



Investigating the Impact of the Persian Gulf Pearl Trade on the Establishment of Permanent Maritime Peace between Arab Sheikhs and Britain during the Qajar Period

Ziba Ghafouri¹ | Hamid Hajianpour^{2*}

1. Ph.D in the History of Iran After Islam, Shiraz University, Iran

2. Associate Professor, Shiraz University, Iran

* Corresponding Author Email: hhajianpour@yahoo.com

Abstract

During the colonial era, British merchants ventured into the eastern lands with the primary goal of trade, eventually leading to the colonization of India. The immense economic benefits derived from India's colonization prompted the British government to strongly support the East India Company, including deploying the Royal Navy to assist in achieving its objectives. While Britain's initial motive for entering the East was trade, the region's lucrative markets for British manufactured goods and its valuable raw materials drove Britain to seek control over trade and secure its hold on India, which was highly profitable for the empire. One of the first areas that attracted British traders' attention after their arrival in the East was the Persian Gulf. The lands surrounding this waterway served as a lucrative market for British products while also supplying them with valuable and highly profitable goods. Consequently, British businessmen continuously sought to maintain and strengthen their presence in the Persian Gulf. Their primary objectives included reducing competition in the region, controlling trade, and exerting influence over the inhabitants of the surrounding lands. During the first half of the 19th century, the most important commodity in the Persian Gulf was pearls. The abundance of valuable pearl resources in this waterway strongly attracted British interest, as the pearl trade was highly profitable for British merchants. This article, using a historical-analytical approach and based on available historical evidence, seeks to answer the following question: What impact did the pearl trade have on the expansion of British influence in the Persian Gulf and the British government's efforts to establish stability in the region? To clarify this issue, it is essential to examine the reasons behind Britain's entry into the Persian Gulf and its role in the pearl trade. Consequently, efforts were made to ensure the area's security for the trade of this valuable commodity.

Due to the significance of trade in the Persian Gulf, one of Britain's primary objectives in the region was to address violence and conflict. In this context, establishing and maintaining peace, as well as resolving disputes among various ethnic groups and tribes, became essential. Additionally, ongoing unrest made it difficult for Britain to monitor the Persian Gulf and its surrounding coasts. Therefore, a key aspect of Britain's strategy in the region was to combat piracy and suppress conflicts among



Arab tribes. In fact, one of the main reasons Britain sought to end hostilities in the Persian Gulf was its vested interest in pearl fishing and trade. The substantial profits generated by this industry made it highly desirable for any power seeking economic control. However, the persistent unrest and violence during the 18th and 19th centuries (12th and 13th centuries AH) significantly disrupted pearl fishing and trade. In this context, the British political residency in the Persian Gulf took the initiative to facilitate the pearl trade by brokering short-term and temporary ceasefire agreements between Arab sheikhs, applicable only during the pearl fishing season. The substantial profits from the pearl trade also motivated the Arabs to seek temporary truces during this period.

The first such ceasefire agreement was signed on August 21, 1835 (26 Rabi al-Thani 1251 AH) between Britain and the sheikhs of Sharjah, Dubai, Ajman, and Abu Dhabi, covering an eight-month period during the pearl fishing season. Over the following years, these temporary truces were repeatedly extended, particularly as British influence in the region grew. The increasing presence of the British Navy further solidified Britain's control. Initially, the ceasefire lasted approximately eight months, then was extended to one year. By 1843 (1259 AH), the agreement was prolonged to ten years. Eventually, in 1853 (1269 AH), following efforts by the British political residency, the temporary truce was transformed into a permanent maritime peace. Although Britain initially believed that Arab hostilities and longstanding rivalries would hinder the establishment of lasting peace, the growing power of the British Navy and increasing British influence gradually led the Arab sheikhs to accept an end to armed conflicts. During the ceasefire periods, the British Indian Navy patrolled the waters of the Persian Gulf to enforce the agreements, ensuring compliance and swiftly responding to any violations.

By signing these temporary ceasefire agreements, the Arab sheikhs gradually ceded authority and influence to Britain, effectively increasing British dominance in the region. From that point onward, acts of piracy, insecurity, or any defiance of British-imposed order were met with military retaliation by the British naval fleet. Ultimately, among Britain's various strategic interests in the Persian Gulf, the pearl trade played a crucial role in achieving its primary objective: securing full control over the Persian Gulf. Through the pretext of establishing peace, Britain first gained dominance over regional trade and, later, permanent control of this vital waterway.

Keywords: Britain, pearl trade, Persian Gulf, Arab Sheikhs, Maritime Peace, Qajar.

