation, one of the principal inland tribes on which the al-Muzkur had relied for military security and support was almost exterminated. The tribe, the Demukh, originally had migrated from Arabia and settled around the village of ChāhkJutāh which was located about twenty to thirty miles from Būshire. ChāhkJutāh was vitally important for Būshire's defense. It lay in the frontier region between Būshire and Tangistān. To reach the port, Tangistāni raiders had to pass in the general vicinity of the village. Thus, ChāhkJutāh and the Demukh acted as a first line of defense for Būshire. For example, during the tax dispute of 1767, the

24. Ibid., 8 December, 1811.
The dispute of 1767, the initial fighting occurred at Chāhkutān. 25

The Demukh, who were "considered the militia of this country", had always been "warmly attached" to the Būshīre shaykhs. 26 They were also wealthier than other tribes in the region, a fact which lead to their downfall at the hands of Muḥammad Nebī in the spring and fall of 1809. 27 Since Quseley mentions that there were "Tangasiri sentinels" in Būshīre during Muḥammad Nebī's tenure, it is possible that the khāns of Tangistān were involved (perhaps instrumentally) in engineering the downfall of an old enemy. With the demise of the Demukh, Būshīre lost an important bulkwak against its inland enemies.

The al-Muzkur were not threatened during the next decade (1815-1825). The inland tribes seem to have been held in check and the Shirāz government made no overt moves against the family's position. The period was also one of economic stability. For

25. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/1/part 2, 13 August, 1767. "The Tankseer (Tangistani) people and the Shaiks have commenced hostilities and three skirmishes have lately happened near Charcoatas (Chākhutān)."


27. Ibid., p. 255.
example, foreign trade more than doubled between 1817 and 1824.

The "era of peace" was upset in 1826 when the Imam of Muscat declared war on 'Abd al-Rasūl. This "mini war" was the start of a long, disastrous slide for the family which eventually ended in its permanent ouster from Būshire in 1850. In order to understand the events leading up to this war, Būshire's relations with the various shaykhs in the central and lower Gulf must be surveyed briefly.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Persian Gulf politics in large measure revolved around 'Omani efforts to establish a political hegemony in the region. Prior to the death of Karim Khān (1779), 'Omani ambitions had been partially checked by the equally ambitious designs of Karim Khān and his maritime Arab supporters. With the collapse of the Zands, the Arabs on the southern shore of the Gulf had to assume the counterweight role of checking 'Omani ambitions. By the 1780's, several Arab city-states had established themselves

28. For a detailed account of this effort, see Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf; Miles, The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf; Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf; and Landen, Oman Since 1856.
successfully on the southern shore of the Gulf and as Landen notes they "were ready to challenge 'Oman's domination over Gulf trade and maritime activity."

During the reign of Soltān ibn Ahmad (1793-1804), a concerted effort was made to establish an 'Omani maritime empire by seizing strategic points on both shores of the Gulf (for example, Bandar 'Abbās, which commands the Strait of Hormuz was acquired in 1794) and by holding the Gulf's more important islands (witness the siege of Kharg in the late 1790's and the Bahrein campaign between 1798-1802). Moreover, Soltān began to collect tolls on shipping entering or leaving the Gulf. These aggressive actions precipitated a maritime war which continued intermittently for the next two to three decades.

There also seems to have been an attempt to establish a loose axis between Muscat and Shīrāz. The leasing of Bandar 'Abbās brought the two governments into contact. This contact was expanded with the proposed Bahrein expedition at the turn of

29. Landen, Oman Since 1856, p. 25.
32. Landen's theory that the British unwittingly stumbled into this trade war is plausible. See Landen, Ibid., pp. 25-6.
the century, and in 1810, the Shiraz government sent troops to 'Oman to help contain the Wahabbi pressures. Finally, in the 1820's a marriage between the Imām and the Shiraz royal family was arranged. Although ties between the two governments were minimal at best, nevertheless, they were a threat to the Būshire government since they put pressure on Būshire on two fronts.

The Būshire shaykhs had always opposed 'Oman's expansionary efforts. They were Karim Khān's principal allies and had fought with the Khān against 'Oman in the 1770's. The fall of the Zands did not alter their antipathy toward 'Oman. If anything it accelerated the hostility, because the al-Muzkur could ill-afford to be threatened by an expanding 'Oman at the same time their relations with the plateau were undergoing such a profound change. The result was that the al-Muzkur either established or strengthened their ties with the shaykhdoms on the south shore of the Gulf.

Būshire's relations with the Utub of Bahrein were understandably cool in the years following the Utubi seizure of the island. Jones and Manesty in their 1791 trade report stated that there was little trade

between the two, a fact which suggests cool political relations as well. However, the "revolution" in diplomatic relations with Shiraz, as well as the 'Omani threat, necessitated a change in attitude toward Bahrein, although the change occurred very gradually. However, with his hinterland flank threatened, it was imperative for Nāṣir II to neutralize any danger from the sea.

As previously noted, the Utub helped in the counterrevolution of 1798, and both parties worked to forestall the joint Shīrazi/'Omani invasion of Bahrein in 1799. However, by 1802 the alliance, for reasons not entirely clear, became strained to the point of breaking. In fact, Nāṣir II reversed himself and supported Soltān in his efforts to subdue the island. Kelly states that he actually sailed with Soltān when he attacked Bahrein.34

Relations remained cool between the two parties for the next few years. In 1806, the resident noted that "...hostilities still exist between Būshire and the Utubi Arabs." However, this comment is the last indication of the existence political tensions between the two parties. Trade relations expanded

34. Kelly, Ibid., pp. 102-3.
between 1810 and 1820 and the in the 1820's and 30's, the Utub helped the Būshire shaykhs in their efforts to resist the increasing pressures of Shirāz.

Relations between the al-Muzkur and the Quwāsim were close and friendly except for occasional disagreements. The Quwāsim actively supported Shaykh Nāṣir I's efforts to recapture Bahrein in the mid-1780's and it may have been the Quwāsim who helped Shaykh Darvish during the exile years (1808-1811).

The Quwāsim also helped crush factions opposed to the ruling family in 1815. In the fall of that year (approximately nine months after the mainline family resumed power), there were disturbances in the town. At the time, Shaykh 'Abd al-Rasūl was away from the port and his uncle, Shaykh Muḥammad, was ruling in his place. Muḥammad sent a request for help to the Quwāsim who responded favorably. In November, a Quwāsimi fleet appeared in the harbor of Būshire and

35. For example, prior to December, 1805, there had been a falling out between the two. However, the resident recorded that in that month "thirty-two (Qawāsim) boats arrived in Būshire to make peace with Shaik Nāṣir." (Būshire Residency Records R/15/1/8, 29 December, 1805.)

36. As will be recalled, Darvish fled to the tribe "from whence the Saiks of Būshire had sprung".
assisted Shaykh Muḥammad in plundering "the quarter of the town in which the Behbaney tribe resided and who were inimical to Shiek Muhammad."\(^{37}\)

There were also other occasions in which the al-Muzkur and Quwāsim worked together. In an interview with the Quwāsim ambassador, one Soltān ibn Sughrur, Blane, then the EIC resident in Būshire, recorded the following conversation:

He (Soltān) then stated that the Joasmees (Quwāsim) had on several occasions acted as allies of the late Sheik of Būshire ('Abdal-Rasul), of which the instance in 1815 was well-known...\(^{38}\)

(Unfortunately, the context and timing of these other "allied" actions were not recorded.)

In 1826, a dispute between 'Oman and Būshire erupted which almost precipitated a general maritime war. The exact origins of the quarrel are unclear. According to Stannus, who was the resident at the time, Shaykh 'Abd al-Rasūl:

had made an attempt to supplant His Highness (the Imām) in the connection (marriage) which was under contemplation between him and the sister of the Prince.\(^{39}\)

37. *Bombay Political Consultations*, range 384, volume 1, 8 November, 1815, pp. 5066-7. It can be theorized that it may well have been this tribe and quarter of the town that supported Shaykh Khanum in the revolution of 1798.

38. *Būshire Residency Records*, R/15/1/58, 17 September, 1832

39. *Būshire Residency Records*, R/15/1/36, 14 April, 1826.
Wellstead gives credence to this idea, adding that the Shirāz government had hopes of confiscating 'Abd al-Rasūl's fortune by holding out "the lure of his marrying a daughter (not the sister) of the Prince." 40

The Fārsnāma presents a different account. According to it, the origin of the dispute lay in the court rivalries at Shirāz. 'Abd al-Rasūl had sided with one of Ḥusayn 'Ali Mirzā's wives, while the Imām had thrown his lot with a wife by the name of Hajīja. When 'Abd al-Rasūl lavishly escorted his patroness to Mecca, Hajīja's jealousy was aroused and she asked the Imām to seize 'Abd al-Rasūl on his return from the Holy City. As a reward for his efforts, she promised the Imām the hand of one of her daughters.

Subsequent events tend to support the Fārsnāma's version. It is possible, though, that 'Abd al-Rasūl may have attempted to prevent a marriage between the two royal families. Such a marriage would have formalized and accelerated the movement towards a Shirāz/Musat axis. However, whichever version is in fact more accurate, Kelly certainly is correct

40. Wellstead, Travels to the City of the Caliphs along the Shores of the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean, volume 2, pp. 133-36.
when he observes that:

the marriage...was designed, on Sa'id's part, to improve his relations with the Prince, which had become rather strained over the previous three or four years. It was also designed to help clear the way for a new attempt to conquer Bahrain. 41

By April, 1826, Sa'id was threatening to seize Kharg Island or Būshīrān itself, claiming that the invasion had the personal support of the Prince of Shirāz. 42 To placate Muscat, Shaykh Muḥammad, then acting Governor of the port, sent two merchants to the Imām in early June. That diplomatic initiative failed and by the end of July, the Imām had blockaded the port with two ships and a brig. The blockade, however, was selective: only those vessels and cargoes belonging to 'Abd al-Rasūl were seized. Other shipping and trade moved freely in and out of the port. 43


42. Būshīrān Residency Records, R/15/1/36, 14 April, 1826. Stannus reported that "the Prince of Shirāz had lately made overtures to him to invade the territories of the Shaik in conjunction with his troops." A few months later the Shirāz government offered to farm Būshīrān for 45,000 tomans a year. The Imām did not respond to the offer.

43. Būshīrān Residency Records, R/15/1/36, 22 June, and 31 July, 1826.
The blockade of Būshīre was a provocative act and threatened to precipitate a general maritime war in the central and southern Gulf. The EIC agent speculated that:

the virulent nature of the enmity between the two chieftains will, it is much to be feared, involve the whole Gulf in their mutual quarrel...The various tribes of Arabs on the Persian Coast between Keshm and Congoon are said to be impatiently waiting an invitation to engage on the side of the Imam, while overtures are reported to have been made by the Government here (Būshīre) for assistance from the Joassums (Quwāsim...)44

The dispute came to a climax in the fall of 1826 when 'Abd al-Rasūl was captured at sea on his return from Mecca. He was held by the Imām for almost a year and finally released upon the payment of a ransom of 80,000 German crowns.45

Two months after 'Abd al-Rasūl's capture (September, 1826) Būshīre was rocked by revolution. While preparing to defend Būshīre against an 'Omani onslaught, Shaykh Muḥammad invited Shaykh ʿAḥmad Khamis, a distant relative, back to the port. Shaykh ʿAḥmad had feuded with the ruling line of the family (although there are no records of the issues surrounding the dispute) and for several years had

44. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/36, 31 July, 1826.

45. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/145, 14 June, 1827.
been living in exile with the Bani Ka'b Arabs near Basra. 46

Once back in Bushire, Ahmad rapidly "endeared himself to all social classes. In the dependent Arab villages, the inhabitants have sworn to devote their lives to his (Ahmad's) service...", while the merchants of Bushire were hopeful of "relief from the Shaik's ('Abd al-Rasul) oppressive commercial policies." Once it was known that 'Abd al-Rasul was in the hands of the Imam, support for Shaykh Muhammad and 'Abd al-Rasul's son, Shaykh Nasir III, rapidly evaporated. The mid-November revolution occurred "without the slightest disturbance." 47

Ahmad ruled for slightly less than three months. In early February, 1827, the Prince of Shiraz was reported to be on his way to Bushire. Ahmad, apparently concerned about the loyalty of his new political subjects, demanded that the surrounding tribes send hostages to Kharg Island "as pledges of their fidelity on the approach of the Prince." When

46. The fact that Ahmad was living with the Ka'b indicates that tension between these two tribes had not abated since the eighteenth century.

47. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/40, 18 November, 1826. Ahmad may have actually been encouraged by 'Oman. Stannus reported that he was a good friend of the Imam. (7 February, 1827.)
Ahmad's plan became public, his would be supporters deserted him and staged a countercoup. The coup was led by Shaykh Husayn, 'Abd al-Rasūl's brother and supported by most of the neighboring tribes. Ten days later the Prince of Shiraz arrived in Būshire and appointed his son, Nūshirwan Mirza, as temporary governor. Nūshirwan ruled until early summer when 'Abd al-Rasūl returned to the port.

The events of 1826-27 signalled a turning point in Būshire's political life. From this point onward, the al-Muzkur family fought a defensive battle for control of Būshire's political and economic life. Moreover, after 1826 the Shiraz government actively began to intervene in the political affairs of Būshire. The "avoidance" policy which had served the family reasonably well for three decades failed to stem this growing tide of intervention.

The revolution of 1826-7 also reopened family divisions and splits. This problem had first surfaced in 1798 and then again after the death of Nāṣir II in 1807. For the next two decades, the mainline family successfully suppressed these divisions, apparently forcing dissenters into exile. However, the splits reemerged in 1826 with complicating problems being added to the original division. First, Shaykh Ahmad was supported by the
khâns of Tangistân. This is the first indication that an inland tribe was openly siding with one faction of the family. Tangistân was a threat to a united Bûshire, but the threat was even more ominous if the Tangistânîs could take advantage of a factionalized family.

Secondly, the 1826-7 events suggest that the family divisions had become embroiled in the larger issue of social dissatisfaction. In the revolution of 1798, there is no concrete evidence that Shaykh Khanum was supported by any segment of Bûshire's population. The Shaykh's support came from outside sources. By the same token, Shaykh Khanum was unable to challenge the position of the mainline family in 1807 because he could not muster enough outside support and virtually none at all from within Bûshire.

The revolution of 1826 was different. Shaykh Ahmad was carried into office by peasants and merchants from in and around Bûshire who were extremely dissatisfied with 'Abd al-Rasûl's harsh rule. As far as it is possible to determine, the revolution was generated entirely from within Bûshire and indicates a clear loss of support for the family by various segments of Bûshire's population. Moreover, the relative ease with which Bûshire was
sacked in 1828 (an event which will be described shortly) demonstrated that 'Abd al-Rasūl's reinstatement had done little to mitigate these intra-city tensions.

The next two decades of Būshire's political history are a tangle of revolution, counterrevolution, invasion by inland forces, and maritime blockades. Therefore, only the more important events of the period will be highlighted.

In January, 1828, 'Abd al-Rasūl approached the East India Company resident in Būshire with a proposal that Būshire and its territorial dependencies "should from hence forward be considered as belonging to (the East India Company) and be looked on by it (the Company) as one of its dependents." The proposal was politely rejected. In his report on the approach, the resident suggested that the reason "'Abd al-Rasūl made such a proposal was because of the conflict between Russia and Iran (i.e. the second Russo-Iranian war) and its uncertain outcome."48

The real reason for 'Abd al-Rasūl's proposal, however, probably could be found closer to home. First, the family had been weakened by internal

48. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/42, 8 January, 1828.
strife and a loss of support from the local population. Secondly, both Tangistān and Shīrāz had shown a revived interest in intervening directly in the affairs of Būshire. Thirdly, the Imam of Muscat finally had married a member of the Shīrāz royal family and had been offered the Būshire government in 1826. Moreover, in 1828 the Imam made another attempt to retake Bahrein. All of these factors pointed to a simple truth: the al-Muzkur were vulnerable politically. They needed an ally, a protector. The EIC could have filled that role had it chosen to do so.

'Abd al-Rasūl was accurate in his assessment of his political vulnerability. In November, 1828, Riza Quli Mirza and Timur Mirza, sons of Hajija, led an army to Būshire composed of troops from Dashtistān, Tangistān, Dashti, as well as troops from Shīrāz. They sacked and pillaged the town, and after two days of looting, the troops withdrew. 'Abd al-Rasūl, who had fled to his ships, then returned to

49. When "Sheikh 'Abd-or-Rasūl Khān was released from prison at Musqat and returned to Būshire, he insulted Hajiya in harsh words without regard to Riza Quli Mirza and Timur Mirza...Then in the year 1246 (1830/31--this date is inaccurate) Timur Mirza entered into an agreement with the Khāns of Dashtistān...They laid siege to Būshire with several thousand musketeers." (Fārsnāma, pp. 203-04.)
the port.\textsuperscript{50}

For the next three years (1829-1831), 'Abd al-Rasūl ruled unmolested. During this period he cultivated the friendship of the Prince of Shīrāz and was able to expand the territory under al-Muzkur control. By the end of 1831, though, the Prince of Shīrāz was again in Būshire "to squeeze the Shaik for more money" or "to place one of his sons as governor of Būshire.\textsuperscript{51} 'Abd al-Rasūl was able to forestall that possibility by increasing his tax payments to 20,000 tomans a year. The Shaykh then paid a return visit to Shīrāz in early January, 1832. On the return journey to Būshire, he was murdered at Borāzjān by several prominent individuals from Tangistān and Dashtistān "who all were longing to revenge the blood of their tribes.\textsuperscript{52} ('Abd al-Rasūl had executed several participants of the 1828 sack of Būshire after they had been delivered to him by the Prince of Shīrāz.)

'Abd al-Rasūl was succeeded by his son, Nāṣir

\textsuperscript{50} Lorimer makes no mention of the sack of Būshire. He merely states that at the end of 1828, Abd al-Rasūl was "displeased by Timūr Mirzā." This statement is incorrect.

\textsuperscript{51} Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/58, no exact date given.

\textsuperscript{52} Faršnāma, p. 211.
III. Naşir's control over the town at best was tenuous and by mid-summer, 1832, Rizâ Qulî Mirzâ (one of Hajîja's sons) had expelled the young Shaykh and was appointed governor of Bushire by his father, the Prince of Shiraz. Naşir responded with a blockade (supported by the Qawâsim, Utubi and Kuwaiti Arabs) which rapidly brought trade to a standstill. However, as in other previous cases, the blockade was an instrument ill-suited for removing the occupying force and by the end of the year, Naşir was reported to have lifted the siege and sailed to Kuwait.

The revolutions, raids and political upheavals of 1779, 1798, 1826/27, 1828, and 1832 offer some interesting comparisons and contrasts. In the first three instances, Bushire was, of course, occupied by forces other than the mainline family. However, in each case, there was a localized counterreaction and the mainline family was able to regain control of Bushire through its own actions. It was different, however, in 1828 and 1832. In 1828 the Shiráz-led troops withdrew on their own account. Moreover, 'Abd al-Rasûl was unable to take the offensive and invade Dashtistân and Tangistân in order to punish the offenders. 'Abd al-Rasûl's action was a marked contrast from that of his grandfather's (Naşir I) following the 1779 Tangistâni raid. The 1832 ouster
of the family also produced no counterreaction which supported the family.

Secondly, the time span between upheavals became more compressed beginning with the 1826/27 problem. This development was a reflection of 'Abd al-Rasūl's gradually weakening political status.

Finally the inland tribes led by the khāns of Tangistān were involved in virtually all of the raids against Būshire. For example, in 1767, Būshire was defended by the inhabitants of the town and by Arabs tribes such as the Babarum, Bani Hajir and Damukh who lived north and west of Būshire. The attacking forces were drawn from Tangistān and Dashtistān.

Although the alliances did fluctuate, the general pattern of political allegiance which was revealed in 1767 remained remarkably stable over time. The only major change of note was that khān of Dashti moved closer and closer to the al-Muzkur.

The 1830's, however, witnessed an ironic development. As Shirāz became more embroiled in Būshire's political life, the al-Muzkur's habitual enemies in Tangistān and Dashistān became the arbitrators of its political fate. Without the support of the inland tribes, the al-Muzkur were hard pressed to defend their political position.
There were several political upheavals in Būshire in 1833. In April, a close political advisor of the al-Muzkur, Aghā Jamil KHān, engineered a coup against Rīza Quṭī. The coup owed much of its success to the fact that it was supported by the khāns of Dashtī and Tangistān.

