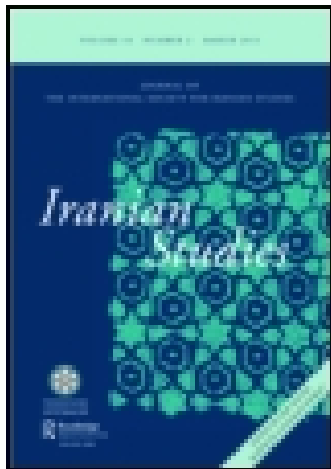


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Willem Floor

The Iranian Navy in the Gulf during the Eighteenth Century

In the 18th century, rather remarkably, Iran formed a navy. Up to that time the shahs of Iran had relied on other powers to maintain security in the Persian Gulf. The dominant naval power in the gulf during the 16th century was Portugal, while the Dutch, and to a lesser extent the English, were supreme during the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries. Because Iran's southern borders were safe and secure after the conquest of Hormoz in 1622, it did not need a navy. Hence, Iran relied for a time on the Dutch and the English to maintain security in the gulf.

English naval assistance in the conquest of Hormoz set the pattern for the next century. This reliance on other powers for maintenance of security in the gulf proved to be a workable policy as long as there was no real threat to Iran's coastal borders in the south. However, this policy put Iran in a dependent and vulnerable position vis-à-vis the Dutch and the English. The European powers never formally entered into an agreement with Iran to protect Iranian territory in the gulf, although discussions on this issue did take place between the Dutch and Iran. The European naval powers were mainly, if not exclusively, interested in protecting their trade routes. Therefore, attacks on the Iranian coast which did not interfere with their trading operations were not their affair. Neither the Dutch nor the English were interested in military operations in the gulf. Their objective was, after all, to make money, not to make war.

When Iran needed naval power to ward off attacks from Masqat, this policy of relying on the Dutch and the English proved ineffective. The policy was also counterproductive when conflicts arose with these naval powers. For when such conflicts led to military action, as they did in 1645 and 1685 with the Dutch, Iran could not prevent a blockade of its southern ports. Not having a navy, moreover, inhibited Iranian expansionist designs in the gulf. All these considerations led to efforts to form an Iranian navy in 1718 and again 1734. Only the 1734 initiative was successful, however.

After the conquest of Hormoz in 1622, which marked the end of Portuguese supremacy in the gulf, the Iranian government showed no further interest in extending its influence in that region. The governor-general of Fars, Imam Qoli Khan, still may have played with the idea of ousting the Portuguese from Masqat: The *shāhbandar* (customs master) of Bandar Abbas

intimated to the Dutch at the end of 1624 that the English would support such an Iranian plan with three ships in 1625. He asked the Dutch to supply naval assistance as well, which was refused. Visnich, the Dutch agent in Bandar Abbas, explained to the directors of the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC or Dutch East Indies Company) that the Portuguese were still interfering with trade in the gulf and that it would be better for the VOC than for Iran to do something about these Portuguese actions. However, he referred any positive decision on this matter to the directors of the VOC.¹

It may well have been that Imam Qoli Khan sent out this feeler in order to gauge the willingness of the Dutch and English to be involved in military action in the gulf. At the time Iran was at war with the Ottoman Empire, and Imam Qoli Khan was engaged in the Basra area. Rumors reached Amsterdam that Visnich had agreed to provide Dutch naval assistance against Turkey, which the VOC directors explicitly forbade.²

European naval supremacy in the gulf was clearly recognized by Shah Safi I when, at the end of 1629, he wrote to Prince Frederik Hendrik, Stadtholder of Holland, that the latter "would (continue) to keep the sea clear of the Portuguese, and that his subjects, none excepted, would open the road to all voyagers."³ Towards the end of 1632, Imam Qoli Khan once more suggested that the English and Dutch jointly undertake the conquest of Masqat. The Dutch believed that the English might agree to such naval assistance to ingratiate Imam Qoli Khan and the shah, while the English believed that the Dutch had similar motives. However, neither nation wanted to be involved in this action, the more so since both nations were about to conclude peace agreements with the Portuguese. Because Imam Qoli Khan had recently granted the Portuguese the right to open a factory in Bandar-e Kong, the Dutch suspected Imam Qoli Khan's motives. The Dutch Agent was therefore ordered to refer any decision on this matter to the governor-general in Batavia (Jakarta), and to gather intelligence with regard to any promises and privileges given by Imam Qoli Khan to the English. However, the plan, if it really existed, was aborted by Imam Qoli Khan's execution on the order of Shah Safi I in 1633.⁴

Iran continued to rely on Dutch protection of its southern ports. On April 5, 1639, for example, the shahbandar of Bandar Abbas asked the Dutch to lend him a ship to catch a rebel. On April 25 the ship *de Santfoort* returned having achieved nothing, for the unnamed rebel had fled to Basra on learning of the Dutch action. In early 1640 the shahbandar of Bandar Abbas asked the Dutch to take action against the Portuguese, who were interfering with local navigation around Qeshm and Larak. However, before the Dutch could take action, the Portuguese had left. It was therefore not an exaggeration when the VOC director in Iran, Geleynsen, argued in 1641

¹ H. Dunlop, *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis der Oostindische Compagnie in Perzie, 1611-1638* (sGravenhage, 1930), p.142.

² *Ibid.*, pp.157-59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 315. This task was facilitated by the fact that the VOC and the EIC had formally concluded a joint naval pact against the Portuguese on December 21, 1629, *Ibid.*, p. 308 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 389, 404-06.

that the Dutch were protecting Iran's southern borders against the Portuguese, and that therefore the E'temād al-Dowleh (honorific title used by Safavid vizirs), Mirza Taqi, should take this service into account in assessing the benefits of Iran's relations with the Dutch.⁵

This lack of interest of the Safavid shahs in the formation of an Iranian navy was, to a great extent, due to the relative tranquility of their southern borders as compared to their western, northern, and eastern borders, which were beset by conflicts with the Ottoman, Uzbeks, and Moguls respectively. Even the military conflict in 1645 with the Dutch, who blockaded the gulf and stopped Iranian trading ships, did not lead to a change in this attitude. The Iranian government realized that the Dutch were neither interested in territorial gain nor in a long conflict, which would hurt their trade and profits.⁶ During the subsequent negotiations the Dutch proposed, *inter alia*, to protect Iranian territory against naval attacks from any of Iran's enemies in exchange for free and unhindered trade in Iran. However, the negotiations broke down in 1647, and this proposal was not raised in any of the subsequent discussions.⁷ The new commercial treaty of 1652 did not refer to it either.⁸

