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PERSIAN GULF I. IN ANTIQUITY

The Persian Gulf (24° 30′ 30″ N, 48° 56′ 30″ E) is a shallow, epi-continental sea approximately 1,000 km long and 200-350 km wide, narrowing to about 60 km across at the Straits of Hormuz. Depths average only 35 m (max. ca. 100 m), and a rate of 37-40 percent salinity is considered high. During the last glacial maximum (ca. 70,000-17,000 BP), when worldwide sea-levels were up to 120 m lower than at present, the bed of the Persian Gulf was a valley floor through which the combined waters of the Tigris, Euphrates, and Karun ran as a single river draining into the Straits of Hormuz. With the onset of the Flandrian Transgression about 17,000 BP, sea-levels in the Gulf valley began to rise and by 7000 BP a sea-level comparable to that of the present day was reached (Lambeck, 1996, p. 49). Although sea-levels have fluctuated slightly since that time (Sanlaville et al., 1987), the main point of relevance with regard to understanding the archaeology of the surrounding landmasses is that any site of the Palaeolithic, Epipalaeolithic, or Neolithic along the ancient “Tigris-Euphrates-Karun to Hormuz” river which may have been in what was then southernmost Iran or eastern Arabia were submerged by the rising sea-levels of the late Pleistocene and early Holocene (Teller et al., 2000). Consequently, it would be unusual, except on highly elevated ground, to find any prehistoric remains pre-dating the Chalcolithic, but this is in fact the case.

To date, no Neolithic remains have been found anywhere along the Persian Gulf coast of Iran. The earliest archaeological remains yet identified on the

coast of Iran consist of sherds of Mesopotamian Ubaid (ʿObayd) 1-2 (Eridu, Haji Muhammad) type picked up by M. E. Prickett and A. Williamson on the surface of Ḥalila, a prehistoric site on the Bušehr peninsula (Oates, 2004, p. 92). These may be roughly dated to about 5500-5000 BCE (cf. Porada et al., 1992, p. 92). On the Arabian coast, dozens of sites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), characterized by bifacial, finely pressure-flaked arrowheads, belong to the so-called Arabian bifacial tradition (Uerpmann, 1992). Because of the presence of domesticated sheep and goat on those sites which have been excavated, this tradition is considered "Neolithic" (Kallweit, 2003), even though there is no evidence of domesticated plant use and the societies that left these remains are probably best understood as herders who engaged in some hunting (hence the preponderance of arrowheads) to supplement their source of protein, conserving their herds for the exploitation of their secondary products (milk, cheese, hair/fleece), as opposed to hunter-gatherers. The earliest dates for this complex come from some of the offshore islands of Abu Dhabi and cluster in the period between circa 5300-5800 BCE (Shepherd Popescu, 2003, Table 1). As the east Arabian littoral is well outside the natural habitat of either sheep or goats, both species must have been introduced into the area, most probably from the aceramic Neolithic communities of the southern Levant (Uerpmann, Uerpmann and Jasim, 2000). Marine resources (shellfish, fish, dugong, etc.), of course, were extremely important to the diet of the inhabitants of the Arabian coast (Shepherd Popescu, 2003; Beech, 2004) and are likely to have been equally significant along the Iranian shore.

Although remains dating to the 5th-3rd millennium BCE are well attested in the interior of Iran, they have yet to be positively identified on the Persian Gulf coast of the country, although a very Sumerian-looking statuette has been found on Kharg island (Majidzadeh, 2003). Similarly, apart from a few sites dominated by stone tools along the U.A.E. coast (Uerpmann, 2003), there is little archaeological evidence from the 4th and early 3rd millennium BCE on the coast of eastern Arabia. The Gulf region, however, does begin to figure in Mesopotamian cuneiform sources from the late 4th millennium BCE onwards. The Archaic texts from Uruk, dating to circa 3400-3000 BCE, contain the earliest references (Englund, 1983) to Dilmun (Akk. *Tilmun*), a region which, based on later evidence, can be identified initially with the east Arabian mainland (Al Hasa/al-Aḥsāʾ, the modern Šarqiya [Eastern] province of Saudi Arabia) and, from the late 3rd millennium BCE onwards, the island of Bahrain (Potts, 1983; Crawford, 1998, p. 43ff). Dilmun was a purveyor of both copper

and wood to southern Mesopotamia during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE. In both cases, it was transshipping resources obtained further east. While the source of the wood which reached the Sumerian city-state of Lagash in the mid-3rd millennium (Hruška, 1983, p. 83) from Dilmun is unknown, the copper most probably came from Magan (Akk. *Makkan*), another eastern region attested in the cuneiform sources which has been identified with the Oman peninsula (Potts, 2000).