The aid rendered by the khān of Dashtī is understandable. Dashtī had supported the al-Muzkur as far back as the Tangistānī raid of 1779. Moreover, Jamil KHān had economic interests in Dashtī (he owned over 1500 camels there which were used in the grain trade) and thus must have had a close political relationship with the Khān of Dashtī, Haydar KHān.

Rīza Quṭī's harsh tax policies were the primary factor which moved the Tangistānis to side with their habitual enemy. Moreover, Rīza Quṭī seems to have taken the attitude that his rule was not restricted to Būshire; rather Būshire was to be the principal administrative center for the central lowlands. Although Tangistānis apparently recognized the dangerous implications of Rīza Quṭī's attitude on this occasion, over the long run, they failed to develop a consistent policy to counter it.

Aghā Jamil's spring success was short-lived. He was unable to keep his two allies focused on the dangers from the plateau and on August 1, 1833, the
khan of Dashti murdered his Tangistani counterpart because he was "jealous" of the Tangistani's power.\textsuperscript{53} Riza Quli quickly regrouped his forces and by August 20 was back in Boshire. Although the Qajar princes continued to control Boshire, political order was not restored. Eleven months later the resident commented that "the posture of affairs at Boshire affords little hope of long exemption from the renewal of anarchy."\textsuperscript{54}

In January, 1835, Shaykh Nasir III, supported by Shaykh Sabah of Kuwait, attempted to impose another blockade on the port; like its predecessors, it too ended in failure. The Qajar position, though, in Boshire was far from secure by this time. Following his return to Boshire in August of 1833, Riza Quli was able to reconstruct the old alliance with the khans of Dashtistan and Tangistan. He and his brother Timur also were able to cajole (through carrot and stick devices) the khans of the Rohilla and Shubankara normally supporters of the al-Muzkur, into the same alliance. This power configuration was unstable and began to crack in January of 1835. There were several reasons for the unraveling of the

\textsuperscript{53} Lorimer, volume 1, part II, pp. 1918-19.

\textsuperscript{54} Boshire Residency Records, R/15/1/65, 1 July, 1834.
Shiraz government's position. The Prince of Shiraz made an ill-fated attempt to challenge Muhammad Shāh's claim to the throne following the death of Fath 'Ali Shāh in 1834. While the outcome remained uncertain in January of 1835, the Prince of Shiraz's fortunes were dissipating. Secondly, by the spring of 1835, the khān of Tangistān was embroiled in intra-tribal disputes. He was not in a position to defend his Qājār allies.

In January, 1835, the khāns of Rohilla and Shubankara cast off their nominal allegiance to the Qājārs by declaring war on Haji Muhammad Khān of Borāzjān, "whose affairs owing to a division in his own tribe are at present in a very embarrassed and critical situation."55 By March, the Qājār representative in Būshire, Mirzā 'Ali Khān, found that "a general combination had been entered into by chiefs of Dashtistān to put Shaik Nāṣir back into power."56 Mirzā 'Ali fled once it became apparent that Baqir Khān of Tangistān would not be able to support him because of internal tribal squabbles in Tangistān, and on March 6, Shaykh Sadun, Nāṣir's III


56. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/67, 6 March, 1835.
uncle, entered Būshīre in preparation for Nāṣīr's arrival from the Dashtī port of Kangān.

For the next two years (1835-7), the new Shirāz government made no attempt to disturb al-Muzkur rule. Wellstead believes that the main reason for the return to al-Muzkur rule was because "it was found that they (the al-Muzkur) were better adopted for collecting and paying the revenue than the Persians." 57 However, by early fall of 1837, Shirāz was again threatening to remove the al-Muzkur because of their failure to pay back taxes. Nāṣīr III tried to negotiate with Shirāz; however, this ploy failed and on November 1, 1837, a Mirzā Muḥammad Rīzā arrived in Būshīre, supported by the Tangistānis and what remained of the Damukh. Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh, Nāṣīr's uncle and acting governor, considered putting up resistance by trying to enlist the support of the Bani Hajar of Rohilla. However, the Bani Hajar were unwilling to heed the call. 58 At this point, however, for reasons which are not clear, Shirāz reversed itself and reappointed Nāṣīr.


58. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/72, 9 November, 1837.
Nāšir's reprise was short-lived. By May, it was obvious that he was unable to meet his tax obligation and Mirzā 'Abbās was appointed governor. When the new governor approached the town, Nāšir fled to Kharg Island without resisting.

The ten years between 1828 and 1838 were a watershed decade for the al-Ḥuzur. First by 1838, it was plain that the al-Muzkur were incapable of defending Būshire. They were not able to rally the townfolk or many of the once loyal tribes (such as the Damukh) who inhabited the surrounding districts. For example in the fall of 1828, it was rumored that the Imām of Muscat was planning to attack the port. Shaykh 'Abd al-Rasūl was able to assemble only five hundred men from the outlying areas to defend both Kharg Island and Būshire. Those who stayed in Būshire were "distributed in the different towers connected with the defenses of the town, the inhabitants being no longer as formerly entrusted with their charge..."59 The call for support in 1837 has already been noted.

Secondly, during this decade, the inland tribes of Dashtistān and Tangistān played an increasingly

59. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/47, 3 September, 1828.
decisive role in the political life of Būshīre. These tribes participated in the sack of Būshīre in 1828; they were intimately involved in the upheavals in 1833 and 1835, and they were ready to support another Shirāz appointed governor in 1837. Ironically, although the tribes in the past had been viewed as enemies, in the 1830's, the al-Muzkur had to depend on them to maintain their independence vis-a-vis Shirāz. When an alliance between the al-Muzkur and Dashtistān and/or Tangistān failed to materialize (in 1838 for example), the al-Muzkur were powerless to stop Shirāz. As early as 1828, therefore, the khāns of Tangistān and Dashtistān had become the true arbitrators of Būshīre's political destiny.

The decade from 1828 to 1838 also demonstrates the importance of the alliance between Būshīre and the various shaykhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula. The presence of the Prince of Shirāz in Būshīre for an extended period of time in the 1830's was viewed as a threatening development. There was a general fear among Arab shaykhs that the Persians would build a naval force and "endanger" all of the Gulf. In particular, the Utub of Bahrein were concerned that the Shirāz government would use Būshīre as a base for
an expedition against the island. As long as the al-Muzkur family remained in power, they acted as a buffer for the south shore. In essence, the al-Muzkur provided "free protection" for shaykhdoms like Bahrein.

The importance which the shaykhdoms of the Arabian Peninsula attached to the survival of the al-Muzkur was demonstrated by their support for the two blockades in the 1830's. These blockades challenged the Shiraz government and can be considered to have been open acts of war.

The same general political pattern was repeated in the period from 1838 to 1850 as in the previous decade with Shiraz appointed governors controlling the town with the support of the khans of Tangistan.

60. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/42, 24 January, 1833. It should be remembered that British policy had not yet evolved to the point that Great Britain was willing to enforce a "perpetual peace" in the Gulf. Therefore, it was possible at this date for Shiraz to try to expand in the Gulf if it had had the capacity and the will (which, of course, it did not possess.)

61. Lorimer has argued--inaccurately--that the reason the Qawāsim supported the 1832 blockade was because they wanted to plunder the "mercantile inhabitants" (volume 1, part 2, p. 1918). He based his judgment on the fact that the Qawāsim arrived at Bushire in November "a few days after (Abd al-Rasūl) had discontinued his blockade." In actuality, the Qawāsim arrived in September, 1832 and the blockade was not lifted until December, 1832 or January, 1833.
and Dashtistān only to find themselves suddenly ousted by a hostile combination of the once supportive lowland forces. There were two factors, though, that became increasingly important during this period. First, the 1840's saw the ascendancy of Tangistān over Dashtistān. The increasing dominance of Tangistān resulted in a much closer relationship between Būshire and Dashti.

Secondly, the al-Muzkur's financial situation began to deteriorate seriously in the face of the al-Muzkur's inability to meet their tax obligations to Shirāz. Other instances which involved tax disputes, such as 1756, 1767, or the early 1830's, centered on the issue of how much to pay. In 1838 a new dimension to the problem seems to have been added i.e. the absolute inability to pay taxes. Several factors were responsible for this serious problem, including the declining volume of trade passing through Būshire, increased tax burdens, a reduction of territory under the direct control of Būshire, crop failures (for example in 1838) and the unwillingness of the merchant community to extend credit to the family.

As indicated in May of 1838 Shaykh Naṣir III abandoned Būshire on the approach of Mirzā 'Abbās. According to the resident, there was no panic in the
town which suggested that the Shiráz appointee may have been actually welcomed. Moreover, Mirzâ 'Abbás made an important gesture to the local population when he decided not to garrison troops in the port. However, he did order an embargo of all exports of rice and wheat from Bûshire which sent ripples of discontent through the merchant community. Matters came to a head in November, 1838, when Mirzâ 'Abbás attempted to charge customs on goods which the merchant community claimed had already been taxed by Shaykh Nâşir before he fled. By mid-December Mirzâ 'Abbás had been replaced, following a "merchant march" on Shiráz to lay the case before the Shiráz government.

The new governor was Mirzâ Assâd. During his six month tenure in Bûshire, he quarreled with the British and Bâqîr Khân of Tangistân. The Khân moved his forces toward Bûshire at the end of January,

---

62. Secret Letters and Enclosures from Persia, L/P and S/9, volume 62, 26 October, 1838. Nine months later there were approximately 150 regular troops and 25 artillerymen in Bûshire who had a devastating impact, according to the resident. They received no food or pay and as a result were "robbing the inhabitants with a degree of daring and impunity hitherto unexampled in Bûshire." Bûshire Residency Records, R/15/1/71, 25 May, 1839.

63. Bûshire Residency Records, R/15/1/76, 22 November and 12 December, 1838.
1839, but at that point made no attempt to force the issue and remove Mirza Assad.

In the meantime relations between the British and the Persians deteriorated following Muhammad Shah's attack on Herat. The fallout from the attack eventually reached Bushire in the spring of 1839 with the result that the British left Bushire and retired to Kharg Island. By May, the British resident had entered into a secret correspondence with Baqir Khan and others and in June, 1839, Mirza Assad's position had become so untenable that Shiraz was compelled to appoint yet another new governor, Mirza Muhammad Husayn, who was a nephew of the Mirza Ahmad Khan, the vizir of Fars province. A month later Mirza Ahmad fell from grace and his nephew was thrown out of Bushire in August by Shaykh Husayn, the uncle Shaykh Nasir III. According to the resident, Baqir Khan of Tangistan was the key to the al-Muzkur's success. However, the political cycle repeated itself again and by December, 1839, the al-Muzkur fled yet again and Shirazi troops once again reentered the town.

For the next five years Bushire was governed

---

64. For a succinct account of this broader issue see M. Yapp, Strategies of British India, chapter 4.

65. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/80, part 2, 26 August, 1839.
primarily by appointees from Shiraz, although for a short period of time in 1844 one of Nasir's uncles was the acting governor. The following year (1845), though, Shaykh Nasir III was reappointed governor of Bushire.

Nasir's hold on power was tenuous. For one thing, his relations with Baqir Khan deteriorated and in 1848 degenerated into outright hostilities. By that time, Baqir had become the dominant force in the region. The principal city in Dashtistan, Borazjan had come under his authority in 1845, as had districts such as Shubaukara, Angoli and Zirukh. The district of Ruhilla may have also have fallen under Baqir Khan's sway sometime later. The tribes in Shubaukara and Ruhilla for years had been important allies of the al-Muzkur.

Nasir confronted a second problem: the Shiraz government demanded ever increasing tax revenues. In fact in 1848 and 1849 Shiraz almost deposed Nasir because he was delinquent in his tax payments, an issue which will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

66. In 1849, the resident reported that hostilities had broken out between the Bani Hajir tribe of Rudhill and the Damukh. Baqir Khan supported the Bani Hajir. (Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/117, p. 349.)
Finally, the merchant class turned on the family because Nāṣir tried to extort revenue from them in an attempt to raise tax revenues. This oppression led to open dissatisfaction with the family. By 1849, the malik-e-tujjar of Būshire had become aligned with the Qavām family of Shīrāz and was openly intriguing against the al-Muzkur. (Merchant/al-Muzkur relations will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.)

Nāṣir’s final fall came in September, 1850. The year had started well for the Shaykh. He had survived a challenge to his rule in 1849 and in January, 1850, he had received a robe of honor from the Shīrāz government. However, the problem of taxes reemerged almost immediately thereafter. Nāṣir simply was not able to pay the taxes demanded of him, and in the late summer of 1850, the Shīrāz government apparently made a final decision to oust the family from Būshire. Nāṣir was, therefore, summoned to Shīrāz and "upon his arrival in Shīrāz, he was sent to Tehrān. The governorship of Būshire, its dependences, and Dashtistān was entrusted to


68. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/121, January, 1850.
Mīrzā 'Alī Khān, son of...Qavām ol-Molk."69
Shaykh Ḥusayn, who was still in Būshīre, prepared to resist the new appointment. However, he discovered that there was no local support for the al-Muzkur cause and that resistance would be futile. According to the Fārsnāma, Ḥusayn "took the money of the custom house, went with his family on board ship; and sailed for Basra."70 The next day Mīrzā 'Alī entered Būshīre.

The al-Muzkur never again challenged the Shīrāz government. Persian control of Iran's most important port was firmly established and a breach had now been made in the Arab "wall" of port-city rulers. From Būshīre, the Persian government gradually extended its direct control up and down the coast. In many cases, Persian administrators replaced local shaykhs and khāns. One by one, the small shaykhdoms on the northern littoral fell under the more direct control of Shīrāz and its local elite. The fall of the al-Muzkur family of Būshīre was the beginning of a process which only ended in 1925 when all of the northern littoral passed firmly into the hands of the centralized plateau government.

69. Fārsnāma, p. 294.
70. Ibid., p. 295.
CHAPTER V

Būshire and the Trade of the Persian Gulf

In his book, *The Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides recounted the debate over defense strategies which took place in Syracuse in the months prior to the launching of the ill-conceived Athenian attack on that city-state. During the course of those debates, Hermocrates, a leading citizen of Syracuse, was reported to have encouraged his compatriots to enter into an alliance with Carthage because:

They could give us more assistance than any other existing power, if they choose. They have the greater reserves of gold and silver, which are the sinews of war and of everything else.

In a single sentence, Hermocrates captured the essence of the critical relationship that exists between a nation's economy and its national security. An abundance of gold or silver (or in modern economic parlance "a strong, productive economy") is vital to a nation's security posture. What was true for the Hellenic international system was no less true for the nineteenth century shaykhdoms of the Persian Gulf, including Būshire. A financial and economic base was necessary to survive the rough and tumble world of Gulf politics in that
era. Yet, for the shaykhs of Būshire that "productive" economic base gradually deteriorated beginning about 1800. Moreover, the inability of the Būshire shaykhs to have "ready money" at their disposal lead to rash political decisions and repression which eventually alienated a key segment in Būshire's society, the merchants.

The political impact of this economic decline for the shaykhs of Būshire has already been sketched out briefly in Chapter 1. The argument postulates that over the course of the nineteenth century, the revenues of the shaykhs of Būshire shrank, while their expenditures for protection payments (taxes) to the Shīrāz government increased dramatically. With decreasing revenues the shaykhs of Būshire were unable to maintain the loyalty of tribal levies or continue to buy-off the Shīrāz government. In turn, the politico-military decline encouraged further economic decline.

Several factors were responsible for the decline in al-Muzkur revenues. One of the most important was--ironically--an increase in the volume of overseas trade. Starting in the late eighteenth century, trade between the Iranian heartland and India began to expand. Surplus wealth became increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small
number of merchant families who resided principally—but not exclusively—in Shīrāz and India. The most important result of this expansion of trade and subsequent concentration of wealth was that it helped to facilitate the transformation of the economy of southern Iran from one that was characterized by subsistence agriculture to one oriented to the export of cash crops. This transformation occurred in two stages: in the first stage, horse and grain exports predominated. Beginning in the 1860's, however, opium became the principal cash crop export. Related to this overall transformation of the economy was the transformation of the Persian Gulf bandar (port city) from a port-of-call to a port-of-transit.

These changes had a direct impact on the economic and hence political fortunes of the al-Muzkur. For example, the expansion of trade lead to the economic revival of other port cities which in turn eventually cut into Būshīre's customs revenues. Competition with the khāns of Tangistān and Dashtistān for control over grain producing regions in the interior of the Garm sir intensified. Moreover, the merchant community of Būshīre became increasingly estranged from the al-Muzkur, resulting in a cut-off of an important source of financial credit for the family.
The remainder of this chapter will analyze the growth of trade. Subsequent chapters will examine the transformation of the bandar from port-of-call to port-of-trade and the merchant/al-Muzkur relationship. A final chapter will examine the decline of the al-Muzkur's income.

The Growth of Trade. Prior to 1789 there are almost no statistics which provide even a rough approximation of the total imports or exports for Būshire. Those figures that are available refer only to the trade of the East India Company (EIC) or the Persian Gulf/Arabian Peninsula region as a whole. For example, in 1776 David Scott, agent for the Commercial Society of Merchants at Calcutta, estimated that "Bombay drew from the Gulphs from 20 to 30 lacs (of rupees) annually",¹ while in that same year John Beaumont, EIC agent in Būshire, calculated that the Company could sale 675 bales of cloth in the Iranian market.²

1. David Scott, L/Mar/c/892, 28 April, 1776. The term "gulphs" refers to the Persian Gulf proper and the area from Socotra Island to Mocha and perhaps Jeddah. In the eighteenth century, the EIC referred to this body of water as the Arabian Gulf.

2. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/2, 1776. Beaumont's estimate turned out to be about three and a half times too high.
The first "comprehensive" estimate of Bushire's total imports was made in 1788 and 1789 by Charles Watkins, then EIC resident in Bushire. Watkins had been asked to write a report detailing the trade at Bushire by the Basra residents, Samuel Manesty and Harford Jones. In his memorandum, Watkins prepared a series of tables which listed the type, quantity, medium price, and origin of imported goods sold in the bazaars of Bushire. Using the Watkins figures, it can be calculated that Bushire's imports in the late 1780's amounted to 13,56,075 rajee rupees or approximately 11,37,062.5 Bombay rupees.3

Until 1799, there are no additional import/export statistics for Bushire. From various comments made by EIC staff, however, it appears that trade in the Persian Gulf may have declined or remained stationary.

---

3. The rajee rupee was actually an "imaginary" accounting figure used by the Bushire merchants. In 1803, it equaled five mahmoodies (Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/6, 10 May, 1803) and was considered invariable.
between 1790-95. The fall of the Zand dynasty and the transition to a new dynasty would account for some, if not all, of this stagnation.

Five separate estimates of various aspects of Iran's foreign trade were made between 1799 and 1811. The Maister/Fawcett report of 1799 put total imports of Indian (non-European) goods at 23,00,000 Bombay rupees and Persian exports to India at 9,60,000. Most of those imports and exports would have passed through Bushire.

The Malcolm study of 1800 estimated the total Persian Gulf trade at one core and 60 lacs of Bombay rupees (1,60,00,000). Imports of Indian goods

---

4. For example, "the trade to the Gulphs of Persia and Arabia is again reviving and I understand from good authority that the Arab merchants have derived a handsome profit by their speculations from hence (Calcutta) during the last season." (Report on Private Trade of Bullion and Merchandise, T. Brown, reporter of external commerce, 15 August, 1796, Bengal Commercial Records, range 174, Volume 13.) Maister and Fawcett, writing from Bombay in 1799, claim that between 1795-98 exports from India to the Persian Gulf and Red Sea increased considerably from previous years.


6. Writing a year later (1800) Sir John Malcolm noted that "the trade with India is chiefly confined to Abushehr (Bushire)," (Report on the Trade of Persia, Factory Records, G/29/22, 26 February, 1800.)
(exclusive of EIC sales) into Iran were place at twenty lacs (20,00,000) of which 17-1/2 lacs (17,50,000) passed through Būshire or 87.5% of the total trade. Malcolm assumed that the export of specie and merchandise balanced the import bill. Moreover, he felt that the trade with India was underestimated rather than overestimated. 7

In 1802, Scott Waring estimated total exports to India at 12,00,000 Bombay rupees 8 which would also give a minimum import figure of 12,00,000. In light of the previous calculations, the Waring estimate is probably low. Seven years later (1809), William Bruce, resident at Būshire, calculated that 30 to 40 lacs of specie were exported annually from Būshire to India in return for an equivalent amount of Indian merchandise. 9 Bruce did not include Persian

7. Ibid, 26 February, 1800. A year later Malcolm revised his figures upward: 26,00,000 for Indian goods, 30,00,000 for Indian and EIC goods combined.