Only in 1664 that the shahbandar of Bandar Abbas again approach the Dutch, allegedly at the orders of Shah Abbas II, for naval assistance against Masqat. Arab forces had ousted the Portuguese from the city in 1650. Under the Ya'arib dynasty Masqat prospered and became a strong naval power. Because of high tariffs in Bandar Abbas, and oppressive behavior by the customs officials, many merchants preferred to take their trade to Masqat where better terms were offered. The Iranian government was worried about the drop in revenues from Bandar Abbas and wanted to reverse this situation. Whether Shah Abbas II really wanted to undertake military action against Masqat is not known. However, by 1666 the situation had changed because of a rise in tariffs at Masqat, which may have been due to the Iranian threat. The Dutch, who were not pleased with the current situation in Bandar Abbas either, and who, moreover, had been invited by Imam Sultan ibn Saif to open a factory in Masqat, were in a quandary. The governor-general wanted to keep the Masqat option open, while the VOC directors were not unwilling to give naval support to Shah Abbas II. However, subsequent changes in Masqat, the death of Shah Abbas II in 1666, and the outbreak of the Second Dutch-English War (1664-66) put an end to these activities.⁹

⁵ Algemeen Rijks Archief (henceforth cited as ARA/Dutch National Archives, the Hague), VOC 1149, Westerwolt to governor-general, Gamron, 28 April 1639, f. 1249; *Ibid.*, 6 April 1639, f. 1283; VOC 1156, Geleynsen to governor-general, Gamron, 21 may 1640, f. 802; VOC 1160, Geleynsen to governor-general, Isfahan, 25 October 1641, f. 275.

⁶ Willem Floor, "Het Nederlands-Iraanse conflict van 1645", *Verlagen en Aanwinsten 1978-1979* (Stichting Cultuurgeschiedenis van de Nederlanders Overzee, Amsterdam, 1980), pp. 46-56.

⁷ ARA, VOC 1175, Petitie Verburch, f. 245.

⁸ A. Hotz, *Journal der reis van...Cunaeus naar Perzie in 1651-52* (Amsterdam, 1908).

⁹ Willem Floor, "First Contacts between the Netherlands and Masqat", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. 132, 1982, p. 289-307.

Meanwhile, Masqat's power increased considerably in the gulf, while Iran's hold on the Arabs on its side of the gulf became less firm. For the time being, Iran experienced little trouble from the growing power of Masqat, which focused mainly on fighting the Portuguese in the Gulf, in India, and in Africa.¹⁰ However, a new conflict with the Dutch in 1685, which led to the shelling and conquest of the island of Qeshm, again underscored Iranian military weakness in the gulf, and especially its lack of a navy.¹¹ In January 1695 the Masqat Arabs attacked Bandar-e Kong, pretending that their sole objective was to oust their arch-enemies, the Portuguese, from the gulf. The Iranian government was very disturbed about this violation of its territory and prepared an expeditionary force commanded by Ali Mardan Khan.

The Dutch were asked to provide naval support, but they refused.¹² However, the shah asked them to reconsider their decision. In exchange for Dutch naval support, he promised not only his favor and gratitude, but also free trade in Iran, with exemption from all taxes and duties, and an annual payment of 1,000 toman. On June 14, 1647, the governor-general in Batavia decided to assist the Iranian government with six ships. The ships were to be employed only to ship Iranian troops to Masqat and to protect them en route. The Dutch admiral had strict orders not to use his ships to bombard Masqat's fortresses or positions. Nor was he allowed to support the Iranian invasion force with manpower. He was, however, allowed to supply the Iranians with military supplies and with some military advisers to operate the cannons, if the Iranians requested such assistance. The fleet duly arrived in the gulf, but it was unable to do anything because the Iranians had given up their plans to attack Masqat.¹³

During Shah Sultan Hosayn's reign the attacks by the Masqat Arabs against Iranian territory increased in number and vehemence. As long as the Masqat attacks were incursions only, the court in Isfahan did not worry too much about them. Nor did it pay much attention to annual raids by the Baluchis in southern Iran. Even the sack of Bandar-e Kong in 1714 hardly stirred the lethargic court. Aroused by the event for one week, it then slipped back into business as usual. However, loss of territory and the probability of losing more was something that could no longer be ignored. The first time Masqat's Imam Sultan ibn Saif II tried to annex Iranian territory came in May-September 1715 when he mounted a large scale attack against Bahrain.¹⁴

The attempt failed. Although Masqat's fleet was active in the gulf in 1716, it was only in 1717 that it attacked Bahrain again, this time with more success. The conquest of Bahrain caused consternation in Isfahan. Shah Sultan Hosayn asked the Dutch ambassador, Joan Josua Ketelaar, who happened to be at his court to discuss a new commercial treaty, for Dutch

¹⁰ Willem Floor, "Masqat Anno 1673", *Le Moyen-Orient et l'Océan Indien*, Vol. 2, 1985, pp. 1-80.

¹¹ W. Ph. Coolhaas (ed.), *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII*, deel IV, 1675-85, ('sGravenhage, 1971), pp. 740-42, 826.

¹² *Ibid.*, deel V, 1686-1697, ('sGravenhage, 1975), p. 743.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 859-61.

¹⁴ ARA, *VOC* 1886, Oets to governor-general, Gamron, 24 March, 1716, f. 18.

naval support in retaking Bahrain. Ketelaar refused the loan of Dutch ships because he had no authority to grant such assistance.¹⁵ Ketelaar gave the same reply to a similar request from Fath Ali Khan, the e'temād al-dowleh, to support his nephew, Lotf Ali Khan, who had been appointed *beglerbegi* of Fars and Adharbaijan and *sepāhsālār* (commander-in-chief) of Iran, and who was leading the operations against the Masqat Arabs.

Although the Shah and his e'temād al-dowleh acquiesced in Ketelaar's refusal, Lotf Ali Khan did not. On his return to Bandar Abbas, Ketelaar was confronted by Ya'qub Sultan, one of Lotf Ali Khan's deputy commanders, with the same demand. For not only had the Masqat Arabs taken Bahrain, they had also taken the islands of Larak and Qeshm and were laying siege to the fortress of Hormoz. Both the Dutch and the English rebuffed Ya'qub Sultan. In desperation he laid siege to their factories to force the loan of their ships. He eventually had to give in, and Lotf Ali Khan punished him for his allegedly unauthorized action. However, Lotf Ali Khan made it clear that he still insisted on naval assistance. The Dutch replied that both Shah Sultan Hosayn and the e'temād al-dowleh had accepted their reasons for not providing support and asked why lesser officials were not content with that reply. The Dutch also pointed out that in February 1718 they had given passage to Goa to an Iranian envoy named as Tammurath Beg. The latter's mission was to ask the Portuguese for naval assistance.¹⁶

Lotf Ali Khan had to content himself with that reply, which was made easier by his retaking Bahrain. On July 5, 1718 he put 6,000 troops ashore using small vessels supplied by coastal Arabs who recognized Iran's suzerainty. The Masqat forces responded by raising the siege of Hormoz and regrouping on Larak and Qeshm.¹⁷ The Iranian victory was of short duration, however. In November 1718 the Masqat Arabs retook Bahrain and almost completely annihilated the Iranian relief force. Not only did Lotf Ali Khan lose many troops, he also lost many vessels. Because the promised Portuguese naval support had not yet arrived, Lotf Ali Khan needed ships badly. He therefore wrote to the shah asking him to send money to buy ten well-armed grabs, "for without ships there is nothing much that we can do to oppose the Masqat Arabs." Writing to Jan Oets, the Dutch director in Bandar Abbas, Lotf Ali Khan regretted the fact that the Dutch had not shown friendship by helping him previously, but hoped that they would prove their professed friendship by supplying him with at least five ships, for which he would pay in cash. Moreover, if they were to procure 30 ships for him, these too would be welcome, and paid for within four months time.¹⁸ Oets, who had just arrived from Batavia, replied that

¹⁵ ARA, VOC 1913, Ketelaar to governor-general, Gamron, 31 December 1717, f. 29, 49.