The late 3rd and early 2nd millennium BCE is well-represented on the western side of the Persian Gulf, with major settlements on Failaka island, Kuwait (Højlund, 1987); on Tarut island, opposite the Qatif oasis (Potts, 1989, pp. 13-26); on Bahrain, at Qalat al-Bahrain (Højlund and Andersen, 1994, 1997), Barbar (Andersen and Højlund, 2004), Diraz (Crawford, 1998, pp. 77-78), and Saar (Crawford, Killick and Moon, 1997); and at Umm an-Nar (Frifelt, 1991, 1995), Al Sufouh (Benton, 1996), and Tell Abraq (Potts, 1990, 1991a, 2000) on the coast of the U.A.E. There is clear evidence in ceramics, seals, stone vessels and burial practices for the distinction between Dilmun (Bahrain, northeastern Arabia) and Magan (southeastern Arabia). In the central and northern Gulf the most common type of local pottery is the so-called “chain-ridged” (late 3rd millennium) and the slightly later “red-ridged” ware (early 2nd millennium). In southeastern Arabia, the ceramic industry of the late 3rd millennium BCE (Umm an-Nar period) is more often painted in geometric and vegetal motifs in black-on-orange ware, some of it reminiscent of ceramics from sites in southeastern Iran and Baluchistan (Khurab, Damin, Bampur whence some influence on the local industry may have derived. In the early 2nd millennium BCE (Wadi Suq period in Oman), ceramic forms and fabrics change and simple wavy lines painted on storage jars, coupled with comb-incised decoration and raised shoulder ridges replace the often elegant black-on-orange chevrons of the earlier period. A reversion to handmade ceramics can be seen as well, and the prevalence of string-cut bases is a distinctive feature (for these ceramic changes see e.g., Potts, 1990, 1991a).

The central and northern Gulf is also characterized by a distinctive round stamp seal with raised, perforated back. The earlier “Persian Gulf” style (ca. 2200-2000 BCE) tends to show only animals and plants, while the later “Dilmun” style (ca. 2000-1700 BCE) has a varied iconography with humans and animals (e.g., Kjærum, 1983; Crawford, 2001). From the late 3rd to the mid-1st millennium BCE soft-stone vessel production using steatite or chlorite (q.v.) from the Ḥajar mountains of Oman was prodigious. Earlier styles of pattern

decoration using the dotted or double-dotted circle (late 3rd millennium) were employed on open bowls, canisters, compartmented vessels and suspension vessels, whereas diagonal lines and saw-tooth or zigzag decoration was introduced in the early 2nd millennium BCE. Hundreds of complete and fragmentary vessels have been found, mainly in burials and examples reached a number of sites in Iran including Susa (q.v.), Liyan (see below), and Tepe Yahya (q.v.; de Miroschedji, 1973; Potts, 2003b).

Both regions are characterized by thousands of burials of 3rd and early 2nd millennium BCE date, most often of a mounded nature with interior, stone chambers on Bahrain (Soweileh, 1995), and of a circular, multi-chambered (e.g., Benton, 1996; Potts, 2000) or long, single chambered type in the Oman peninsula (Vogt, 1998; Velde, 2003). At various points along the coast of Fārs –on the Bušehr peninsula, in the mountains to the north of Sirāf, and at Damāḡa-ye Gora, about 40 kms southeast of Sirāf – stone cairns, believed to have been graves, have been noted. These, however, have yielded no datable artifacts (Boucharlat, 1989, pp. 682-83) and it is unclear whether they represent a burial tradition comparable to that which we see in eastern Arabia, Bahrain and the Oman peninsula.

Just as cuneiform sources situate Dilmun and Magan on the western shore of the Persian Gulf, recent scholarship has favored locating the region of Mišime (Mišima), attested in pre-Sargonic and Old Akkadian sources, or P/Bašime, as it was generally known in Old Akkadian, Ur III and Old Babylonian texts, along the northeastern coast of the Gulf, roughly between Bušehr and the Shatt al-Arab (q.v.) estuary (Steinkeller, 1982, pp. 240-42) or possibly more precisely in the area of Bandar-e Deylam (q.v.; e.g., Vallat, 1993, p. CXXVI). Mišime is first attested during the reign of Eannatum of Lagash (ca. 2450-2425 BCE) who, in addition to conquering Elam (q.v.), claims to have raided and destroyed Mišime (Sollberger and Kupper, 1971, pp. 58-59; Selz, 1991, pp. 34, 36). During the reign of the Old Akkadian king Manistusu (2269-2255 BCE) an Akkadian governor in Pašime (Pašima) is attested but the region must have regained its independence by the early 21st century BCE, perhaps as a result of the collapse of the Akkadian empire, for during the reign of Šulgi (2094-2047 BCE) a diplomatic marriage was arranged between Tāram-Šulgi, one of the Ur III king's daughters, and Šudda-bani, the ruler of Pašime (Steinkeller, 1982, p. 241 and notes 15-16). The fact that an Ur III governor of Pašime is mentioned during the reign of Šu-Sin (2037-2029 BCE) suggests that by this point Pašime had been incorporated into the Ur III empire as a coastal province at the head

of the Gulf. Several texts are explicit, moreover, in referring to the "coast of Pašime" (Steinkeller, 1982, pp. 242-43, n. 18). According to a hymn to Išbi-Erra (2017-1985 BCE), founder of the First Dynasty of Isin, Bašime formed the south(west)ern portion of the state established by Kindattu, the "man of Elam" credited with bringing about the end of the Ur III empire (van Dijk, 1978, p. 194; Vallat, 1991, p. 11).

