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PEARL INDUSTRY IN THE UAE REGION IN 1869—1938: ITS CONSTRUCTION, REPRODUCTION, AND DECLINE*

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Abstract. The article focuses on the United Arab Emirates' pearl industry during the period of British colonialization of the Arabian Gulf region, and, specifically, during the rise and decline of the pearl industry. The article aims to explore and analyze the development of the pearl industry in the UAE region, how it was constructed and reproduced from 1869 to 1938. One of the objectives of the study is to show that the pearl industry in the UAE region was a social construction in which the minority profited from financing the pearl extraction and export of pearls. The research also revels political, economic, and cultural factors of the reproduction of the pearl industry. The author shows that it was the colonial power behind the construction and reproduction of the pearl industry that was hierarchically structured. Within the hierarchical structure, the British rule implanted the financiers of the pearl industry, who served at the top level of the hierarchy. Other classes within this hierarchy consisted of local *tujar* merchants, *tawawish* middlemen, *nawakhodha* ship captains, *ghawasin* divers, *siyub* divers' assistants, etc. The research proves the exploitative nature of the pearl industry financial distribution among different strata. The differences within the hierarchy in terms of role, power, myth, and financial distribution further helped this reproduction. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, several factors led to the decline of the pearl diving industry, such as the spread of Japanese cultural pearling. This decline led to the decline of all the classes in the UAE pearling industry and to the rise of new classes related to the oil industry. The article considers a wide range of approaches ranging from statistical, from British archival materials, to discursive analysis of the relationships between colonial and local, rules and citizens, local and non-local, and different strata within the hierarchy of the pearl industry.

Key words: British colonialism; United Arab Emirates region; pearl industry; pearl industry construction; pearl industry reproduction; organizational hierarchy

The UAE is situated on the Arabian Gulf. It is about 83 thousand square kilometers, with a population of about 10.5 million as of 2018. It is comprised of 7 emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al-Khaimah, Fujairah, Ajman, and Um Al-Quwain. The UAE became independent on December 2, 1971; for about 150 years prior to this it had been under the British mandate. During this period, the UAE region had been reliant on the traditional economy including trade, agriculture, fishing, and, later on, the pearl industry.

First, the author analyzes pearls as a commodity embodied in social relationships; second, demonstrates that the pearl industry was socially and discursively constructed; third, shows how British colonialism constructed the pearl industry; fourth, analyzes the hierarchical structure of the pearl industry and the role of its different strata; fifth, identifies main causes of the decline of the pearl industry, and its consequences for different social strata within the pearl industry. Methodologically, the study is based on the social-discursive analysis in understanding the pearl industry. This means that the author analyzes political, economic and cultural construction of the pearl industry in relation to socially constructed power relations within it. This approach allows to identify different discourses within the pearl industry strata.

The study implies several other approaches to the analysis of the pearl industry. One approach is social-historical. The author considers the pre-colonial and colonial periods of pearl production in the region, which allows to see the colonial role in its construction. The second approach takes into account political, economic and cultural construction of the pearl industry, and the strata within it. The third approach considers the pearl industry within the global context. In addition, the study uses macro-analysis to cover different social-historical periods. Micro-analysis is also used to explain each stratum in relation to other strata within the colonial discourses. The sixth approach is comparative: pre-colonial and colonial periods are compared, and different strata are compared. The seventh approach is statistical: the figures from the archives help to describe the pearl industry production and reproduction.

The article is divided into three parts. The first part shows how the pearl industry was constructed in 1869 in relation to earlier periods. The second part examines different strata involved in the industry, its revenue distribution, and its hierarchical structure, and explains how the pearl industry continued to reproduce itself discursively for such a long period. The third part considers global and regional factors of the decline of the pearl industry, and its consequences for the UAE economy in general, for the pearl industry's social strata, and the UAE relations with British colonialism.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE PEARL INDUSTRY

To understand the importance of the pearl industry for the UAE society during the period before the UAE independence from British colonialism (December 2, 1971), it is necessary to describe how the industry was constructed (1). The pearl industry had existed in the Arabian Gulf long before this period, and the Classical Arab writers, in fact, often referred to the pearl industry and how it functioned. During the Classical Period (620—1500), however, the industry coexisted with other productive economic sectors in the Arabian Gulf. Writers such as Al-Idrisi and Ibn Batutta also describe a pearl industry structured very differently from the one established in the UAE region in 1869—1938. In his book, *Nazhat al-Mushtaq* (1100), Sharif al-Idrisi provides details about pearl fisheries that existed in the Arabian Gulf at that time. His descriptions include the personnel involved, locations of the pearl banks, and activities of the fisheries [6. P. 387—391]. Ibn Battuta in 1300 also discussed pearl fisheries in the Arabian Gulf. His described the locations and techniques of pearl diving, crews of the pearling ships, etc. [38. P. 290]. Both al-Idrisi and Ibn-Battuta describe the extensive commerce characterizing the Arabian Gulf during the corresponding periods. The exports of the Arabian Gulf commercial cities during that period included agricultural products, crafts, textiles, etc. The UAE and Oman region, in addition to this, had a prosperous shipbuilding industry. It was also a maritime center on the Indian Ocean; its trading cities were entrepots, or intermediary trading centers, for the export of the Muslim regional products, and the re-export of other goods such as Chinese porcelain, Indian spices, etc., as well as pearls. Its commercial stratum heavily invested in the Indian Ocean commercial enclaves and regional inter-trades [12. P. 35—55].