¹⁶ ARA, VOC 1904, Oets to governor-general, Gamron, 7 November, 1718, f. 2363-65; *Ibid.*, f. 2403-05.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 2263 vs-2264.

¹⁸ ARA, VOC 1928, Lotf Ali Khan to van Biesum, 17 July, 1718 (received), f. 116; *Ibid.*, Oets to van Biesum, Gamron, 15 September 1718, f. 179; *Ibid.*, 1 October 1718, f. 181; *Ibid.*, Lotf Ali Khan to van Biesum, 18 September, 1718 (received), f. 118-122; *Ibid.*, Schorer to van Biesum, Isfahan, 13 August, 1718, f. 71 (people are elated in Isfahan. Shah is said to have appointed Lotf Ali Khan as *tofāngchī bāshī* [artillery

Ketelaar had discussed this issue with the shah and the e'temad al-dowleh. He had brought with him the governor-general's reply to the shah's request, which Oets had given to the shahbandar to be sent on to the shah. Oets therefore was bound to act in accordance with this reply; moreover, at that time there were no Dutch ships available to assist Lotf Ali Khan.¹⁹

Having not yet received the governor-general's letter, Shah Sultan Hosayn ordered the Dutch in October 1718 to send three ships that had just arrived from Batavia to support Lotf Ali Khan and the Portuguese, who had promised to send five ships. If the Dutch refused to do so, they would be punished for disobedience. The e'temad al-dowleh wrote Oets to the same effect and added that Lotf Ali Khan had money to pay the Dutch for any expenses they would incur. Lotf Ali Khan separately wrote to the Dutch and asked them to execute the shah's orders so that he could retake Bahrain and punish the rebellious Arabs. He added that after the Portuguese ships arrived and Bahrain was reconquered, it was his intention to execute another plan with the combined Dutch-Portuguese fleet. Although Lotf Ali Khan does not mention what this plan was, he probably intended to invade Masqat itself.²⁰

Oets replied to the shah and e'temad al-dowleh that the Dutch ships had already left. In his letter to the e'temad al-dowleh Oets added that since Fath Ali Khan had written that Bahrain and the other islands had been retaken, which at the time of Oets' receipt of the letter was no longer true, the support of Dutch Ships was not needed. Lotf Ali Khan received a similar reply.²¹ It was only with the help of four Portuguese ships that Lotf Ali Khan was able to launch a counteroffensive against the Masqat forces. After several inconclusive encounters between the two fleets, the Portuguese were able to push the Masqat fleet from Bahrain waters.²²

As a result of these developments, along with internal troubles in Masqat, the two warring parties started negotiations which in 1721 led to a peace agreement. Masqat promised to return all conquered territories in exchange for commercial privileges at Bandar-e kong and Iranian support in case of Portuguese attacks on Masqat. But when Lotf Ali Khan sent some troops to Bahrain to reinstate Iranian rule, they were sent back. A dispute had arisen among the Masqat leaders, some of whom refused to accept the terms of the peace treaty.²³ In April 1721 Masqat still occupied Bahrain, and it was unclear whether the peace treaty would be implemented.²⁴ However, at the end of 1722, because of dynastic problems, Masqat proved unable to maintain its power in the gulf. A nominal Iranian subject, Shaykh Jabbara of Tahiri, one of the chiefs of the important Hūla (or Hūwala) tribe, took

commander]); *Ibid.*, 12 October, 1718, f. 80 (there were three days of bonfires at Isfahan to celebrate the reconquest of Bahrain).

¹⁹ ARA, VOC 1928, Oets to Lotf Ali Khan, Gamron, 24 August, 1718, f. 126-27.

²⁰ ARA, VOC 1928, Shah to Oets, Dhu al-Qa'da, 1130 (October 1718), f. 219-221.

²¹ ARA, VOC 1928, Oets to Shah, f. 221-24; Oets to E'temad al-Dowleh, f. 224-28; Oets to Lotf Ali Khan, f. 232-35, Gamron, 3 January, 1719.

²² ARA, VOC 1947, Oets to governor-general, Gamron, 21 september, 1719, f. 82.

²³ ARA, VOC 1964, Oets to governor-general, Gamron, 15 February, 1721, f. 76.

²⁴ ARA, VOC 1964, Oets to governor-general, Gamron, 5 April, 1721, f. 767.

possession of Bahrain on behalf of Shah Sultan Hosayn.²⁵ But by that time Safavid rule had crumbled before the onslaught of the Afghan invaders who took Isfahan in October 1722 and forced Shah Sultan Hosayn to abdicate.²⁶

With the temporary restoration of Safavid power in 1730, the central government tried to reinstate its rule in the gulf area, and especially in the littoral, the Garmsirat. The coastal Arabs had become independent in all but name, while those living in Laristan were in open revolt. The coastal Arabs not only offered the fleeing Afghans a safe refuge, but they offered their vessels for hire to sail to safety. Consequently, Shah Tahmasp's general, Tahmasp Qoli Khan (the later Nader Shah), issued orders to the European companies at Bandar Abbas not to assist the Afghans in escaping by sea but to prevent this with their maritime power.²⁷ This first request for naval assistance by the new Safavid government heralds the "era of the loan of ships" from the European companies.

The period 1730-34 was an unruly one for the Garmsirat because of a revolt by Shaykh Ahmad Madani and marauding activities by other coastal dwellers.²⁸ Iranian expeditions sent to capture Shaykh Ahmad Madani were unsuccessful because they had no naval force to complete the encirclement of his forces. Several times the Iranian commander, Mohammad Ali Khan, beglerbegi of Fars, asked for Dutch naval assistance.²⁹ When Nader Shah himself finally decided to deal with Shaykh Ahmad Madani, who had allied himself with another rebel, Mohammad Khan Baluch, he also had to ask for naval assistance to complete the job. In February of 1734 his general Tahmasp Beg Jalayir asked the Dutch and English companies to patrol the gulf and seize all rebels. The companies gave a joint noncommittal reply, hoping that Tahmasp Beg would not repeat his request. But on March 29 both companies received a request to send ships to Bandar-e Charak to help capture Mohammad Khan Baluch and Shaykh Ahmad Madani. After some delay, the Dutch and English decided to send one and two ships, respectively, to the island of Qaysh, where the shaykh was alleged to have taken refuge. On May 14 Mohammad Latif Khan, Nader's "Admiral of the Gulph," as the English called him, arrived in Bandar Abbas, "with orders to purchase Shipping of the Europeans of Gombroon. He therefore, required our Compliance with the Caun's Desires in Sparing Two Ships for their Service which we should be paid for, and insisted on our Immediate Answer."³⁰ The companies, after consulting one another, replied that they could not comply with this request, since they had no authority to sell ships, which, after all, they needed for trading purposes. Latif Khan therefore had to satisfy himself with the ships that the companies had put at the shah's

²⁵ ARA, VOC 2009, Oets to governor-general, Gamron, 15 November, 1722, f. 47.