In 1856, stamped bricks with Elamite royal inscriptions were found at the large mound of Tol-e Peytul near Bušehr by East India Company (q.v.) forces during the war against Persia (English, 1971, p. 81). In 1876 Friedrich Stolze conducted excavations at the site, discovering some 2000 fragmentary and 1000 complete inscribed bricks, only two of which he was permitted to remove. The remainder, however, eventually entered the antiquities market and while small numbers ended up in London, Leiden, The Hague and Berlin, the majority went to the Louvre in Paris (König, 1965, p. 18). Subsequently, Maurice Pézard undertook a season of excavations at Tol-e Peytul in 1913 (Pézard, 1914).

The epigraphic evidence from Tol-e Peytul identifies the mound as ancient Liyan (Potts, 2003a). The earliest text from the site is a fragmentary alabaster socle bearing the name of Simut-wartaš. If this is the same Simut-wartaš known to have been *sukkal* of Susa and son of the Elamite *sukkalmah* Širuk-tuh, then it is probably safe to assume that Liyan had come under the political control of Elam by the early 2nd millennium BCE at the latest (cf. Vallat, 1984, p. 259). This suggestion would be supported by the fact that much of the painted pottery recovered by Pézard is comparable to that known on the Marvdašt plain at Tal-e Maliān (q.v.), ancient Anshan (q.v.; e.g., Sumner, 1974, p. 173 and Figs. 6-9), during the Kaftari (see KAFTARI WARE) period (ca. 2200-1600 BCE), a time which overlaps with the Dynasty of Šimaški and the era of the *sukkalmahs* at Susa and Anshan (Potts, 1999, pp. 151-82). The discovery at Liyan (Pézard, 1914, p. 24 and Pl. 8.2) and Susa (de Miroschedji, 1973, Pl. 7e) of soft-stone vessels attributable to a class well-attested in the Oman peninsula during the early 2nd millennium BCE (Häser 1990a, 1990b, p. 349) also reflects cross-Gulf contacts at this time. Similarly, the discovery at Susa of four "Dilmun" stamp seals, a type common on Bahrain and Failaka (Kuwait) during the early 2nd millennium BCE; six bitumen compound copies of Dilmun seals; two cylinder seals influenced by Dilmunite iconography; and a tablet belonging to an archive dating to the reign of the *sukkalmah* Kutir-Nahhunte I, bearing the impression of a Dilmun-style stamp seal, all add weight to the

conviction that southern Iran and the Gulf region interacted commercially at this time (Potts, 1999, pp. 179-80). Given its location, Liyan most probably functioned as a major port or gateway for traffic between the highlands of Anshan/Elam and the Persian Gulf (Potts, 2003b).

Liyan has also yielded epigraphic evidence from the reign of the Middle Elamite ruler Humban-Numena (ca. 1350-1340 BCE), who called himself "king of Susa and Anshan" in an inscribed brick from a *kukunnum* (high temple?) constructed for the Elamite deity Kiririša-of-Liyan at the site (Vallat, 1984, p. 258; Walker, 1981, p. 130, no. 192). Later bricks inscribed by Kutir-Nahhunte (König, 1965, §31) and Šilhak-Inšušinak (König, 1965, §57-59; Grillot and Vallat, 1984) show that the temple was restored in the 12th century BCE. The western side of the Persian Gulf has produced little evidence of contact with Elamite southwestern Iran after the *sukkalmah* era. One of the few pieces of evidence is a faience cylinder seal of Middle Elamite type discovered at Tell Abraq which has close affinities with finds from Čoga Zanbil and Susa (Potts, 1990a, pp. 122-23, Figs. 150-151).

The Iron Age is very poorly known along the Iranian coast. Fourteen sites (K 84, 96[?], 100 =122, 104-106, 108, 110B, 112, 124-126, 130 and 137) surveyed in the Mināb region by A. Williamson and M. E. Prickett are thought to have occupation sometime in the 1st millennium BCE (Prickett, 1986, pp. 1270-72). In contrast, sites such as Qalat al-Bahrain (Højlund and Andersen, 1994, 1997) on Bahrain and Tell Abraq (Potts, 1990, 1991a, 2000) and Muweilah (Magee, 1998) near the U.A.E. coast have substantial Iron Age occupations. Inland the number of Iron Age sites, particularly in southeastern Arabia, is large and it was clearly a time of great settlement expansion, perhaps associated with the spread of advanced irrigation technology (Ar. *aflaj*, pl. *falāj*, lit. "crack, crevice" reminiscent of *qanāt*s but very definitely to be distinguished from them; see Boucharlat, 2001, 2003; KĀRIZ i.) which facilitated agricultural extensification and population growth (Boucharlat and Lombard, 2001, pp. 225-27). It has long been recognized that Iron Age sites on Bahrain and in the U.A.E. have yielded numerous examples of bridge-spouted jars of obvious Iranian affinity (e.g., Magee, 1997, pp. 93-96; Lombard, 1999, pp. 134-35). More significant, perhaps, is the striking occurrence at Rumeilah and Bida Bint Saud in the Al Ain area of interior Abu Dhabi (Boucharlat and Lombard, 2001) and at Muweilah in coastal Sharjah (Magee, 2003) of columned halls which invite comparison with those of Iron Age Ḥasanlu (q.v), Godin Tepe (q.v.), and Nuš-e Jān. While independent invention of this architectural type in both regions is a