Marco Polo, travelling to the Arabian Gulf in the late 1270s, did not consider pearling an important sector of the Arabian Gulf economy, he did not mention it as an important source of income for the Gulf region, but he did mention the Gulf commercial cities, such as Qais, as important entrepots of trade between the Abbasids and India [25. P. 650]. Ma Huan, who in 1413 accompanied Cheng Ho in the Indian Ocean voyages of the 1400s that the Emperor Yung Lo ordered, returned to China with a detailed description of the commercial cities of the Arabian Gulf, such as Hormuz. He went into some detail about the strata comprising the society of Hormuz. According to Ma Huan, Hormuz as a society included physicians, artisans of all kinds, and entertainers. Ma Huan also named an agricultural stratum when he mentioned that the agricultural area of Hormuz produced several kinds of fruits and vegetables, but he did not mention the pearl sector. However, Ma Huan visited the Hormuz market place, and there he saw precious stones from many different parts of the world offered for sale, and utensils made out of jade and crystal. He also found such textiles as velvets, brocade, silks, and woolens [31. P. 165—172]. During this period, Hormuz was connected with both cities along the Central Asian silk route, and with commercial cities in the UAE region and Oman, such as Suhar, Khur Fakkan, Qalhat, and Julafar, all of which functioned as satellites to Hormuz [16. P. 57].

After 1500, the Indian Ocean was seized by the European colonial powers such as the Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French. However, in 1869—1938, the export of pearls became the only source of income for both the UAE region and the Arabian Coast of the Gulf due to the process by which the Portuguese entered the Indian Ocean/Arabian Gulf in 1497, and the Dutch and British in the early 1600s, and the subsequent British colonial process, which shifted trade routes, destroyed the UAE and the Arabian Gulf region's long-distance merchant stratum, and engendered the concomitant impoverishment of the agricultural sector, and even of the tribal-pastoral sector. For example, in the early 1800s, the Al-Qawasim tribal confederation of the UAE's region possessed a fleet of more than 500 vessels and a population of 390,000. During the 1819 war between the British and Al-Qawasim (2), most of the commercial ports and commercial fleets of the UAE region were destroyed by British colonialism [10. P. 26—27; 11. P. 77]. As a result of the British-imposed type of their economy under the treaties, the people of the UAE region faced poverty. The increased impoverishment of the UAE region could be seen in the early 1900s, when the Al-Qawasim had only forty non-pearl, non-fishing vessels and Al-Qawasim population fell to 50,750 [10. P. 26—27; 11. P. 77; 29. P. 6; 30. P. 18].

Aside from the fact that pearls became the UAE region's most important export commodity during 1869—1938, the significance of the pearl industry for the economy of the UAE increased, as seen in both the rise in the monetary value of pearl exports between 1744 and 1913, and in the percentage of the male population employed in it. In 1744, for example, the exports of pearls from the entire Gulf region amounted to 50,000 English Pounds. By 1874/1875, the value of these exports had reached 734,000 English Pounds. For 1903/1904, these exports amounted to 1,434,000 English Pounds. By 1912/1913, the value of the Gulf region pearl exports had reached 2,000,000 English Pounds [7. P. 8]. The UAE region's total population amounted to 200,000 during the 'heyday of the pearl fisheries' in 1912—1913, when the revenues from pearl exports were at their highest. Until the outbreak of World War II, 80 percent of UAE labor force was engaged in the pearling sector, not only as crew members on pearling ships, but also as ship builders, vendors of water, rice and spices to supply the ships, etc. The remaining 20 percent of the labor force worked in agriculture, fisheries, etc. [7. P. 8; 9. P. 6, 11; 29. P. 2256; 40. P. 63].

Aside from recruiting a significant percentage of the male labor force in general, the pearl industry specifically diverted a large percentage of the male labor force from the agricultural sector. Thus, at the beginning of the pearling season, there was a large migration of males northward, from Al Ain and other agricultural regions such as al-Liwa to the Coastal UAE, and a reverse southward migration of women from the Coastal UAE region to Al Ain and other agricultural areas to participate in harvesting [1. P. 514—520; 17. P. 169]. This situation indicated that the recruitment of male labor force in the pearl industry was so extensive that women had to do all works during harvesting including the traditionally done by men. The increased demand for Gulf pearls in Europe also led to the recruitment of crew members on pearling dhows from the tribal-pastoral sector of the UAE economy at the end of the nineteenth century [23. P. 200].

The massive recruitment in the pearl industry of men from both agrarian and tribal labor force of the UAE region in the nineteenth century was determined by the ongoing decline of trade and, thus, the impoverishment of the agrarian and tribal-pastoral sectors. The Abu Dhabi income from the pearl sector reached 95 percent in the early 1900s, and this was also true for other emirates. This meant that agriculture was now mainly aimed at local consumption rather than long-distance export. Nor did the tribal sector continue to play its supportive role for overland long-distance trade which lost its importance in the colonial era. Thus, both sectors ceased to earn surplus, and men from agrarian and tribal labor forces sought employment in the pearl industry, which under British colonialism became the only important sector in UAE region's economy [17. P. 179].

The construction of the pearl industry had to be described in the context of the British installation of regular steamer service in the Arabian Gulf after 1862, first as a mail service, and later as a cargo and passenger service as well. In 1862, the British India Company (BI), a private company receiving subsidies from the British Government of India, won a contract from Bombay for providing mail service between Calcutta, Bombay and Karachi in India, and Basra and other ports on the Arabian Gulf [27. P. 25—26]. Mackinnon Mackenzie and Co., which managed BI's trade services along the Indian Coast, took responsibility for establishing BI operations in the Arabian Gulf. In 1865, Mackinnon Mackenzie (MM) & Co. and BI established the enterprise of Gray, Paul and Co. as their agency in Bushire and Bandar Abbas, then established agency in Basra in 1869, and later an office in Lingeh, a city within Qasimi territory on the Persian littoral of the Arabian Gulf. This port served as a transshipment center for traffic to and from Bahrain and UAE and other ports in the Gulf region [26. P. 149].