²⁶ L. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavid Dynasty* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 171.

²⁷ L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah* (London, 1938), p. 44.

²⁸ Willem Floor, "The Revolt of Shaikh Ahmad Madani in Laristan and the Garmsirat (1730-33)", *Studia Iranica*, Vol. 12, 1983, pp. 63-98.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67 (1731), pp. 71-71 (1732).

³⁰ L. Lockhart, "The Navy of Nadir Shah", *Proceedings of the Iran Society*, Vol. 1, (London, 1936), p. 6, n.1., *Ibid.*, Nadir Shah, pp. 78-79.

disposal at Qaysh and with those vessels supplied by Shaykh Jabbara of Tahiri and by Shaykh Rashid of Basidu. He informed Tahmasp Beg that since the Europeans could not sell him ships, and because building ships himself would take too long in view of the fact that timber would have to be ordered from elsewhere, he had asked the companies' cooperation in acquiring the two ships which were jointly owned by Shaykh Rashid of Basidu and "Sjeeg Mhamet Benalie."³¹ Together with some other vessels Latif Khan had acquired, these formed the nucleus of the Iranian navy.

The operation against Shaykh Ahmad Madani was completed by mid-June 1734 and the companies were thanked for their cooperation. The Europeans hoped that they had heard the last of the sale of ships. They feared that the matter would not only create animosity among the Iranian leadership, but if actual sales did take place, it would also damage their own trading operations. They therefore suggested to Latif Khan that ships could be built and purchased at Surat. The English even offered to buy them there for the Iranian government.³² However, Tahmasp Beg, writing both in reply to the European companies and to Latif Khan, gave orders for the purchase of the companies' ships.³³ The European companies at first ignored these "requests." But Nader's great plans for the gulf demanded a response.

Nader wanted to exert greater control over the coastal Arabs. He wanted to attack Basra, as part of his military strategy against the Ottoman, and he wanted to bring Bahrain back into the Iranian orbit. Finally, he wanted to take action against Masqat and the Mughal Empire. The European companies were well aware of these intentions. Nader instructed Tahmasp Beg in his army camp near Baghdad to form a navy as soon as possible. On his return from Baghdad to Isfahan on November 26, 1734 Tahmasp Beg told van Leypsigh, the Dutch agent, and Geekie, the English agent, that they should inform their directors in Bandar Abbas to prepare some ships for use against the rebellious Arabs. If the directors refused, Nader added, he would build a fleet himself. The number of ships he demanded were to be sufficient to carry 7,000 men. If the companies could not comply with this request, they were to inform Tahmasp Beg immediately. He would then order timber to be felled in Mazandaran, which would be transported to the gulf, where he would have a number of ships built.

Van Leypsigh replied that he believed there were no Dutch ships in Bandar Abbas at that moment. He pointed out, moreover, that Tahmasp Beg would need 20 to 25 ships to transport 7,000 men. To bring together that many ships at least three years would be needed, for the Dutch would have to write to their directors in Amsterdam to get permission. If the directors agreed to such a sale, the ships still would have to be built, which also would take time. He added that Tahmasp Beg would have to be more specific about the enemy, for he would never get any naval assistance from

³¹ ARA, *VOC* 2357, f. 455-57; Tahmasp Khan wrote a reply to this letter on 20 Jumada al-Awwal 1151 (15 October 1734) stating that Latif Khan had to prepare ships for transportation of 3,000 foot and horse; how he would arrange it Tahmasp Khan left to the discretion of Latif Khan, *Ibid.*, f. 458.

³² Lockhart, "Navy", pp. 6-7; *Ibid.*, Nadir Shah, p.79; Floor, "The Revolt", p. 90.

³³ *Ibid.*; ARA, *VOC* 2357, f. 458.

the Dutch if the ships were to be used against the Turks at Basra, the Masqat Arabs, or Hindustan (the Mughal empire).³⁴

The Dutch and the English in Isfahan sent a representative to Bandar Abbas to convey Tahmasp Beg's request, which was officially raised by Latif Khan, who arrived in Bandar Abbas on December 16, 1734. Koenad, the Dutch director, gave him the same reply van Leypsigh had given to Tahmasp Beg. He confirmed this view in a letter to Tahmasp Beg on December 27.³⁵ Koenad also told Latif Khan that the Dutch would be more forthcoming were the Iranian officials to show more respect for the Dutch and their rights. Latif Khan promised to do his best to improve matters, and before he left for Bushire on January 7, 1735 he gave instructions to that effect to the local authorities.³⁶ Prior to his arrival in Bandar Abbas Latif Khan had been able to buy a brigantine in Bushire called the *Patna* from a private English trader named Weddell. Weddell's example was followed by Cook, the master of the *Ruperall*, another brigantine. The English director at Bandar Abbas was much annoyed by this, but since they were not company ships, there was little he could do about it. The East India Company reacted by issuing instructions that owners of vessels sailing under their protection were forbidden to sell them to the Iranians.³⁷

In Bushire, meanwhile, Latif Khan was preparing a naval base and a fleet for the attack on Basra. On Nader's orders he repaired an old Portuguese fortress just outside Bushire, which was renamed Bandar-e Naderiyyeh. To strengthen the fleet, the Iranian government had asked the European companies for ships on several occasions during the early part of 1735. On getting the usual refusal and the referral to Surat, Latif Khan decided to get ships from there in April 1735. He sent a vessel with a cargo of assafoetida to Surat. With the proceeds of its sale the captain was to buy ships, masts, planks, and other woodwork required for the building of ships. Latif Khan asked the Dutch to allow his ship to sail in the company of a Dutch ship to Surat, and to help its captain with the sale of the cargo and the purchase of the ships and other goods. The captain had been ordered to do nothing without the orders of the Dutch in Surat. Koenad replied that if the vessel could keep pace with the Dutch ships, it could come along; but the Dutch could not take responsibility for the sale and purchase of goods in Surat.³⁸

Shortly thereafter, the Iranian fleet had its first trial by fire. Strengthened by vessels of the Ka'b Arabs, who had once again fallen out with the Turks in

³⁴ ARA, VOC 2357, van Leypsigh to de Cleen, Isfahan, 5 November, 1734, f. 1106-08, 1115-16; Lockhart, "Navy", p. 6.

³⁵ ARA, VOC 2357, f. 461-64; *Ibid.*, Koenad to Nadir, Gamron, 27 December, 1734, f. 463-63.

³⁶ ARA, VOC 2357, f. 549.

³⁷ Lockhart, "Navy", p. 7; *Ibid.*, Nadir Shah, p. 93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*; ARA, VOC 2357, f. 879-81 (received on 11 May, 1735). According to the Dutch Mohammad Latif Khan "is an ingenuous man, who has learnt too much about European customs at Istanbul, for he showed more curiosity than Mr. Waters, the English second-in-command, had credited him for, during their discussion about ship building and navigation aboard an English vessel", ARA, VOC 2357, Koenad to governor-general, Gamron, 24 August 1735, f. 232.

