



## BANDAR-E LENGA

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**BANDAR-(E) LENGA**, (lat 26° 33' N, long 54° 53' E), a small port on the coast of Lārestān. It first appeared as part of the political landscape of coastal Persia during the Afghan crisis. In May-June 1734, Moḥammad Khan Baluči, governor of Kuh-galu and an Afghan supporter, retreated to Lenga under pressure from Ṭahmāsp-qoli Khan. A Dutch description of conditions in the Persian Gulf in 1756 says that Lenga was inhabited by *Houlas* (Huwala Arabs, the mainly Sunni tribes who inhabited the northern shores of the Persian Gulf in the 18th century) called *Mersousies* (Marzuqi Arabs) who earned their livelihood from trade in charcoal and firewood “which they transport throughout the Gulf” (Slot, pp. 278-79). Their ruler at the time, Shaykh Sa‘id, was said to be on friendly terms with the Dutch (Floor, pp. 167-68). In the turmoil of the late 1750s, however, when Nāser Khan of Lār, Mollā ‘Ali-Šāh of [Bandar-e ‘Abbas](#), the Qawāsem and the ‘Omānis all vied for control of the Persian coast, the Shaikh of Lenga, an ally of Rašid b. Maṭar al-Qāsemi of Sir in Ra’s al-Ḳayma (Ras-al-Khaimah), was attacked by Nāser Khan of Lār. The attack was repulsed by Qawāsem forces (Slot, 1993, p. 383) and by 1760 the Qawāsem controlled Lenga (Wilson, p. 201; Slot, p. 23).

Wahhabi successes in the 1790s with the Qawāsem of Ra’s al-Ḳayma meant that the Qawāsem of Lenga were expected to adopt Wahhabi precepts as well, and in 1803 the Shaikh of Lenga attacked Muscati forces at the command of the Saudi rulers (Al-Rashid, pp. 47-48). By this time, Lenga was viewed as a nest of pirates by the English. When on 30 June 1805 William Bruce, the English East India Company’s Resident at Bušehr, “waited on the Persian



Ambassador and enquired of him whether ...the Shaiks of Linga...were under the protection of the Persian government,” he was told they were, but that “he did not suppose there would be any objection to our prosecuting them, if they had acted in any manner deserving of it” (Al-Qasemi, p. 56). In 1805 the English Resident in Muscat, David Seton, identified Lenga as one of “two ports on the Persian mainland...belonging to the Joassims [i.e. the Qawāsem] who furnish boats and men for their piratical enterprises” (Al-Qasimi, pp. 64-65) and indeed James Horsburgh considered Lenga “the chief town of the Jowasmee pirates on the Persian Coast” (Horsburgh, p. 259). In 1809 twenty Qawāsem vessels were destroyed at Lenga by the Bombay Marine (Al-Qasimi, p. 140). The Imam of Muscat, also an enemy of the Qawāsem, attacked Lenga in March 1811 (Al-Qasimi, p. 153). Ten years after the suppression of the pirates by the Bombay Marine in 1818/1819, Lenga was considered (and rejected) as a possible site for a British Residency (Tuson, p. 2).

When Lord Curzon visited Lenga, it had a shipyard, building three or four 300 ton vessels each year, and a fleet of about forty trading vessels. At the time Lenga was the chief port of Lārestān (Pelly, p. 266), and carried on a lively trade with Bahrain and the Arabian coast. Cotton, pearls and tobacco were among its most important exports (Curzon, II, pp. 407-408). M. Freiherr von Oppenheim noted that Lenga was the chief port for the distribution of carpets from Kermān and Yazd, as well as a major center in the slave trade (Oppenheim, p. 318; Wilson, p. 223). In 1887 the Qawāsem rule over Lenga ended when Persian troops arrived, took Shaikh Kadthib prisoner, sent him to Tehran, and installed themselves in newly built barracks (Curzon, II, p. 409). In 1892 Lenga came under the authority of the Governor of Bandar-e ‘Abbās who in turn relied on the Governor of Bušehr for its management via a deputy. In 1899, however, a member of the shaikhly Qawāsem family in Lenga attempted to regain control by driving out the Persian deputy-governor, whereupon the Governor of Bušehr, known as *Derja Begi* (lord of the sea), attacked Lenga and restored his deputy (Oppenheim, p. 320). In 1906 Lenga had a Belgian customs officer and an Irish doctor. Its bazaar was well stocked and its population of 10-20,000 inhabitants approximately half Arab and half Persian. Because of quarantine regulations, however, ships from India rarely if ever stopped there (Stürken, pp. 78-79). A British vice-consulate, under the supervision of the Resident in Bushehr, was established at Lenga in 1910 (Tuson, p. 7).



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