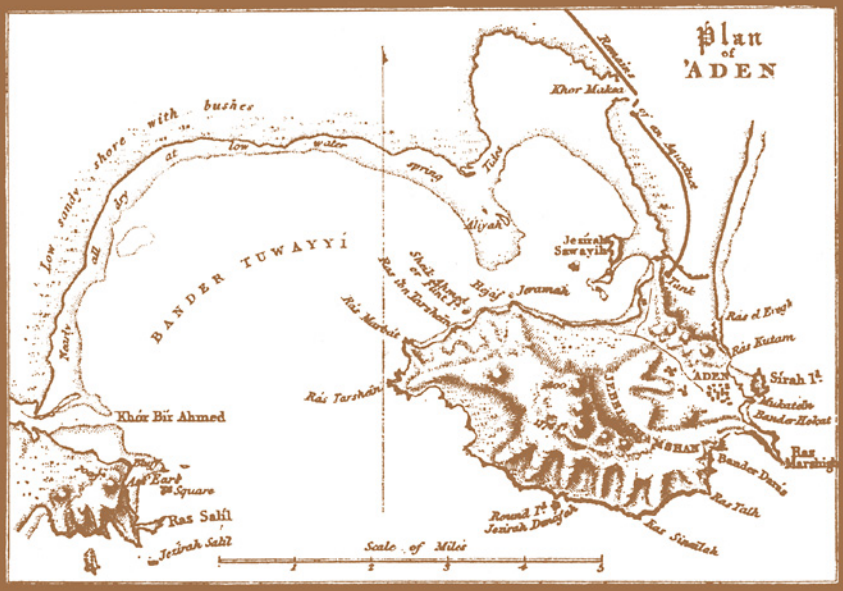
THE HISTORY OF ADEN

1839-1872



Z. H. Kour

Also available as a printed book
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FRANK CASS

First published 1981 in Great Britain by
FRANK CASS AND COMPANY LIMITED
Gainsborough House, Gainsborough Road
London E11 1RS, England

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

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and in the United States of America by
FRANK CASS AND COMPANY LIMITED
c/o Biblio Distribution Centre
81 Adams Drive, P.O. Box 327, Totowa, N.J. 07511

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Kour, Z H
The history of Aden, 1839–72.
1. Aden-History
I. Title
953′.35 DS247.A27

ISBN 0-203-98815-9 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-7146-3101-9 (Print Edition)

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To my wife
for her love and devotion
and great help in writing
this work.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Dr M.E.Yapp, of the University of London, for his advice; Mr F.R.Suntook for drawing the maps on pages 109, 110, and for proof-reading; Mr G.W.Adams for proof-reading; and the staff of the India Office Library for the facilities and help they provided. I should also like to acknowledge permission by the Earl of Dalhousie to quote from the Dalhousie Muniments at the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh.

Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

The peninsula of Aden, on the south-west coast of Arabia, lies 100 miles east of the straits of Bab al-Mandab at the entrance to the Red Sea. It has an area of 21 square miles, the greater part of which is uninhabitable being covered by precipitous hills, the highest of which is Mount Shamsan, 1,775 feet. These hills slope towards the sea, forming many spurs and valleys.

Aden is surrounded by the Arabian Sea on the east, west, and south. To the north it is connected with the mainland by an isthmus, one and a half miles long and 1,350 yards broad. It has been suggested that the peninsula was once an island, for until the British era the Isthmus was at one place almost covered by the sea at spring tides. In 1868, the British built a causeway to carry the 'Uthman aqueduct and to facilitate trade with the interior.

The peninsula has two large bays, one on the eastern, and one on the western, side. Before the British occupation, the harbour was in Eastern or Front Bay. The British, however, built their harbour in Western or Back Bay, it being deeper, more extensive, and well sheltered. The new harbour lies between the peninsulas of Aden and Jabal Ihsan (Little Aden). It measures about seven miles east to west and four miles north to south. Eastern Bay had been silting up long before the British came, and in the 1860s the old harbour was abandoned.