Basra, Latif Khan's force of two grabs,³⁹ one brigantine, and 40 assorted other vessels, acting on Nader's orders, attacked Basra on May 30, 1735. The Turkish pasha of Baghdad pressed two English company ships into his service to defend the city together with 14 of his own galleys. After a three day battle Latif Khan withdrew. He blamed the English for his defeat and promised them a taste of Nader's wrath. Fearing retaliation, the English director at Bandar Abbas, Cockell, wrote to Mohammad Taqi Khan Shirazi, beglerbegi of Fars, that it was a case of force majeure, and that if Latif Khan had warned him beforehand, he would have had the two English ships withdrawn from Basra. To avoid Nader's fury the English withdrew part of their staff from Iran. Nader, who indeed was furious, dismissed Latif Khan, and demanded an explanation from both the Dutch and English companies. The former expressed their surprise and made it clear that they had nothing to do with the affair.⁴⁰ Having other, more pressing, problems to deal with, Nader did not take action against the English. He undoubtedly realized that he could not afford to antagonize the European companies at that time since he needed their help to get ships.

On October 6, 1735 Mohammad Taqi Khan's representative, the *qāpotān bāshī* Mohammad Zaman Beg, arrived in Bandar Abbas and behaved quite well toward the Europeans. Four days later he handed Koenad one letter from Nader and two from Mohammad Taqi Khan in which they asked both companies to help Mohammad Zaman Beg buy ships or to sell him their own ships. Koenad told him that he had written a year earlier that without authorization he was not allowed to sell ships. He also expressed his surprise that the letters were addressed to the Dutch and English jointly instead of separately, as if there was no sifference between them. Had Nader already forgotten, he wanted to know, that the Dutch had three times put ships at his disposal? Mohammad Zaman Beg assured Koenad that the Dutch services had been greatly appreciated.⁴¹

At Mohammad Taqi Khan's orders the shahbandar raised an extra 3,000 toman from the population of Bandar Abbas to buy two ships and some pearls. The money was taken by force. The English contributed a considerable amount to smooth over the Basra affair and their various smuggling activities. On November 22 the shahbandar told the Dutch that he still lacked 1,000 toman for the purchase of the two ships. He asked them to pay half of this amount; the other half would be paid by the English. Both companies would later be repaid out of the customs revenues. He showed a letter from Mohammad Taqi Khan which stated that if he did not have enough money, he would have to ask the Dutch and English companies to lend him the remainder, "for in these difficult times all subjects and friends of the Empire have to serve the Crown in accordance with their ability." The English had already paid, so the Dutch were asked

³⁹ It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the meaning of the terms referring to various types of vessels native to the Gulf area such as *grab*, *gallivat*, and *dinghy*. For a full bibliography on ship studies see: A. H. J. Prins, "The Maritime Middle East: A Century of Studies", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 27, 1973, pp. 207-220.

⁴⁰ Lockhart, "Navy", pp. 7-8; *Ibid.*, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 93-94; ARA, VOC 2357, f. 917; *Ibid.*, f. 1233 f. Mohammad Taqi Khan Shirazi to European companies, 27 July, 1735 (received).

⁴¹ ARA, VOC 2416, Resolutie Gamron, 23 October, 1735, f. 526-29.

to pay their share in order to avoid troubles. After an initial refusal Koenad finally gave 300 toman.⁴² On December 5, 1735 a Dutch vessel took the money to Shaykh Rashid at Basidu at the request of the shahbandar.⁴³

In March 1736 Nader crowned himself Nader Shah and ended the nominal Safavid rule by deposing the infant-king Abbas III, whose father, Tahmasp II, he had deposed four years earlier.⁴⁴ Finally his own master, Nader embarked on further campaigns for territorial gain. The first item on his agenda was Bahrain, which he intended to retake that year. He informed the Dutch that Mohammad Taqi Khan, beglerbegi of Fars and *qāpotān-e savāhel* (commander of the seaports), had orders to retake Bahrain after his arrival in Bandar Abbas.⁴⁵ Whether in response to this development, or to obtain Nader's favor, or both, the English offered to buy ships for him. The Dutch were furious and taken aback. The English had already been giving presents to the authorities beyond what was customary, but this offer topped it. How could they refuse the loan of ships and not lose the shah's favor, the Dutch commented.⁴⁶ The ships were not delivered immediately, and Latif Khan, who had been reinstated as admiral and put in charge of the Bahrain expedition, forced the captain of an English vessel named the Northumberland to sell his ship at "a great price."⁴⁷

According to the Dutch, as a result of this purchase the Iranian navy was composed of the following ships:⁴⁸

<u>Name or type of ship</u>	<u>White Money</u>	<u>Black Money</u>
<i>Fattie Sjahie</i> , from the English	7,000	
<i>Capitaine</i> , from the English		4,000
<i>Fatta Mamoedie</i> , from the English	400	
<i>Nastar Chanie</i> , from the English	300	
<i>Toeckel</i> , from Sjeeg Rasjet	3,000	
<i>Fattilhaije</i> , from Sjeeg Rasjet	1,300	

⁴² ARA, VOC 2416, Resolutie Gamron, 21 November, 1735, f. 666-81.

⁴³ ARA, VOC 2416, Resolutie Gamron, 22 December, 1735, f. 736-39. Shaykh Rashid said that there was no need for the Dutch to give a draft; a letter would have sufficed, for the VOC had a very large credit, as far as he was concerned. He refused, however, to accept the EIC draft; *Ibid.*, f. 365 mentions that captain Louis (Lewis?) of the EIC had estimated the value of the Tawakkul.

⁴⁴ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, p.63, 96 f.

⁴⁵ ARA, VOC 2416, f. 503-04 (dated Rabi' al-Awwal, 1148/July 1736); see also *Ibid.*, f. 1036 Nadir's *raqam* (decree) of February 1736.

⁴⁶ Lockhart, "Navy", p.9; ARA, VOC 2416, 1041, and *Ibid.*, Resolutie Gamron, 6 May, 1736, f. 995.

⁴⁷ Lockhart, "Navy", p.9; ARA, VOC 2416, Resolutie Gamron, 5 April, 1736, f. 337; Five years later the Dutch remarked that the English could spend so much money on the Iranian officials because they sold their ships to the Iranian government at 200% profit, ARA, VOC 2548, f. 2592.

⁴⁸ ARA, VOC 2417, Koenad to governor-general, Gamron, 4 April, 1737, f. 3264; on the two trankis taken from Shaykh Rashid see: Floor, "The Revolt", p. 89; Toeckel is Tawakkul. The term white money refers to good money, *i.e.*, which had not been debased. Black money refers to bad or debased money, which was exchanged at a discount of 50%. So the total expenditure amounted to 12,800 toman plus 50% or 19,200 toman + 4000 toman = 23,200 toman of black money. Other expenditures brought the grand total to 23,600 toman.