To ensure that the Gulf ports for BI ships could pay for the imports from Britain, the BI began to encourage most of the Gulf ports to develop their own cash commodities for export mainly by providing them with shipping and investments. In Bushire, whose imports usually exceeded exports in value in 1865—1870s, the chosen cash commodity was opium due to the ready market in Hong Kong, Singapore, and later in Britain and the US. In addition, Bushire was important for Gray, Paul and Co. as a significant importer of British goods such as cotton goods, shirting, copper and arms [27. P. 36—38]. Bandar Abbas also was a significant export depot for Persia's opium. Basra was another significant importer of British goods, its trade was also important to Gray, Mackenzie and Co. for exports to Europe, America, and Australia. On the other hand, Lingeh's initial importance for Gray, Paul and Company can be explained by its function as a port of mail delivery [27. P. 41—42, 44—47]. However, Lingeh became a very significant pearl exporter for all the pearls from the banks of UAE region were exported to British India via that port. This trade began to decline after the end of the pearling season of 1901—1902 due to stricter customs regulations that the officials of the Qajar shah [13. P. 220—228] (who had taken Lingeh from the Al-Qawasim in 1887 [33. P. 242]), imposed after that year. Dubai began to gain significance as an Arabian Gulf port after 1887, when the port of Lingeh, to which it had hitherto been linked, begun to decline and Dubai became a major port for steamers [35. P. 774]. Prior to the decline of Lingeh, during the rule of Sheikh Hashar bin Maktoum (1859—1886), Dubai was becoming an important port where pearls of the UAE region were exported by pearl merchants. After the decline of Lingeh, however, the pearl merchants of the UAE region used the Dubai port to export pearls directly to the Moti Bazaar pearl market in Bombay.

Because the UAE and Gulf region lacked the financial capability to invest in the pearl industry as the only cash commodity after 1869, the British colonials reconstructed the pearl industry (so that it was no longer indigenous merchants who invested in the industry), sold pearls within the Indian Ocean commercial system, and set the price for pearls. It was now an external commercial force sponsored by the British that made investment, set prices, and sold pearls in Europe. The British used natives from elsewhere in the Indian Ocean as instruments for the British control of the UAE economy. British colonialism was able to fit these 'natives' into the UAE region's economy after gaining political control of the UAE, completing the destruction of the UAE long-distance trade stratum, and reconstructing the pearl industry into a major export industry tor the European and North American markets.

The 'natives' from elsewhere in the Indian Ocean who became prominent in the pearling sector were Banyan merchants from India. They comprised a specific stratum within the British hegemonic structure that was constructed in relation to the English East India Company's penetration in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf during the 17th century. Typically, a Banyan merchant initially had a certain amount of capital to invest and took an opportunity of attaching himself to an East Indian Company merchant or official, starting with the lower positions in the Company hierarchy and moving to more important ones as he gained capital and experience. During the 18th century, Banyan merchants in the East India Company served as cross-cultural agents for the commercial affairs or sometimes contributed capital to a commercial venture that a Company official entered on his own account and shared the profits. Banyan merchants benefitted further during the late 18th century because as company servants they enjoyed the same exemptions that the British did from tolls on transported goods in and out of the Mughal Empire [19. P. 175]. During the 19th century, members of Banyan merchant families often became full partners with British entrepreneurs in banking, insurance, shipping centers and commercial agency houses.

Banyan merchants increased their activities in the UAE region after the arrival of the steamer in the Gulf region after 1869 [1. 82; 34. P. 169], as the pearling industry grew as a result of increased capital investment and because pearl exporters created the demand for pearls in Europe, just as the British East India Company in 17th and 18th centuries created the demand for other Indian Ocean commodities such as textiles, spices etc. [12. P. 122—123]. Banyan merchants, both in Bombay and in the Arabian Gulf, served as the main financiers of the pearl industry for their partnership with British entrepreneurs had provided them with capital, they enjoyed special protection as British subjects, and because Muslims were forbidden by the Islamic Law from charging interest rates [1. P. 105]. Pearls became the main export commodity in the UAE and in the rest of the Arabian Gulf after 1869, and the peak period for pearl exports was in the 1870s and through the 1920s until the collapse in 1938 [7. P. 8]. Banyan merchants also dealt with textiles, but more importantly, in the Arabian Gulf and India they served as financiers of this industry by lending money to local *tujar* merchants from the Arabian Gulf who sold pearls they had bought from smaller merchants to Banyan pearl exporters at the Moti Bazaar in Bombay [1. P. 82]. The Banyan merchants also controlled the process of preparing pearls for export to Europe, i.e. categorization, polishing, bleaching, drilling, packaging, etc. They exported pearls to London, Paris, and New York from Bombay [1. P. 82—83; 21. P. 171; 29. P. 2240; 40. P. 64—65], thereby controlling their price on the world market. The Banyan exporters also unilaterally set the price they paid for pearls shipped to India from the Arabian Gulf, or brought there by *tujar* or *tawawish* merchants, *tawawish* usually bought pearls from the *nawakhodha* captain to sell to *tujar* or *tawawish* merchants [2. P. 67]. *Tujar* or *tawawish* could be local or Banyan. Among *tujar* merchants, it was usually the Banyans who lent money to local *tawawish* pearl merchants in the Arabian Gulf and sold pearls from the Gulf to the Bombay exporters. Some of the *tawawish*, or pearl merchants who did not own dhows and obtained pearls either directly from fleets or from smaller local sellers on shore, were also Banyan [29. P. 2236]. The interest rates that the Banyan *tujar* charged the local *tawawish* or *tujar* merchants often amounted to 25 percent and sometimes more than 35 percent [36. P. 138].