On the eastern side of the peninsula, and open to the sea, is a plain, the crater of an extinct volcano. It is three miles in circumference and on it stands the town of Aden, or Crater, as it is often called. From the western side of the peninsula and from the interior there was until the 1950s only one way into the town except for rugged mountain paths. This road lies to the north of the town, and the British called it the Main Pass. The Little Pass

(Ras Hujayf) is to the west of the peninsula and leads to Tawahi (Steamer Point). The dry bed of a watercourse runs down to the sea from the Tawilah Valley, dividing the town into two nearly equal parts.

Opposite to and commanding the town is Sirah Island, a triangular rock, 1,200 yards long by 700 yards wide and 400 feet high. At low water it is connected to the peninsula. Two miles to the north-west of the town, and about half a mile to the north of the Main Pass, lies Mu'alla, in 1839 a fishing hamlet, but now a flourishing township. Here the coasting craft still anchor as in the past.

During the north-east monsoon or the trading season (from October to April), the temperature rarely rises above 80 degrees F. For the rest of the year, i.e. during the south-west monsoon, hot sandy winds coming, strangely enough, from the north prevail, and the temperature can exceed 100 degrees F. May and September are particularly unpleasant, being the months of the change of monsoon, when there is practically no wind and the air is oppressive.

Aden has no mineral wealth and produces nothing worthy of mention. Even for its water it is dependent on outside sources. Yet its strategic and commercial position made it a highly desirable possession. In August 1538, the Ottomans, under Admiral Sulayman Pasha, seized it with the intention of using it as a base for their operations against the Portuguese settlements on the west coast of India. Leaving a garrison behind them, the Ottomans proceeded to attack Diu. When they were repulsed, they returned to Aden, landed one hundred pieces of artillery and strengthened the garrison. Then from Aden Sulayman went to Mukha and spread Ottoman authority along the coast of the Yemen. He eventually captured San'a and subjected the whole country.

In 1540, the Portuguese attacked Suez in retaliation, but were driven back. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Aden rose against the Ottomans, slaughtered the entire garrison, and invited the Portuguese to take over. The Portuguese remained in control of the town until 1551, when an Ottoman fleet under Peri Pasha recovered it.

When Murad IV succeeded to the sultanate in 1623, the Ottoman Empire appeared to be on the point of collapse. In the Yemen, in 1595, the new imam, al-Qasim Ibn Muhammad, had

rebelled against the Sunni Ottomans, he being a Shi'i and head of the Zaydi sect. Al-Qasim fought successfully until his death in 1620, and his son Muhammad continued the struggle. Faced with this situation and with other difficulties in the Empire, Murad withdrew from the Yemen in 1635.

After the departure of the Ottomans, South Yemen, which was Sunni, asserted its independence. Aden, together with Lahj to the north and Abyan to the east, was seized by Husayn Ibn 'Abd al-Qadir, the Yafi'i. In 1644, the Imam Muhammad died and was succeeded by his brother Isma'il who, in the same year, annexed Aden and the two neighbouring districts. Before his death in 1676, Isma'il had subjected the rest of South Yemen except Hadramawt which fell to his uncle and successor, Ahmad Ibn Husayn, in 1681.

The imams, however, could not control the south for long, and the term 'Yemen' was soon to mean only the northern part of the country. In the south, the tribes, one by one, revolted and freed themselves from imamic rule. Their chiefs assumed different titles, the most common being that of 'Sultan'.

Fadl Ibn 'Ali, the chief of the 'Abdali tribe which inhabited Lahj, wanted to gain independence and annex Aden. For this purpose, he sought the assistance of Sayf Ibn Qahtan, the Sultan of Lower Yafi', and promised him in return half the revenues of the port; Sayf agreed. In 1728, Fadl declared his independence, and in 1735, the confederates captured Aden; but before six months had elapsed, Fadl broke his promise and expelled the Yafi'is from the town.