9. Factory Records, G/29/30. 1 April, 1809, p. 132. Bruce's figures are very closely correlated to those of Morier's who remarked, "Persia exports yearly three hundred and fifty thousands tomauns in specie to India (J. Morier, A Journey through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople in the years 1808 and 1809, p. 239.) Using an 1803 exchange rate of one toman equals 10.5 Bombay rupees, total exports would have amounted to 36.7 lacs of rupees.
commodity exports in his estimate. Finally, Kinnier stated that the Būshire government received a lac of piasters in customs duties which would put the total volume of trade (imports and exports) somewhere between 13.8 and 22.2 lacks of Bombay rupees.¹⁰

If Waring and Kinnier are correct, the general impression would be that trade between Būshire and India essentially plateaued between 1789 and 1811 or at best showed only a slight increase. On the other hand, if the Maister/Fawcett, Malcolm, and Bruce figures are accepted, the period between 1789 and 1811 would be characterized by a steady expansion of trade and commerce. This author is inclined to accept the latter view. The expansion of credit in Būshire between 1799 and 1803, the movement of Persian merchants to India and the increase in shipping activity are all facts which point to a lively commercial life and will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters. Admittedly, there

¹⁰ J.M. Kinnier, A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire, p. 70. The calculation is very rough. It is based on the assumption that import duties at Būshire averaged three to four percent and that export duties were almost non-existent. It also uses an 1812 exchange rate of 1.5 to 1.8 piasters equals one Bombay rupee. At the very best these figures can only suggest parameters or an order of magnitude of trade.
were gluts and recessions in the Būshire market, particularly for EIC woollens. However, the EIC was not Būshire's major trading partner. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that EIC economic difficulties provide a mirror image of the state of trade in the port.

Beginning in late 1816, the British resident in Būshire made a sustained effort to monitor the imports and exports of Būshire (see Table 1). Statistics for the years 1816-1822 are limited to goods shipped on British flag vessels. However for the years 1823, 1829/30, 1832/33 and 1833/34, figures do include Persian and British shipping. Writing in 1824, Colonel Stannus, the resident in Būshire, commented "that goods have been imported to an equal extent during former years in native vessels."¹¹ By 1825, though, Stannus felt that "the trade of Bushire appears to be gradually on the decline",¹²

¹¹. Stannus to Henry Willock, Charge de Affairs, Tehran, L/P and S/9, volume 37, 3 June, 1824. Seven years earlier, William Bruce had written that, "The imports and exports by foreign bottoms, that is Arab Vessels, may fairly be estimated at one third of the whole by British shipping." (Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/20, 18 February, 1817.) The apparent contradiction may be explained by the fact that in 1817 the Qawāsim pirate threat still loomed large over the Gulf and Arab shippers were more vulnerable to that threat than was the British Navy.

¹². Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/33, 30 April, 1825.
TABLE 5.1

Total Imports and Exports through Bushire 1816-1823\(^1\)
(British Bottoms Only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Imports</th>
<th>Total Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>36,81,415</td>
<td>6,00,309,2(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>30,03,947</td>
<td>29,27,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>32,06,085,3</td>
<td>36,77,313,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>66,52,274</td>
<td>36,97,449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>54,35,711</td>
<td>35,54,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>77,69,538</td>
<td>24,94,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>31,15,806(^2)</td>
<td>26,85,056(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(89,27,636(^2))</td>
<td>(47,32,986(^2))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Imports and Exports through Bushire 1829-30, 1832-34\(^4\)
(British and Persian Bottoms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Imports</th>
<th>Total Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1829-30</td>
<td>106,78,611</td>
<td>40,85,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832-33</td>
<td>52,45,856</td>
<td>24,93,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833-34</td>
<td>17,79,733</td>
<td>8,74,132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES:

1. Figures are in Persian Rupees.
2. Figures in parenthesis represent totals obtained from the Bushire customs house.
3. Figure represents information obtained between October 25, 1816 and December 31, 1816.
4. Dates are from August to July, thus August 1829 to July 1830.
a view to which he adhered a year later.\textsuperscript{13} Trade figures from the year 1829/30 do not substantiate Stannus' mid-decade assessment. The sharp decline in Būshire's trade started in 1832/33.

There are no trade statistics for Būshire during the rest of 1830's and early 1840's.\textsuperscript{14} However, total imports and exports passing through Būshire probably fell, since there were severe political disturbances in the town during that time period. Trade, however, between Iran and India continued to expand during the 1830's and 40's as Table 2 indicates. While it is true that Būshire's portion of the India trade may have declined, there is ample evidence that suggests that ports such as Bandar 'Abbās and Moḩammera were able to absorb the

\textsuperscript{13} Būshire Residency Records, R/25/1/40, 7 August, 1826. It is not clear precisely why Stannus felt that trade was entering a decline. In April, 1826, he had written to India that imports in 1825/26 had actually exceeded the previous year by Persian rupees 7,43,822. Perhaps an answer might be found in Stannus' observation that demand for English manufactured chintzes and broad cloth is "by no means so great as before." (R/15/1/40, 7 August, 1826.)--the assumption being that if demand for English goods was falling, so was demand in general.

\textsuperscript{14} In 1849-50, Abbott estimated imports at Būshire from India and Java at L500,000 to 600,000 and exports including species at L400,000 to 480,000 (P.O. 60/165, quoted in C. Issawi, \textit{Economic History of Iran}.)

TABLE 5.2

Imports and Exports between the Persian Gulf area and Bombay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1835-36</th>
<th>1836-37</th>
<th>1837-38</th>
<th>1838-39</th>
<th>1839-40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imports</td>
<td>38,67,586</td>
<td>35,00,241</td>
<td>37,33,125</td>
<td>24,13,961</td>
<td>28,60,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exports</td>
<td>40,03,835</td>
<td>35,59,589</td>
<td>36,02,274</td>
<td>29,97,490</td>
<td>28,95,719</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE:

1. Figures are in Bombay rupees. Figures do not include the rest of India (i.e. Calcutta and Madras).
difference. Finally, Pelly estimated that "between 1845 and 1865 trade (with India) quintupled itself."\(^{15}\)

**The Structure of Trade.** A wide variety of goods were imported into and exported from southern Iran. In the late eighteenth century Bushire's imports came from several of locales: (1) from India—chintzes from Coromandel and Masuliptan, piece goods from Bengal, Surat, Gujarat and Malabar; indigo, rice, spices, leather, sugar and sugar candy, coir, wooden planks (for home and boat construction) shawls, and cotton cloths and yarn, (2) from the Red Sea (via Muscat)—coffee, (3) from Europe (via Bombay)—woollens, cloth, iron, steel, tin, and lead, and (4) elsewhere—chinaware (from China) and sugar (from China and Java).

India was by far southern Iran's most important trading partner beginning in the late 1700's. Moreover, it was locally (Indian) produced goods which made up the bulk of the imports passing through Bushire. The Watkins figures (1789), for example, reveal that at least 68% of all imports were of Indian

\(^{15}\) Secret Letters Received (Various), L/P and S/9, volume 16, 23 April, 1870, p. 80.
manufacture or Indian produce. European manufactures made up about 3.5% of total Iranian imports through Bushire at that time.

Surprisingly, in the late eighteenth century, the Western Coast of India (including Bombay) was not Bushire's most important trading partner. "From Bombay and the Western side of India, the trade is not very great." Ten years later (1799), the Maister and Fawcett Report noted that

"with respect to the former state of the trade we find that there has been for many years so very little intercourse (with Persia) immediately from this port (Bombay) of India, that the oldest merchant could give us no information on the subject." It was only in the latter half of the nineteenth century that Bombay became the most important Indian port trading with Bushire.

Musulipatan was by far the most important region in India with which Bushire traded at this time. Its

16. This figure is probably higher because none of the imports from Muscat were included, although most of the goods imported from Muscat originally came from India.


dominating position was a relatively late
development, as Watkins noted.

"With regard to the trade of this place
(Būshire) from India it is from the best
information that I can obtain increased
of late years which is owing chiefly to the
much greater consumption of Musulipatan goods
than formerly. The articles bought from
Musulipatan, consisting chiefly of chintzes,
form the principal branch of commerce of
Būshire." 20

Watkins estimated they made up almost 65% of
Būshire's total cloth imports or 33% of all imports.

Musulipatam retained its commanding position in
the Būshire market for at least two decades. For
example, in 1796, Nicholas H. Smith, then the EIC
resident in Būshire, wrote that "the greatest
individual custom collected in Persia is on the
Mussulaptom chintz, which is annually imported at
Būshire..." 21 Waring calculated in 1802 that over
60% of Būshire's exports of specie were bound for
Musulipatam 22 and in 1803, it was noted that of a
shipment of treasure valued at about two lacs of
rupees, "the greater part" of it was consigned to

20. Watkins Trade Report, Būshire Residency Records,
R/15/1/microfilm, 20 November, 1789.

August, 1796, p. 1766.

Musulipatam. In 1816, imports from Musulipatam made up almost 40% of total imports on British flag vessels and in 1820 they accounted for an incredible 75% of British flag imports. However, the 1820 import figure seems to have been a high point. In fact, between 1817 and 1819 Musulipatam imports averaged only 7.5% of imports on British bottoms and in 1829 Musulipatam chintzes were able to capture only 5% of the total import market. It appears that within the next decade or so they had ceased to be an important import item or at best they were of minor relevance.

Musulipatam chintzes like so many other "native" weaving industries all over Asia were falling victim to the ever increasing flood of cheap English cotton cloth. This process is vividly reflected in the changing source of Bushire's cloth imports. In 1789, imports of East India Company broad cloth and perperts averaged almost 24,000 raige rupees compared with 6,69,650 raige rupees of Indian cloth.

23. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/6, 8 November, 1803.

24. The Stannus Trade Report, L/P and S/9, volume 37.

25. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/54, 20 September, 1830.
In 1829 English piece goods made up 34.2% of the cloth imports. India piece goods captured only 13.3% of the market; even is Kashmir shawls are added, the total percentage of Indian handicrafts imported in Bushire is still only 26.6%. In 1832/33 English piece goods captured 19.2% of the market, while those from India only 3.3%. The addition of Kashmir shawls would have raised this percentage to 11%.

Because statistics are virtually nonexistent with regard to the quantity of other goods imported into Bushire only the most general statements can be made about the more important items.

Indigo. The general impression is that indigo imports through Bushire were small during the eighteenth century, but increased substantially in the nineteenth century. While various reports and travelogues included indigo as a commodity imported by the sea in the eighteenth century, interestingly enough when a diplomatic delegation from Tipu Sultan visited Bushire in 1786, they did not mention indigo in a list of over forty items sold in the Bushire market.

About fifteen years later (1801), Sir John Malcolm stated that indigo:
"made in Bengal has within these last four years been imported into Persia, where it is already more esteemed than any brought from the higher ports of India by way of Caubul and Candahar, and I should hope that in a very few years, the supplies of this new article from India would turn into a new channel this great branch of trade."26

There is reason to believe that Malcolm's hope was realized. Trade statistics from 1816 to 1823 reveal that indigo was imported from Bengal in all of those years.27 In 1818, a memorandum on the trade of Başra stated that the most valuable commodity of trade in Başra at this time is indigo.28 Since the composition of imports in Başra and Bushire differed very little, it may well be that indigo was equally important in the Bushire trade. Finally, trade statistics of 1829/30 reveal that indigo accounted


27. Unfortunately, only total figures for each region of India are provided. It probably is too much to hope that the order in which the resident listed products reflected their value in descending order. However, it is interesting to note that between 1817 and 1819 indigo appears second on the list; between 1820-22 it appears first and in 1823 it appears second on the list for imports of British flag ships and fifth on the list for Bushire flag ships.

for 18.1% of total imports, while in 1832/33 it accounted for a staggering 91% of total imports.

During the remainder of the 1830's, 40's, and 50's, indigo imports seem to have declined, although there are no specific statistics to substantiate this assertion. However, in a commercial letter written by J. Malcolm in 1856, indigo was not mentioned as an important imported good. Although indigo was still imported into Iran (as trade statistics for 1873-1903 reveal), it was a minor item of trade usually averaging less than 2% of total market imports. Moreover, these statistics also give imports by volume and the total volume of indigo imports fluctuated little from year to year.

The collapse of the indigo trade probably can be related to the decline of the domestic weaving industry in Iran and Turkey. Indigo was used as a dye and as the weaving industry contracted, demand for it would have declined accordingly. However, there would always have been some level of demand for indigo because of its use in the carpet industry.

29. Salisbury Residency Records, R/15/1/144, 10 May, 1856.
Sugar. Sugar and sugar candy were always important imported goods. Watkins placed the average value of annual sugar imports at raige rupees 2,72,500 or 20% of the total market. An estimate for the period 1817-1823 cannot be hazard based on available statistics. There are, however, several indents of merchants in the Bushire Residency Records during this period which would indicate that sugar was an important imported commodity. For example, in 1822 one, Haji 'Abd ol-Raḥim, a Shirazi merchant, purchased about eleven tons of sugar. The Bushire merchant, J.A. Malcolm, writing in 1856, indicated that sugar, along with piece goods, were the most important imported items in Bushire. This trend continued during the 1860's and 70's.

Sugar was imported from China, India, and Batavia (Java) and Siam. In fact, the sugar trade with Java was a main stay for the Dutch in Iran. It is not uncommon to read in the Residency Records comments to the effect that a Dutch ship had unloaded

30. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/25, 2 May, 1822.

31. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/144, 10 May, 1856.
an entire cargo of sugar. Precisely, what percentage of Bushire's sugar imports came from Java, China, or India cannot be determined. Malcolm's letter does state that "raw sugar...is preferred to that brought from India."32 which might suggest that sugar from Java had a larger percentage of the market than did Indian sugar.

Sometime in the 1840's or early 50's, refined sugar began to be imported from Europe, particularly from France. French exports of sugar continued to grow throughout the rest of the century. By the 1880's they had almost completely displace those of Java, thus ending a trade connection that had stretched back at least two hundred years.

32. Ibid., 10 May, 1856. In 1863, Pelly remarked that the sugar trade with Java had "increased during the past twenty years and that this sugar (from Java) drives those of Mysore, Bengal, Mauritius and Siam out of the market" (L. Pelly, Remarks on the Tribes, etc. around the Shore Line of the Persian Gulf, Indian Office Library, ST 393, 1863/64.) Five years later (1868) Thompson commented "that the importation of raw sugar from Batavia (Java) to Bushire in 1862 was valued at L90,000. During the past season it has increased to nearly L200,000." (Report on the Population, Revenue, Military Forces, and Trade of Persia, F.O. 60/314, April 20, 1868.)
Specie and merchandise were used to pay for Persian imports. Specie exports consisted of "Persian and Turkish coins, Venetian sequins, German crowns, gold and silver bars", as well as jewels and pearls. Specie was the most important export of southern Iran throughout the eighteenth and for about three quarters of the nineteenth century. In 1791, Jones and Manesty stated bluntly that "the Persian merchant is obliged to make the greatest part of his returns to India...in specie." In fact, they estimated that nine-tenths of all Indian imports were purchased with specie. This would mean that at least 60% of Būshire's total imports were paid for in treasure. The figure may have been higher. Waring calculated that 87.5% of Būshire's exports to India consisted of specie, while Milbourne placed the figure at 80% in 1811. In 1815, William Bruce, resident at Būshire, wrote to James Morier, charge de affairs in Tehran, that "specie (is) the usual return

33. W. Milbourne, Oriental Commerce, p. 130.
35. Ibid
from this country for what is imported into it.\textsuperscript{38} Export statistics for the years 1816-23 confirm Bruce's assertion and reveal that the annual average export of specie in those years was about 83\% of total exports, while for the years 1829/30 and 1832/33-34, they averaged about 66.6\%. This figure interestingly enough corresponds to Buckingham's comment that merchandise exports did not equal one-third of the total imports.\textsuperscript{39} In other words, about 67\% of Būshire's exports were made in specie. There are no specific export figures for Būshire during the remainder of the 1830's and 40's. There are figures, however, which give imports and exports between Bombay and the entire Persian Gulf between 1835 and 1840. These figures show that during those years, specie exports amounted to about 51\% of total exports.\textsuperscript{40} In 1857, the next occasion for which we have specific figures, treasure exports from Būshire amounted to Bombay rupees 3,54,700 or 49.7\% of total exports.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{38} Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/16, 26 January, 1815.

\textsuperscript{39} J.S. Buckingham, \textit{Travels in Asyria, Media, and Persia}, p. 353. Buckingham was in Būshire in 1827 or 1828.

\textsuperscript{40} Bombay Political Records, P/373/23.

\textsuperscript{41} Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/166, 1857.
Specie continued to make up at least 50% of Bushire's annual exports through the 1860's. However, when opium began to play a more important role in the exports of southern Iran (beginning about 1869), exports of gold and silver diminished. Trade statistics from the 1870's on clearly support this assertion.

How was Iran able to sustain such a prolonged and steady loss of precious metals for over a period of at least two hundred years? Part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Iran actually consisted of a northern and southern trading region. The northern region consistently imported specie from Russia, while the southern area consistently exported it to India. In 1809, William Bruce vividly described the cycle:

"...a great quantity of specie (from Russia) is also brought as the return for the immense quantity of raw silk supplied by Persia...The most of the specie brought into Persia by this traffic finds its way to British India by the different ports in the Gulf of Persia..."43

42. See Marvin Etner, Russo-Persian Commercial Relations, 1828-1914, for specific trade statistics with Russia. Etner shows that up to the 1880's Russia was exporting large quantities of silver to Iran.

43. Factory Records, G/29/30, 1 April, 1809.
Until the late nineteenth century, this vast flow of treasure seems to have continued unabated.

Specie was also imported from Basra and Ottoman Turkey. Throughout the nineteenth century, southern Iran (Fars province in particular) exported large quantities of tobacco to Turkey. In return, specie was imported as the following example suggests:

"The exportations, however, for 1819 fall short of the previous year...This I conceive has in a great measure arose from the very great scarcity which has been felt during the period owing to the disturbances at Bussora and Baghdad from whence a very great portion of the remittances from this (Bushire) are received."

Although specie was the principal export for much of the nineteenth century, it was by no means Iran's only export. For example, carpets, silk, Kirmān wool, old copper and dried fruits were also exported. However, as the century progressed, three products came to dominate the Iranian export market: horses, grain and ultimately opium.

Opium was by far the most important Iranian cash crop and its extensive cultivation (beginning in the 1860's) lead to the virtual transformation of the economy of southern Iran from one of subsistence agriculture to cash crop agriculture. This

44. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/22. 2 March, 1820. The term "remittances" was often used by EIC agents in Bushire as a synonym for the word "specie."
transformation to an opium economy was a gradual process and was preceded by preliminary experiments with other products, namely horses and grain.

Olson has pointed out that the impetus for this conversion was the expansion of trade and the resulting profits derived from the trade.\textsuperscript{45} Persian merchants began to search for suitable investments which could serve as outlets for their excess trade profits, as well as help stem the flow of specie from the country. In its early phases, this search lead to investments in India and in Persian Gulf shipping. This search also lead to expanded purchases of horses and grain in Iran which in turn appears to have begun to stimulate competition for control of land resources, particularly in the Garmsir region. In fact, much of the political jockeying and maneuvering which occurred in the Garmsir in the 1820's and 1830's may have been related to the drive to gain control over various grain producing districts. With these preliminary remarks in mind, the discussion will now focus on these important exports.

\textsuperscript{45} R. Olson, "Persian Gulf Trade and the Agricultural Economy of Southern Iran in the Nineteenth Century", from Continuity and Change in Modern Iran, Michael E. Bonnier and Nikki R. Keddi, editors.
Horses. Prior to the nineteenth century, a steady export market for horses seems to have been virtually non-existent. European travelers in Iran during the eighteenth century consistently excluded horses in their listing of Persian exports and theBushire Residency Records echo this silence.

Sustained horse exports began in the early nineteenth century in order to meet British Indian army demands. The earliest record of British interest in Persian horses occurred in 1814. In that year, EIC officials wrote to William Bruce, resident in Bushire, inquiring if horses were procurable in Persia. Bruce responded with the comment that as many as 2000 a year could be exported "once it was known that there would be a steady market for them."46

Trade statistics for the years 1816 through 1823 indicate that horse exports expanded, although at an erratic pace. This general observation is supported by Fraser who visited Kazarun, an important horse

46. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/14, 25 April, 1814. The preceding discussion does not imply that horses were not exported from Iran prior to this date. What is asserted, though, is that it was only in the nineteenth century that a steady, sustained market was developed in response to British military needs.
center of Fārs province. He noted "at this time (the early 1820's) the place had been drained of its best (horses) by purchases made for mounting our calvary in India."\(^{47}\)

By 1840, treasure and horses were said to be "the two most important articles of exportation from Persia to India."\(^{48}\) In the 1850's Binning estimated that "the value of horses imported annually from the Persian Gulf to Bombay has been reckoned at not less than 40,000 L", most of which probably would have had to come from Iran.\(^{49}\)

Based on a limited number of trade statistics, it would appear that horse exports steadily expanded during the first six decades of the nineteenth century and then slowly began to decrease in the last forty years of the century. Horse purchases and exports appear to have been primarily controlled by

---

47. J.B. Fraser, Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan in the Years 1821 and 1822, p. 80.

48. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/84, October, 1840.

