



DUBAI

DUBAI (Dobayy), second largest of the seven emirates constituting the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. It rivals Abu Dhabi (Abū Ḥabī) for preeminence within a federal structure that provides for considerable autonomy among its constituents (Dubai, p. 29). The twin cities of Dubai and Daireh (Dayra) are located around a creek (*kawr*) and have thus functioned as a center of commerce on the Persian Gulf. The emirate encompasses about 3,200 km², and in 1993 it had an estimated 501,000 inhabitants, 27 percent of the total population of the U.A.E. ("United Arab Emirates," p. 2897). Most of the population of the U.A.E. and of Dubai in particular consists of immigrants; nationals account for only 20.7 percent of the total population of the federation (Middle East Research Institute, p. 131). Almost half the inhabitants of Dubai are from the Indian subcontinent; 100,000-150,000 are of Persian origin (Farāzanda, p. 34). This Persian community, the largest in the U.A.E., has been instrumental in promoting ties between Persia and Dubai.

Relations with Persia before 1357 Š./1979. Toward the end of the 19th century the Persian port of Lenga lost its free-trade status, and nearby Dubai became the leading entrepôt in the area. The liberal policies of the emir of Dubai persuaded many Persian merchants to move there from Lenga. Dubai thus became the major port for trade with Persia. In addition, the growing Persian community provided opportunities for special cultural ties between the two countries. Nevertheless, Dubai, as a member of the Trucial States, was still under British control, and its relations with Persia were governed by the



overall relations between Great Britain and Persia.

In January 1968 Great Britain announced its decision to withdraw from the Persian Gulf, including the Trucial States, by 1971; in the resulting power vacuum the government of Persia was concerned about its own claims and geopolitical interests in the area (Ramazani, pp. 408-27). When the idea of forming the U.A.E. was put forward by Great Britain Persian support was conditional on recognition of the islands of *Abū Mūsā* and the two Tonbs (also claimed by the emirates of Sharjah [Šāreḡa] and Ras al-Khaimah [Ra's-al-Ḳayma]) as Persian territory. Despite Arab opposition to this demand, relations between Shaikh Rāšed (1958-90), emir of Dubai, and Moḡammad-Režā Shah (1320-57 Š./1941-79) remained friendly. The emir, on a state visit to Persia in October 1969, expressed support for Persian preeminence over Iraq in the Persian Gulf (Alam, pp. 93-94), reflecting the political and socioeconomic realities in Dubai. Persia was able to exploit the rivalry between Dubai and Abu Dhabi by developing close ties with the emir of Dubai. A consulate was opened in Dubai in July 1952; it was elevated to consulate general in 1954. On the other hand, the trade-oriented economy of Dubai ensured the emir's greater interest in Persia than in his immediate neighbors. In the early 1970s more than half of about 50,000 trading dhows in Dubai were engaged primarily in re-export trade with Persia (Wezārat-e bāzargānī, p. 130). Cultural relations flourished as well, as Persia sponsored educational, health, and other institutions in Dubai. Students from Dubai attended Persian universities, particularly in Shiraz.

The postrevolutionary period. The conservative Arab countries viewed the Persian revolution of 1357 Š./1979 as a threat to the stability of the Persian Gulf. The formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (G.C.C.) and its support for Iraq in the war with Persia in the 1980s attest the council members' fears of the Persian revolutionary regime. The U.A.E. was, however, more temperate than Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in its support for Iraq, primarily owing to the influence of Dubai and Sharjah. The emirs of both distrusted Iraq, and neither wished to sacrifice trade relations with Persia. In addition, the Persian community in Dubai, conservative, predominantly Sunnite, rather than Shi'ite, merchants, meant that it posed less of a threat as a "fifth column" than might otherwise have been so. The trade route thus not only remained open, but transactions between Persia and the U.A.E., mainly Dubai, reached a peak of 1 billion dirhams during the war (Yazdānīnīā, pp. 50-51, 55; Eilts, p. 22). The end of the war and subsequent developments in the Persian Gulf area, including



the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, only strengthened ties between Persia and Dubai. Many hospitals, schools, banks, recreation clubs, workers' cooperatives, and other institutions in Dubai are run directly by the Persian government or semigovernmental organizations (Wezārat-e omūr-e kāreja, pp. 36-37). If no new major crises occur capitalist initiatives adopted recently by the Persian government should strengthen relations with Dubai in the near future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. A. Alam, *The Shah and I*, ed. A. N. Alikhani, London, 1991.

Dubai, Ministry of Culture and Information, *United Arab Emirates 1971-1986. Fifteen Years of Progress*, Dubai, n.d.

H. F. Eilts, "Foreign Policy Perspectives of the Gulf States," in H. R. Sindler, ed., *Crosscurrents in the Gulf*, Washington, D.C., 1988, pp. 16-37.

H. Farāzanda, *Šakl-gīrī-e sīāsat-e kārejī-e emārāt*, Tehran, 1362 Š./1983.

Middle East Research Institute, *The MERI Report. United Arab Emirates*, 1985.

R. Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy. 1941-1973*, Charlottesville, Va., 1975.

"The United Arab Emirates," in *The Europa World Year Book. 1993 II*, London, 1993, pp. 3011-24.

Wezārat-e bāzargānī, Mo'assassa-ye moṭāla'āt o pažūhešhā-ye bāzargānī (Institute for commercial studies and research), *Emārāt-e mottaḥeda-ye 'arabī*, Negāh-ī kūtāh be kešvarhā 17, Tehran, 1365 Š./1986.

Wezārat-e omūr-e kāreja, *Ketāb-e sabz*, Tehran, 1368 Š./1989.

Abu'l-Qāsem Yazdānīnīā, *Sīāsat-e kārejī-e emārāt-e 'arabī-e mottaḥeda bā takīa bar jang-e taḥmīlī*, Tehran, 1359 Š./1980.