<i>Fatta Rhamhanie</i> , from the Arabs	400	
<i>Illhaiji</i> , from Sjeeg Rasjet	400	
2 trankis taken from Sjeeg Rasjet	?	
2 galwets built by Latif Khan	?	
<i>Total:</i>	12,800	4,000

On May 26, 1736 an expeditionary force of some 4,000 troops boarded the ships, which then set sail to Bahrain. Shaykh Jabbara was on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and without their leader the Hula garrison put up a feeble resistance. As a result of this move, many Hula Arabs fled the mainland of Iran to the islands offshore. Mohammad Taqi Khan asked the Dutch, who had not sent ships to assist in the Bahrain expedition, to delay sending their ships to Batavia, in case the Hula Arabs, who were valuable to Iran as sailors, did not obey his orders to return to the mainland. If that happened, he wanted to use Dutch, and other, ships to force them to return.⁴⁹ However, the Hulas did not trust Mohammad Taqi Khan. During the summer of 1736 the Hulas and other Arabs waylaid passing vessels and settled old scores among themselves. Shaykh Rahma Charaki, also known as Shaykh Rahma ibn Fazl, acquired a fair amount of notoriety, but he informed the Dutch that he had not committed most of the piratical acts ascribed to him.⁵⁰

The situation became serious after the death of Shaykh Rashid of Basidu, probably in early October 1736. Local officials tried to arrest his widow in order to get hold of the shaykh's property. An Iranian force of some 40 men led by Mir Haydar was repulsed. So Mohammad Taqi Khan ordered the Iranian fleet to attack Basidu, which they did, ransacking and plundering the town. Then, as his force was not strong enough to hold the town, Latif Khan decided to withdraw. A force of Arabs in 200 vessels pursued him, but he got away. Despite the fact that at that time the Iranian fleet was reinforced, the Hula Arabs continued their piracy. The reinforcement of the fleet consisted of two English 20-gun frigates, each of 400 tons and 145 feet long. One of them was named the Cowan. Their cost was 8,000 toman. The Hulas attacked Qeshm and tried to stop supplies of water and firewood from reaching Bandar Abbas. They even went so far as to seize two Dutch and four English vessels carrying supplies. The Dutch, therefore, were willing to comply with a request from the authorities at Bandar Abbas to send a ship to stop the piracy. They sent the ship *de Rithem* on October 19 to patrol the areas where supplies of water and firewood were obtained. The captain was authorized to act against Hula Arabs if he encountered them. However, if he found that these places were freely accessible, the ship was to return to Bandar Abbas. After an uneventful patrol *de Rithem* returned to Bandar Abbas on November 8.

⁴⁹ Lockhart, "Navy", p. 9; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 108-09; ARA, VOC 2416, Koenad to Muhammad Taqi Khan, Safar 1149/June 1736, f. 1178-79.

⁵⁰ ARA, VOC 2416, Resolutie Gamron, 13 October, 1736, f. 1390-92; VOC 2417, f. 4095-97, Sjeeg Rhama bien Fassal Tjoerecki to Koenad, 26 January, 1737 (received), see also *Ibid.*, f. 4047 (Tjereckie).

Shaykh Rahma, perhaps alerted by the Dutch interference, sent letters to the Dutch and English in November 1736. He assured the Dutch of his friendship and returned the goods taken from their vessels. The men who had committed this abominable act, he said, had been killed at his orders, and he expressed the hope that this event would not mar their good relations. He also stopped interfering with supplies for Bandar Abbas. Local shipping resumed, and the Dutch did not have to send out their ship again. Shaykh Rahma even sent a representative to the Dutch "factory" (trading station) on January 25, 1737 to apologize once more.⁵¹

On February 24 Mohammad Taqi Khan arrived in Bandar Abbas with a large force. Nader Shah had plans to add Masqat to his empire. It is not clear who suggested this idea to him, Latif Khan or the English. The Dutch reported that the English had promised to deliver Masqat into Iranian hands.⁵² On March 15 the Iranian fleet, consisting of five ships, one grab, and some smaller vessels, commanded by Latif Khan and captain Cook, his vice-admiral, arrived at Bandar Abbas. After embarking some 5,000 men and 1,500 horses, the fleet left for Khor Fakkan where a force was landed. The fleet then sailed to Julfar (Ra's al-Khayma) where Latif Khan met with Masqat's Imam Sayf ibn Sultan II. The latter had been unable to subdue a rebellion of his subjects and had appealed to Nader for help, a coincidence which suited Nader's plans very well. The joint forces were very successful at Masqat, but the imam and Latif Khan quarreled with one another, so the latter was forced to withdraw his troops to Julfar. Already at the end of March 1737 Mohammad Taqi Khan had asked the Dutch to put a ship at his disposal for the transportation of troops. Because he had been instrumental in the renewal of Dutch trading privileges, the Dutch sent *de Anthonia* to Julfar. Mohammad Taqi Khan also asked for mortars and powder, and in May again for the assistance of a ship. Because he told the Dutch this would be the last time he asked for a ship, they complied with his request and sent *thHuys Foreest*. Of their own accord, the English had also offered to ship troops and supplies to Julfar. However, Mohammad Taqi Khan did not trust them because they had just been caught in a smuggling affair, for which he had fined them 1,000 toman.⁵³

Despite his promise, Mohammad Taqi Khan continued to ask the Dutch for favors, especially for the supply of spare parts and other ships' supplies. Although it was annoying, the Dutch observed that he at least asked them politely, while the English just received orders to deliver certain supplies.⁵⁴ Nader also sent them a letter in which he thanked the Dutch for

⁵¹ ARA, VOC 2416, Resoluties Gamron, 10 December, 1736, f. 331-36, 442/8 November, 1736, f. 1506-08/8 November, 1736, f. 1476-83; VOC 2417, Koenad to Mirza Isma'il (brother of Mohammad Taqi Khan), Gamron, 26 December, 1736, f. 4013-18; *Ibid.*, Koenad to Sjeeg Rama bien Fassal Tjereckie (Shaikh Rahma ibn Fazl Charaki), f. 4047; *Ibid.*, Resoluties Gamron, 12 February, 1737, f. 3745-46/8 January, 1737, f. 3677-78; Lockhart, "Navy", p.9.

⁵² ARA, VOC 2417, Resolutie Gamron, 9 March, 1737, f. 3791; VOC 2416, van Leypsigh to Koenad, Isfahan, 17 July, 1737, f. 2490; Lockhart, "Navy", p. 9; *Ibid.*, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 182-83.

⁵³ Lockhart, "Navy", p. 10; ARA, VOC 2417, Resoluties Gamron, 23 March, 1737, f. 3822-24/30 March 1737, f. 3860-61; VOC 2448, Resolutie Gamron, 30 April, 1737, f. 319-32.