49. R.B.M. Binning, A Journal of Two Years Travel in Persia, volume 2, pp. 256-7. In fact, Binning claimed that not one horse in 500 ever saw (that is came from) Arabia. This statement is an exaggeration but it is worth noting that trade figures for 1856/7 show that exports of horses from Būshire were double those of Baṣra (Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/66, p. 43.)
local merchants working directly with the British. The al-Muzkur family does not seem to have been involved in that trade.

Grain Exports. The grain trade also appears to have evolved in the same manner as horse exports. As demand for grain increased in the West Indian Ocean basin, it was the merchant community, and not the al-Muzkur family, which was best positioned and willing to take advantage of the opportunity.

Grain was grown throughout the Garmisir region. In the central sector of the Garmisir, grain production was concentrated in the area behind Bushire and as far north as Bandar Dellum and as far south as Bandar Deyyar. Corn and wheat were the principal types of grain exported. The grain trade moved through fairly well-defined channels. It was raised in the interior regions on lands controlled by local khāns. The grain was then brought to smaller

50. Writing in the 1860's, Pelly commented "to the South of Bunder Reigh (Rig) and immediately North of Bushire creek lies a flat corn growing circle of some ten Arab villages, known as Rohilla; indeed it may be remarked, that coming Southward from the Chaab territories (present day Khuzistān), the plain, there wholly pastoral, becomes gradually patched with corn, until towards Rohilla large breaths are found under plough." (L. Pelly, Remarks on the Tribes, India Office Library, ST 393, 1863/64.)
ports such as Dellum or Rig where merchants from
Bushire or their agents purchased the grain and
freighted it to Bushire or directly to Bahrein or to
India.

As indicated, the Bushire shaykhs do not seem to
have become actively involved in the purchasing or
marketing of grain. Instead they seem to have made
an attempt (in the 1820's and 30's) to gain control
of interior tracts of land and thus become producers
of grain. That attempt, of course, failed.

What caused the increase in trade between Iran
and India in the nineteenth century? Several reasons
can be suggested. First, Persian demand for Indian
goods (including EIC goods) was probably stronger and
more vigorous than has been generally suspected. Our
impression of Iran's economy in the late eighteenth
and early nineteenth centuries has been shaped in
large measure by EIC reports drafted in Bombay and
London and trade statistics related to EIC sales in
Bushire and the Gulf. However, these reports are
misleading and do not reflect accurately observations
made by company representatives stationed in Bushire.
Close study of the Bushire Residency Records reveals a different perspective than the general conventional view. Reference has already been made to the Watkins trade report which clearly showed there was an active non-EIC trade between Musulipatam and Bushire. The records also indicate that there was demand for EIC goods, but that the Company consistently failed to deliver the right quantity and assortment of goods and that it failed to deliver
them during the winter trading season. 51

Persian merchants balked at buying colors and types of woollens for which there was no demand; however,

51. On the issue of the proper assortments of cloth see Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/2, 13 November, 1775: "We have not been able to make any sales chiefly owing to not being the sortments in demand." "The Bushire merchants having as late wished much for the arrival of woollens, I hope it will soon suit your honor to furnish me with a supply of the proper sortments." (R/15/1/3, 20 November, 1779). "I have not yet been able to bring the merchants to take them (the woollens) on account of a deficiency of the color scarlet in the perpets which are the clothes the most in demand at this market (R/15/1/3, 15 March, 1781.)"

In April, 1783, the resident reported that woollens "were still in great demand throughout all of Persia." By August of that year, the resident was writing that he hoped that the company would "shortly be able to comply with my indent (request) for this article of 12 June, 1782." This request was not met by the Company, however. (R/15/1/3 August 21, 1783, and October 12, 1783. Also Bombay Public Consultations, range 341, volume 50, 5 April, 1783.)

In July, 1784, the resident reported losses at the Residency. However, he noted that "the increase of the net loss arises in great measure from the inability of your honor to supply me with any woollens during the last year." (R/15/1/3, 24 July, 1784.)

Failure to supply the market was in evidence ten years later: "I have the honor to inform you Honorable Board that in consequence of no Broad cloth or perpetues having been transmitted here (to Bushire) or to Bussora for the last two years past, there is at present a great demand for those articles, especially perpetues." (R/15/1/microfilm, Frame 40, 5 November, 1794.) Two years later the resident wrote "I beg leave to inform your Honorable Board that the merchants of Bushire have been much disappointed this year in no goods of any kind having been conveyed by your Honorables." (R/15/1/microfilm/frames 62-63, 30 May, 1796.)
there was demand for the correct assortments of cloth. What is interesting about the comments of the Būshīre resident is that they indicate that there was Iranian demand during the period of the Zand/Qājār struggles—a time period during which it has been generally assumed that trade went into steep decline.

The above generalizations do not imply that the Zand/Qājār struggles had no impact on trade. Obviously, they did have some impact. Thus, a second factor which spurred trade in the early nineteenth century was the return to semblance of political order and stability in Iran. Trade was also stimulated from the 1820’s on by demands for colonial goods such as tea and for cheap Manchester cottons, a point to which reference has already been made.

British activities and commercial policies also helped stimulate trade. For example, the 1820 expedition lowered the cost of marine security. In theory, these lower costs could be passed onto consumers in the form of lower commodity prices.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, competition existed between "native" (Arab and Persian) and English owned shipping. As a general rule, when peace and stability prevailed in the Gulf, Arab/Persian shipping was cheaper than British. With
the advent of marine instability, the increased cost of freighting on English ships was more than offset by the increase in security which the individual merchant received by shipping on a British vessel. Thus, the cost of security was a crucial factor affecting Gulf shipping up to 1820.

Two examples can be cited to support the above generalization. In 1800, Sir John Malcolm wrote that the smaller craft of the Arabs and Persians could freight goods "for a third of the sum that they are (freighted) on European rigged and well-founded vessels."52 Yet, two years later, Mehdi 'Ali Khan, then the EIC resident in Būshire would write:

"The political situation of this country is very serious. At present, by sea no traffic is carried on but in English ships as the country vessels dare not venture out of these ports for fear of the Bani Utuba Arabs."53

In 1817, William Bruce estimated that Arab/Persian shipping in and out of Būshire equalled only about one-third that of British flag shipping. Probably the main factor accounting for this difference was the threat of the Qawāsim raids on local vessels. The observation is substantiated by

53. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/5, 14 August, 1802.
comments which the Bushire resident, Stannus, made in 1824 (four years after the British had broken the strength of the Qawāsim)

"...the security with which small vessels now navigate the Gulf...have caused a considerable part of the carrying trade to pass from the hands of Europeans to those of natives who can do it cheaper. It is probable that the same cause will continue to operate and diminish that share which the European ship owners still have in this trade."54

In both of these examples, it is clear that the cost of security was the crucial factor in the competition between European and Arab/Persian shipping because almost without exception Arab/Persian ship owners had lower operating expenses. The Reporter for External Commerce in Bombay, for example, noted that the Arabs and Persians did not pay insurance premiums, that wages were lower, and the case of the Imam of Muscat (and probably other local shaykhs), slave labor could be utilized.55

The 1820 expedition had the effect of permanently lowering security costs in the Gulf by imposing a

54. Secret Letters and Enclosures from Persia, L/P and S/9, volume 37, 14 July, 1824.

55. Bombay Commercial Reports, range 419, volume 40, 1802/03.
marine peace on the area. Since the British did not directly charge for this service, their actions gave local ship owners a distinct comparative advantage over their European counterparts. This advantage lasted until the advent of the steamship era which began in the 1860's.

British commercial policies also influenced the commercial activities of the merchant class. In turn, these policies and the Persian merchant response to them had a profound impact on the structural function of the Persian Gulf bandar. It is to that issue that the discussion will now turn.

56. Just how far the process of lowered security costs had progressed by the 1830's can be seen in the following comment: "On the other hand the more peaceable part of the community (referring here to Persian and Arab merchants) and our own subjects trading from India, rely so implicitly upon the protection afforded to them by the intervention of our (British) power and influence that they appear to neglect all means of defending themselves or (their) vessels..." (Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/67, 1835)

57. For an in-depth discussion of the impact of the steamship on Gulf shipping see R. Landen, Oman Since 1856, especially chapter 1.
CHAPTER VI
The Transformation of Bushire from Port-of-Call to Port-of-Transit

In the preface to his book, *The Economic History of the Middle East*, Charles Issawi has suggested that "few aspects of the history of the Middle East in the last two hundred years have received less attention than the economic."¹ This generalization applies specifically to the history of the Persian Gulf region. While a number of excellent volumes have been published over the past several decades about that region, they have focused almost exclusively on the Gulf's political history; only a limited number of studies (most of which are journal length) have attempted to analyze the traditional economy (i.e., pearling, fishing, animal husbandry, regional and international trade, etc.) of the Persian Gulf or the institutions that supported this economy.

An important institution in the Gulf's socio-economic structure was the port city or bandar. The bandar served as an exchange point for a wide variety of goods and materials produced within the region. Equally, it functioned as a point of exchange for long-distance (international) trade. In fact, Hambly claims that the remarkable growth of the Persian Gulf ports in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was almost exclusively the result of the demands of overseas trade, specifically the Indian trade.2

Until recently, little was known about how the bandar functioned in international trade. For example, in discussing the concept of the "port-of-trade" as a model for pre-industrial international trade, Leeds could only hypothesize that such a paragon was valid for "Persia, Arabia, and the East Coast of Africa...for indeterminate (my emphasis) periods which begin with the Portuguese conquests at the beginning of the sixteenth century."3


This chapter will examine the role of bandar in international trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It will be proposed that (1) the "port-of-trade" concept is not applicable to the Gulf during this time frame and that (2) two new models, the "port-of-call" and the "port-of-transit" best explain how the Persian Gulf bandar functioned in the period under review.

Karl Polanyi and others have developed a model of long-distance, overseas trade under early state conditions which they have termed the "port-of-trade."\(^4\) It is claimed that the "port-of-trade" has been operative from the second millennium B.C. to the late nineteenth century A.D. and that geographically it could be found from China through the Near East and Africa to the New World.\(^5\)

According to Polanyi, the main obstacle with which overseas trade has been confronted in the past has been the problem of security. That is to say,

---


trade had to face two related questions: (1) how could goods be safely carried over vast distances which were largely unpoliced and (2) how could trade be protected from illegal seizure after it arrived at its destination. According to Polanyi, the "port-of-trade" was developed in response to this security problem. The "port-of-trade" had the following general characteristics: (1) It was an autonomous, specialized town, city, or small state which was politically independent of the major trading empires or nations. (2) It was usually a point of transshipment between distinct ecological regions. (3) Its inhabitants often were not active traders. (4) Only those commodities of value to the state were handled; such goods were usually luxury items and not intended for wide-scale distribution. (5) Foreign merchants frequently resided in the port. (6) These merchants, in general, were employees of the major trading states or empires. 6

The key concept underlying the "port-of-trade" arrangement was that the "administration (of trade) prevailed over the 'economic' procedure of

competition.7 Prices were administered and arranged by treaty and not determined by the laws of supply and demand. "Trade was an affair of state; a function of polity rather than of economy."8 The "port-of-trade" arrangement attempted to remove as much uncertainty from long distance trade as possible. For this reason, clearly defined procedures and regulations (administration) prevailed over the uncertainty of a price-oriented market. Traders coming to the "port-of-trade" knew in advance the selling price of the articles they were bringing and the cost of the goods they would take back to their home countries. They were also assured of the physical security of their goods while in port.

In essence, the "port-of-trade" was a "neutrality device" or "a kind of buffer zone, protected in its sovereignty by the mutual self-interest of the major trading states operating in it." The "port-of-trade" can also be conceived of as transshipment point "between distinct ecological regions" or between

---


long-distance maritime and long-distance caravan hauling. 9

At first glance, the port cities of the Persian Gulf in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appear to fit the "port-of-trade" model. Many of them were small, essentially independent city-states; they had foreign merchants in residence; they lay on the edge of distinct geographical regions; and they linked the major trading states of the region: the Ottoman Empire, Zand/Qājār Iran, and India. In fact, however, these port cities do not fit the Polanyi/Leeds model as the following analysis will show. Since there is a large volume of evidence available on Būshire, it will be used as the principal model in the analysis.

Three aspects of Būshire's long-distance trade patterns and relations merit attention: the structure of trade, the social groups who conducted the trade and most importantly, the origin of Būshire's price system. The types of goods traded will be considered first.

As mentioned previously, the commodities exchanged in the "port-of-trade" were luxury items or

9. A. Leeds, Ibid., p. 27
goods of strategic value such as precious metals and stones, animals (especially elephants and horses), slaves, prized cloths, scents and dyes. Precious stones and metals, elephants, and horses were particularly valuable for they were considered crucial in the maintenance of state power. Therefore, there was a direct state interest in the control and exchange of these items. Furthermore, these commodities were not intended "for wide-spread distribution" to the population at large.

In contrast to the imports and exports of the "port-of-trade", Būshīre's imports were composed principally of cloth (woollens and cottons), sugar and sugar loaf, spices (pepper, cardamon, cinnamon, etc.), indigo, coffee, rice, iron, and tin. These goods were paid for by the export of treasure (gold, silver, pearls, and jewels), horses, tobacco, Shirāz wine, dried fruits, rosewater, wool and silk. Beginning in the late 1860's, opium dominated the exports of southern Iran.

From this brief but inclusive listing of Būshīre's trade, it is obvious that, by and large, the items mentioned above were not goods of strategic value, nor were they restricted to elite consumption, as the following examples reveal. By 1768, the East India Company (EIC) resident at Būshīre found that
the type of cloth most in demand was the coarse medley, the cheapest of all EIC clothes. In fact, in order to sell the more expensive broad cloth, the resident devised a scheme whereby he only would sell coarse medleys to the local merchants provided they would also take a certain quantity of broad cloth.\textsuperscript{10}

The continued demand for low quality cloth is reflected in the 1799 Maister-Fawcett report on the economic condition of Persia. In the report, Maister and Fawcett noted that the quality of cloth consumed in Persia had declined since 1760.\textsuperscript{11}

Sugar imports also highlight the fact that long distance trade was not aimed solely at elite consumption. Large quantities of sugar were imported into Bushire, especially as the nineteenth century progressed. It was cheap and meant for as wide a distribution as possible. In summary, in contrast to the commerce of the "port-of-trade", the Persian Gulf trade did not have strategic value to the major consuming states in the region.

Turning to the second point, the principal actors in the long-distance trade of the Gulf in the

\textsuperscript{10} Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/1-part 2, 9 January, 1768.

\textsuperscript{11} Maister and Fawcett Trade Report of 1799.
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries included private merchants and traders (both local and foreign)\(^{12}\) working either as individuals or in small two, three, or four man partnerships, the East India Companies (English, French and Dutch) and the various rulers of the port cities, such as the Imam of Muscat or the shaykhs of Būshire or Kangān, etc. Almost without exception, these individuals or organizations were not permanent representatives of the Iranian government. There are cases where the shaykh of Būshire served as a temporary agent for the Zands or Qājārs. For example, in the 1830's the Tehran (Qājār) government asked the Shaykh to purchase and forward a shipment of rifles from India. However, the Shaykh made every attempt to avoid the "honor" of acting as Tehran's agent, because he knew that Tehran would not compensate him for his efforts.

With regard to the origin of prices in Būshire, the overwhelming conclusion is that they were determined by supply and demand—that is, a market economy prevailed. The strongest evidence supporting this conclusion is the very absence of comments or references in the EIC records to any attempt by

\(^{12}\) The term "foreign" would include the baniyans (from India) and Europeans.
governmental authorities to set prices for an extended period of time in the port. Admittedly, there are some references to price-fixing schemes by the shaykhs of Bushire, but these were short term efforts and in no way resembled the complex organizational and administrative practices described by Polanyi and Leeds. Had elaborate, price-fixing schemes existed in Bushire, they would have almost certainly been referred to and described by the EIC residents.

It is also worth noting that between the years 1763 and 1800, there were several increases in the prices of English broad cloth. These changes were ordered by the Company which made no effort to consult the shaykh of Bushire when it was decided to raise prices. The Company was not hindered by administrative fiats or restrictions which would have prevented it from raising (or lowering) prices.

The fluctuations in the Bushire money market are also indicators supporting the thesis that a market economy existed in the town. Several currencies were used as a means of exchange in Bushire throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Close examination of the Bushire Residency Records demonstrates that there were no controls on currency exchanges and that there were continual exchange rate
fluctuations. Ultimately, exchange rate shifts are a reflection of changes in the price (and hence supply and demand) of goods and services in a market. Therefore, had prices been fixed on the costs of goods and services, this fact would have been mirrored in a much more stabilized system of currency exchange over time.

Finally, prices in Būshire were sensitive to those in Baṣra or Muscat. On more than one occasion the British resident noted that if prices were too high in Būshire, merchants would go to either port in order to make their purchases. The fact that Būshire prices fluctuated in relation to those at Muscat or Baṣra (and vice versa) indicates that there was a larger, market-oriented system of exchange in the Gulf and that prices were determined by an overall supply and demand equilibrium and not by administrative fiat.

The fact that trade was conducted within the framework of a market-oriented economy leads to two observations: First, a market economy is indicative

---

13. In 1767, for example, the resident pointed out that most of the Company's sales were centered in Baṣra and Baghdad because these centers were able to undersell Būshire. "Merchants on this account have gone from hence (Būshire) to Bussora (Baṣra)." Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/1-part 1, 20 March, 1767.
of a decentralized political structure in the region. No single port city was so politically powerful that it was able to dominate the trade of the Gulf, control its directional flow or impose monopoly price-fixing schemes. A second implication (flowing from the first) is that while a local shaykh could attempt to "administratively" operate his port (manipulate prices to his advantage), over the long run such a policy was difficult to maintain. If customs duties were too high or bazaar prices artificially controlled and out of line with those of other port cities, then there was the distinct possibility that the merchants would cease to frequent that port.\textsuperscript{14} Shaykhs who ruled on the northern littoral were particularly vulnerable to this dilemma because there were several routes which drained the producing and consuming hinterland. In essence, then, rulers had to compete with one another to attract merchants and traders to their respective port. A local ruler was thus limited in his ability

\textsuperscript{14}. There are numerous examples in Gulf history of merchants moving from one port to another to seek more favorable conditions under which to trade, including the luring of merchants to Kharg Island by the Dutch in the 1750’s, and the flight of several prominent merchants from Basra.
to manipulate trade to his personal advantage and
enrichment.

Why does the eighteen century Persian Gulf
region fail to conform to the Polanyi model? Leeds
has hypothesized:

that an institution like the port-of-trade
appears when agrarian developments of an
emerging polity have developed to the point
that the polity has begun to expand into an
total homogeneous ecological area or has run
into another polity which is also expanding.
In either expansion or competition, the polity
required constant supplies of certain kinds of
goods which it does not have or cannot
sufficiently produce. It acquires these from
external sources, or through polities with which
it is not in competition, but rather in
symbiosis.15

The "constant supplies of certain kinds" tended
to be goods which, in part, formed the material basis
of politico-military power of the polity. In the
case of the several Indian kingdoms which Leeds
studied, it was found that horses and elephants
constituted the mainstay of the military apparatus of
the state and that, in general, both animals were in
short supply in most of these Indian kingdoms.

"There chiefs of state kept, or tried to
achieve, control over the sources of those
goods which could, like horses, be used
directly, or like gold and jewels, indirectly,

in maintaining the state. This fact clarifies all of the efforts at controlling the elephant and horse trades..."16

Since these goods often had to be imported, it was crucial for Indian kings to develop long-distance trade arrangements which would provide a continuous and steady supply of horses or gold. The "port-of-trade" was an arrangement which helped to assure an uninterrupted flow of these supplies.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, there were two principal hinterland powers in the Gulf region: Zand/Qājār Iran and the Ottoman Empire. It is clear that the Persian Gulf trade did not constitute a crucial factor in the power base of either of those governments. Cloth, spices, or indigo, for example, had no direct bearing upon the Qājār's ability to maintain their political control over Iran. The long-distance trade of the Persian Gulf did not meet a strategic need; therefore, there was no political imperative to supervise it or the port cities through which it passed or to develop the institutional apparatus of the "port-of-trade." The result was that these hinterland states abdicated any administrative responsibility for the conduct of

trade and made no attempt to control it, except to the degree that tax policy impacted upon trade.