THE STRUCTURE AND REPRODUCTION OF THE PEARL INDUSTRY

In terms of the actual work of the pearl industry, pearling ships or dhow were usually owned by *tujar* merchants or *tawawish* though some were also owned by *nawakhodha* captains (4) [5. P. 11]. Sometimes, the *nawakhodha* would be hired by *tujar* or *tawawish* merchants for pearling. The wealthier pearl merchants owned a large number of ships [39. P. 10—11]. Financially the pearling industry was a hierarchy. Both the local *tujar* and *tawawish* merchants borrowed from the Banyan *tujar* financiers, and, in turn, *tawawish* merchants extended advances to *nawakhodha* captains of the pearl ships [29. P. 2227]. The *nawakhodha* used these advances to make payment advances to *ghawasin* pearl divers and *siyub* who were responsible for hauling each diver out of the water at the end of each dive. These advances to the pearling ship's crew took the combined form of coin, rice and coffee. One of these cash advances called *salafiyyah* was at the beginning of the pearling season and was to support the diver's family when the diver was at sea, and the second called *tisgam* was at the end of the pearling season to support the diver's family during the off-season period, when the diver was not working. The third advance was called *kharjiyyah* and served as pocket money for the diver and his family until the next season, and it was given in anticipation of the diver's commitment to the *nakhodha* captain for that season. The size of the sib's advances amounted to a third of those allocated to the ghawas [39. P. 25].

The pearl-diving season normally lasted from May to September, or from June to October, when the waters of the Arabian Gulf were warm enough for diving. The peak season,called *al-ghaws al-kabir*, or 'the great dive', lasted from early June to September. It was during this period that all the dhows went *to al-maghasat*, or the pearl banks, and that the greatest number of oysters was collected.

On the pearling ship, together with *nakhodha* and several *ghawasin*, or divers, the crew included the *mujddimi*, who was second in command and responsible for discipline on the ship, and the *siyub*, who were responsible for hauling divers out of the sea by rope. The largest pearling ships had additional crew members. These included *rawadif*, or assistants, to carry out such duties as helping *siyub*, cleaning, and attending to the *nakhodha's* request, and *jelasin* who were employed to lay open the oyster shells or to be on standby to replace *siyub* during their prayers or other works. Each pearling ship crew also included *tabbakh*, a cook, and *tabbabin*, or youths who helped the crew to open the oyster shells and served water and food [37. P. 51]. The *tabbabin* were usually the sons of *nawakhodha, ghawasin*, or *siyub*, who later adopted their fathers' occupations [1]. The pearling ship's crew also included the *nahham*, or singer, whose job was to lighten the work on pearling dhows by singing or leading the other crew members in song [8. P. 26]. Usually, these songs were related to pearling, their rhythm reminded of the waves, and they depicted the hardship of the industry as well as the joy at completing the season. Each crew member on the pearling ship had a specific job title and a specific role under the supervision of *nakhodha* captain and his *mujddimi* [24. P. 335].

Each pearling ship was theoretically a profit-sharing venture, but the reality was that the lower strata of the pearling hierarchy remained in debt. A description of how revenues in the pearling industry were disposed illustrates this. If a *tawwash* borrowed money from a Banyan *tajir* merchant, and then made a cash advance to a *nakhodha,* then *nakhodha* sold to the *tawwah* the season's catch of pearls at a 15 to 20 percent discount as a repayment of both the sum that the *tawwash* had advanced, and what tacitly amounted to interest on the cash advance. The *nakhodha* then divided these proceeds between himself and the rest of the crew. If the *nakhodha* owned the ship, his earnings amounted to a fifth of the revenue from the sale to the *tawwash*. Out of the remainder of the total revenue, minus the *nakhodha* earnings, were paid taxes to the ruling *sheikh*, travel expenses, and the shares of each member of the crew. The monetary value of each individual share was calculated first by the total number of shares to be paid to the crew. This was done by multiplying the number of individuals in each crew by the number of shares to which each was entitled. The *nakhodha* and *ghawas* were entitled to three shares each, for example. Each *sib* was entitled to two shares, the *radif* and *jalas* to one share each, and the *tabbab* to none. The sum of revenue (minus the owner's one fifth) left after paying taxes to the ruling *sheikh* and travel expenses would be divided by the total number of shares to which the crew members were entitled. That would yield the monetary amount of each share, and payment to each crew member [15. P. 451; 18. P. 119—120; 29. P. 2232—2233; 39. P. 55] (5).

It was the pearl merchants who reaped the profits, while the extractors of pearls were chronically in debt. The most privileged in this hierarchy were the Banyan *tujar* financiers and exporters in Bombay. An example of the substantial profits that were made from the exports of Gulf pearls to Europe can be seen in the Kumzar Pearl Case of 1899—1901. Here, a valuable Gulf pearl was sold to local Sharjah merchants for about 2,668 rupees, but once it had been sold to Bombay exporters it was valued as 400,000 rupees for sale to Europe [29. P. 2243, 2252]. Another Gulf pearl was purchased by Miss Barbara Hutton in Paris after 1926 for a price of 200,000 rupees [14. P. 29].

There were also wholesale *tujar* merchants, local or Banyan, who made the substantial profits from purchasing vast numbers of pearls from both larger and smaller *tawawish* merchants and selling to the Banyan exporters at the Moti Bazaar in Bombay. Since these exporters charged such astronomical prices for the Gulf pearls they sold to the European markets, they were able to buy pearls from the *tujar* or larger *tawawish* merchants at substantially higher prices than the latter two paid for them. Some of these wholesale *tujar* merchants, most of them Banyan, also made monetary advances or loans to *tawawish*. Merchants who financed the pearl industry could make profits of 20 to 70 percent on these loans [9. P. 28].