The Fadlis, the neighbours of the 'Abdalis to the east, invaded Aden in 1835 and 1836. On the latter occasion they carried off property amounting to $30,000 and demanded, for the future, one dollar per day. In 1837, the *Darya Dawlat* incident occurred and resulted, two years later, in the occupation of Aden by the British as will be seen. Now, however, it is necessary to trace very briefly British contacts with the peninsula in the previous 230 years.

The first British ship to visit Aden was the *Ascension* of the East India Company in 1609. In the following year, a flotilla of three EIC vessels called there. However, the town which had once been a great commercial centre was now without any trade. Besides, on both occasions the Ottomans ill-treated the British merchants. For

these reasons, the EIC left Aden out of its sphere of interest, but this did not mean that it left the Red Sea area.

In 1618, the British company established a factory or trading post at Mukha. The Dutch and French East India Companies followed suit in 1620 and 1709 respectively. However, they abandoned their posts at the end of the Seven Years War (1756–63), and the British were left in control of the Red Sea trade. This monopoly was short-lived, for in 1785 the Americans began to compete with the British, and by 1800 they were the main exporters of the Yemen's most important product, coffee.

The decisive result of the Seven Years War between Britain and France was that France lost her Indian possessions. The French could not forget their loss and were bent on revenge. For this purpose they thought of occupying Egypt not only to maintain their interests in the Near East, but also to threaten Britain's position in India.

In April 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte was appointed Commander of the Army of the East. He was to secure Egypt, cut a channel through the Isthmus of Suez, and obtain for his country full control of the Red Sea, the ultimate object being the expulsion of the British from India. Napoleon took Egypt in July, and this event directed British attention to Aden, now ruled by an Arab sultan, Ahmad Ibn 'Abd al-Karim of the 'Abdali tribe. The first contact with him was not for commercial, but for diplomatic, reasons. In November, Captain Samuel Wilson, the British Resident at Mukha, asked him to prevent the French from being supplied in his territory and to pass on any information which he might have about their movements. In reply, the Sultan assured Captain Wilson of his full co-operation.

The British also took measures to prevent communication between Napoleon in Egypt and Tippoo Sultan, his potential ally in India. One of these measures was the occupation, in May 1799, of the island of Perim at the entrance to the Red Sea. The small occupying force, which was under Lt-Col John Murray, remained on the island until the end of August. When it left, for military and logistic reasons, it went to Aden where it stayed until March 1800.

In Aden, the British were treated with extreme kindness and courtesy. The Sultan even proposed to Murray that the British should take his country under their protection and treat him as an Indian nawwab or rajah. Ahmad had many enemies, and he

thought that an alliance with the British would strengthen him greatly. He was also anxious to restore the commerce of Aden.

Murray was very much impressed by Aden. He wrote that the peninsula was nearly impregnable both from the land and sea. The roadstead (in Eastern Bay) was preferable to the one at Mukha, and Western Bay was still better than Eastern Bay. It was enclosed by land, and ships could safely anchor there in either monsoon. Water was excellent and in profusion. The British fleet in the Red Sea could be supplied at Aden with every necessary article. Admittedly supply facilities were poor due to lack of demand, but this situation could be remedied.

While the French remained in Egypt, Aden could serve as a base for the British navy. When the British force was on Perim, it was dependent on the neighbouring tribes for its food and water; a settlement in Aden would render the British independent. For all these reasons Murray recommended acceptance of Sultan Ahmad's offer and the stationing of a garrison at his port. Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General of India, did not take up the offer, being afraid that the British might find themselves involved in tribal affairs.

Meantime, in Egypt, things did not go the way the French had hoped. In August 1799, Napoleon had returned to France after receiving news which convinced him that his presence was needed there. Two years later the French evacuated Egypt, having been defeated by the British. Thus the threat to India through Arabia was removed. Yet for decades after that fears of a French re-occupation of Egypt and use of Aden as a stepping-stone to India continued to haunt the British.