III

Within the Persian Gulf market economy, two types of port city can be identified: the "port-of-call" and the "port-of-transit". The "port-of-call" was operative in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By 1850, however, it had been superseded by the "port-of-transit".

The "port-of-call" functioned as a marketing and distribution center for long-distance trade and as a place where two distinct sets of merchants met and exchanged goods. Moreover, the exchange was not pre-arranged, but was "spontaneous" in the sense that it was dependent upon the price mechanism. Prices cleared the market according the supply and demand of the commodity in question.

Historically, the "port-of-call" can be associated with Steengard's "peddler merchant", or Lane's "mobile merchant". In the peddler merchant model, "trade (was) carried on by peddlers, buying and selling small quantities (of goods) on continuous
travels from market to market."\textsuperscript{17} According to Lane, the mobile merchant was one "who would wander around looking for buyers and sources of supply."\textsuperscript{18} This type of trade, i.e., the continuous search for markets in which to buy and sell, has been characterized by de Roover as "medieval" trade. According to de Roover, medieval trade differed from modern trade in at least one important respect:

Today most goods are sold before they are shipped. This is especially true of heavy equipment and machinery. Medieval trade, however, with few exceptions involved venturing. An assortment of goods was shipped to a distant place in the expectation that a merchant would be able to make his returns in other commodities demanded at home.\textsuperscript{19}

Conolly, traveling in northeastern Iran and Central Asia in the early 1830's, readily confirms de Roover's assertion. "Thus, for want of a regular understanding many (merchants) bring goods at a complete venture, and if they do not suit the market, send them east or west, to any place at which there

\textsuperscript{17} N. Steensgaard, \textit{Caaracks, Caravans and Companies}, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{18} F. Lane, \textit{Venice, A Maritime Republic}, p. 137.

\textsuperscript{19} R. de Roover, "The Organization of Trade", from the \textit{Cambridge Economic History of Europe}, volume 3, p. 44.
is a change of their selling."20 The Persian Gulf bandar, functioning as a "port-of-call", served as one exchange point for these peddler merchants in their continuous cycle of travels.

In the latter decades of the eighteenth century, Būshire was functioning as a "port-of-call". There are continual references in the Residency Records to hinterland merchants who came to the port. In a memo prepared for the Court of Directors of the EIC, Alexander Douglas, resident at Gambroon (Bandar 'Abbās) commented that Būshire was a "place full of inland merchants."21 In 1767, Karim Khān "prohibited any merchant in future to carry specie to Būshire on any pretense whatsoever".22 Finally, Nicholas Smith, Būshire resident in 1796, wrote that

20. A. Conolly, Journey to the North of India Overland from England, volume I, p. 347. Stannus, the Būshire resident in the mid-1820's, referred to a merchant who "had ebony (obtained from East Africa?) which he took to Bagra where he exchange it for dates to be taken to the Red Sea." In the Red Sea ports, he could well have purchased coffee which he might have taken back to the Gulf or to India where, in turn, he could have purchased a variety of goods suitable for the Gulf market.


22. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/1-part 1, 23 March, 1767.
"several merchants of consequence from Corresan (Khorāsān) come here (Būshīre) in the winter months".23

The resident also continually commented on the relationship between prices and sales. In 1775, he noted that he had been able to sell only eighteen pieces of worsters (at 3-1/4 rupees per piece) and nine pieces of perpetts (at 22 rupees per piece), because "these prices were the utmost we could bring the merchants to give". Worsters formerly had sold at three rupees the piece and "the perpetts for never above 20-3/4 rupees and often for 18".24 The quantity sold was dependent on price which, in turn, was subject to the give and take of market forces.

A similar example of the relationship between price and sales is reflected in the actions of the

23. Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/microfilm frames 62-63, 30 May, 1796. The same exchange arrangement was also found at Bandar 'Abbās. In discussing the problem of a trade deficit in that port, Bogle, resident at Muscat, throws the following light on the mobile merchant. "It (Kirmān wool) is sometimes brought down (to Bandar 'Abbās) by the merchants, who seem to be at a loss in what manner to remit the sums necessary to purchase the spices and other valuable articles they carry with them to the interior." (Home Miscellaneous Series, 19 March, 1800, p. 128.) Bandar 'Abbās, like Būshīre, was serving as a point of exchange for hinterland and maritime goods.

delegation sent by Tipu Sultan of India to Istanbul in 1786. On its way up the Gulf, the party stopped in Bushire hoping to sell Indian spices and cloth. However, they found bazaar prices too low, refused to unload their goods, and departed for Basra in hopes of getting a better price there. These examples demonstrate that there were traveling merchants, that they came to Bushire to buy and sell goods, and that the quantities, prices and even types of goods bought and sold were determined in the port. Thus, Bushire and ports like it were marketing centers where exchange occurred under the auspices of the price mechanism.

The very fact that trade was conducted seasonably also helps buttress the idea that Bushire was a "port-of-call". In the late eighteenth century, hinterland merchants would arrive in Bushire in the fall and winter months and return to the plateau before the hot, summer weather had descended upon the Gulf. In fact, there was almost no trade activity in the town during the summer months. With reference to the sale of the eighteen worsters and nine perpetts, the resident stated "I have no prospects of making more sales during the hot season".25 In contrast,

25. Ibid., 25 June, 1775.
by the 1840's goods arrived in Būshire year round because by then the port was simply a point of transshipment from one mode of transportation to another.

Finally, it should be noted that although the shaykh of Būshire was the port's most important merchant in the eighteenth century, in general, he remained a "Būshire" merchant — that is, he brought imported goods only as far as Būshire. The East India Company and Imām of Muscat (there was a Muscati residency in Būshire in 1786) also only marketed their goods in the bazaars of Būshire. (In fact, the EIC agent was forbidden by the Company to sell anywhere but that port.) Two groups of merchants, therefore, can be distinguished: the marine merchant and the hinterland. The marine merchant, living along the coast or in Muscat, India, etc., carried goods to Būshire and sold them to the hinterland merchant who had brought inland goods and treasure to pay for his purchases.

26. There are some exceptions to that statement, especially during the rule of Karim Khān Zand. During Karim Khān's rule, Shaykh Nāṣir I supplied the Khān's armies with cloth. However, it does not appear that the Būshire shaykh was "retailing" cloth in the bazaars of Shirāz or any other plateau city.
Beginning about 1800, Būshire gradually underwent a transformation from a "port-of-call" to a "port-of-transit". As a "port-of-transit", the town now functioned simply as a point of transfer between long-distance maritime and long-distance caravan hauling. Wares were purchased overseas (primarily India), landed in Būshire, and sent directly into the interior all under the auspices of one owner. Būshire had ceased to act as a market exchange center for distinct merchant groups involved in long-distance trade.

The port-of-transit is an outgrowth of a development which Lane has termed the "resident merchant". The "resident merchant" has been characterized as a merchant who was capable of conducting long-distance trade from his home base. Because of improved commercial techniques (to be discussed later), it was no longer necessary for the merchant to accompany his merchandise. Purchases could be made at the sources of supply and disposed of at the sources of demand by the same individual. The need for intermediary exchange and distribution centers was eliminated.

27. F. Lane, Ibid., pp. 137-38.
Though the process was gradual, the evidence clearly indicates that during the nineteenth century Bushire was transformed from a port-of-call to a port-of-transit. After 1810, the Residency Records contain virtually no references to the physical presence of the Khorāsāni merchant who annually had come to Bushire to purchase goods.\textsuperscript{28} Since the structure of trade and trade routes had not changed (Bushire was still the most important port), the disappearance of the Khorāsāni merchant in Bushire leads to the strong suspicion that some type of shift in conduct (method) of trade was occurring.

Secondly, the seasonal rhythm of importing and exporting was changing. Shipping records in the 1820's and 1830's indicate that goods were being

\textsuperscript{28} It could be argued that this changing pattern was the result of internal political difficulties in Khorāsān — the idea being that political "chaos" brings economic stagnation. However, recent research indicates that Iranian trade was not as adversely affected by the "time of troubles" as was previously believed. For example, in the 1780's, the trade of Bushire rapidly increased, despite the civil and tribal strife in the region. (See the Watkins Trade Report in particular for details). See also T. Ricks, \textit{Kirmāni Wool Trade in Southern Iran, 1700-1850}, paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association Conference, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November, 1978.
landed in Būshīre year-round. Moreover, in the summer of 1836, the EIC resident observed that the Būshīre customs house was over-flowing with merchandise. Because there were no major technological changes in communication, climate control, or ship construction between the late eighteenth century and 1830, some other explanation must be found to account for this apparent shift in the seasonal rhythm of trade. The best explanation is that the mobile merchant was being replaced by the resident merchant who, located in Shīrāz, Yazd or Bombay, and not having to brave the Persian Gulf summer, could continue his trading activities year-round.

Thirdly, by 1828, many Būshīre merchants were merely forwarding agents for inland or overseas merchants as the following example reveals. In November of that year, Būshīre was sacked. In commenting on the property losses, the Resident

29. See, for example, "Statement showing the Articles and their value imported from India to the Port of Būshīre in Persia", Būshīre Residency Records, R/15/1/54, 20 September, 1830, where it is reported that seventeen vessels (British, Arab, and Persian) docked in Būshīre during June, July, and August. This example contrasts with the experience which George Farmer, a private English trade, had had sixty years earlier (1776). Farmer had arrived in Būshīre in the summer months quite prepared to sell woollens only to find the town deserted of any merchants.
observed that:

a considerable portion of (the loss) will
I fear ultimately fall on British subjects or
persons residing under our government in India
(a direct reference to Persians living there).
The merchants here (in Būshire) are, in general
only nominally rich, being traders on the capital
of others and in most transactions are only
agents.30

If Būshire merchants were simply agents, then their
basic function was to assure that their "master's"
goods were transferred from ship to caravan.

Other Persian Gulf bandars also underwent a
similar change. Muscat, for instance, provides an
equally compelling example. In the last half of the
eighteenth century, Muscat rapidly became the most
important port in the far west Indian Ocean basin.
Its preeminence was based on its function as a
"port-of-call". Traders from Baluchestān, Iran,
Baṣra, the Red Sea, India, etc., met in Muscat,
exchanged wares, and then returned to their
respective homes.31

Beginning about 1800, merchants from various port
cities attempted to by-pass Muscat. In 1798, for
example, several Būshire merchants successfully

30. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/47, 2
December, 1828.

31. Sir John Malcolm estimated that over half of
Būshire's trade with India came through Muscat. (The
Malcom Trade Report of 1800, Persian Gulf Factory
Records, G/29/22, 26 February, 1800).
started to ship directly from Bombay to Bushire.
Over the next half century, Muscat fought a losing battle to retain its pivotal role as a "port-of-call". Its final collapse came with the introduction of regular steamship routes in the Gulf in the 1860's. By then, the port clearly had ceased to serve as a regional marketing and distribution center.

Muscat's prosperity, even more so than Bushire's, was based on its ability to function as a "port-of-call". (It did not have and still does not have a large consuming hinterland which would assure its continuing importance as a "port-of-transit".) As a result, its "golden days" were numbered.

Bandar 'Abbās also experienced a similar transformation. In the eighteenth century, the Gambroon Diary demonstrates that the arrival of the Khorāsānī merchants in Gambroon (Bandar 'Abbās) was the signal for the start of what was almost a frenzied period of trading activity. By the 1840's, though, the situation had changed. Although Bandar 'Abbās had recovered from a long period of depression, most of the trade entering the port (especially from India) had been consigned to an
agent for shipment to Kirman, Yezd or Shiraz. 32
Bandar 'Abbās, like Būshire had now become a
"port-of-transit".

Because of geography, climate, and natural
resources, the immediate hinterland surrounding the
Persian Gulf bandar could not support a large
population or a large volume of long-distance trade;
therefore, for the port to serve as a "port-of-call",
unique socio-economic and political conditions had to
be operative. First, throughout the entire trade
region a large number of individual traders with
relatively small amounts of capital at their disposal
were necessary. An important consequence flowing
from this situation is that with each individual
working by himself and traveling with his
merchandise, there was a "natural territorial" limit
which the individual merchant could cover. Hence,
the need for several exchange points (i.e., Bombay,
Muscat, Būshire, Shiraz, Yezd).

32. See, for instance, Letters Received By and Sent
to the Governor of Bombay, Persian Correspondence,
range 418, volume 67, (1845-46)
Secondly, "state-of-the-art" trade techniques (methods of conducting business) had to be such that the safest and most convenient way to trade was face to face with a counterpart. There could be no business technique available which would assure financial and investment security at an impersonal distance. Commercial practices had to be such that traveling with one's merchandise was the most rational means of trading, a factor leading to the necessity of several exchange points. Finally, the kinds or types of goods traded (the structure of trade) had to be such that they could be exchanged conveniently in the port city.

Around 1800, important changes began to occur in the Persian Gulf which undermined the socio-economic foundations upon which the "port-of-call" rested. First, Persian merchants began migrating to and permanently residing in India. The movement to India had actually commenced earlier, in the 1780's. At that time, Charles Watkins, EIC resident, recorded that Persian merchants were living in Musulipatam, that they had invested in looms, and that they were weaving chintzes which were then exported to Bushire.33

Persian merchants also were settling in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. By 1830, the Persian merchant population in Calcutta had become so extensive that Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh was petitioned to appoint a malik-it-tujjar for that ex-patriot community. These migrations were important because the hinterland Persian merchant now had the opportunity to establish relations with a fellow countryman who could serve as a buyer/agent in a country that was by far southern Iran's most important trading partner. A trusted agent in Bombay or Calcutta could purchase the desired Indian goods for the home-based merchant.

A third factor which affected Bushire's "port-of-trade" status was the increase in wealth of a small segment of the merchant class of southern Iran. This increased wealth permitted the development of what very roughly might be called a vertical integration of long-distance trade -- overseas buying offices, shipping interests, distributing agents and control of various Iranian exports, primarily agricultural products.

The rise of permanent Persian "colonies" in India and the growing wealth of what admittedly was

34. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/54, 26 February, 1830.
only a small but very influential segment of the Persian merchant class undermined the "port-of-call". Purchases were made at the source of supply and disposed of in the final demand centers. Increased wealth gave the merchant greater scope for pursuing commercial activities in the region. For example, Shirāz-based merchants were able to buy shares in shipping interests which in turn lead them to purchase goods close to the sources of supply because now it was cheaper to do so.

The increase in personal wealth and the overseas migrations were facilitated by British commercial policy. For example, by taking up permanent residence in India, the Persian merchant gained access to British protection wherever he traded. This security was advantageous because once under the British security umbrella, the merchant was insulated from capricious seize of his goods in Iran by local authorities. Moreover, he had a much better chance of recovering his property should it be subject to piracy on the high seas. To cite only one example from many, in 1803, the "Hector", a British ship, floundered in a storm off the port of Nakhilū. The ship's contents, most of which belonged to Persian merchants resident in India, subsequently were plundered by the local shaykh. With the persistent prodding of the resident in Bushire, most of the
losses, which these merchants had sustained, were recovered. (See Chapter IV)

Also by registering shipping in Bombay or other Indian ports, Persian merchants were able to secure EIC passes and sail under the British flag which again assured the merchant that his property, including ships, was protected by the full weight of the British military and diplomatic strength. It was through this combination of residence in India and registration of ships, for example, that Bushire merchants were able to break Muscat's edict that all shipping sailing into and out of the Persian Gulf had to pass through that port. For example, when ships from Būshire were seized and held in 1801 by the Shaykh of Qeshm, then a vessel of the Imām of Muscat, Bombay's Governor Duncan, sent a stiff letter to the Imām informing him that interference with shipping under British protection would not be tolerated. The assurances which British protection offered provided a strong incentive for Persian merchants to extend their trade activities to India. "Protection costs" were reduced substantially; it was now possible for one individual to buy merchandise overseas, ship it to Būshire and then transport it into the interior with relative ease and security.

Another important change which undermined
Bushire's "port-of-call" function was the British selection of Bushire as its principal bill-of-exchange market. This decision was made following Sir John Malcolm's first mission (1800) to Iran. The EIC began to funnel money into Iran for political purposes and an exchange market was needed to convert Indian currency to Persian. Moreover, the selling of bills of exchange gave the Company an additional source of profit at a residency which was becoming an increasing economic liability.

Lane has defined the bill of exchange as "an order to pay in one place in one kind of money because of a payment received in a different place in a different kind of money". The bill of exchange was an essential technique in the development of a resident system of trade for it:

enabled a resident merchant to send funds to his agent, or to receive quickly the proceeds of a sale without having to run the risks of making a new investment in merchandise or of shipping bullion.

For example, in 1822 the Shiraz merchant, Haji Abd al-Rahim, sent funds (through a bill of exchange purchased in Bushire by an agent) to Calcutta. In

Calcutta another Rahim agent was instructed to use
the money for the purchase of Indian goods and to
consign them to Rahim through the agent in Bushire.
During this entire transaction, Haji did not leave
Shiraz. The bill of exchange permitted the
merchant to conduct business impersonally, yet
securely.

Finally, in 1813, the Bombay Government closed
the commercial residency in Bushire which meant that
the Company would no longer sell its woollens and
other goods on Persian soil, but rather would
distribute them from Bombay. This act reinforced the
desirability of either residing in India and placing
agents there.

Changes in the structure of trade (particularly
exports) also tended to undermine Bushire's
"port-of-call" function. Goods traded in the
"port-of-call" had to be readily exchangeable, that
is, they had to be transported easily to and stored
in the port while they were being bought and sold.
In the eighteenth century, virtually all imports and
exports were conveniently exchangeable in Bushire.
In general, while this observation was valid in the

37. *Bushire Residency Records*, R/15/1/25, 2 May,
1822. (Farsan of Husayn 'Ali Mirza, Prince of Shiraz
to William Bruce.)
nineteenth century, horse exports were a notable exception. As indicated in Chapter 5 after 1810, horse exports to India expanded rapidly in response to the demands of the British Indian army and by 1840, they had become southern Iran's second most important export (after treasure). The great horse markets of Fars were Shiraz and Kazurun. Both cities were close to the principal sources of supply (the plateau tribes) and both cities could provide grain and water cheaply while the horses were being marketed.

Bushire, on the other hand, was not a convenient marketing point. It was financially risky to drive a herd of horses off of the great plateau and through three incredibly steep passes to the Gulf lowlands, particularly if a sale had not yet been consummated. Moreover, grain could be and water was expensive in the port. Therefore, horses were sent to Bushire only after they had been sold and were exported as quickly as possible. The port was not a natural point of exchange for the horse trade.

38. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/87, October, 1840.
By 1850, the transformation of Bushire from "port-of-call" to "port-of-transit" was complete. The reality of this transformation is vividly contrasted by the following statements. In 1755, Francis Woods of the East India Company wrote that "many rich merchants have resorted to it (Bushire), whereby the place is becoming a Mart for all commodity's proper for sale in Persia." 39 About one hundred years later when Binning visited Bushire, he found the bazaars of Bushire desolate in appearance with many shops closed and abandoned. 40 Those shops that were open sold only the basic necessities. In the eighteenth century, the Bushire bazaar was a well-stocked, thriving market. About one hundred years later, the bazaar was run-down and was serving only local needs, although the volume of trade passing through Bushire was increasing. The contrasting picture of Bushire's bazaars can best be


40. R. Binning, *A Journal of Two Years Travel in Persia*, p. 142. Although many visitors later in the century (1860's on) painted a somewhat better picture of the Bushire bazaars, the fact remains that all of them tended to emphasize that the bazaar only served local needs and interests.
explained by the fact that in the eighteenth century Bushire was functioning as a marketing and distribution center for long-distance trade (a "port-of-call"), while in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it functioned only as a point of transshipment for foreign trade (port-of-transit).

Long-term structural changes in an economy do not produce immediate political changes in a society. It may take several decades before the political ramifications of such changes become readily apparent. Thus, the gradual transformation of Bushire from port-of-call to a port-of-transit did not lead directly to an immediate collapse of the al-Muzkur; however, the trade transformation did have underlying implications which helped pave the way for the family’s eventual downfall.

One spin-off of the transformation was that the merchants could, if they desired, slip under the wing of British protection. This meant that the shaykhs would have less opportunity to tap the wealth of the merchant community at a time when they needed to expand their sources of income.