possibility, the large numbers of bridge-spouted ceramic vessels of Iranian style in the Muweilah building strongly suggests that the form diffused from western Iran to southeastern Arabia. The precise function of the building type in its Arabian context is unclear, but it is likely to have been a locus of power and authority within the communities in which it occurs.

The Persepolis fortification tablets (q.v.) contain hundreds of toponyms, the locations of which are uncertain. Nevertheless, some are likely to have been situated in that part of the Persian Gulf coastal region of Iran which belonged to the satrapy of Parsa (Jacobs, 1994, p. 199). It has been suggested that one toponym in this region may be Tam(uk)ka(n), a place mentioned in at least 48 fortification texts (Hallock, 1969, p. 760; Koch, 1990, pp. 69-77; Vallat, 1993, p. 273). This has been identified with Greek *Taoce* (Ptolemy 6.4.2 and 7; Hallock, 1959, p. 178; cf. Metzler, 1977, pp. 1058-59). According to Strabo (*Geog.*15.3.3) there was a Persian palace "on the coast near Taocê." In this regard, it is interesting that an important Achaemenid site, probably a royal way-station, has been excavated at Borāzjān (q.v.), on the road between Kazerun (q.v.) and Bušehr (Sarfaraz, 1971, 1973). Judging by the fine black and white stone masonry, so reminiscent of Pasargadae (q.v.), the site may well have been a foundation of Cyrus' (q.v.). Some scholars have therefore identified Borāzjān with ancient Taoce/Tam(uk)ka(n) (e.g., Mallowan, 1972, p. 6). If we judge by the distances between way-stations along the Royal Road, we ought to expect to find more sites like Borāzjān approximately 24 kms apart from each other (Koch, 1986, p. 33). Approximately 3 kms north/northwest of Borāzjān is the site of early Islamic Tawwaj (Tauweg, Tauwez, Ta'us; Schwarz, 1896, pp. 66-68; Le Strange, 1905, pp. 259-60) which has long been assimilated with the name Taoce (d'Anville, 1764, p. 161; Tomaschek, 1890, p. 64; Schwarz, 1896, p. 66; cf. Whitcomb, 1987, p. 331, site B6). It has been suggested that the remains of an ancient canal in this area (the "Angali canal") may date to the Achaemenid or even Elamite period (Whitcomb, 1987, p. 331).

The degree to which the Persian Gulf was under Achaemenid control has been debated for many years (e.g., Schiwek, 1962; Salles, 1990). The Achaemenid satrapy of *Maka* can be identified with Oman thanks to the Achaemenid equation of Old Persian Maka with Akkadian Qade. In the Ishtar slab inscription from Nineveh the capital of Qade is identified as Izkie, in which we can easily recognize Izki, reputedly the "oldest" town in Oman (Potts, 1985a). Nevertheless, we have no sources which throw light on the projection of Achaemenid power across the Persian Gulf, nor do we know how control of

Maka may have been related to influence over the islands of the Gulf and the east Arabian mainland. Certainly the presence at sites like Rumeilah of wheel-made bowls with vertical, offset rims; "s" carinated bowls and Achaemenid-style "tulip bowls" – all of which can be paralleled at Iranian sites like Godin Tepe II, Bābā Jān I (q.v.), and Tepe Yahya II – as well as the presence of socketed tilobate arrowheads at Rumeilah, suggest links between southeastern Arabia and Iran in the Achaemenid period (Magee, 1997). Furthermore, short swords found at al-Qusais (Lombard, 1981), Qidfa, Rumeilah, Jabal Buhais and Jabal Ḥafit (Potts, 1998a, pp. 192-94) in the U.A.E. are clearly reminiscent of Iron Age types from Iran and may be the physical equivalent of the short sword shown slung over the shoulder of a Mačiya (native of Maka) in the grave relief of Darius II (q.v.) at Persepolis (Potts, 1985b, Fig. 1a; 1998a, p. 194 and Fig. 10).