In 1802, with a view to reviving British trade in coffee,

Lord Wellesley appointed Sir Home Popham envoy to 'the States of Arabia' and gave him full authority to conclude commercial treaties. Popham's plan was to have his first treaty with the Imam of San'a who controlled the coffee lands, but in this he failed. Then he turned to the Sultan of Aden who again proposed an alliance with the British. His proposal was again turned down, but Popham promised him help if the French attacked. The Sultan had no cause to fear the French; what he wanted was help against his neighbours. However, a treaty of friendship and commerce was made between the two parties. Aden had no commerce to speak of, and the treaty, therefore, must be seen either as a courteous

gesture or a precautionary measure should the French re-occupy Egypt. It was never put into practice.

After Popham, Aden was visited by Lord Valentia in 1804 in the course of a voyage which lasted four years (1802–6). Valentia wrote that Aden was the only good seaport in the Yemen, its harbour being open all the year round. The little trade the town had was carried on by Banyans from Mukha and was mainly with Berbera on the Somali coast. The Somalis took their products of myrrh and gum to Aden where the Banyans bought them.

In 1808, in a report to the Foreign Office, Valentia described Aden as 'the Gibraltar of the East' and added that it could be made impregnable at a trifling expense. He recommended the establishment of a factory in the town, the repair of the old fortifications, and the garrisoning of Sirah Island by troops from India.

Valentia reported that the Sultan was willing to deny the use of his port to all other states, and this, he mistakenly believed, would give the British a monopoly of the Red Sea trade. In his opinion, a strong British presence in Aden and an alliance with the Abyssinians and with the Wahhabis in Arabia would be the best means of closing the Red Sea to any hostile power from the west. Valentia was afraid of a Wahhabi attack on Aden. Therefore, he advised his government to send Sultan Ahmad ammunition and also money to help him increase his army by the purchase of slaves.

The Foreign Office did not act on Valentia's recommendations, but in 1809 it sent to Abyssinia Henry Salt, his secretary and draftsman during the long voyage, to report on the state of that country and to cultivate friendly relations with the tribes on the Red Sea coast. In the course of his voyage Salt visited Aden twice, in 1809 and 1810. After the first visit he wrote that as a place of trade, Aden was still of some importance. It was the chief market for gums, and coffee of the best quality could be procured there although not as speedily as at Mukha owing to want of demand. The anchorage in Western Bay lacked the necessary protection; any vessel at anchor might be attacked and denied aid from the shore. Salt's fear that a British ship might experience such a danger prompted him to suggest privately to Jonathan Duncan, the Governor of Bombay, that the EIC should send two pieces of cannon as a present to the Sultan on the understanding that they

should be placed where they would protect the anchorage. Duncan did not act on this suggestion.

During Salt's second visit, Sultan Ahmad proposed that the British should found a factory at Aden. However, his proposal was not considered, and Aden was forgotten until a dispute with the Imam of San'a, early in 1822, forced the EIC to think of moving its factory from Mukha.

Captain G.Hutchinson, the Resident at Mukha, visited Sultan Ahmad and discussed with him the possibility of transferring the EIC factory to his port. The Sultan agreed and asked that in return the British should erect a fort on Eastern Bay and join forces with him. Hutchinson refused this offer and told the Sultan that his instructions were to enter into commercial, and not political, relations with him. Thus the factory remained where it was.

In 1807, Robert Fulton built the first practical steam vessel on the Hudson. The Government of India was quick to realize the value of this development and with a view to shortening the journey between India and England, directed its naval officers to study the possibility of opening up communication through Egypt by means of steam navigation. However, before the Red Sea line of communication with Europe could be established, a safe and convenient station was necessary between Bombay and Suez where steam vessels might refuel and carry out minor repairs.

Colonel Michael Bagnold, the Resident at Mukha, thought that Aden would be the ideal station, and he came to this conclusion after visiting the town in 1827 on his way to Bombay. His visit was at the invitation of the new 'Abdali sultan, Muhsin Ibn Fadl. Muhsin wanted the British to help him revive the trade of Aden, an aim which his cousin and predecessor had also hoped to achieve with their assistance. The Sultan told Bagnold that if the British wished to have a residency at Aden, they would be welcome. Bagnold himself favoured the idea of transferring the British factory from Mukha to Aden, but the Bombay Government thought that it rested with the merchants themselves to choose their ports. If more preferred Aden to Mukha, the factory would be moved there.