An even more important spin-off of the transformation is the decline of the close bond which apparently existed in the eighteenth century between the al-Muzkur and the merchants. This spirit of
community was dissolved gradually, with the shifting of the locus of commercial exchange points to either India or the Persian heartland. Those engaged in the Indian trade increasingly had little vested interest in the political fortunes of the al-Muzkur. In fact, semi-independent political entities lying between the Persian heartland and India may have been seen by the merchants as a liability, because the family was unable to maintain political order, particularly after 1830. Hinterland control of the port (through the appointment of Shiraz-based administrators) became a viable alternative to the al-Muzkur.
CHAPTER VII

The Merchants and the al-Muzkur Family

The mercantile (bazaar) class has always played an important role in Iranian society. Besides their economic functions, the merchants have often been at the forefront of political, social and religious movements which have periodically swept the country over the past two centuries. The Bahai movement sprang out of southern Iran’s mercantile community, while the revolutionary movement which toppled the late Shāh was largely financed by the bazaar merchants, particularly in Tehran.

Within Būshire’s society, the merchants functioned in capacities other than just buyers and sellers of goods. First, the merchant acted as a communication mechanism. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Iran was an isolated country with vast distances separating regions and towns. The mercantile community was the one group within Iranian society which was in fairly regular communication with various sections of the country. Continuous exchanges of economic, political, social, and religious information flowed between merchants located in Būshire and their counterparts in other regions. For example, in April 1786, the EIC
resident noted that:

a letter was received from a principal merchant of this place from Karrasan (Khorāsān) giving his agent here particulars of Ja'far 'Ali Khan's defeat. 1

In another instance, in 1808 a merchant at Hoodida (North Yemen) wrote to a Būshire merchant that three hundred French vessels had arrived in Alexandria. 2 The importance of the merchants' communication role began to dissipate with the coming of the telegraph in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The merchant also functioned as a diplomat and mediator of political disputes. Not unexpectedly, merchants had an economic interest in preserving the peace. There are numerous examples of merchants turned diplomat. In the 1826 dispute between the Imām of Muscat and the al Muzkur, Shaykh Muḥammad (then the acting governor of Būshire) wrote to the Imām attempting to dissuade him from attacking the town. According to the EIC resident, "This letter it was the intention of Shaik Muḥammad to send by two merchants who were about to embark for Muscat for

1. *Būshire Residency Records*, R/15/1/3, 29 April, 1786.

the purpose of negotiation..."\(^3\)

In another instance, merchants in Būshire were actively involved in arranging a meeting between the Prince of Shiraz and Shaykh Ahmad who had seized temporary control of Būshire.\(^4\)

The merchant community (particularly the Armenians) often acted as intermediaries in disputes between the al-Muzkur and the British. In 1827 the British were feuding with the al-Muzkur and the resident actually had left the residency quarters and moved outside the city. In a dispatch to Bombay, the resident noted that an Armenian, Arrathoon Constantine, "was sent out (to the British camp) to ascertain my sentiments..."\(^5\) Again in 1839 when the British occupied Kharg Island, one of Būshire's leading merchants shuttled between the port and the island in an effort to resolve differences.\(^6\)

The merchants were also financiers for both the

---

3. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/36, 22 June, 1826.

4. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/40, 7 February, 1827.

5. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/45, day and month not recorded, 1827.

Bushire shaykhs and other Gulf port rulers. Within the context of this broad financial function, several different roles can be distinguished. First, the merchants extended loans and credit to the al-Muzkur. There are numerous references throughout the Bushire Residency Records to al-Muzkur approaches to various merchants for loans. Along the same line, the Frenchman, Arthur de Gobineau noted that merchants:

hold most of the capital of Persia which gives them great importance in the eyes of the government which is always harassed by financial obligations and which would not know what to do if they were not there to help it out. 7

Secondly, the merchants acted as a sort of financial clearing house in that they were the principal mechanism by which long distance financial transactions could be undertaken. For example in 1827, the Jews of Bushire owed the Shiraz government the equivalent of 17,000 Bombay rupees. To discharge this debt, these Jews wrote bills of exchange on a syndicate of Shiraz merchants who in turn were responsible for paying the government. 8

Finally, merchants from Bushire acted as third


8. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/38, 23 June, 1827.
party guarantors for financial agreements and loans.

In the late eighteenth century Bushire's leading merchant, Haji Khalil was said to be:

standing in the situation of security for the Imam of Muscat to the present governing powers in Persia for the revenues that the former is said to farm of the Ports of Gambron (Bandar 'Abbās) Koong and Feeloom...9

In 1839, a merchant temporarily acted as a guarantor for the al-Muzkur. The resident received a communication "from a merchant named Seyeed Meer Bakir who is understood to have become security for Hooseain Khan and the Sheik (Nāṣir III)...10

In this particular case, the merchant would have guaranteed the Shirāz government that it would receive its taxes from Bushire.

Before turning to the specific issue of merchant relations with the Bushire shaykhs, it should be noted that the al-Muzkur themselves were active traders and merchants. In the 1770's, the EIC resident stated that Shaykh Nāṣir was purchasing up to one-third of the Company's woollens11 and that the Shaykh was an important supplier of cloth and


11. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/2, 14 August, 1776.
grain to Karim Khan. References to Nasir's business dealings in Mocha, Basra and the Caspian Sea province of Gilan testify to the geographic scope of his mercantile interests.  

Thus, it seems clear that in the eighteenth century the al-Muzkur family was very much a part of the mercantile community. In a particularly revealing comment in 1776, the EIC agent wrote that Shaykh Nasir I:

> is too much of a merchant himself for us to expect any assistance from him in regarding the prices we sell, for...it is evidently his interest to join the merchants for getting them (the woollens) as cheap as possible.

This sense of a close working relationship with the merchant community is also conveyed in the resident's comment that "Shaik Nassir and the principal merchants here have joined and freighted a dow to Grain (Kuwait)..."  

Certain implications flowed from the fact that the al-Muzkur had a strong mercantile bent and close relations with the rest of the merchant community. The al-Muzkur had a vested interest in a prosperous

---

12. See for example Persian Gulf Factory Records, G/29/6, 28 June, 1751.

13. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/2, 13 December, 1776.

14. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/2, 14 August, 1776.
Būshire capable of attracting commerce. To do so, they had to provide a government which was perceived as being stable and reasonably just. It was precisely this type of environment which seems to have existed during the rule of Shaykh Nāṣir I.

There is a striking contrast between al-Muzkur/merchant relations in the eighteenth century and those of the nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, there was a marked deterioration in relations, primarily because of the family's repressive economic policies. Not unnaturally, the merchant community reacted to these provocations, and it was the merchant community's collusion with Shirāzi elites that ultimately was responsible for the family's downfall in 1850.

The first significant indication of possible tension between the al-Muzkur and the merchants was noted by the EIC agent at the end of the eighteenth century. The resident reported that Nāṣir II had instituted a practice of purchasing all of the Company's wares which he then "resold to the merchants and thereby gained a profit of 10 to 12 thousand rupees." 15 Naturally, this practice

caused resentment within the merchant community.

Further indications of possible tension were revealed two years later (in 1800). At that time, Nasir II and the Imam of Muscat were at odds over Bahrein. (See Chapter IV for further details.) In an attempt to settle their differences, Nasir sent a relative to Muscat in December of that year. The EIC resident in Muscat reported that one of the proposed conditions for a settlement (which the al-Muzkur were inclined to accept) was that "Nasser shall wink at the Imam's sending people to seize the malik-it-tujjar". 16

At that time, the malik-it-tujjar of Bushire was one, Haji Khalil. Although Khalil and his career will be discussed in greater detail shortly, suffice it to say for now that in the 1790s Khalil had grown very wealthy on the Indian trade. Not only did he act as middleman for finished goods (i.e. cloth), he also had investments in cloth looms in India, as well as shipping interests throughout the Gulf. In 1801, he was appointed Persian ambassador to India.

The origin of the apparent rivalry between Nasir II and Khalil (and by extension other important

16. Home Miscellaneous Series, volume 475, falll of 1800. (Exact date not given.)
merchants) stems at least in part from the changing economic relationship of the two. In the period preceding the 1790s, the al-Muzkur was Bushire's largest and wealthiest merchant family. The family dominated Bushire's mercantile life. (For example, reference has already been made to Naṣir I's purchases of East India Company woollens). Beginning in the 1780's, this dominance began to diminish. Except in a few instances, the Bushire shaykhs failed to respond to the changing commercial environment and the opportunities which it afforded. The al-Muzkur were no longer the big investors or commercial innovators. And by the turn of the century, individuals such as Haji Khalil were assuming increasingly dominate positions within Bushire's commercial life. (It was Khalil, not the al-Muzkur, who guaranteed the Imām of Muscat's tax farm at Bandar 'Abbās. Khalil could never have provided such security without a commanding commercial position.)

In the late eighteenth century, two areas of changing commercial opportunity affected al-Muzkur economic dominance. The first was related to the manufacture of cotton chintzes at Musilapatam, which was located on the eastern coast of India. In 1789, Charles Watkins, then the EIC resident in Bushire, reported that Bushire's trade with India had
increased because of the greater consumption of Musilapatam chintzes.\textsuperscript{17} Seven years later (in 1796), Nicholas Smith, Watkins' replacement reported that the chintz imports continued to dominate Bushire's trade and that "the muguls (i.e. traders) who reside at Mussalpatam and who manufacture and carry on their trade are all natives of Fārs..."\textsuperscript{18}

Taken together, the two statements suggest that sometime in the early 1780s (or perhaps in the late 1770s), Persian merchants began to invest heavily in the profitable chintz trade. Haji Khalil, for example, almost certainly seems to have been one of those merchants. On the other hand, the al-Muzkur, for reasons which are not readily apparent, do not appear to have done so. While the al-Muzkur obviously benefitted from the customs revenues generated by the chintz trade, nevertheless, the greater profits would have been made on the actual marketing of the chintzes.

A second area of change which affected relations between the merchant community and the al-Muzkur was the movement of Persian merchants to Indian ports.

\textsuperscript{17} "Watkins Trade Report", Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/microfilm, 20 November, 1789.

\textsuperscript{18} Home Miscellaneous Series, volume 474, p. 108-9, 29 December, 1796.
such as Bombay. The merchant could take advantage of the British security umbrella, because capricious seizure of his goods would often result in British protests or threats to use force if confiscated goods were not returned. Thus, the al-Muzkur were less able to expropriate surplus merchant capital.

A quick examination of some of the activities and economic holdings of various Persian merchants helps to support the preceding generalizations. One of the most important merchants in the late eighteenth century was Haji Khalil, whose full name was Haji Khalil Khān Qaralū Qazvini. In the late 1780s, he was actively engaged in trade between Baṣra, Būshire, and Shīrāz and by 1792 was considered the most important merchant in Būshire by the EIC resident. His influence and wealth continued to grow during the rest of the decade. Besides acting as security for the Imām of Muscat, he was also a partner in a large shipping concern with two EIC agents, Samuel Manesty and Harford Jones and a Portuguese merchant of Calcutta. By the end of the century, he was able to purchase the ambassadorship to India. (While in India, he died in a brawl with a detachment of EIC guards.)

Khalil used his relatives to extend his trade network. Two brothers-in-law, Muḥammad Nebī Khān and
Muḥammad Ja'far Khān, were merchants in Būshīre. Khalil had a son, Aghā Ismā'īl, who lived in Bombay but was active in Būshīre's commercial life in the 1820s and 1830s. He also had another nephew, Aghā Ḥusayn, "now at Bombay", and there were also relatives in Yezd and probably Baṣra.

Muḥammad Nebī Khān, said to be of "mean" origin, obtained a significant portion of Haji Khalil's fortune and used it to expand his commercial and political fortunes. Muḥammad Nebī was the son of a merchant from Būshīre named Aghā Kuchik, who also held a minor political "office" under Shaykh Nāṣir I of Būshīre. Through petty trade (beginning in Baṣra) and his marriage to Khalil's sister, Muḥammad Nebī was able to improve his worldly status. Following Haji Khalil's death, Muḥammad Nebī became the Persian ambassador to India, expanded his shipping interests while there, and returned to Iran several years later to become vizer to the Prince of Shirāz. Through that office, he gained control of the production, sale, and exportation of tobacco at Jahrom, and for three years (1808-11) effectively ran the government of Būshīre through his brother, Muḥammad Ja'far Khān.

There were other merchants living in India and conducting business from its various ports. An Aghā
Muḥammad Behbahānī arrived in Bombay about 1800 and died in that city in 1824. At the turn of the century, he was serving as an agent for Mehdī 'Alī Khān, then the EIC resident in Būshire. He had shipping interests and owned the Governor Duncan, one of the more prominent and active ships plying the waters between the Gulf and India. In approximately 1806, he negotiated a contract with the EIC to transport all of the Company's woollens to Būshire.¹⁹

The pattern whereby merchant families lived both in India and Iran continued during the nineteenth century. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, a Haji Aghā Bozorg moved to India staying there some forty years. He had at least three (and possibly four) sons. One son, Haji Shirāzi, resided primarily in Calcutta. He was described as being "of high character" and had extensive commercial dealings throughout the Indian Ocean and even had agents as far away as Cairo.

Shirāzi had two brothers who lived in Būshire: Haji Aghā 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad 'Alī and Aghā Muḥammad 'Alī. They were active in the commercial life of Būshire in the 1830s and the British resident

described Aghā 'Abd Allāh as "one of the leading merchants" of the port. In the early 1840s, Haji 'Abd Allāh became the malik-it-tujjar of Būshire and by the end of the decade, his wealth and influence in Būshire were readily apparent as the following comment demonstrates:

The Mullik-o-Tujar, having available a large sum of ready money, has been enabled to command the markets, and consequently to exercise a degree of control over his less rich brethren... Haji 'Abd Allāh may have enjoyed British consular protection as well, and he was instrumental in bringing down the al-muzkur in 1850.

Acts of al-Muzkur repression were not limited to the rule of Nāṣir II. For example, Wellsted noted that in the 1820s 'Abd al-Rasūl "placed many exactions on merchants, among them compelling them to take his goods at a price fixed by himself." Approximately two decades later, the resident commented that Nāṣir III was attempting to extort


23. J.R. Wellsted, Travels to the City of the Caliphs along the Shores of the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean, volume 2, p. 133
money from the merchants by demanding "loans or advances in anticipation of duty to be levied on their merchandise from India." 24

The loss of a sense of "community spirit" between the Bushire merchants and the al-Muzkur and the subsequent development of repressive commercial practices had several important implications. First, it had the tendency to divert trade to other ports because of merchant migration; in turn this situation lead to a decline of customs revenues, which were an obvious source of income for the family.

Second, the soured relationship made the merchant community extremely reluctant to float financial loans to the al-Muzkur. There are several references to merchant resistance to al-Muzkur demands for cash advances in the Bushire Residency Records in the 1830s and 40s. In 1838, the resident noted that a Jewish merchant was resisting being "oppressed by Shaik Nassir (III) for money." 25 Twelve years later (1850), the resident commented that "as the Shaik (Nasir III) is notorious for the non-payment of his

24. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/111, 14 April, 1847.

25. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/78, 9 March, 1838.
debts, the merchants of Bushire will afford him no pecuniary assistance, unless under coercion. 26

Frederick Lane has commented that "theoretically one might say that violence is productive when it is used to control violence and is not productive when it is used to transfer wealth from one person to another." 27 Lane's observation neatly summarizes the transformation which occurred in the relationship between the al-Muzkur family and the merchant community. In the eighteenth century, the al-Muzkur enforced order—that is to say they used violence in Bushire and the surrounding region in order to enhance the commercial life of the port. In contrast, in the nineteenth century, they attempted to "transfer wealth from one person to another."

The repressive policies of the al-Muzkur (particularly the demand for loans) led the merchant leadership of Bushire to turn to Shiraz, first in an effort to obtain relief and eventually to join in a conspiracy to oust the al-Muzkur. Although the al-Muzkur had pressured individual merchants for loans for several years, in 1847 the merchant

26. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/21, 15 June, 1850.

27. F. Lane, "The Economic Consequences of Organized Violence", from Venice and History, p. 421.
community collectively resisted al-Muzkur requisitions. The affair had begun in the usual manner. Shaykh Nāṣir III was unable to meet his tax obligation which had come due in March, 1847. He began to pressure various merchants for cash advances. However, this time under the leadership of Haji 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad, the malik-it-tujjar, the merchant community left the town en masse and began to march to Shīrāz. Before the merchants reached Shīrāz, the dispute was mediated, but only after Nāṣir III agreed to refrain from asking for further loans.28

Relations between the al-Muzkur and the merchants, particularly Haji 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad, however, remained shaky. Two years later, a new reputation occurred. Although the details are somewhat sketchy, the general outline of events is clear enough. With the death of the Qājār monarch, Muḥammad Shāh, (in 1848) and following the accession to the throne of Nāṣir ed-Dīn Shāh, a new governor of Fārs province was appointed. According to the resident, Haji 'Abd Allāh apparently took advantage of the situation and tried to persuade the new governor not to reappoint Nāṣir III governor of Būshire.

28. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/111, 14 April, 1847.
The al-Muzkur reacted to this possible threat by harassing Haji 'Abd Allāh to the point that he "feared for his life." To save himself, Haji 'Abd Allāh called to his side "most of the principal merchants of the place (Būshire) who remained in his house night and day pending the adjustment of the quarrel."\textsuperscript{29} The affair ended with Haji 'Abd Allāh's ouster from Būshire and flight to Shirāz. Three months later (August 1849), the al-Muzkur forced the brother of Haji 'Abd Allāh from the town on the grounds that he was intriguing with his exiled brother in Shirāz.

The protection which the merchant community offered to Haji 'Abd Allāh clearly shows where its sympathies lay. By this juncture, the Al-Muzkur had no substantive allies within the town as events would shortly show.

The flight of Haji 'Abd Allāh to Shirāz proved to be a disaster for the al-Muzkur. Haji 'Abd Allāh found a ready ally for his intrigues in the person of 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, who was a member of the Qavām family, one of Shirāz's most powerful families. Although the Qavām family had lived in the Shirāz

\textsuperscript{29} Būshire Residency Records, R/15/117, 15 May, 1849.
area for several centuries, it gained national prominence when Haji Ibrāhīm betrayed the Zands and turned Shirāz over to the Qājārs in 1791. Haji Ibrāhīm was rewarded for his efforts by being named chief minister. However, Fatḥ 'Alī Shāh eventually had him and his sons and brothers killed or blinded except for a young son, 'Alī Akbar, who was thought to be dying of cholera. 'Alī Akbar returned to Shirāz in 1812 and later was named kalāntar of Fārs. In 1829-30 he was given the title of Qavām-al-Mulk. 'Alī Muhammad Khān, the fourth son of 'Alī Akbar, inherited his father's title and succeeded him in the kalāntar post. 30

The alliance which developed between the Qavāms and Haji 'Abd Allāh had its genesis in two important developments which were shaping the political and economic landscape of southern Iran at mid-century. First, there was a realignment of political coalitions and power relationships in the area. Ervand Abrahamian has pointed out that Qājār rule was sustained—in large measure—by playing regional rivals against one another so as to maintain a rough

30. This discussion was taken primarily from W. Royce, "The Shirazi Provincial Elite: Status Maintenance and Change", in Continuity and Change in Modern Iran, edited by M. Bonnie and N. Keddie.
balance of power between all important political factions and rivals. In Fars province, the Qajars attempted to balance the power of the Qashqaii tribe:

by relying on the local Bakhtiyaris, the Boir Ahmedis and the powerful family of Haji Ibrāhīm... This balance, however, broke down in the 1850s. The five Ni'matī wards in Shiraz turned against the Haji Ibrāhīm family, whose strength lay in the five Haydari wards, and formed an alliance with the Qashqayis. At the same time, the Bakhtiyaris and Boir Ahmedia, absorbed in internal feuds, ceased to deter the Qashqayis. They awarded 'Alī Muḥammad Khān... the title of Qāvām al-Mulk and the governorship of Fars. They placed his relatives in crucial posts throughout the southern provinces. They encouraged him to ally five minor tribes... all of whom were individually threatened by the expanding Qashqayis. And naming his confederation the Khamseh (Five Together), the Qajars nominated Qāvām al-Mulk as its first ilkhān.  