⁵⁴ ARA, VOC 2448, Resolutie Gamron, 13 June, 1737, f. 419-22.

their assistance. He added, however, that they should be ready to do more and keep their ships and grabs prepared for action.⁵⁵

Latif Khan, despite his setback in Masqat, still enjoyed Nader's favor. There was even talk that he would succeed Mohammad Taqi Khan as beglerbegi of Fars. After his return from Julfar, the sailors complained about insufficient food supplies and their lack of pay. Latif Khan was able to soothe the sailors, mostly Hula Arabs, by promising redress.⁵⁶ In view of his good standing with Nader, the Dutch reacted positively to Latif Khan's request for them to send three ship's carpenters to Bushire. Although they only sent one, he was well received and returned after one month.⁵⁷ Mohammad Taqi Khan, meanwhile, had returned to Bandar Abbas on December 10, 1737 accompanied by Shaykh Jabbara. Nader had rebuked him for not personally leading the expedition to Masqat and had given him orders to redress the situation there. Understandably, Mohammad Taqi Khan was not in good spirits. He immediately made preparations to embark a large expeditionary force to strengthen the Iranian garrison at Julfar. Although the Dutch had promised him one ship, he became very angry when the ship proved not yet ready when he wanted to leave. He accused the Dutch of ingratitude, and told them that they could keep their ship. He did not care whether they left Iran or stayed, but if they stayed, he would punish them for their dastardly deed.

The local authorities, headed by Mohammad Taqi Khan's brother, interceded on behalf of the Dutch, but Mohammad Taqi Khan remained angry. He indicated that it would take a present of 1,000 toman to erase the shameful incident. The Dutch deliberated over what to do. If they left, everything would be lost; if they stayed and fought, they could not win. They therefore decided to pay and lodge a complaint with Nader Shah. Mohammad Taqi Khan told the Dutch, after payment was made, that bygones were bygones and acted very friendly toward them. Meanwhile, he commandeered all vessels in and around Bandar Abbas to supply Julfar, including the small craft of the Dutch and the English. Needless to say, this had a negative impact on living conditions in Bandar Abbas.⁵⁸

Sayf ibn Sultan II, the Imam of Masqat, again welcomed the arrival of Iranian troops, for events had taken a bad turn for him. The combined forces defeated the rebel troops, seized several towns, and finally captured Masqat itself. Then they laid siege to the two large forts by Masqat's harbor. When the imam realized that the Iranians wanted to occupy his land rather than just help him regain it, he switched sides and joined the rebels. The Iranians were badly defeated and had to fall back on Julfar. Their

⁵⁵ ARA, VOC 2448, Nadir Shah to Koenad, Rabi' al-Awwal, 1150/February 1737 (from Qandahar), received on 19 July, 1737, f. 55.

⁵⁶ Lockhart, "Navy", p. 10; *Ibid.*, Nadir Shah, p. 183-84; ARA, VOC 2448, Resolutie Gamron, 30 November, 1737, f. 822.

⁵⁷ ARA, VOC 2448, Resolutie Gamron, 8 November, 1737, f. 789-96/10 December, 1737, f. 889.

⁵⁸ ARA, VOC 2448, Resoluties Gamron, 10 December, 1737, f. 858, 884-84, 888-89/2 January, 1738, f. 949-56/28 January, 1738, f. 957-75/31 January, 1738, f. 977-85/3 March, 1738, f. 1990-94; *Ibid.*, Mohammad Taqi Khan to Koenad, 23 Shawwal, 1150/13 Febrary, 1738, f. 1998; *Ibid.*, Koenad to governor-general, Gamron, 30 April, 1738, f. 1834, 1839-41.

defeat may have been caused by Mohammad Taqi Khan's poisoning of Latif Khan. The fleet thus lost a capable commander, and its deputy commander, the English vice-admiral Cook, also died. The Masqat fleet engaged the Iranian fleet and defeated it. Mohammad Taqi Khan had to flee from Julfar. The Masqat fleet pursued him all the way to Bandar-e Kong.

An English vessel, which had been assisting Mohammad Taqi Khan, had been unable to help him. He therefore blamed the Europeans for his defeat: the English by deserting him, and the Dutch by not assisting him. The English gave him 1,200 toman, while he asked the Dutch for a loan of 40,000 toman, which they refused. The supply lines with Julfar were cut and the remaining Iranian garrison, commanded by *minbashi* Assur Khan, was in dire straits. Because Mohammad Taqi Khan had treated the Arab crew of his fleet in a niggardly fashion, they mutinied and deserted. The Masqat Arabs made use of the Iranian defeat to attack the islands and the coastal settlements in the Garmsirat. They sacked Qeshm, Kong, and Bahrain, and it was rumored that Shaykh Jabbara wanted to seize Bahrain again for himself.⁵⁹ In December 1737 a sea battle took place between the Masqat and Iranian fleets near Qassab. A heavy thunderstorm separated the two fleets, and the Arabs lost one of their biggest ships, the *Malik*, to a fire caused by its own crew.⁶⁰ In the meantime, the Iranian troops in Julfar received new supplies shipped on Dutch and other vessels. Shaykh Mazkur of Bushire supplied sailors to reinforce the crews of the Iranian fleet. In February 1738 Abu al-Arab attacked Julfar with 20,000 troops, but Assur Sultan and his troops were able to repulse him.⁶¹ The supplies sent to Julfar caused dearth and scarcity in Bandar Abbas to such an extent that in January the poor were forced to eat grass like animals. The streets were covered with dead bodies left unburied.⁶²

Mohammad Taqi Khan returned to Bandar Abbas on March 16 with orders to persevere in the war with Masqat. He promised the Dutch repayment, in installments, of Iran's debt, which amounted to 17,000

⁵⁹ ARA, *VOC* 2449, Resolutie Gamron, 6 May 1738, f. 2090-91; *VOC* 2476, Koenad to governor-general, Gamron, 25 February, 1739, f. 87-91; *Ibid.*, Resoluties Gamron, 8 August, 1738, f. 182-83/12 August, 1738, f. 190-91/29 September, 1738, f. 244-46/3 October, 1738, f. 255-56. On 17 July, 1738/31 Rabi' al-Awwal Mohammad Taqi Khan had written to Koenad, that the latter's lack of enthusiasm to lend him a ship was quite evident. However, he did not need his ships anymore, because he was almost finished there (Masqat). "If the Imam of Masqat, Sayf, wants to oppose me, I have 7 to 8 ships on the roadstead of Julfar, one English company ship, and about 100 small vessels of Arab and other subjects of the Shah. Sayf only has two rotten, decrepit ships, and the royal fleet can handle those"; *VOC* 2476, Mohammad Taqi Khan to Koenad, Kong, 14 September, 1738 (received), f. 260-61; *Ibid.*, Schoonderwoerd to Koenad, Bushire, 17 August, 1738, f. 1066/16 September, 1738, f. 1077/ 12 November, 1738, f. 1097/12 January, 1739, f. 1106; *Ibid.*, Hoogbeem c. s. to Koenad, Qeshm, 23 July, 1738, f. 1130; see also f. 1140, 1146.

⁶⁰ ARA, *VOC* 2476, Koenad to governor-general, Gamron, 25 February, 1739, f. 132-33.

⁶¹ ARA, *VOC* 2476, Schoonderwoerd to Koenad, Bushire, 17 August, 1738, f. 1067; *Ibid.*, Hoogbeem c. s. to Koenad, Qeshm, 13 December, 1738, f. 1193; *Ibid.*, Koenad to governor-general, 25 February, 1739, f. 132-33.