The *tujar* merchants, advanced funds to the *nawakhodha* for the purchase of the ship's supplies during the pearling season, and sometimes owned several pearling ships. This meant that a given *tawawish* was both likely to reap tacit interest on the advances to the *nawakhodha* by purchasing pearls from him at a discount price, and to obtain back the sum of one fifth of his payments to the captains for the pearl catches as the owner's share. Furthermore, the *tawwash* got additional profit in selling pearls to the *tujar* merchants [29. P. 2236]. The *tujar* merchants also bought pearls from the smaller *tawawish* merchants who were shore-based and did not own ships, and who purchased pearls to sell them to other merchants at constantly increasing prices. All but the smallest *tawawish* merchants made as much as a tenfold profit on their pearls with every sale to a larger *tawawish*. The smallest *tawawish* merchants bought pearls directly and cheaply from the *nawakhodha* who had not borrowed enough money to sustain the ship's food supply for the season. Larger *tawawish* merchants bought pearls from smaller ones, and the largest ones either sold pearls to the *tujar* or sometimes went to Bombay [9. P. 28]. Local *tujar* or *tawawish* merchants selling their pearls in India did so with the help of the *dallal* who was usually from the Arabian Gulf but had settled in Bombay. The *dallal* kept himself familiar with pearl market conditions and knew the prices at which different types of pearls could be sold. He earned his commissions both from the Banyan exporters in the Moti Bazaar and from the *tujar* and *tawawish* merchants from the Arabian Gulf by linking them together and mediating in setting the price of pearls [1. P. 80—83].

With the profits of the pearl merchants, Banyan exporters and Banyan financiers, there was the chronic indebtedness of the *nawakhodha* and *ghawasin*. The *nawakhodha* were rarely able to harvest a haul of pearls sufficient to pay their debts to the *tawawish* or to buy more than a bare subsistence [18. P. 111]. As mentioned above, the *ghawasin* and *siyub* obtained the *salafiyyah*, *tisgam*, and *kharjiyyah* advances to support themselves and their families during the year. However, once the revenue actually earned from the sale of pearls was divided among the crew, and the share owed to the owner of the ship was paid, the *ghawas* rarely earned enough even to pay his debt to the *nakhodha* for that year. A *ghawas* debt from one season carried over into the next with a delinquency penalty added on, and this forced the diver to work for that *nakhodha* for the second season, during which he usually got an additional debt. Furthermore, as the divers were usually illiterate, the *nakhodha* could falsify the amount of debt to make it irredeemable. Sometimes, the *nawakhodha* would falsify the accounts of the most productive divers simply to keep them. If a *ghawas* died and left a debt, his sons would inherit it, and this obliged them to become *ghawasin* [39. P. 54—56]. 90 percent of the *ghawasin* were in debt to their *nawakhodha* at that time in the 1920s [21. P. 167]. Furthermore, the Treaty of 1879, signed by the British with each of the UAE regional *sheikhs*, allowed the extradition of any indebted *ghawas* who attempted to escape to another sheikhdom (6) [32. P. 142]. Therefore, the Treaty of 1879 between the British and the regional *sheikhs* made it difficult for divers and pearling ships' crew members to escape their debts, which ensured the ongoing extraction of pearls and, consequently, the continued profits of pearl *tujar* merchants and, most importantly, of the Banyan financiers of the industry who were protected British subjects [12. P. 146].

The *nakhodha* too was constantly in debt,because he borrowed money from the *tawwash* to supply the pearling vessel and to give cash advances to the *ghawas* and *sib*. In fact, his debt situation usually bound the *nakhodha* to the *tawwash* who extended the advance in a manner similar to that which bound the diver to the *nakhodha* [17. P. 178].

Disputes on debts were resolved in a special court that the ruling *sheikhs* established for the pearling industry. This court was under the control of pearl merchants, and it could state that a *nakhodha* who could not pay off his debts was to lose his boat and his divers [17. P. 179]. As for the *ghawasin*, they never won an arbitration case against the *nakhodha* because it was in the interests of pearl merchants that a *nakhodha* pay a *ghawas* as little as possible in order to enable the *nakhodha* to pay pearl merchants as much as possible in redeemed debts [18. P. 123—124].

The hierarchical structure of the pearl industry can be seen in the distribution of merchants in relation to the *ghawasin*, *siyub* and the other strata physically involved in pearl extraction. In 1903—1913, the total number of large pearl merchants in the UAE region was 950 [9. P. 28]. Out of them, 408 were Indian, 194 — Banyan, and 214 — Khoja, or Indian Muslims. Both the Khojas and Banyans were British subjects and enjoyed special privileges and protection in the UAE region [22. P. 207; 31. P. 2379, 2383]. After the merchants (*tujar* and *tawawish*) came the *nawakhodha*. In 1907, these numbered 1,215. The remaining 20,830 men employed in the pearl industry were *ghawasin*, *siyub*, *rawadif*, *jalasin*, and *tabbabin*. These figures show that the overwhelming majority in the pearl industry were employed in the lowest strata and only a small minority were in the upper strata. It was this majority, and particularly the *ghawasin* and *siyub*, who were the most exploited within the industry not only in terms of indebtedness but also in terms of their treatment.

For the *ghawasin*, pearl diving was a brutally exhausting work. Aside from facing the possibility of paralyzing stings from jellyfish and devil rays, the *ghawas* faced constant submersion in seawater which frequently led to skin rashes [29. P. 2231] and even to blindness. Repeated exposure to water pressure while submerged in rapid contrast with ordinary air pressure after the dive frequently led to suppuration of the eardrums as well as to respiratory hemorrhages. In addition, the *ghawasin* often got rheumatism and arthritis as a result of constant submersion. Many eventually died from these ailments and from sheer exhaustion [17. P. 175].

The work of the *sib* was also difficult. It was *the* sib who propelled the boat by means of rowing in the direction of pearl banks, especially if there was insufficient wind. It was also the *sib's* task to pull the *ghawas* out of the water after each dive and to stay right at the side of the ship at all times to do this as the *ghawas* would otherwise drown. This meant standing all day in the sun and submitting one's hands to rope cuts from pulling every few minutes [1. P. 91].