While the Qajars may have been satisfied with a decentralized but balanced power equilibrium, the merchant community in Būshore and perhaps elsewhere seems to have been pushing for a more centralized power arrangement. Essentially, Būshore's merchants determined that they were better off paying protection rents to the Qāvāms than they were to the al-Muzkur. Certainly, during the two previous decades, the al-Muzkur had been unable to insure political stability and security in Būshore. Nor was there any prospect that the al-Muzkur would be able

31. E. Abrahimian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, p. 45.
to do so in the future. Thus, the merchants were willing to look for a new protector. Lane has described—somewhat abstractly—the process that occurred when he noted that:

the diversity of ways in which (commercial) enterprises could obtain protection enabled them to choose among alternatives, pay different amounts according to the choice made and receive different kinds or degrees of protection in return.\(^{32}\)

Merchant communities throughout history have searched for regularized protection as a means of protecting trade and trade routes and helping to ensure the maximization of profits. Certainly this was true of European merchants at the end of the Middle Ages. At that time, they began to support the growth of centralized power at the expense of local barons and decentralized fiefdoms. Their motive for doing so was simple—a willingness to pay regular protection payments (taxes) in exchange for security and stability throughout a given trading area.

Haji 'Abd Allāh and 'Alī Muḥammad worked for a year to oust the al-Muzkur from Bushire. The final opportunity came in the summer of 1850. Haji 'Abd Allāh was able to convince the governor of Shiraz that Nāṣir III had collected approximately 12,000

tomans in back taxes but only paid 2,000 tomans to Shiraz. Shiraz duly demanded that Nasir come to the city and turn over the additional monies. Foolishly, Nasir complied with the request, although he was unable to produce the money. Nasir was imprisoned and the Qavam family quickly stepped forward and purchased the governorship. Commenting on the al-Muzkur's final debacle, the resident observed that "Hajee 'Abdool Mohammed has secretly done much injury to the shaik's affairs." 33

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the al-Muzkur were increasingly unable to tap the wealth of the merchant community which in turn affected their tax relationship with Shiraz. There are two basic ways that the al-Muzkur could have obtained access to merchant funds: they could have taxed trade through heavy customs duties (which was not feasible) or they could have obtained loans. However, the loan option became increasingly untenable, given the merchants' resistance to al-Muzkur overtures.

What made the merchant community so resistant to the al-Muzkur? Strayer's observation about Philip

33. Secret Letters and Enclosures to Secret Letters Received from Bombay, L/P and S/5/466, August 26 to 7 Setpember, 1850.
the Fair's relationship with the Italian banking community residing in France provides a suggestive answer. Strayer argues that the reason Philip was not able to take advantage of the wealth of the Italian banking community was because:

it was difficult for Philip to put his relations with the Italians on a stable basis when there was no stability in his financial system as a whole...(Philip could not) establish normal banking relations with them because he could not furnish adequate security for a large loan or for a continuing line of credit.\textsuperscript{34}

The al-Muzkur faced the same issue during the last twenty to thirty years of their rule. Naturally, the merchant community had little interest in extending credit under such circumstances. Efforts to extort loans only made the situation worse. The fundamental problem that the al-Muzkur faced was that they were losing access to their sources of revenue. The following chapter will focus on that issue and the problems it raised.

\textsuperscript{34} Strayer, "Italian Bankers and Philip the Fair" from Economy, Society, and Government in Italy, edited by D. Herlihy, R. S. Lopez and V. Slessarev.
CHAPTER VIII
The Financial Resources of the al-Muzkur

The last three chapters have examined structural changes in the conduct of Persian Gulf trade, changes in merchant/al-Muzkur relations and the impact of those changes on the political fortunes of the al-Muzkur family. Attention will now be focused on the more concrete issue of al-Muzkur revenues. Following a description of the principal sources of income of the shaykhs of Būshire, the discussion will examine the problem of their financial expenditures, particularly the increasing tax demands of the Shirazi government.

The al-Muzkur had two major sources of income: customs revenue and tax receipts from territories under their control. The amount of revenue that could be generated from customs receipts was a function of the volume of trade passing through the port. In turn, the volume of trade was influenced by several factors, including demand for overseas products, exchange rates, shipping costs and customs duties. However, two factors stand out as having had a particularly decisive influence on trade and customs revenues in the Gulf during the nineteenth
century: political stability in the port itself and the extent to which a port city could exercise political influence and control over a given trade region.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Bushire was the dominate port on the northern littoral of the Persian Gulf, although this situation had not always prevailed. Reference already has been made in Chapter III to the competition which existed between Bushire, Bandar Rig and Bandar 'Abbās for control of the trade entering the Persian heartland. As has been shown, Bushire eventually emerged as the ultimate victor in the struggle. However, this is not to argue that a port like Bandar 'Abbās was reduced to the status of a mere fishing village in the aftermath of the victory of the al-Muzkur and Bushire. Bandar'Abbās still continued to function as a port and trade still continued to pass through it.\(^1\)

Nevertheless, two points are of interest: first, by the end of the eighteenth century, the volume of trade passing through Bandar 'Abbās was reduced

---

\(^1\) For example, the East India Company (EIC) resident in Muscat noted in 1800 that spices and cloth goods were imported into Bandar 'Abbās, while spicie, Kirman wool, and dried nuts and fruit were exported. *Home Miscellaneous Series*, volume 474, 19 March, 1800, p. 128.
significantly from its previously high levels. 2 Secondly, trade was confined regionally. Bandar 'Abbās served a very local market.

Bushire's predominate market position was not challenged seriously until the 1830's. Not unexpectedly, it was the internal political situation which threatened Bushire's market dominance. An earlier chapter has described the numerous revolutions and violence to which the port was subjected in the late 1820's and 1830's. The impact of this political instability on the imports and exports of Bushire was devastating. Imports carried on British flag vessels alone fell from 106,78,611 Persian rupees for the year August 1829 to July, 1830 to 17,79,722 rupees for the year August, 1833 to July, 1834. Much of this trade was diverted into other channels, as Whitelock's observation (made in 1836) readily demonstrates:

---

2 For example, Milburn noted that "the trade formerly carried on was very considerable; at present (approximately 1808-10) it was trifling, scarce one vessel in a season calling here (i.e. Bandar 'Abbās)". W. Millburn, Oriental Commerce, volume 1, p. 132. In 1800, however, the EIC resident in Muscat believed that the port was experiencing somewhat of a revival under the Imām of Muscat. Home Miscellaneous Series, volume 474, 19 March, 1800, p. 128.
When Būshire, a few years ago, remained for some time in a disturbed state, commerce found its way again into this channel (Bandar 'Abbās): and if Būshire had not been speedily restored to peace, Bunder Abbass would very soon have recovered a considerable portion of its former importance.  

In fact, over the next ten years (roughly 1835-45), Bandar 'Abbās did recover much of its "former importance". For example, the Persian Correspondence Series of the Government of Bombay shows that for the Iranian years 1845/46 and 1846/47, Persian merchants in India were consigning shipments of goods almost three times as often to Bandar 'Abbās as to Būshire. Moreover, by 1851 Bandar 'Abbās appears to have reasserted its dominance over much of the trade destined for the eastern Iranian heartland.

Bandar 'Abbās' growing commercial prosperity renewed the Shirāz government's interest in the

---


4. Letters Received by and sent to the Governor of Bombay, Persian Correspondence, range 418, volume 67.

5. In a memorandum to Lord Palmerston, Justin Shiel, Whitehall's representative in Tehrān, commented that "trade coming from India and destined for Yezd, Kirmān and the eastern parts of Fārs and (all of) Khorāsān usually is landed at Bunder 'Abbās." Political and Secret Letters and Enclosures from the Persian Gulf, L/P and S/9/126, 29 December, 1851, p. 433.
port. As will be recalled, Bandar 'Abbās had been farmed by the Imāms of Muscat since the early 1790's. However, by the end of 1847, the Būshire resident reported that Shirāz was anxious to reassert full control over Bandar 'Abbās "since the government of Fārs expected to realize 40,000 tomans from the district—the larger portion of the revenues (being) derived from the import and export duties levied there." 6

Bandar 'Abbās was not the only port to challenge Būshire. Beginning in the 1830's, the port of Muḥammerra (modern day Khurramshahr) emerged as an important source of competition both to Baṣra and Būshire. Muḥammerra which is located at the confluence of the Shatt al-'Arab and Karun rivers, was administered by the Bani Ka'ab tribe. In 1830, the Bani Ka'ab instituted an aggressive trade policy which rapidly transformed that port from a sleepy river village to a bustling trade center. Henry Rawlinson, then East India Company (EIC) resident in Baṣra, noted for example that "Muḥammerra swelled from a petty fort into a considerable town between the years 1830 and 1838—into so much consequence as a

6. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/113, 31 December, 1847. The Shirāz government did in fact regain control of Bandar 'Abbās in the following decade.
emporium of trade, that it attracted general attention.\textsuperscript{7}

Muhammad's rapid growth was predicated on and sustained by a simple trade policy: customs duties were not levied. The result of such a policy was not unexpected: large numbers of merchants gravitated to the port to the detriment of other port cities. In particular, the free trade policy of the Ka'ab lowered the volume of trade passing through Bagra and to a lesser degree Būshire and thus cut deeply into customs receipts.\textsuperscript{8} In an effort to return affairs to the previous status quo, the Pasha of Baghdad

\textsuperscript{7} Henry Rawlinson, "Memorandum on Mohemmera". Cited by Shiel in Political and Secret Letters and Enclosures from the Persian Gulf, L/P and S/9/126, 29 December, 1844, p. 813.

\textsuperscript{8} For example, a merchant from Būshire wrote to the EIC resident that "as Mohamrah was allowed by its Sheiks to be a free place for commerce, the merchants of Bassorah had preferred to carry on their business in landing their Indian and European piece goods at that place..." Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/100, 12 August, 1843.
sacked the town in 1837. However, the attack was only a temporary set back for the city, and Muḥammērā regained its economic vitality in the 1840's.

It is impossible to estimate precisely how much revenue the al-Muzkur lost because of the economic challenges of Bandar 'Abbās and Muḥammērā. By the late 1840's, though, the figure must have been substantial. In 1848, for example, Shaykh Nāṣir III complained to the resident that the annual revenues of Būshirā had been falling "owing to the extensive trade which formerly existed having been diverted into other channels." ¹⁰

There were essentially two broad responses which the ruling family could have made to recoup revenues lost from the rising port challenges. The first would have employed a military strategy. Within the

9. "It is well-known that the cause of the attack of the Pasha of Baghdad on this town (i.e. Muḥammērā) was the injury it inflicted on the commercial prosperity of Bassarah by attracting to itself the trade of the latter city in consequence of the freedom from all duties, which prevailed at Moḥammērā. Būshirā too felt similar effects from the same cause...It is a reasonable inference that the absence of duties drew a large share of the import and export trade of the south of Persia and of that part of Turkey (i.e. Iraq)." Justin Sheil to the Earl of Aberdeen, Political and Secret Letters and Enclosures from the Persian Gulf, L/P and S/9/126, 29 December, 1844, p. 813.

context of this strategy, the al-Muzkur had two theoretical options. First, they could have embarked on a policy of port destruction such as the Pasha of Baghdad attempted to employ against Muhammera.

An alternative option would have been to assert influence and/or control over the Persian Gulf’s shipping lanes and channels and—under the most optimum of conditions—forcibly divert trade to Bushire. Frederick Lane has identified the two methods which would have been open to the al-Muzkur in their efforts to "control" shipping. The first tactic is that of "cut and run" which denies an opponent the use of essential trade routes, even if the party employing the strategy cannot fully protect its own shipping or control the shipping lanes. This was the basic option which Germany pursued during World War I.

The second possible tactic is that of "cut and dry command of the sea." Here the object is to control strategic points along trade routes, as well as employ regular patrols to protect trade. The intent of the "cut and dry" tactic is "to deny (to the enemy) the use of (a given set of) waters...and to make navigation safe for friends at all times."

Such a tactic was employed successfully by Venice for
several centuries.\textsuperscript{11}

The "cut and dry" approach is actually part of a broader strategy which an independent port might have employed. Lane defines this broad strategy as the drive to be a "staple city." He defines the staple city in the following manner:

Each medieval city strove to be what was called the staple. This meant that it imposed on as large an area as feasible, staple rights which required the wares being exchange between different parts of the region to be brought to the staple city, unloaded there to pay taxes, and offered there for sale. Merchandize from outside the region was required to be brought to the staple city and not to any other place within the region.\textsuperscript{12}

Rival merchants were welcomed at the port, but they were required to exchange merchandise in the port and nowhere else. Through "cut and dry" control of the sea lanes (and land routes) a "staple" policy was enforceable.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Muscat sought to become the "staple city" for the Persian Gulf region. It gained (or attempted to gain) control over several strategic choke points in the Gulf and forcibly divert trade through Muscat. The British resident in Muscat neatly summed up the

\textsuperscript{11} F. Lane, \textit{Venice: A Maritime Republic}, pp. 67-68.

\textsuperscript{12} F. Lane, \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 62.
Omani policies in the following comment:

The Imāms of Muscat having cleared the Gulf of priates (i.e. secured "cut and dry" control of the lower Gulf), established a duty of 2.5% to be paid by those who benefitted by the protection thus afforded to their trade.13

When Persian merchants attempted to sail directly from India to Būshire and elsewhere, Muscat reacted through attacks on local shipping and appeals to the British.14 In the long run, however, Muscat failed to maintain its status as a "staple city."

The preceding discussion has laid out the theoretical military options available to Būshire in responding to the challenge of port competition. In fact, Būshire did not have the military or political capability to employ any of those options. It did not have the necessary naval strength to patrol the Gulf. Moreover, by the 1830's, the rural hinterland was a mortal threat to the security of the port. With that flank in question, there was virtually no possibility that the al-Muzkur could undertake the large scale naval operations required for a "cut and run" or "cut and dry" strategy.


A second theoretical option for recouping lost revenues would have been for the al-Muzkur to have increased customs duties. However, this option was also not viable since high customs duties would have caused merchant migration. The remarkable similarity of customs duties throughout the Gulf reinforces the preceding generalization. An individual port city simply could not raise customs duties to exorbitant height and expect to retain its share of the Gulf trade.

In 1768, customs duties in Bushire were said to average eight to nine percent.15 This rate seems to have dropped over the next three decades for in their 1791 economic report, Jones and Manesty found customs duties to be "very moderate."16 In 1800, Malcolm reported that import duties on exports were "trifling."17 Two years later, Waring stated that "the duty on goods imported into Persia, amounts at

15. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/1/Part 1, 8 February, 1768. "The merchants...already pay from 8 to 9% to the Persian Custom House."

16. "Report on the Commerce of Arabia and Persia," Factory Records, G/19/21. They did admit that it was difficult to determine precisely what the rate was because they varied according to the "commercial importance of the importer and according to the peaceful or confused state of the interior ports of the Empire."

Bushire to about five percent.\textsuperscript{18} and in 1803 the Bushire resident observed that the duties on sugar, cinnamon, iron, lead, and rice amounted to four or five percent.\textsuperscript{19} In the early 1820's, Fraser suggested that duties in Bushire were about five percent.\textsuperscript{20} Finally, an 1836 statement of the customs duties levied at Bushire placed the "average custom house duty" at 4 percent.\textsuperscript{21}

How did customs duties at Bushire compare with those at other ports? Customs duties at Muscat averaged 6 to 6.5 percent at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{22} Jones and Manesty also reported (in 1791) that Bahrein had no duties "on mercantile articles", although duties were imposed during the nineteenth

\textsuperscript{18} S. Waring, A Tour of Sheeraz, p. 79. In addition to the customs duties, Waring noted that "the Sheikh of Bushire takes one piece of chintz from every bale imported into Persia." (Footnote, p. 79.)

\textsuperscript{19} Bombay Commercial Proceedings, range 451, volume 41, p. 1312, 17 August, 1803.

\textsuperscript{20} J. Fraser, Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan in the Years 1821 and 1822, p. 213. "All merchandise, on arriving either by sea or land, pays an entering duty at the first Persian town; which, though it varies in some instances, may be taken at 5 percent generally."

\textsuperscript{21} Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/71, 6 July, 1836.

\textsuperscript{22} Jone/Manesty Report and Malcolm Report.
century. Customs duties in Başra in 1803 were 7 percent for individual merchants and 3 percent for the East India Company, an arrangement that was still in effect when Buckingham was there in 1828.

It is more difficult to determine the customs duties of Bandar Lingah. In 1828, they were said to be five percent on all imports and exports. This figure is somewhat contradicted by the Deputy Collector of Customs at Kurrachi who stated that up to 1855 "there was no duty" on merchandise but rather "a tax on boats belonging to the port." After 1855 a five percent duty was imposed as well as the tonnage tax. In 1864, however, Pelly reported that there were no import or export duties at Lingah.

At Bandar 'Abbās import duties were said to be low in the early nineteenth century although no specific figures are available. In 1851, import

23. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/6, 26 April, 1803.

24. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/147, "Extract Paragraph: Number 7 from the Digest of the Deputy Collector of Customs at Kurrachee," 7 November, 1855. The tax on a boat of 100 candies (a unit of weight measurement) was under 50 krans. On larger boats it was a half a kran per candy.

25. Secret Letters Received (various), L/P and S/9, volume 15, 16 January, 1864.
duties averaged about five percent. 26

The limited evidence suggests that customs duties were remarkably parallel throughout the Gulf region. The most compelling reason for this close corellation lies in the fact that the ports competed with one another for trade, and, therefore, their customs duties could not be grossly out of line with those of their competitors scattered up and down the Gulf.

Customs revenues, however, were not the al-Muzkur's only source of income. Tax revenues from coastal and hinterland districts under al-Muzkur control also represented an integral source of income for the Būshire shaykhs. Yet al-Muzkur control over various tax districts gradually waned over time, resulting in a subsequent loss of revenue. The following paragraphs trace the contraction of Būshire's political authority over various districts. Before proceeding, however, a caveat is necessary: the discussion is conducted at a general level because more detailed evidence and material is not available. Nevertheless, the trends are discernible.

26. Secret Letters and Enclosures from India, L/P and S/9, 15 December, 1851.
In the mid-eighteenth century Bushire's political influence extended over the entire Bushire peninsula and inland to the village of Chah Kutah. It also extended to the northwest and encompassed a district known as Rohilla. The broad parameters of this territorial influence appear to have remained generally stable over the next two to three decades. For example, the alliance relationships which emerged during the tax disputes of 1767 suggest that the al-Muzkur had no authority over territories such as Dashtistan or Tangistan. (See Chapter III for details.) Moreover, during this time frame, Bushire was unable to extend its influence further up the coast toward Bandar Rig, despite Mir Mohanna's eventual collapse.

The al-Muzkur, of course, did expand their influence in the Gulf. Bahrain was seized and various other maritime expeditions were mounted. However, the directional orientation of expansion was reversed in the period following the Tangistani

27. Following the tax dispute of 1767, the EIC resident noted that "the inhabitants (of Rohilla) were retired (had returned) into the country at the distance of 3 to 5 leagues (11.5 to 17.5 miles) toward Banderick (Bandar Rig) tilling and sowing their land." Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/1/part 1, 3 January, 1766. The fact that these people had taken refuge in Bushire suggests a political and economic relationship.
raid of 1779. After leading a successful counter offensive, Shaykh Nāşir I built and occupied two forts in Tangistān. The presence in Tangistān of armed retainers loyal to Nāşir suggests that they could easily have been employed in tax collecting activities. Nāşir's influence was also firmly entrenched in Dashtistān during the period of the 1780's. 28 This apparent overwhelming authority again hints that Nāşir was able to draw tax revenues from the area. On the other hand, Bahrein was lost in 1783.

During the 1790's, the al-Muzkur tried to move further afield and in some cases were successful. For example, Carrack (modern Kharg) Island and Bandar Rig fell under Būshire's sway. 29 However, an expedition to expand Būshire's internal political frontiers failed. The target was the town of Khisht, which is located off of the Gulf lowland plans.

28. For example, Morier commented that "the Dashtistān was his (Nāşir's) province. (J. Morier, A Journey through Persia during the years 1808 and 1809, p. 16.) In 1787, Harford Jones also noted that "the Shaikh's influence amongst the inhabitants and chiefs of the Dashtistān and Garmseer was very great." (Harford Jones Brydyes, The Dynasty of the Qajars, pp. CXIX-CXX.)

Nasir II organized and led the expedition to Khisht. Little is known about what exactly happened at Khisht, other than the expedition apparently suffered a severe loss and ended in failure.

Two lines of speculative thought may help to explain why the al-Muzkur attempted to expand their influence as far north as Khisht and why as it turned out the Khisht expedition remained only an isolated footnote in Bushire's history. The decision to attack Khisht may have stemmed from the realization that Bushire's economic security was dependent on developments both in the interior of the country and in the Gulf. More specifically, if trade routes were cut in the interior, trade would come to a standstill in Bushire no matter how favorable the security situation in the Gulf. Thus, there was a logic to trying to expand political authority over the main trade route in order to assure its security.