Before Bagnold left Aden, Muhsin gave him a letter for Mountstuart Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, asking for two guns, two howitzers and ammunition. The Sultan wanted the guns to put down his neighbours, the 'Aqrabis, and was ready to pay.

However, he was told that British policy was against giving military aid to any chief in Arabia. Sultan Muhsin did not accept this answer and repeated his request to the new Governor of Bombay, Maj-Gen Sir John Malcolm. The Governor discussed the subject with Bagnold who advised him to send the guns, as this would aid future communication with the Red Sea. Malcolm accepted his advice, and in December 1828 the guns were shipped to the Sultan as a gift.

In the following year it was decided to inaugurate the Red Sea Line. Coal was deposited at Sirah Island for the use of the *Hugh Lindsay* (411 tons), the first steamship made in India and the first to navigate the Red Sea. The *Hugh Lindsay,* which was built to carry five and a half days' fuel, left Bombay with coal for eleven days. Yet when she reached Aden, she had only six hours' fuel left. This showed that for a vessel of her kind the distance (1,641 miles) was too great without an intermediate station. Besides, it was so hard to obtain labour at Aden that six and a half days were needed to take on only 180 tons of coal. These two factors made the British abandon Aden.

Mukalla, on the Hadrami coast, 250 miles nearer to Bombay, was then tried. When it proved unsatisfactory, the British tried to buy the island of Socotra, off the Horn of Africa, but were unsuccessful. The choice then fell on the island of Kamaran, north-west of Hudaydah. This island was under Egyptian rule, and Sir Robert Grant, the Governor of Bombay, wrote to Muhammad 'Ali, the Pasha of Egypt, asking for permission to establish a coal depot there. Muhammad 'Ali agreed without hesitation. However, the island was not used by the British.

On 18 February 1837, the day before Muhammad 'Ali wrote to Grant, the *Darya Dawlat,* a Madras ship sailing under British colours with cargo and passengers on board, ran aground off Aden. The vessel was plundered and her passengers were ill-treated. Such an occurrence was by no means uncommon on the Arabian or any other coast, and the *Darya Dawlat* was by no means the first British ship to be plundered. In cases like these, the normal practice was to seek reparation. On this occasion, however, the British were not content with reparation, but used the incident to annex Aden.

By 1837, the Bombay Government had obviously decided that Aden, situated as it was half-way between India and Egypt, would

be better than Kamaran as a coal depot. In 1829, the place had been abandoned because the distance from Bombay was too great for a small vessel like the *Hugh Lindsay,* and because labour was scarce. However, these problems were not insurmountable. The first had been solved by the building of larger steamers, and the second could be overcome by British occupation. However, it was not only as a coal depot that the British now wanted Aden.

Muhammad 'Ali, who was appointed Pasha of Egypt in 1805, had by 1833 made himself the virtual ruler of the Sudan, Syria, Najd, the Hijaz, and the Yemen. The Pasha was a great admirer of France, and the British feared that he, on his own or in conjunction with France, might seize Aden and pose a serious threat to India. A French re-occupation of Egypt after Muhammad 'Ali's death also presented itself as a distinct possibility. In such an event, it was argued, the peninsula would be useful as an observation post or a forward base should the French decide to re-take Egypt.

In 1837, American merchants introduced their cotton goods into the Mukha market at three per cent duty, while British merchants were charged seven per cent on similar goods. By now also the Americans had dominated the coffee trade for four decades. To restore their monopoly of coffee, and to break American commercial supremacy in the Yemen, the British decided to occupy Aden and to re-establish it as a great market.

When the *Darya Dawlat* incident happened, Commander Stafford Bettesworth Haines of the Indian Navy was at Mukha on a survey mission in the Red Sea. On hearing of the ship's wreck and plunder he went to Aden to investigate the matter. He found that the supercargo had made off with a third of the merchandise, and the rest was being sold on behalf of the Sultan at one-third of its real value. Haines asked the Sultan to protect what was left of the cargo until a decision regarding it had been taken by the authorities in India.