The ruling *sheikhs* obtained a share of the seasonal revenues from the pearl industry by the nub tax that each *sheikh* put on each pearl ship fishing in the waters under his jurisdiction. This tax was payed either by the *nakhodha* or by the ship's owner. Pearling ships from other towns that came to places such as Umm al-Qawain for provisions for the pearling season also paid a taraz tax to the sheikh [18. P. 120—121]. The nub tax was calculated in accordance with the size of the ship, and the taraz tax — with the size and composition of the crew. Sometimes taxes were paid in kind rather than in cash. When the tax was in kind, payment frequently took the form of bags of rice [29. P. 2284—2284]. The cash tax was calculated similar to the *nakhodha* or *ghawas* share which was equal to three shares of the season profits [35. P. 308]. Because the UAE region *sheikhs* were earning a small amount of tax revenues from the industry, they probably had little incentive to improving agriculture in their sheikhdoms or trying to maintain pastoral as a viable sector [17. P. 179].

The British role in the pearl industry in the UAE region and in the rest of the Arabian Gulf was mainly protecting the profits of the Banyan pearl exporters and financiers and ensuring the pearl industry's sustainability. The British did these, first, by extending special privileges and protections to Banyan *tujar* pearl exporters and financiers as British subjects. Second, the British imposed the above-mentioned treaty on each UAE regional *sheikh* requiring from each sheikhdom to extradite runaway debtors from the pearl industry. This also protected the profits of the Banyan merchants. Finally, the British assigned warships to patrol the *maghasat,* the pearl banks along the Arabian littoral of the Arabian Gulf, to prevent fighting or other disturbances during the pearling season [18. P. 94]. It was in the British interest to curb forcibly strife that was to develop among the sheikhdoms around shares in the pearl banks for pearls were the UAE only export commodity. This strife was rooted in the manner in which the sheikhdoms were divided by British colonialism (without discernable borders from each other), and in the general poverty that all of the British-imposed treaties determined in the UAE region [12. P. 149—155]. A profitable pearl industry was also important to the British because it ensured the reproduction of the two strata upon which the British relied for the preservation of stability in the Arabian Gulf, namely, the UAE regional *sheikhs* and the Banyan merchants. It also provided employment for the population that might otherwise develop a form of trade more independent of British colonialism or might resist British colonialism.

Pearls as a commodity sold on the world market implied a social relationship in which the minority profited from financing the extraction of pearls and exporting them, while the majority, who were chronically in debt, did the extraction work. Despite the harshness of work aboard the pearling ships and despite the fact that this work was done by the majority within the industry, there was very little collective resistance for several reasons, and this lack of resistance enabled the power relations in the pearl industry to reproduce themselves.

The factors contributing to the sustainability of power relations were economic, political and cultural. Two particularly important economic and political factors were the constant indebtedness of the lower strata of the pearl industry, and that the UAE regional economy and the rest of the Arabian Gulf did not offer alternative works. The economics of indebtedness bound the *ghawasin* and *siyub* to the pearl industry and ensured its reproduction for when a debtor died his sons inherited his debt and were obliged to work for the *nakhodha* as *ghawasin* or *siyub*. Considering the alternative work, the political and economic reality of the European penetration and British colonization had constructed the UAE regional economy and that of the rest of the Arabian Gulf as a producer of a single commodity for the world market. British colonization achieved this with the destruction of the UAE long-distance trade route and with the marginalization of its agriculture. This made escaping to another sheikhdom futile for the *ghawasin* or *siyub* for it could, at best, result in employment with another *nakhodha*. Even this form of resistance was eliminated by the British imposition of the Treaty of 1879 providing extradition among the sheikhdoms of runaway divers and other debtors.

Cultural, economic and political realities of segmentation within the pearl industry and of the UAE region into several sheikhdoms were also factors that helped to preclude consolidated collective resistance on the part of *ghawasin* or *siyub* to their exploitation in the pearl industry. The segmentation of the UAE region itself contributed to this situation because different fleets of pearling dhows represented different sheikhdoms, and the ships were associated with their sheikhdoms rather than with other *ghawasin*. Segmentation also prevailed among the crew members of each pearling ship for each crew consisted of individuals from urban, agrarian and tribal formations, and these individuals tended to differentiate themselves on this basis. For example, the *siyub* were mainly from the Badia (desert), while the *ghawasin* were usually from agrarian and urban areas [36. P. 137]. Segmentation across the industry manifested itself in the fact that the average pearling boat usually had about eighteen crew members only, and there was insufficient communication among crew members of various dhows for the development of consolidated resistance. In addition, the lower strata of the pearl industry were unaware of the extent of their exploitation. Specifically, they knew nothing about the upper strata. *Ghawasin, siyub, rawadif, jalasin* and *tabbabin* were unaware of the profits earned by the Banyan pearl exporters and financiers of the industry in Bombay and in the UAE region, and were only partially aware of the relationship between the *nawakhodha* and *tawawish* for they had relationship with their *nawakhodha* but not with any of the higher strata of the pearl industry.

The segmentation on each boat could also be seen in the fact that all of the *ghawasin* were in competition. In addition, members of the crew were paid at different rates. Whereas the *ghawas* was entitled to three shares of the ship's earnings, the *sib* was entitled to two, the *radif* and *jalas* only to one, and the *tabbab* to none. This made the *sib, radif, jalas, tabbab* and cook view the *ghawas* as being privileged, and made the *tabbab* and cook see all other members of the crew as having advantages over him. These differences too precluded any consolidation of resistance efforts aboard a given ship.

Although political, economic and cultural factors precluded the development of consolidated resistance to exploitation both in the pearl industry at large and among the crew members of pearling dhows other cultural-ideological factors played the dual role both in legitimizing the power relationships between the upper and lower strata of the pearl industry and enabling these power relationships to reproduce themselves, and in constituting a form of individual resistance. These factors were the various myths of the lower strata within the pearl industry. This mythology was a mixture of folklore constructed within the pearling industry itself and of particular interpretation of Islam. The songs chanted by the *nahham*, for example, tended to glamorize the pearling voyage and to praise the *ghawasin* and other members of the crew for their skill and strength; the songs had verses about far-away diving places, beautiful pearls, and the skill and strength of the crew [20. P. 28].