Elsewhere in the Gulf, the island of Failaka in the bay of Kuwait has yielded numerous examples of so-called Achaemenid-style "horse and rider" figurines (Mathiesen, 1982, pp. 20-25; Salles, 1986a, pp. 162-65) while the ceramic assemblage from the mid-1st millennium BCE site of Tell Khazneh/Tal Ḵazna (Salles 1986b, pp. 201-44) has parallels both in Iran (e.g., Susa) and in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Babylonia (e.g., Larsa, Uruk, Nippur). On Bahrain excavations in a large building complex (Excavation 519) of mid-1st millennium BCE date at Qalat al-Bahrain yielded local imitations of Achaemenid tulip bowls (e.g., Højlund and Andersen, 1997, Fig. 395) and a conical glass stamp seal showing a royal hero in Persian dress standing on a sphinx while grasping the throat of a standing, winged bull, a motif well-attested in the Achaemenid "court style" (Kjærum, 1997, pp. 163-64 and fig. 734).

If we may rely on a fragment preserved by the late antique writer Stephen of Byzantium (Meineke, 1849, p. 396), Greek geographers as early as Hecataeus of Miletus (q.v.; ca. 500 BCE) were already familiar with the term "Persian Gulf" (*Persikos kolpos*). Around the same time, in discussing his own version of the Suez canal, Darius referred to the Red Sea as "the sea which goes from Persia" (Kent, 1953, p. 147, DZc 7-12; cf. Lecoq, 1997, p. 248; INDIAN OCEAN i.). The implication of Darius' usage, i.e., that the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf were somehow connected, is reminiscent of the Greek term "Erythraean Sea" which was applied to the totality of the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, western Indian Ocean and Red Sea (Casson, 1989). Whatever knowledge of the Persian Gulf may have reached Greece by 5th century BCE, there can be little doubt that

Greek knowledge of the region expanded enormously in the wake of Alexander's (q.v.) eastern campaign, particularly as a result of the voyage of Alexander's admiral Nearchus from the mouth of the Indus to the head of the Persian Gulf in 325 BCE and the subsequent expeditions under Archias, Androsthenes and Hieron sent out by Alexander to explore the Arabian coast (Schiwek, 1962; Högemann, 1985). Although none of the original accounts of this expedition have survived, excerpts are preserved in later works by such writers as Eratosthenes (*apud* Strabo), Theophrastus, Pliny and Arrian (q.v.), whose *Anabasis* (q.v.)offers the most complete version available. The representation of the Persian Gulf coastline of Iran in these sources has been carefully studied by numerous scholars (e.g., d'Anville, 1764; Vincent, 1809; Berghaus, 1832; Tomaschek, 1890; Berthelot, 1935). During the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, in particular, as more and more data gathered by European mariners became available, scholars attempted to identify the toponyms mentioned in the ancient sources with names recorded by modern visitors. Beginning with at the Straits of Hormuz, we have a series of such identifications which are generally accepted for *Anamis* (Mināb), *Organa* (Hormuz island, q.v.), *Oaracta* (Qeshm island, q.v.), *Kaikandros* (Hendorabi island) *Gogona* (Bandar Kangān?) *Hieratis* (Ḥalila) *Mesambria* (Bušehr peninsula), and *Rhogonis* (Bandar Rig) but in no case, with the exception of the large, yet unexcavated site at Rēšahr (Rēw-Ardašir), do we have any archaeological evidence which could bolster these identifications. It has been suggested that Mesambria, the Greek name mentioned by Arrian commonly identified with the Bušehr peninsula (Vincent, 1809, p. 365; Berghaus, 1832, p. 39), "is genetically connected with Pašime/Mišime" (Steinkeller, 1982, p. 243).

It was almost certainly during the reign of Antiochus I (q.v.; 281-261 BCE) that Antioch in Persis (Ptolemy 6.4.2) was founded. Although the location of this city remains unconfirmed, scholars have long identified it on the Bušehr peninsula (Tarn, 1929, p. 11; Tarn, 1951, p. 418; cf. Bernard, 1995, p. 83, n. 58), where the large mound of Rēšahr would be the best candidate. The decision to found an important Seleucid colony here was hardly random, though we have no idea whether Liyan was still inhabited at this late date or whether the harbor of Bušehr simply presented the most obvious, sheltered embayment along this part of the Iranian coast to the Seleucids (see SELEUCID EMPIRE). Several texts from Magnesia-ad-Maeandrum in Asia Minor dating to the reign of Antiochus III (222-187 BCE) throw light on the Greek colony at Antioch in Persis. These include a letter (OGIS 231) from Antiochus III (q.v.) to the council

and people of Magnesia, which shows that the Seleucid king was at Antioch in Persis when a delegation of ambassadors (*theoroi*) from Magnesia arrived. More importantly, a decree (OGIS 233) sent to the "kinsmen and friends" at Magnesia by the citizens of Antioch in Persis reveals that Magnesia provided the original colonists who established Antiochia, and that the Persian *polis* had all of the civic institutions associated with Greek colonies, including a representative council (*boule*) (Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, 1993, p. 166).