The Bombay Government welcomed the *Darya Dawlat* incident as a means of putting pressure on the Sultan to cede Aden to them on their own terms. In November 1837, they sent Haines from Bombay to demand redress for the plunder of the vessel and the restoration of her cargo or the remittance of its value. This done, he was to enter into negotiations for the transfer of Aden to the British.

Haines arrived off Aden in the sloop-of-war *Coote* on 28 December 1837, and had his first meeting with the Sultan on 4 January 1838. At that meeting he demanded the return of the *Darya Dawlat's* cargo or $12,000. Muhsin reluctantly returned what he had, amounting to $7,809, and signed a promissory note for the remainder. Then Haines sent him a draft treaty for the purchase of Aden. The treaty protected the Sultan's religion, guaranteed him independence, and gave him the right to reside in Aden and to remain in possession of his two houses. His trading vessels were to be protected and allowed to fly the British flag. Muhsin had only to name his price.

The Sultan and Haines met again on 13 January to discuss the transfer arrangements, and the meeting ended apparently to the satisfaction of the British. The only question which was not settled was the price for Aden which the Sultan had promised to include in a letter to the Governor of Bombay. Muhsin did write to the Governor, but instead of naming his price stated very frankly that he would rather die than sell any part of his country.

The Sultan would have gladly given the British a depot in return for an offensive-defensive alliance, but at no time was he willing to part with Aden. In the face of British determination, he used dilatory tactics and laid down impossible conditions.

When Haines continued to press the Sultan for a price, he said that he would part with Aden for half the customs revenue. Haines did not agree on the ground that the revenue, which was then small, would increase under British rule. Muhsin then proposed $50,000 annually, saying that was his income from the port. This claim Haines dismissed as 'ridiculous' adding that the Sultan received only between six and seven thousand dollars. Then Muhsin said that the British could have Aden provided his rule continued over its inhabitants, a condition which Haines could not possibly accept.

Finally, the Sultan told a messenger sent by Haines that the price for Aden was to be $8,700 a year and that the agreement could now be signed. Haines considered the sum reasonable and came ashore for what was to be a signing ceremony. However, no sooner had he landed than he received a warning that there was a conspiracy to seize him and, possibly, to murder him. Whereupon Haines returned to the *Coote,* and on 30 January he left for Bombay without accomplishing his mission.

The Bombay Government, which was determined to annex Aden, chose to consider that the transfer agreement had actually been made and that the conspiracy alone had prevented it from being formally concluded. Haines, therefore, was sent back to complete the formalities. With him he took a revised version of the draft treaty, which was not fundamentally different from the original, and an escort of thirty European soldiers. Haines was told that if necessary he should increase the annual sum of $8,700 rather than resort to force.

The *Coote* anchored off Aden on 24 October 1838, and from the ship Haines wrote to the Sultan that he had returned to conclude the transfer agreement. The Sultan answered that he had entrusted the negotiations to his eldest son Ahmad. Haines then sent Ahmad the revised treaty in which he stated that the annual sum for Aden was to be $8,000, thus deducting from, instead of adding to, the original sum as he had been instructed. Ahmad was advised to study the treaty and see what other advantages he would get besides the money.

The young chief did not take Haines' advice and on 31 October his father ordered that the *Coote* should receive no provisions from Aden. The British retaliated by blockading the port, and the Fadli sultan, Muhsin's neighbour and enemy, undertook to supply them with food, water and firewood.

On 20 November, the Arabs fired on the *Coote's* pinnance, and this act marked the beginning of hostilities between the two sides. Early in December, the Sultan requested a ten day truce, but Haines would agree only to a permanent peace preceded by the transfer of Aden. The Sultan offered half the town for $8,000, and this having been refused, he suggested $12,000 for the whole. Haines, however, insisted that he should apologize prior to any friendly communication between them. The Sultan disregarded Haines' letter and tried to enlist the support of the Fadlis, but in this he failed.

