



LĀVĀN ISLAND

LĀVĀN ISLAND, in the Persian Gulf.

Lāvān is located at lat 26.8° N and long 53.3° E, six nautical miles west-southwest of Naḵilu and three-quarters of a nautical mile west-northwest of Šatvār islet (United States Hydrographic Office, p. 154; Deutsches Hydrographisches Institut, p. 179). It is almost 21 km long and about 3.2 km wide. In [Arrian](#)'s account of the voyage of Nearchus, reference is made to "another island, inhabited." Arrian noted further that "according to Nearchus, there is [pearl](#) fishing here" (Arrian, *Indica* 38.3-4). This unnamed island, which lies to the west of [Qeshm](#), has been identified by some scholars with Lāvān (Berghaus, pp. 42-43; Tomaschek, p. 55).

Lāvān has also been identified with the island of Lār(a), Lān, or Allān, off the coast of [Fars](#), mentioned in the medieval geographical sources (Le Strange, p. 261; tr., pp. 281-82; Schwarz, p. 87; Aubin, p. 101). Yāqut referred to the island of Lār between Sirāf and Qays, with pearl fishery on its coasts, and [Ebn Ḳordāḍbeh](#) (p. 61) located the island Lāvān 80 leagues (*farsak*) from [Kharg](#) and 7 from Abrun/Hendrābi (Tomaschek, p. 55). Portuguese sources used the form Lara, for instance in referring to acts of piracy committed by the Niquelus (people of Naḵilu) in 1581. They also refer to Lāvān as "Laz" or "Lazao," the population of which were said to be subject to the king of [Hormuz](#) (Floor, p. 94). Laz is the name of "the principal village of the island," on the north coast (United States Hydrographic Office, p. 154; Lorimer, II/B, p. 1814).

In early European sources Lāvān was called "Busheab" (Bu Šo'ayb), "Shaikh



Shu‘aib” (Šayk Šo‘ayb), or “Jazirat ash-Shaikh” (Jazirat al-Šayk). The identity of this place with Lāvān was argued by Tomaschek (p. 55), who compared the name of the village of Gōrāt on the south side of Šayk Šo‘ayb with Qōrt of Lāvān Island (cf. Le Strange, p. 261; Lorimer, II/B, p. 1813; Deutsches Hydrographisches Institut, p. 180).

During the mid-17th century, the Dutch [East India Company](#)/Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) director in Iran, Wollebrandt Geleynsen de Jong, conceived a project of renaming local places with Dutch names, and Lāvān was called “Rotterdam” (Slot, p. 157), according to some VOC maps. In the 18th century, Lāvān belonged to the Howala Arabs (Slot, p. 21). In the early 19th century Lāvān was a dependency of the Shaikh of Naḳilu (Taylor, p. 21) and its population was estimated at 425 men of the “Aboosemate tribe” (Brucks, p. 594). It is likely that this name masks that of an Omani group, like the Āl Bu Sa‘id or Āl Bu Šāmes. At this time, the island figures in some of the early 19th century accounts of piracy in the Persian Gulf. In 1803 the British [East India Company](#) packet *Alert* was forced to land at Lāvān, after which it was attacked by 500 islanders who made off with the pearls and coins that it was carrying, which belonged to the merchants of [Basra](#) and [Bušehr](#). Some days later, Sheikh Raḥma of Naḳilu came and took the remainder of the cargo, since Lāvān was a dependency of his (Taylor, p. 21), leaving the crew with “only two bags of their own rice as provision for 30 or 40 people” (Davies, p. 73). Another incident, involving the *Shannon*, occurred in 1807 (Davies, pp. 79-80), this time involving the ruler of Ajmān (a small sheikhdom in Oman), Sheikh Rašid b. Ḥomayd al-No‘aymi. Conflict between the Qāsemis of Ra’s al-Ḳayma and the sheikh of Naḳilu, however, resulted in an attack in October 1817, by a Qāsemi force that “burnt and plundered the villages at the western part of the island, carrying off all the cattle and killing great numbers of the inhabitants,” according to a report sent by Capt. William Bruce, the resident at Bušehr, to Bombay on 16 October 1817 (Davies, p. 203). In the late 19th century pearl diving and fishing formed the principal occupations of the inhabitants, who lived in ten villages and numbered about 1,500 souls (Lorimer, II/B, pp. 1813-14).



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