Seleucid colonization elsewhere in the Gulf region is less well-documented. Most of the other Seleucid colonies in the area were located in southern Mesopotamia (e.g., Seleucia-on-the-Erythraean Sea, Alexandria-on-the-Tigris/Antiochia-Charax). A Seleucid military outpost consisting of a small fort (60-70 m. on a side) enclosing two temples was built on Failaka (Jeppesen, 1989), known as *Ikaros* in Greek sources (e.g., Strabo, *Geog*. 16.3.2), allegedly because Alexander commanded it to be so called "after the island Ikaros in the Aegean Sea" (Arrian, *Anab.* 7.20.2-3). Although a stele bearing a letter to the inhabitants of Ikaros in 44 lines of Greek (the date is unclear; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, 1993, p. 174, read it as 109 in the Seleucid era or 204 BCE, thus dating it to the reign of Antiochus III) from one Anaxarchos reveals the presence of Greek institutions on Failaka, including gymnastic games and sacrifices in sanctuaries, there is no suggestion that the settlement there was a full-fledged *polis* (Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, 1993, p. 175). Bahrain was known as *Tylos* in Greek sources, a name which harkens back to Akk. *Tilmun*. Some scholars have interpreted the visit to Gerrha in what is today eastern Saudi Arabia by Antiochus III in 205 BCE as a show of force designed to re-assert Seleucid control over important Arabian trade (Huth and Potts, 2002, p. 77) and have seen his subsequent stop on Tylos (Polybius, *Hist.* 13.9.2-5) as a "taking – or re-taking – of control over the island" (Gatier, Lombard and al-Sindi, 2002, p. 225).

Failaka (Hannestad, 1983; Gachet and Salles, 1993), Bahrain (Lombard and Kervran, 1993; Herling and Salles, 1993; Andersen, 2003) and to a lesser extent sites such as Thaj (Potts, 1993a) on the coastal mainland of eastern Saudi Arabia have all yielded large quantities of pottery made in typically Hellenistic forms. Much of this material is glazed and can be paralleled at Iranian sites such as Susa (Boucharlat, 1993), Masjed-e Solaymān and Bard-e Nešānda (q.v.), although it is equally common at Mesopotamian sites such as Uruk, Larsa and Seleucia as well (Finkbeiner, 1993; Lecomte, 1993). Because of the generally sparse evidence of Seleucid political control in western Iran, Iranian

specialists have tended to call such pottery “Parthian” rather than Hellenistic (e.g., Haerinck, 1983). Small numbers of Seleucid coins have found on Failaka (Mørkholm, 1960, 1980; Amandry and Callot, 1988), Bahrain (Mørkholm, 1973), in eastern Arabia and in the Oman peninsula (Howgego and Potts, 1992) as well as local issues inspired by Alexander and Seleucid issues (e.g., Arnold-Biucchi, 1991; Callot, 1990; Potts, 1994).

When we move into the Parthian period proper, the quantity of glazed pottery of Parthian type is impressive at Ed-Dur (Haerinck et al, 1993) and Mleiha (Boucharlat and Mouton, 1993) in the U.A.E.; Qalat al-Bahrain and the many cemeteries like Saar, Karanah and Shakhoura (Salles and Lombard, 1999; Jensen, 2003) on Bahrain; and Failaka (Hannestad, 1983). There is nothing to suggest that this material was manufactured locally. On the other hand, in spite of much speculation since the 19th century, the probability that the Gulf region was under Parthian political control in the last century BCE and first two centuries CE is equally remote. Small numbers of Elymaean, Parthian and Persid coins have been found on sites in eastern Arabia (e.g., Haerinck, 1998a, pp. 286-89; 1998b, p. 33) but these are hardly indicative of active trade between the two regions, let alone of political control by any Iranian power over the Arabian side of the Gulf at this time. Moreover, the fact that local coin issues are attested in both northeastern and southeastern Arabia (Potts, 1991b; 1994) suggests the existence there of local, independent polities.

Far more compelling, however, is the case for a form of commercial and political control over the Gulf region exercised by the kingdom of Characene (q.v.; Mesene). Situated at the head of the Persian Gulf in southernmost Iraq with its capital at Spasinou Charax (Schuol, 2000, p. 198), the kingdom of Characene came into being circa 138-127 BCE under Aspasine (Gk. Hyspaosines), previously Antiochus VII’s (q.v.) satrap in the satrapy of the Erythraean Sea (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 6.31.138), in the wake of the loss of Seleucid sovereignty over southern Babylonia (Potts, 2002, p. 357). A dedicatory inscription in Greek from Bahrain honoring Hyspaosines and his wife, Thalassia, names one Kephisodoros “strategos of Tylos and of the islands” (Gatier et al 2002, p. 223). As Hyspaosines was not called king in the Babylonian sources until 127 BCE, and given that he died in 124 BCE, initial Characene control over Bahrain and the unnamed islands must date to this narrow interval of time. Later sources for ongoing Characene control over Tylos include a Greek-Palmyrene bilingual caravan inscription from Palmyra. Dating to 131 CE, the text honors a Palmyrene named Yarhai who served

Meredat, king of Spasinou Charax, as "satrap of the Thilouanoi" (Starcky, no. 38; Potts, 1997a, p. 95). Coins issued in 142 CE by the same Meredat identify him as *basileus Oman* (Potts, 1988) and Characene issues have been found at Ed-Dur (Potts, 1988; Haerinck, 1998a), the largest site of the Parthian period in southeastern Arabia. The fact that a Palmyrene served the king of Charax as a satrap in the Gulf region is particularly interesting in light of the presence of rock-cut tombs in Palmyrene style on Kharg island where there may well have been a Palmyrene merchant colony and/or, on analogy with the situation on Tylos (Bahrain), Palmyrenes in the service of the kingdom of Characene. Whether the designation "strategos of Tylos and of the islands" applied to Kephisodoros in the Bahrain inscription should be understood to have included Kharg cannot be determined, but it remains a possibility.