Muhsin then sent Haines a half-hearted apology. Haines did not accept it and wrote to Bombay that the Sultan was determined not to deliver up Aden, but that the sight of troops would bring him to his senses. The troops, numbering 750, arrived on 16 January. The same day Haines demanded that Muhsin surrender Aden before sunset, and send three hostages and an apology. The Sultan replied that he needed six days to deliberate on the matter, while actually

he wanted time to collect men and prepare his guns for action. Haines returned no answer, and on 19 January the force stormed the peninsula.

Chapter II
THE GROWTH OF THE SETTLEMENT

Before the sixteenth century, Aden was a prominent commercial centre due to its strategic position between India and Egypt, its harbour which provided good anchorage, and its natural strength manifest in the surrounding hills. Indian and other Eastern products bound for Europe were brought to Aden and then shipped to Egypt where they were channelled through Alexandria to the West. The town was also the entrepôt for the trade of the East African coast and the southern Red Sea and the southern terminus of all caravan routes through Arabia. The Romans called Aden *Romanum Emporium.*

The same factors which contributed to Aden's commercial importance also combined to render it an important military post, hence its fortification by the different rulers. The ruins which were still visible at the time of the British occupation showed how strong and extensive its defences had been. All the mountain passes had been fortified, and at every commanding point there was a fort, a tower, or a turret. On the Shamsan range, overlooking the town, had been a wall four miles long, and other walls had been built on both the northern and the southern sides of the Main Pass. At Darb al-Hawsh, a gap on the northern side, there had been a gateway and breastwork. Sirah Island had been strongly defended with numerous works.

On the Mansuri range of hills which separated the town from the Isthmus was a ruined wall flanked at intervals by irregular bastions. Across the Isthmus itself, from shore to shore, was a wall which the Arabs called Darb al-'Arabi (the Arab Wall), and which the British, starting with Haines, called the Turkish Wall (believing it to have been built by the Turks), and they continued to refer to

it as such even after they had replaced it with a new one. The ruins of the sea defences attested to their former strength.

The prosperity of Aden suggests that it had a sizeable population. Löfgren writes that in 1276, the year of Marco Polo's visit, it had 80,000 inhabitants,[1] but he does not quote the source of his information. Marco Polo himself gives no figure, and there is nothing to suggest that he visited Aden. In any event, it is certain that he did not visit it in 1276.[2] Whatever the population may have been, it is unlikely that it amounted to 80,000. The town was in the Crater, which has an area of only three square miles, not all of it suitable for building.

For water, the inhabitants depended in the first instance on wells. When a more reliable source became necessary, because of drought or heavy consumption, tanks for collecting rainwater were cut in tiers in the solid rock. When the uppermost was full, it overflowed into the next, and so on until they were all full.

It is not known when or by whom these tanks were built. Some attribute their construction to the Himyarites, and date them back to 1500 BC. Others believe that they were built by the Persians during their second invasion of the Yemen about 600 AD. Still others maintain that they were constructed by the Turks after their occupation of the Yemen in 1538. The first two theories are worth investigating, but the third is to be discarded. Ibn Battutah, the great Moroccan traveller who visited Aden in the fourtenth century, mentioned its tanks.[3]

The number of the tanks at the end of the fifteenth century is nowhere given, nor is there any indication as to their capacity and condition, but it is clear that there was not enough water in the town. To relieve this shortage, the sovereign of the Yemen, Taj al-Din 'Abd al-Wahhab Ibn Tahir, built an aqueduct to bring water from Bir Hamid, a village eight miles away in what was later Fadli territory. In addition, water was brought from the interior in great quantities on camels.