References

Books

- Al-Qāsemi, S. B. M. (2008). *Dozdān-e Daryā'i dar Khalij-e Fārs*. tarjomeye M. B. Vosoughi & F. Farāmarzi. Qom: Nashr-e Hamsāyeh. [in Persian]
- Amin, A. A. M. (1967). *British interests in the Persian Gulf*. Netherlands.
- Atchinson, C. U. A. (1909). *Collection of treaties, engagements, and sanad, relating to India and neighboring countries* (Vol. XXII). Calcutta.
- Belgrave, C. (1972). *The pirate coast*. Beirut: Libraia du Liban.
- Curzon, G. N. (1968). *Iran va Mas'aleh-ye Iran*. tarjomeye A. Javāher-Kalām. Bi-jā: Ibn Sinā Publishing. [in Persian]
- E'temād al-Saltaneh, M.-H. K. (1988). *Mir'āt al-Boldān*. A. Navā'i & M. Mohaddes, Eds. Tehran: University of Tehran. [in Persian]
- Floor, W. (1992). *San'ati Shodan-e Iran va Shoresh-e Sheikh Ahmad Madani*. tarjomeye A. Seri. Tehran: Tos Publishing. [in Persian]
- Floor, W. (2010). *Tārikheh-ye Bushehr az Safaviyeh tā Zandiyeh*. tarjomeye H. Zangeneh. Bushehr: Shorou'. [in Persian]
- Habibi, H., & Vosoughi, M.-B. (2008). *Barrasi-ye Tārikh-e Siyasi va Ejtemā'i-ye Asnād-e Bandarabbās*. Bi-jā: Bonyād-e Iran-shenāsi. [in Persian]
- Hawley, D. (1999). *Daryā-ye Pārs va Savāhel-e Sarzamin-hā-ye Motesāleh*. tarjomeye H. Zangeneh. Qom: Nashr-e Hamsāyeh. [in Persian]
- Herzfeld, E. (2003). *Iran dar Sharq-e Bāstān*. tarjomeye H. San'ati-Zādeh. Tehran: Research Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. [in Persian]
- Hoseini Fasā'i, M. H. (1988). *Fārsnameh-ye Nāseri*. M. R. Fasā'i, Ed. Tehran: Amirkabir. [in Persian]
- Hunt, G. H. (1948). *Khāterāt-e Hunt: Jang-e Engelis va Iran dar Sāl-e 1273 Hijri Qamari*. H. tarjomeye Sa'adat-Nouri. Tehran: Shekārat-e Sahāmi Chap. [in Persian]
- Kelly, J. B. (1986). *Britain and the Persian Gulf 1795-1880*. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, London.
- Kelly, J. B., & Ricks, T. M. (2004). *Arab va Tejārat-e Bardeh dar Daryā-ye Pārs: 1848-1800*. tarjomeye H. Zangeneh. Shiraz: Navid Shiraz. [in Persian]
- Khārāksi, I. (2013). *Manzelgāh-hā-ye Ashkāni*. tarjomeye A.-A. Mirzā'i. Tehran: Māhi. [in Persian]
- Khoramouji, M. J. (2004). *Haqā'iq al-Akhhār Nāseri*. S. H. Khodiv Jam, Ed. Tehran: Nashr-e Ney. [in Persian]
- Lorimer, J. G. (1986). *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia* (Vol. I, Historical, Part I). Archive Edition.