Turning to the extent of Parthian control over the southern coast of Iran itself, several sources on the rise of Ardašir (*Kār-nāmag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān*, Ṭabari, Ebn al-Aṯir, qq.v.) state that along the "coasts of the Persian Sea" a king ruled in the late Parthian period whose name was reconstructed by Theodor Nöldeke (q.v.) as Haftānboxt (q.v.; Widengren, 1971, p. 761; cf. Piacentini, 1984, pp. 173-74; 1985, p. 57), the Haftvād (q.v.) of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* (Piacentini, 1988, p. 309). If this "invincible lord of the coasts, master of numerous castles" left archaeological evidence of Parthian date along the coast, it has yet to be identified, since none of the forts with Sasanian occupation, e.g., in Lārestān (Pohanka, 1986, p. 5; cf. Schön, 1990), is located on the coast itself and no specifically Parthian sites have been recorded apart from a number of surface sites in the hinterland of Bušehr where glazed sherds, some of which may be Parthian, have been picked up (Whitcomb, 1987, pp. 317-30).

The sources relating to the early campaigns of Ardašir (Ṭabari, Dinavari [q.v.], Ebn al-Aṯir) state that he conquered Oman, al-Bahrayn and Yamama (Widengren, 1971, pp. 763-73). In al-Baḥrayn, a term normally applied to the east Arabian mainland rather than the islands which today bear this name, Ardašir is said to have encountered and killed a king named Sanaṭruq. Although this has sometimes been taken as a confusion on the part of the Arabic sources with the campaign of Ardašir and Šāpur I (q.v.; r. 239-70) against Hatra (Widengren, 1971, p. 755), where a ruler named Sanaṭruq was defeated in 240, the possibility of Parthian control over mainland northeastern Arabia in the late Parthian period cannot be ruled out entirely even though, as noted above, archaeological and epigraphic evidence to support it is lacking.

Given the political fortunes of the kingdom of Characene in the late Parthian period, on the other hand, it is unlikely that the east Arabian Sanaṭruq of the Arabic sources was another Characene satrap.

According to Ṭabari (Bosworth, tr. p. 16), one of Ardašir's foundations in Fārs was a town called Rēw-Ardašir. Rēw-Ardašir was also the name of one of a number of provinces (*šahr*) administered by an *āmārgar* (q.v.; Gyselen, 1989, p. 57), a high official responsible for fiscal control. Yāqut reports that, according to Ḥamza (*apud* Yāqut 2.887.1), the name Rēšahr or Rašahr was derived from Rēw-Ardašir (Le Strange, 1905, p. 261; Schwarz, 1912, p. 120). Although often confused with another Rēšahr/Rašahr on the Ṭāb (Marun) river (e.g., Chabot, 1902, p. 681; Sachau, 1916, p. 3; Rahimi-Laridjani, 1988, p. 262), qualified as being on the road to Arrajān (e.g., by Moqaddasi; the fact that Balāḏori, on the other hand, described Rēšahr as being close to Tawwaj [Schwarz, 1912, p. 120] shows that even the medieval geographers were referring to at least two different places, since Tawwaj is close to Bušehr, not to Arrajān), the most important of several settlements bearing this name (Gyselen, 1989, p. 57) was certainly the coastal town located on the Persian Gulf coast near modern Bušehr. A large archaeological site about 3 kms west of Liyan and 10 kms south of Bušehr (Whitehouse and Williamson, 1973, pp. 35-42; Whitcomb, 1987, Figs. A-B) continues to bear the name Rēšahr. Known only from surface investigations, the site has yielded sherds of Indian Red Polished ware, imported from Pakistan or the Indian sub-continent and so-called "Namord ware," from southeastern Iran (Potts, 1998b), while structural remains, once thought to be Portuguese, have been identified as those of an "imposing fort with a broad ditch and mud brick walls" dating to the Sasanian period (Whitehouse and Williamson, 1973, p. 40). The possibility is strong that Rēw-Ardašir was not a foundation of Ardašir I's (Peeters, 1924, p. 304; Schwaigert, 1989, p. 13), but a re-foundation on the site of Seleucid Antioch in Persis.