In 1498, the discovery of the sea route to India via the Cape of Good Hope enabled European merchants to trade with that country direct, and Aden ceased to be an important entrepôt between the East and the West. The Ottoman occupation in 1538 contributed still further to its decline; Aden became a garrison town, and Mukha soon replaced it as the centre of trade for the Yemen. Without giving a reference, Playfair writes that Aden's

population in the seventeenth century was 30,000,[4] implying that although it had greatly declined, it was still an important city. However, the accounts given by the merchants of the East India Company early in that century cast doubt on this figure.

What cannot be doubted is that in 1839, the year of the British occupation, Aden was but a small village. Lt J.R. Wellsted, Indian Navy, who visited Aden with Haines in 1835, mentions in his book *Travels in Arabia,* published in 1838, that the inhabitants were not more than 800. Of these, a few were Banyans, between 250 and 300 were Jews, and the rest were 'descendants of Arabs, Somalis and offspring of slaves'.[5] Haines, who revisited Aden in 1837 and 1838, writes in his memoir, submitted to the Bombay Government in the latter year, that the population numbered 600: 300 Arabs, 250 Jews, and 50 Banyans. Captain F.M.Hunter, Assistant Resident at Aden (1871–88) gives the population at the time of the occupation as 6,000,[6] which clearly could not have been the case. The mistake may have been due to a printing error or to the inadvertant addition of a nought by the writer himself.

Most of the Arabs gained their livelihood by fishing and supplying the pilgrim boats with water and firewood. Some Jews earned their living by distilling from raisins an intoxicating drink which they sold to the Arabs in great quantities. Some used their houses as shops where they sold grain and other articles of small value, while a number caught fish with nets along the beach. The Jews were also the porters, bricklayers, and artisans of Aden and Lahj.

The Banyans were Hindu merchants who came from the Gujerat area, and for centuries had traded with Aden as well as with other Arabian ports. They monopolized almost the whole of the Red Sea trade in myrrh and gum. Aden's commerce, little as it was, was nearly all in their hands, and because of this monopoly they wielded great influence.

The people lived in about one hundred houses built mainly of baked mud. The largest and best was the one occupied by Sultan Muhsin when he was in Aden. Later, this house was acquired by Haines and remained his official residence until 1842.

There were several mosques in Aden, the oldest of which was the one where, it is said, the Fourth Orthodox Caliph, 'Ali, prayed. However, the only mosque kept in good repair was the one which contained the tomb of Shaykh 'Aydarus, the Wali

(patron saint) of Aden. The shrine was supported by visitors to the town, and the descendants of the Shaykh, who were the custodians of his tomb, benefited greatly from the gifts.

The tanks were all in disrepair, and some had even been concealed by sand and debris. The acqueduct was in ruins. The wells, estimated at 300,[7] were in a state of neglect. The streets were choked with the rubble of fallen dwellings. Tombs, mounds and heaps of rubbish formed the landscape. The fortifications had all crumbled; drift sand had filled the breaches and covered the whole. Such was Aden when the British seized it from Sultan Muhsin, and the purpose of this chapter is to trace its growth under their rule in the light of the value set upon it.

Security against tribal attacks was the first concern of the new conquerors, and therefore Lt J.Western, the Executive Engineer, urged the temporary repair of the Turkish Wall. As a site for the military camp, he proposed the whole seafront in Eastern Bay where the occupying force had pitched its tents. One line of barracks was to be built at the northern end, and another at the southern, with quarters for the officers in the middle. The space behind the camp, in the direction of the 'Aydarus Valley, was to be a parade ground.

Western further suggested that the fishermen be moved to Bandar Huqqat outside the Southern Gate where they would not interfere with the camp. The rest of the inhabitants were to be settled in the Tawilah and 'Aydarus Valleys south of the town. The bazaar was to be near the Main Pass.[8]

The Bombay Government,[9] who were more interested in the commercial, than the military, aspect of the town, did not sanction Western's plan for the camp because the site which he had chosen was the most convenient for trade.

> The commercial advantages of Aden being of the highest importance with regard to that place, these must have primary consideration in the arrangement of the town and public buildings, and the Governor in Council [Farish] therefore requests that in planning out of the town, and selecting sites for public buildings, this object be kept distinctly in view and strictly attended to.[10]