Venician history helps to illustrate the point. In discussing Venice's decision to expand inland in the early 14th century, Pullan has commented that:

it seems as though the Venetians had begun to realize that if they were to survive as an entrepot, they could not go on ignoring the question of overland communications or continue to divorce the sea from the land. These could no longer be treated as two entirely separate spheres of action, competing for investment and attention. They must be regarded as complementary to each other...30

The problem that confronted Venice was how to prevent one or more powers from gaining control of the transit routes which went up the Po, Brento and Adige rivers and eventually over the Lombardy or Julian Alps. Failure to gain strong influence over or outright control of these routes could mean that they could be closed at will by powers hostile to Venice's well-being.

In Buşhish's case, there was only one route readily available for trade. Trade could be harassed or closed as it moved along that route because no single entity exercised absolute authority along its entire length, particularly in the late 18th century. Thus, the al-Muzkur may have wanted to gain control over as much of the route as possible, in order to assure the continuous flow of trade to the interior plateau. The period during which dynastic transition was coming to a climax would have been an obvious time to have made such a move.

What is more difficult to explain is why the 1793 Khisht expedition was apparently an isolated phenomenon. Why were there not further efforts to seize control of towns such as Khisht, particularly in the late 18th century during which time Buşhish was relative stable politically and prosperous economically.
Part of the answer may lie in the relationship which exists between the geographic size of a political entity and the structure of its economy. In essence, the economy and the government which it is able to support--to a large extent--can determine the geographic size of a political entity. This is so because the economy can determine--in large measure--the amount of material resources which can be mobilized to expand the political/geographic influence and control of the entity. The subsistence economy which dominated much of Būshīre's economic life simply did not allow the al-Muzkur to put together sufficient military resources to expand onto the plateau. The mountain passes which empty onto the lowland plains were the geographic limit for a shaykhdom such as Būshīre. Russell has developed the same theme in his discussion of medieval regions in Europe. Speaking of France, Italy, Germany and Spain, he has noted that:

Whatever the historical and national forces there were to unite these areas into workable political entities, the demographic and economic forces of the regions were considerable hurdles, too great for the period AD 1000-1348 to bring out permanently.31

The economic forces necessary to sustain political centralization were not sufficiently strong to encourage the growth of the modern nation-state.

One of the ironies of history for the al-Muzkur was that the family was unable to take advantage of the conversion from a subsistence to cash crop economy in southern Iran. Rather, the process encouraged a centralizing tendency and helped to lay the groundwork for the demise of the family and all of the northern littoral shaykhdoms.

During the nineteenth century, there was a gradual contraction of Būshīre's political authority in the surrounding districts. The process was slow and uneven (there were temporary expansive periods, for example). Nevertheless, the overall direction of the trend line was toward contraction.

The first major set back occurred in 1802 with the loss of Dalīki, a rich grain and date producing region located at the foot of the interior mountain ranges. With the ouster of the al-Muzkur from Būshīre during the years 1807 to 1815, there probably was a loss of political authority in the hinterland authority, although there is no detailed evidence to support this assertion. However, events in the 1820's demonstrated that authority in areas such as Dashtistān had been curtailed at a previous point.
For example, on his visit to Bushire in 1825, Alexander commented that the area around Borāzjān (capital of Dashtistān) was unsettled, primarily because of "the grasping disposition of the Sheik of Bushire, who is endeavoring to get under his jurisdiction the whole of the low country..."  

'Abd al-Rasūl apparently was successful in the effort, but not because of his political or military prowess. It required a payment to Shirāz to secure 'Abd al-Rasūl's authority (and even then it is not clear that 'Abd al-Rasūl had the military clout to enforce this grant.) This victory was short-lived—at least in Dashtistān. In 1829, 'Abd al-Rasūl again reported that Shirāz had given him charge of the Dashtistān, implying that he had lost control sometime between 1825 and 1829. In this particular case, part or all of Tangistān must have been included in the grant, since the town of Ahram was included in the farman.

Another incident suggesting a loss of territorial control either early in the 1820's (or prior to that time) was the expedition to Bandar Dallum which 'Abd

32. J. Alexander, Travels from India to England, 1825-26, p. 100.
33. Bushire Residency Records, R/15/1/33, 12 March, 1825.
al-Rasūl proposed to make in 1829. In a message to
the Resident, the Shaykh wrote that:

It is not hidden from you that Bandar Dellum
for some years past has been in rebellion
against me and has not even paid the payment
of the arrears of tribute. 34

It is not clear whether the expedition was successful
or not.

With 'Abd al-Rasūl's death in 1831, al-Muzkur
influence rapidly dissipated in the interior areas.
For example, the town of Ahram was permanently lost
in the mid-1830's. The 1840's saw a further
diminution of Būshire's political authority and
hence its access to revenues. For example, when
Nāṣir III was restored to the governorship in 1845,
several districts in the immediate Būshire area were
taken from him and placed under the authority of
Tangistān. 35

The gradual loss of territory was linked to the
decline of the political fortunes of the al-Muzkur
family. Control of territory brought in tax
revenue. Large financial coffers assured that the
al-Muzkur could maintain large and loyal military
forces. In turn, loyal forces were the primary

34. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/45, 3 June,
1829.

35. Būshire Residency Records, R/15/1/105, 19 May,
1845.
mechanism of projecting power into the interior and influencing other political actors. Finally, the projection of power assured a flow of revenues.

The process was cylindrically dialectic in nature; that is to say a weakened military weakened the al-Muzkur's ability to obtain revenues which further weakened military strength. There was action/reaction linkage. However, the process was not a straightline, deterministic, dialectic process such as expounded by Marx. Expansion of revenues could expand political influence. However, to the detriment of the al-Muzkur, it was the contraction process which predominated in the nineteenth century.

The last three and a half chapters have sought to show that the revenues of the al-Muzkur shrank during the nineteenth century due to port competition, territorial contraction and long-term structural changes in the conduct of Persian Gulf trade. Moreover, these revenue losses generally were not recoupable. If revenues shrank, however, demands made upon those revenues steadily increased during the nineteenth century and it is on that problem that discussion will now be focussed.

The tax demands of the Shiraz government are the central issue of concern. Tax figures covering approximately one hundred years have been assembled.
Admittedly, these figures are not complete. There are also other problems associated with them. Persian currency, for example, depreciated during the period under consideration, and there is no accurate method by which one can compute a base year and measure changes in real value. Nevertheless, even though these limitations exist, a broad general trend is discernible in the figures: tax demands increased, particularly in the period after 1830. This is precisely the same time period that revenues began their truly precipitous decline.

Table 1 contains a compilation of available data of tax demands imposed on the al-Muzkur. While the table is self-explanatory, two points do stand out: First, tax demands during the Zand period were light compared to the Qajar period. Secondly, Zand tax demands were relatively stable, while figures available from the Qajar period show a steady drift upward.

There is no financial data with which to even roughly estimate the total revenue of the Bushire shaykhs over time. Thus, it is impossible to calculate the ratio between revenues and the demand on them. However, actions taken by the al-Muzkur to meet their tax bills (i.e. borrowing from the merchants or selling personal property) strongly
TABLE 8.1
Tribute Costs for the al-Muzkur Shaykhs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 1751</td>
<td>35,000 tomans</td>
<td>Gambroon Diary G/29/6</td>
<td>This was tribute demanded by 'Ali-Mardan Khan. It was extremely high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1767</td>
<td>4,000 tomans</td>
<td>Residency Records R/15/1/1/part 2</td>
<td>Karim Khan demanded this sum for retention of the governorship of Bushire and Bahrein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1786</td>
<td>5,000 tomans</td>
<td>Residency Records R/15/1/microfilm</td>
<td>Imposed during the dispute with Ja'far Khan Zand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1800</td>
<td>approximately 3,800 tomans</td>
<td>Factory Records G/29/22</td>
<td>Malcolm estimated that this figure was &quot;transmitted regularly&quot; to Shīrāz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1802</td>
<td>4,000 tomans</td>
<td>Waring</td>
<td>This was for the rent of lands in the Garmsir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>17,798 tomans</td>
<td>Residency Records R/15/1/115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-1830s</td>
<td>15,798 tomans</td>
<td>Residency Records R/15/1/115</td>
<td>Reduction due to the loss of control of the town of Aḥram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late-1830s</td>
<td>20,000 tomans</td>
<td>Residency Records R/15/1/115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 1840s</td>
<td>22,632 tomans</td>
<td>Residency Records R/15/1/115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1840s</td>
<td>26,000 tomans</td>
<td>Residency Records R/15/1/115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
suggest that the al-Muzkur were hard pressed financially, particularly in the two decades preceding their collapse.
CONCLUSION

The numerous strands of thought in this study can now be summarized. As a point of departure, this study postulated that a fundamental change occurred in the political configuration of the northern littoral of the Persian Gulf, primarily during the nineteenth century. Semi-independent Arab shaykhdoms (and Arab/Persian khanates in the interior of the Garmsir) succumbed to the political domination of the Shiraz government. Shiraz appointed governors (generally members of Shiraz's local, elite families) now ruled in place of the local Arab shaykhs. The collapse of the shaykhdom of Bushire provides a textbook example of this process.

There were two basic reasons for the collapse of the power of the al-Muzkur, Bushire's ruling Arab family. First, the Bushire shaykhs lost control of their hinterland security which was the principal source of threat to Bushire. Bushire could be attacked by a combination of various local, interior khanates. It could also be threatened by Shiraz (often in conjunction with the local khans.) Whether a hinterland threat actually materialized depended to a large extent on the attitude of Shiraz which was why the alliance with the Zands was so important. In the nineteenth century, however, the
al-Muzkur were never able to form what might be termed a stable security relationship with the Qājārs.

Two important implications flowed from the unstable relationship with Shirāz. Shirāz had no vested interest in the al-Muzkur and became an increasing threat to their independence. Secondly, the al-Muzkur generally would have to face the interior tribes on their own. In a worse case scenario, the al-Muzkur would have to face a combination of Shirāzi and interior forces, and, in fact, this is precisely the scenario that came to dominate Būshire's political life in the 1830s and 1840s.

The security of the al-Muzkur was not threatened just by the change in security relations among the major political actors. The revenue base of the al-Muzkur also came under pressure in the nineteenth century which had direct political implications for the al-Muzkur. First customs revenues plateaued or actually shrunk as a result of structural changes in the conduct of Persian Gulf trade (i.e. the transformation of Būshire from port-of-call to port-of-transit, British commercial practices and the rise of port city competition). At the same time that maritime based revenues were declining, land based revenues were also under pressure. Granted that the process was irregular, nevertheless the long run trend was one of decline in land holding and hence tax revenues. The net effect of these changes was to reduce the revenue base of
the al-Muzkur. Financial demands on the al-Muzkur increased, however; but as has been shown, there was little the al-Muzkur could do to close the deficit gap.

The decline in economic power led to a decline in political power (the al-Muzkur could not pay retainers, loyal tribes or buy off adversaries) which in turn led to a further decline in economic strength since territory could not be defended. The question can be raised which came first: the decline in economic or political power? The question is almost like asking which came first: the chicken or the egg?; it defies a definitive answer. It can be suggested, however, that the factors giving rise to this process began to appear about the same time—that is the last decade of the eighteenth century. The rise of the Qajars signalled a change in security relationships, while Būshire's interior political expansion was checked at Khisht. Economic changes also began to occur, although quite independent of the change in dynasties, for example. Eventually, these two processes had an interlocking impact on the political fortunes of the al-Muzkur, the one process influencing the other.

In the final analysis, only the British could have protected the al-Muzkur from the onslaught of Shiraz because "the most important condition for the security of the weak states is their ability to appeal to other states
for help and support" when threatened.\textsuperscript{1} However, the British refrained from becoming involved in the affairs of the al-Muzkur, despite al-Muzkur efforts to engage the British from time to time. Why was this so? While an analysis of British Persian Gulf policy lies beyond the scope of this discussion, nevertheless a general answer to the question can be ventured.\textsuperscript{2} British policy in the Gulf ultimately was guided by and rested on what today might be called a theory of containment. The British were essentially interested in containing three forces in the area. On the Arabian peninsula they wanted to restrict Wahabbi (and later Turkish) influence to the interior of the peninsula and prevent its spread to the coast of the Gulf. In time, this led to a policy designed to protect the small Peninsular shaykhdoms. In the Gulf, itself, the British wanted to prevent the outbreak of maritime disturbances and naval wars. This policy was implemented, of course, by imposing a pax Britannica on the region. To the north, the British were interested in containing the Russian colossus. Iran was seen as an important buffer between the expanding Russian empire and British India. The Arab shaykhdoms on the northern littoral would not be

\textsuperscript{1} M. Handel, \textit{Weak States in the International System}, pp. 257-8.

\textsuperscript{2} For a thorough discussion of this issue see Malcolm Yapp's, \textit{Strategies of British India}, particularly Part 1.
protected for the simple reason that to have done so would have caused a needless friction with Tehrān and wasted valuable political capital. It made no sense to help the shaykhs of Būshīre or any other port since they had nothing of value to offer in return for such protection.

The final collapse of the al-Muzkur marked the beginning of a more direct Persian assertion of control over the northern littoral. In the following decade, Bandar 'Abbās was brought back into the Persian fold. The process of filling in the southern border finally was completed in 1925 with the collapse of the Bani Ka'ab's semi-independent state in Khuzistān. Iran was now positioned to assume a leading role in late twentieth century Persian Gulf politics.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Manuscript Sources

During the course of research for this study, the following series were consulted. However, not every volume within the series was utilized. Specific volumes are cited in footnotes.

(a) India Office Records

1. Abstracts of Letters Received from Bombay (the E/4 series), 1703-1816.

2. Bengal Commercial Proceedings. Only the late eighteenth century volumes were consulted.

3. Bombay Commercial Proceedings. Volumes covering the years 1786 to 1813 were consulted.

4. Bombay Internal and External Commerce Reports: 1801 to 1858.

5. Bombay Journals and Ledgers. This series was most useful between 1770 and 1835.


8. Bombay Public Proceedings. Only the late eighteenth century volumes were consulted.


10. Bombay Secret Letters Received.

11. Enclosures to Secret Letters Received.

12. Būshire Residency Records. This series was by far the most important for this study.

13. Factory Records: Persia and the Persian Gulf. The first 12 volumes of this series are known as the Gambroon Diary.

14. Home Miscellaneous. Only a few of the collection's more than eight hundred volumes were consulted.

15. Letters Received By and Sent to the Governor of Bombay: Diaries of Persian, Arabic and Hindustani Letters.
17. Political and Secret Letters and Enclosures Received from the Persian Gulf.
18. Secret Letters and Enclosures from Persia, etc.
19. Secret Letters Received (various).
   (b) Public Records Office
1. F.O. 60--Persia.

II. Printed Documentary Sources

2. Annual Administration Reports of the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Muscat Political Agency, Calcutta, 1875 to 1890.

3. Selections from State Papers, Bombay, regarding the East India Company's Connection with the Persian Gulf, with a Summary of Events, 1600-1800.


III. Contemporary Travelogues, Local Histories and Secondary Works


--------"Notes on a journey east of Shiraz, west to Kazeroon, 1850", Journal of the Royal Geographic Society, volume 27, 1857.
"Notes on the provinces and cities of southern Persia--1849-50", Foreign Office Miscellaneous, 251, number 42.

Abrahamian, E., Iran Between Two Revolutions, Princeton, 1982.


al-Shushtari, Abd Allah, Tarikh-e-Shushtari, Bibl. Indica Number 206, Calcutta, 1914 and 1924.

Alcock, T., Travels in Russia, Persia, Turkey and Greece: 1829-9, E. Clark and Son, London, 1831.


Arnold, A., "Our Commercial Opportunities in Western Asia" Manchester Geographical Society, volume 1, 1885.

Avery, Peter, Modern Iran, Ernest Benn Limited, London, 1965

Beazley, C.R., "Medieval Trade and Trade Routes", Geography Teacher, volume 2, 1903.

Bell, John of Antermony, Travels from St. Petersbourg in Russia to divers parts of Asia, Two volumes, Glasgow, 1763.

Bell, M.S. "A Visit on the Karun River" Blackwood's Magazine, April, 1889.

"Isfahan to Bushire" Blackwood's Magazine, July, 1889.


Burnes, A., "Remarks on the maritime communication of India as carried on by the natives", *Geographic Society of Bombay*, 1834-35.

Candler, E., "The Old Baghdad-Kermanshah Road", *Blackwood's Magazine*, volume 203, 1918.


--------"Trade Routes of Persia", *Journal of Social Arts*, volume 31, 1883.


Colvill, W.H., "Land Journey along the shores of the Persian Gulf, from Bushire to Lingah", *Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society*, 1867.


Francklin, W., *Observations made on a tour from Bengal to Persia, in the years 1786-7*, Stuart and Cooper, Calcutta, 1788.

Fraser, James B., *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Persia from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time*, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1834.

----------Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan in the Years 1821 and 1822*, London, 1825.


Hanway, Jonas, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, Two volumes, Dublin, 1754.


Hollingberg, W., *A Journal of observations made during the British embassy to the court of Persia in the years 1799-1801*, Calcutta, 1814.


Hotz, A. "Persian Trade Routes" *Journal of Social Arts*, volume 49, 1899.


Houtum-Schindler, A. "On the length of the Persian Farsakh", *Proceedings of Royal Geographic Society*, 1888.

--------- "Notes on the Kur River in Fars, Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society*, 1891.


Ives, E., A Voyage from England to India in the year 1754, London, 1773.

Jackson, James, Sketches of Persia, Philadelphia, 1828.


--------Historical Obstacles to Agrarian Change in Iran, Clearmont, 1950.


---------The Universal Cambist and Commercial Instructor, printed by the author, 1835.


---------"Rural Development and Land Reform in Iran" CENTO, 1963.


Lane, Frederick, "The Economic Consequences of Organized Violence" in Venice and History, Johns Hopkins University Press.


Milburn, W., Oriental Commerce, London, 1813.

Monteith, W., "Notes on the routes from Bushire to Shiraz", Journal of the Royal Geographic Society, number 26, 1857.

Morier, J., A Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor to Constantinople in the years 1808 and 1809, London, 1812.
------ Some Account of the I'liyats or wandering tribes of Persia, obtained in the years 1814 and 1815," Journal of the Royal Geographic Society, number 7, 1837.


Napier, G.C., Collection of Journals and Reports from Captain Napier, on special duty in Persia, 1874, London, 1876.

Niebuhr, C., Travels through Arabia and other Countries in the East, translated by Robert Heron, Edinburgh, 1792.


Ouseley, W., Travels in various countries of the East, more particularly Persia, London, 1819.


Parsons, Abraham, Travels in Arabia, London, 1808.

Pelly, L., "Account of a recent journey from Bushire to Shiraz" Transactions of the Bombay Geographic Society, volume 17, 1863.

"Account of a recent tour round the northern portion of the Persian Gulf," Transactions of the Bombay Geographic Society, volume 17, 1863.

"Remarks on the Tribes, trade, and Resources around the Shoreline of the Persian Gulf" Transactions of the Bombay Geographic Society, volume 17, 1863.

"A visit to Lingah, Kishem, and Bunder Abbas", Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society, 1863-64.


Preece, J.R., "Journey from Shiraz to Jashk" *Royal Geographic Society Supplementary Paper*, volume 1, part 3, 1885.


--------"Caravan routes and road making in Persia", *Manchester Geographic Society*, volume 14, 1918.

Wellsted, J.R., *Travels to the City of the Caliphs along the Shores of the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean*, London, 1840.


--------"An Account of Arabs who inhabit the Coast between Ras-el-Keiman and Abothubee in the Gulf of Persia, generally called the Pirate Coast", *Transactions of the Bombay Geographic Society*, 1836-38.


CURRICULUM VITAE

STEPHEN RAY GRUMMON
6107 WYOMA COURT
SPRINGFIELD VIRGINIA, 22152
(703) 569-7750

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:
1979 to present: Persian Gulf analyst with special responsibilities for Iran, U.S. Department of State.

SPECIAL HONORS AND AWARDS:
1984: Superior Honor Award, Department of State.
1981-82: International Affairs Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and Research Fellow at the Asia Society.
1980: Meritorious Honor Award, Department of State.
1976-77: Shell Research Fellowship.

Publication:
The Iran-Iraq War: Islam Embattled

Education:
Bachelor of Arts (cum laude), Cornell College, 1969.
Master of Arts, The School of Advanced International Studies, the Johns Hopkins University, 1974.
Doctor of Philosophy, The School of Advanced International Studies, the Johns Hopkins University, 1985.