Rēw-Ardašir was the seat of the Nestorian Metropolitan of Fārs (Fiey, 1969, p. 179; Jullien and Jullien, 2002, p. 178). Because he located the metropolitanate of Rēw-Ardašir in the Rēšahr near Arrajān, Sachau was puzzled by what he considered its inconvenient location (Sachau, 1916, p. 3), whereas in fact, as he himself recognized, Bušehr was extremely easy to reach by sea from Susiana or southern Mesopotamia, if less accessible from Eṣṭaḵr (q.v.) thanks to the difficult route through the mountains between Shiraz and the coast (cf. on this route, e.g., Sykes, 1902, pp. 312ff; Pilgrim, 1908, pp. 61ff). According to

the *Chronicle of Seert*, Šāpur settled some of the prisoners deported from Antioch in towns founded by his father (Peeters, 1924, pp. 304-5) and it appears that this led to the building of two churches at Rēw-Ardašir, one of the "Romans," i.e., Greek-speaking deportees from the Roman east, and one of the "Karmanians" (Sachau, 1916, p. 5; Fiey, 1969, p. 181; Jullien and Jullien, 2002, p. 178-80; cf. the parallel situation in Ḵuzestān, where deportees and their descendants may be distinguished in the lists of attendees at Nestorian synods from those with non-Greek names, Wiesner, 1967; Schwaigert, 1989, p. 38; see CARMANIA). The designation "Karmanians" is intriguing, suggesting to Fiey native, Christianized deportees from the interior of Iran (Kerman province) (Fiey, 1969, p. 182). A single martyr (Yabsin/Kabsin of Riašdar [?]) from Rēw-Ardašir is attested in the *Breviarum syriacum* of 411, presumably one who had suffered during the earlier persecutions of Šāpur II (q.v.; Fiey, 1969, p. 182). Thereafter metropolitans of Rēw-Ardašir or Persis (the designations seem to have been synonymous, see Sachau, 1916, p. 13; Fiey, 1969, p. 179) are attested in 415, 420, 424, 485, 497, 544, 554 and 585 and intermittently until the 14th century (Chabot, 1902, p. 681; Fiey, 1969, pp. 182-93). Under the metropolitan Simeon a crisis erupted at Rēw-Ardašir in 649 (Fiey, 1970, p. 29ff) which threatened a schism between the church of Persis and the catholicate at Seleucia-Ctesiphon and which also involved the Nestorian communities on Bahrain, the east Arabian mainland and in the Oman peninsula (Beaucamp and Robin, 1983) where several Nestorian churches and monastic buildings have been discovered in recent years (e.g., Bernard et al, 1991; Langfeldt, 1994; Elders, 2001). Simeon was also the probable author of an important legal text which was translated from Persian into Syriac (Sachau, 1907; Rücker, 1908) and sheds a great deal of light on social and religious matters at Rēw-Ardašir in the 7th century. An important Nestorian monastic settlement was located on the island of Kharg.

Further south, Sirāf has produced evidence of a probable Sasanian fort beneath the remains of a 9th century mosque, as well as Sasanian coins and rock-cut chambers in the hills behind the site which have been interpreted as Zoroastrian ossuaries (Whitehouse and Williamson, 1972, pp. 33-35 and Fig. 3). In the Mināb area Williamson and Prickett recorded ten sites (K 17, 62, 81[?], 84, 85, 93, 102A-B, 170) with surface sherds attributable to the Sasanian period (Prickett, 1986, pp. 1270-72). Additional surface sherds of Sasanian date were found on smaller coastal sites as far east as Jāsk (q.v.) and as far west as Bušehr (Priestman and Kennet, 2002, p. 266; Kennet, 2002, p. 160). On the Arabian side of the Gulf Sasanian remains have been less easy to identify, but

two sites in Ras al-Khaimah, Kush and Khatt, have yielded good ceramic evidence of Sasanian-period occupation (Kennet, 1997, 1998) while a third site on Ras Musandam has been identified as Sasanian (de Cardi, 1972). Sasanian coins have been found at several sites in northeastern and southeastern Arabia (Cribb and Potts, 1995) while a Sasanian lead horse is known from the surface of a site near Jubail in eastern Saudi Arabia (Potts, 1993b) and a burial with iron weaponry dated to the Sasanian period has been excavated in the interior of Sharjah at Jabal Emalah (Potts, 1997b). The sources dealing with the Islamic conquest of Arabia, moreover, make it clear that both northeastern and southeastern Arabia were under the control of Sasanian governors (*marzbāns*) at that time (e.g., Ross, 1874; Shoufani, 1972). In the case of Oman, this control is attested as early as the reign of Sāpur I as witnessed by the mention of Mazūn, the Parthian and Sasanian name for Oman, in the ŠKZ inscription at Naqš-e Rostam (q.v.); Potts, 1985b; Huyse, 1999, vol. 2, p. 38), while in the case of northeastern Arabia, it probably dates either to the reign of Ardašir (discussed above) or to that of Šāpur II, whose aggressive campaign through the region took him all the way to the Ḥejāz (Bosworth, tr., p. 51).

Figure 1. The Persian Gulf in Antiquity.

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