- Lorimer, J. G. (1986). *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia* (Vol. I, Historical, Part II). Archive Edition.
- Lorimer, J. G. (1986). *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia* (Vol. II, Geographical and Statistical). Archive Edition.
- Lorimer, J. G. (2009). *Vāqe'eh-Nameh-ye Khalij-e Fārs, Bakhsheh-ye Tārikheh-ye Iran*. tarjomeye A. Ā'iti. Tehran. [in Persian]
- Lutski, V. (1970). *Tārikheh-ye Arab dar Ghorun-e Jadid*. tarjomeye P. Bābā'i. Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Sepehr. [in Persian]
- Mashruhe Mozākerāt-e Majles-e Shorā-ye Eslāmi. (2013). Tehran: Institute of Computerized Humanities Research. [in Persian]
- Miles, S. B. (1966). *The countries and tribes of the Persian Gulf*. London.
- Mojtahedzādeh, P. (1994). *Keshvarhā va Marzhā dar Mantagheh-ye Geopolitik-e Khalij-e Fārs*. tarjomeye H. R. M. Nouri. Tehran: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [in Persian]
- Nashāt, S. (1965). *Tārikheh-ye Siyasi-ye Khalij-e Fārs*. Tehran: Kānon-e Ketāb. [in Persian]
- Onley, James (2004). *the politics of protection in the gulf: the arab rulers and the british resident in the nineteenth century*, new Arabian studies, November 2004. 92-30.
- Piyo karlu terenziu. (1984). *reghabathaye ruos va englis dar iran va afghanestan*. tarjomeye abbas azarin. Tehran, entesharat elmi va farhangi. . [in Persian]
- Polka, Edward. (1982). *safarnameh Polka: iran va Iranian*. tarjomeye keykavoos jahandari. Tehran, sherkat sahāmi entesharat kharazmi. . [in Persian]
- Sadid alsaltane, mohammad ali. (1963). *bandar abbas, khalij fars "aalamalnas fi ahval bandar abbas"*. mosaheh ahmad eghtedari be koshesh mohammad ali setayesh. tehran: donyaye ketab. . [in Persian]
- Sadid alsaltane, mohammad ali. (1982). *altadghigh fi seyr-e altarigh*. mosaheh ahmad eghtedari. Bi-jā, Bi-nā. . [in Persian]
- Sadid alsaltane, mohammad ali. (1991). *tarikh masghat va oman, Bahrein va ghatar*. mosaheh ahmad eghtedari. Tehran: donyaye ketab. . [in Persian]
- Saldanha, J. A. (1986). *précis of correspondence regarding the affairs of the Persian gulf 1800-1853*, (Calcutta, office of the superintendent of government printing, india 1906), archive edition, 1986.
- Saldanha, J. A. (1986). *the Persian gulf précis (selection from state papers, Bombay regarding the east india company's connection with the Persian gulf, with a summary of events, 1600-1800, government printing press, Calcutta, 1908) volume I*, archive edition.
- Sepehr, Mohammad Taghi Lesan Almulk. (1974). *nasekh altavarikh*. tehran: ketab furoshi eslami. [in Persian]



- Setandish,jhon. (2004). iran , khaliy [fars] dor namaye gozashte, cheshm andaz ayande. tarjomeye abdalreza salar fehzadi. Tehran: Nashr-e ney. . [in Persian]
- Taheri,reza. (2001). az morvarid ta naft tarikh khaliy fars. shiraz: dastansara. [in Persian]
- Tallon,F.(1992). *The Achaemeind Tomb on the Acropol*, the royal city of susa, new York.
- uzae-e eghtesadi iran dar aghaz-e gharn-e bistom: gozaresh heyat-e bazargani hend-e britaniya eezami be jonub-e shrghi-e iran(1905-1904m). (1997). tarjome masummeh jamshidi. mohammadtaghi horufchin,Tehran: moasese-e tarikh moaser. [in Persian]
- yaddashthay-e jeneral trezel dar safar be iran rajee be salhaye (1780-1812). (Bi-tā). be ehtemam-e j.p. duma, tarjomeye abbas-e eghbal, Tehran: farhangsara. [in Persian]
- Zade bushehri,esmaeil. (Bi-tā). falat ghare va jazayer an. Bi-jā, Bi-nā. [in Persian]

Articles

- Ghafouri, ziba, & Hajianpour, hamid. (2020). Barrasi-e Elal-e Entekhab va Tadavom-e Bushehr be Onvan-e Paygah-e Nmayandegi-ye Compani-ye Hend-e Sharqi-ye Britania dar Khaliy-e Fars, *Tarikhnameh-ye Iran Ba'd az Eslam*, 11(24). [in Persian] 10.22034/JIIPH.2020.12325.
- Chamankar, M. J. (2010). Nazarayat-e Andishmandan-e Geopolitic-e Jahan dar Mored-e Ahamiat-e Nezami-ye Khaliy-e Fars, *Tarikhnameh-ye Iran Ba'd az Eslam*, 1(1). [in Persian]
- Mostowfi, F. (2008). *Seid va Tejārat-e Morvārid dar Khaliy-e Fārs dar Gharneh-ye Nozdahom, Barrasi-hā-ye Nowin-e Tārikhi*, 4(4 & 5). [in Persian]
- Nava'i, Abdolhossein (1949). Chand Sanad-e Rasmi az Fa'aliyat-e Siyasi-ye Farance dar Iran, *Vezerat-e Omur Kharejeh*, (5). [in Persian]

Documents

- Bāygāni-ye Asnād-e Vezārat-e Omur-e Khārejeh. (1846). *Sanad marbut be Kharid va Forush-e Bardeh, Karton 38, Zī al-Qadeh 1262* . [in Persian]
- Bāygāni-ye Asnād-e Vezārat-e Omur-e Khārejeh. (1850). *Haml va Naql-e Bardeh, Karton 179, 5 Sha 'bān 1266* . [in Persian]
- Bāygāni-ye Asnād-e Vezārat-e Omur-e Khārejeh. (1851). *Mokātabāt 1269–1263 Q, Morakh Shavāl 1267* . [in Persian]
- sazman asnad va ketabkhane melli (sakma),estekhray morvarid dar banader khaliy fars, shenase sanad 240-110470.1911 AD. [in Persian]