Within the lower strata of the pearl industry, there was folklore blaming the sufferings of the *ghawasin* on supernatural forces such as *shayatin* (demons) and *jan*, rather than on the upper strata [10. P. 85—104]. This mythology legitimized the upper strata of the pearl industry in the eyes of the *ghawasin*, so that they actually believed themselves to be beneficiaries of the controlling strata of that industry rather than exploited by them. It also constructed the *shayatin* and *jan* as 'others' to whom the blame for these sufferings could safely be affixed since, existent or non-existent, *shayatin* and *jan* had no connections to the pearl industry. At the same time, however, these stories about supernatural forces were sometimes constructed to free *ghawasin* from the brutally strenuous work they were doing. In one example, the *ghawas* emerged from a dive stiff and, trembling, acted as if possessed by *shayatin*, and refused to talk until sundown, despite the *matawwa's* continuous reading of the Qur'an over him. When the *ghawas* finally spoke, it was with the voice of a woman who identified herself as a *shaitanah* (female demon) and warned the other crew members not to let him dive again because he had killed her child while fishing. The '*shaitanah'* warned that if the *ghawas* dived again, she would kill him in revenge. However, she also stated that she had no objection to his being made a *sib*. Obviously, the *ghawas* had constructed this affair to escape from diving which was exhausting and would kill him.

There also were myths about the chance that an exceptional pearl harvest would make the crew rich. The central figure of one such myth was a poor Bedouin who began as a pearl diver, earned good shares of the revenues during each season, eventually became a *nakhodha* and then a pearl merchant selling his pearls in Bombay and China [20. P. 33]. In addition, the *ghawasin* tended to view the vicissitudes of the pearl industry and its revenues and their exploitation as the will of God and entered each pearling season hoping to earn what 'God might allow' [7. P. 9]. Finally, just as the ongoing indebtedness of the *ghawasin* and *siyub* enabled power relationships within the pearling sector to reproduce, so did the fact that members of pearling crews made it a point to instill a love for this kind of work in their sons. They did this by bringing them on board pearling dhows for training, re-telling miraculous success stories and instilling in their sons the belief that this sort of work was something that only the exceptionally strong and courageous could do.

THE DECLINE OF THE PEARL INDUSTRY

The Gulf pearl industry began its decline in the late 1920s. By the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Japanese had developed their cultured pearl industry into a global export, and this spelled the demise of the Gulf pearl fisheries altogether [22. P. 197]. This overriding factor in the decline of the Gulf pearl industry developed in conjunction with two others — the onset of the Great Depression, and the decreasing yields from the overfished pearl banks [23. P. 220]. The decline of the pearl industry can be seen both in the decrease in the number of *dhows* from 1904 to 1946, and in the contrasting aggregate revenue figures for pearl exports from the entire Arabian Gulf for the peak year 1912/1913, versus those for 1946. Figures for pearling *dhows* in the UAE region show that 1,215 *dhows* were used in the industry in 1904 [28. P. 2256]. By 1946, this number declined to 250 for the UAE region combined both with Qatar and the pearling ports on the Persian littoral [17. P. 169]. The export value for the Arabian Gulf pearls in 1912/1913 was 2 million GBP. In 1946, that value had plummeted to 62,000 GBP [7. P. 8].

The decline in revenues from the Gulf pearl exports was particularly significant for it engendered the decline of what was left of the UAE larger local merchants' stratum.

As the pearl industry declined under the impact of the global market for Japanese cultured pearls, the *tujar* and tawawish, all of whom had previously became wealthy as pearl merchants, went bankrupt due to their debts to Banyan financiers. Declining pearl revenues made local merchants unable to send a large number of *dhows* on pearling expeditions for the lack of money to supply them, and due to the declining sales prospects for the pearls in the world market. The decline in revenues also made local merchants indebted to the Banyan *tujar* and exporters who purchased pearls from them and credited them.

In response to the increased Banyan complaints of non-repayment by the local merchants, the British Political Resident intervened in the UAE region during the 1920s and 1930s both to force the ruling *sheikhs* to ensure that local pearl merchants repaid their debts to their Banyan creditors, who were British subjects, and to ensure the safety of the Banyan *tujar* when tensions arose in this situation, for example, in Dubai in 1930, after an influential Dubai merchant Abdallah bin Yusuf lost 150,000 Rs. when his Banyan creditor forced him to sell his pearls in an unfavorable market to pay his debt. After repaying 80,000 Rs., he was arrested in Bombay, placed on trial, and forbidden to return to Dubai until he paid his Banyan creditors the remaining 31,000 Rs. When the ruler of Dubai threatened to seize all the Banyans if Abdallah bin Yusuf was not released, the British Political Resident dispatched the H.M.S. *Lupin* to the Dubai harbor to protect the Britain's Banyan subjects. In 1929, another local merchant, Mohammed Bin Bayat, was declared bankrupt because his debt to the Banyan *tujar* was to 600,000 Rs. Another merchant, Mohammed bin Ahmad bin Dalmuk, was in debt to the merchant Hajji Mohammed Ali Zainal in Bombay because of slow sales of his pearls in Paris. To pay this debt, he was obliged to borrow a sum of 200,000 Rs. from a Banyan merchant Ganshamdeshk at an interest rate of 36 percent [32. P. P. 169].

As for the *ghawasin, siyub, rawadif, jalasin and tabbabin*, the decline of the pearl industry determined their displacement from the only steady form of employment that remained available to them no matter how harsh it was. Thus, they became a marginalized stratum finding casual employment as porters or in other positions in the British-controlled import trade [23. P. 250—251]. In some cases, this displacement resulted in their leaving the UAE region.

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This history of the decline of the pearl industry illustrates the interrelationship under the colonial period of the British colonialism, Banyan merchants, local pearl merchants, and ruling *sheikhs*. More importantly, it demonstrates how the pearl industry was constructed by the British colonialism through its historical relationship with Banyan merchants. The article describes different strata, revenue distribution and hierarchical construction of the pearl industry to prove that the dependency of the UAE region on the pearl economy continued from 1869 to 1938 and integrated the UAE into the world market with the help of a single commodity. The decline of the pearl industry in the Arabian Gulf, and the global and regional factors for its decline, spelled the demise of the most significant part of the UAE pearl stratum during this period. Subsequently, the British government intervened more directly in the economic affairs of the UAE region, and correspondingly gave the ruling *sheikhs* regular rent payments through oil concession arrangements. British colonialism also took over UAE region shipping traffic making the city of Dubai entrepots for British goods. The pearl merchants attempted to counteract this trend by the unsuccessful Reform Movement of 1938 in Dubai. This marked the end of the pearl *tujar* and *tawawish*, and the rise of the new *tujar*, who were engaged in the gold trade and the imports and exports of the British goods to the UAE region by the steam ships. The discovery of oil in Abu Dhabi in 1958 and its production set up a new turning point in the UAE region's economy, a new round of integration into the world market economy, and a new structure and process of society's reproduction.

NOTES

(1) Coastal Oman, Coastal Emirates, Trucial States, Trucial Coast were the names of the UAE region before the establishment of the UAE and during the British domination in the Arabian Gulf.

(2) The Al-Qawasim were an Arab mercantile system coexisting with a tribal confederation called the Beni Yas and living in the area extending from the boundary of Qatar, southward to Dubai, and westward to Liwa, and the eastward to Al-Ain.

(3) Qajar Dynasty came to power in Iran in 1794 and lasted until 1924. The customs were reformed for the Qajar *Shah* Mozaffar al-Din needed more revenues and cash to go to Europe for cure, and the Belgian customs adviser M. Naus employed by the *Shah* revised tariffs to produce to provide him with more revenues.

(4) *Dhow* has no equivalent in Arabic, it is a term used by the Western seamen to denote any of the wide range of local lateen-rigged sailing ships. Arab *dhows*, such as the larger size *boums* and *baghlah*, the mid-sized pearling *sambuk* and *battil* were of various shapes and sizes reflecting their diverse uses.

(5) Firstl the *nakhodha* rarely made profit selling his catch of pearls for he usually sold them to the *tawwash* at a discount rate to repay the *tawwash* loan to him. Second, since the *nakhodha* was constantly in debt due to borrowings from the *tawwash* to take care of provisions on the ship, it is unlikely that he was entitled to a portion more than a half of total profits from the catch. Third, it is unlikely that the *nakhodha* was entitled to the same percentage of the revenues for the catch irrespective of whether or not he owned the vessel.

(6) The *sheikhs* of Coastal Oman signed a mutual extradition treaty among themselves in 1879. This treaty particularly pertained to pearl divers and sailors, who were chronically in debt to their employers. According to the treaty each *sheikh* was obliged to extradite runaway debtors under the threat of the fine and the obligation to pay the runaway's debts. The British government's representative called the 'Native Agent' was to demand the extradition of the runway and to head the arbitrations if facts about a runway's case were in dispute.

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ИНДУСТРИЯ ЖЕМЧУГА В ОАЭ В 1869—1938: СОЗДАНИЕ, ВОСПРОИЗВОДСТВО И УПАДОК*

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В статье рассматривается индустрия жемчуга в Объединенных Арабских Эмиратах в период британской колонизации Персидского залива, и особый акцент сделан на причинах расцвета и упадка данной индустрии. Автор стремится реконструировать логику развития индустрии жемчуга в регионе ОАЭ, причины ее становления и воспроизводства в период с 1869 по 1938 годы. Кроме того, в статье показано, что социальная структура индустрии жемчуга в ОАЭ позволяла меньшинству получать выгоду от финансирования добычи жемчуга и его экспорта. Автор подчеркивает значение политических, экономических и культурных факторов в воспроизводстве индустрии жемчуга, отмечая, что именно колониальный режим ответственен за ее создание и воспроизводство в таком формате, который всегда имел жестко иерархическую структуру. Именно иерархическая модель позволила британскому режиму ввести в индустрию жемчуга финансовых игроков, которые оказались на вершине этой социальной пирамиды. Другие группы в этой иерархии состояли из местных туджаров (купцов), тававишей (посредников), навакходха (капитанов судов), гхавасинов (ловцов жемчуга), сийюбов (помощников ловцов жемчуга) и др. Автор настаивает на том, что именно механизм распределения финансов между вовлеченными в индустрию жемчуга акторами обусловил ее эксплуатационный характер. А различия в иерархических позициях всех участников индустрии с точки зрения их ролей, власти, мифов и финансовых потоков лишь поддерживало воспроизводство индустрии. В конце 1920-х — начале 1930-х годов целый ряд факторов привел к упадку индустрии, основанной на труде ловцов жемчуга, в частности, развитие японской индустрии не добычи, а выращивания жемчуга. Этот упадок обусловил разорение всех групп, формирующих индустрию жемчуга в ОАЭ, и появление новых страт благодаря нефтедобыче. Автор опирается на разнообразные подходы и источники, начиная от статистических данных из британских архивов и заканчивая дискурсивным анализом взаимоотношений между колониальными и местными практиками, а также юридическими и неформальными аспектами взаимодействия местных и неместных групп внутри иерархически организованной индустрии жемчуга.

Ключевые слова: британский колониализм; Объединенные Арабские Эмираты; индустрия жемчуга; создание индустрии жемчуга; воспроизводство индустрии жемчуга; организационная иерархия