⁶² ARA, *VOC* 2476, Resolutie Gamron, 20 January, 1739, f. 470-71/29 January, 1739, f. 495-99; *Ibid.*, Koenad to van Leypsigh, Gamron, 31 January, 1739, f. 616.

toman, if the Dutch would supply him with a fully equipped ship for which he would pay in cash. Moreover, the Dutch had to promise to deliver ships' supplies for the maintenance and repair of the fleet. The Dutch told him they could not sell him a ship, but Mohammad Taqi Khan told them the offer was not open to negotiation. At the same time, he gave them a list of ships' supplies which he needed. When the Dutch delayed their response, he threatened to take these supplies by force. He gave them until March 28 to choose between war and peace. The Dutch decided that war was not in their interest. However, to give in would mean giving *carte blanche* to Mohammad Taqi Khan. They therefore decided to give what they could afford. If this proved unacceptable, they would resist and defend Dutch interests by force. Fortunately Mohammad Taqi Khan accepted their offer. Probably to ingratiate themselves with Mohammad Taqi Khan, the English gave him, unsolicited, a new 132-foot ship in addition to many presents.⁶³ Satisfied with these results Mohammad Taqi Khan returned to Shiraz on May 1, 1739.

The war in Masqat, meanwhile, did not go well for the Iranians. The garrison at Julfar was under constant pressure and in great difficulty. In July the deputy governor of Bandar Abbas literally begged the Dutch to send supplies to Julfar. The Dutch refused because they had to repair their own ship. However, the Iranian officials continued to pester them with increasing desperation until on August 5 the ship *tHof niet altijd Somer* left for Julfar.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the Iranian authorities commandeered all local vessels in Bandar Abbas to send supplies to Julfar, for it was a matter of life and death for the Iranian troops there.⁶⁵

Around the same time, peace talks began between the imam and the Iranians, which finally led to the end of hostilities. The Iranians probably took the initiative for these talks since Nader needed his fleet for operations in Sind. In September 1739 Mohammad Taqi Khan was already making preparations for this campaign. When he arrived in Bandar Abbas on November 4, he asked the Dutch to transport troops and supplies to Divil.⁶⁶ The Dutch protested but then gave in to Mohammad Taqi Khan, who appeared to be even more powerful than before. He had an army of about 25,000 foot, seven big and small ships (both three- and two-masters), and about 100 smaller vessels. Supplies arrived from as far away as Kirman, and all vessels in the gulf were pressed into service. On December 17, 1739 Mohammad Taqi Khan boarded the *tHof niet altijd Somer* and sailed for Makran, where he met defeat.⁶⁷

⁶³ ARA, VOC 2477, Koenad to governor-general, Gamron, 20 March, 1739, f. 84,88,109-111; *Ibid.*, Resoluties Gamron, 20 March, 1739, f. 205-07/28 March, 1739, f. 235-39; Lockhart, "Navy", p.11.

⁶⁴ ARA, VOC 2510, Resoluties Gamron, 16 July, 1739, f. 1370-73/29 July, 1739, f. 252; *Ibid.*, Mohammad Taqi Khan to Koenad, f. 1248-53.

⁶⁵ ARA, VOC 2510, Resoluties Gamron, 29 August, 1739, f. 278-79; *Ibid.*, Koenad to governor-general, 25 November, 1739, f. 110-111.

⁶⁶ ARA, VOC 2510, Resoluties Gamron, 10 November, 1739, f. 411/-16; *Ibid.*, Koenad to governor-general, Gamron, f. 119-120; Lockhart, "Navy", p. 11.

⁶⁷ ARA, VOC 2510, f. 114-116, 121; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, p. 184.

As a result of these developments, Mohammad Taqi Khan was dismissed as *beglerbegi* (governor-general) of Fars. Imam Verdi Khan succeeded him. The admiral of the fleet, Mir Ali Khan Torkoman, was also dismissed and succeeded by Mohammad Taqi Khan Mashhadi. The fleet, which had returned to Bandar Abbas in April 1740, was in a bad shape. Mir Ali Khan was constantly asking the European companies for ships' supplies to make repairs. The situation worsened when, as a result of a heavy storm in mid-August, the fleet suffered heavy damage.⁶⁸ Not only were the ships in a bad shape, but the crews as well. Mohammad Taqi Khan had treated them parsimoniously. As a result, the Arab sailors mutinied on August 26. They killed the *daryā begi* (admiral) Mir Ali Khan and a great many Iranian soldiers. The leaders of the mutiny are named in the Dutch sources "Sjeeg Rama, Sjeeg Abdoel Sjeeg, and Sjeeg Abdoel Khoer." Each of them fled with a few ships to a different part of the gulf.⁶⁹ Two Dutch ships helped bring the loyal part of the Iranian fleet safely back to Bandar Abbas. The new *daryā begi*, Mohammad Taqi Khan Mashhadi, demanded that the Dutch also assist him in punishing the mutineers and bringing back their ships. Under pressure, the Dutch gave in. They put two ships at his disposal, which were joined by two brigantines flying English colors, which had been taken by the Dutch in August. Failing to trap Shaykh Abdul Shaykh ("Sjeeg Abdoel Sjeeg"), the ships returned to Bandar Abbas at the end of September.⁷⁰

Imam Verdi Khan, meanwhile, was gathering forces at Bushire where he also commandeered a Dutch vessel *de Valk*. He intended to attack the mutineers at Qaysh, where they had concentrated their forces. Since the English lent the Iranians some soldiers and a small cannon, the Dutch had to do something to remain on good terms with the authorities. So they put two ships at their disposal, *de Middenrak* and *de Croonenburgh*. They sailed to Qaysh on October 3, 1740. On October 15, the Dutch-Iranian squadron engaged the rebel fleet, which was much stronger and had a more determined crew. The mutineers' small *trankis* were especially effective, which was not the case with those accompanying the Iranian ships. The fierce resistance put up by the mutineers made the *daryā begi* disengage from the battle. Although he had not defeated the mutineers, he was pleased with the outcome.

Imam Verdi Khan took a less positive view. He did not understand why the Dutch had not been able to defeat the Arabs. However, when he learned how the battle had gone, he changed his tune and thanked the Dutch for their support, at the same time asking for naval assistance to transport

⁶⁸ ARA, *VOC* 2511, Koenaad to governor-general, 31 July, 1740, f. 157-58; *VOC* 2546, Koenaad to governor-general, 31 March, 1740, f. 30-32.

⁶⁹ Lockhart, "Navy", p. 11; *Ibid.*, *Nadir Shah*, p. 212; ARA, *VOC* 2546, Koenaad to governor-general, Gamron, 31 March, 1741, f. 33f ("Sjeeg Rhama has left with the *Fattisjahi*, 2 smaller vessels, and most of the best other crafts to Kong, Abdoel Sjeeg has fled with two small ships and ten *trankis* and is hidden somewhere near Qeshm); *Ibid.*, f. 1725 states that "Rhama son of Sjahin Naghiloehi has fled after the mutiny with some ships to Sjahi and Bandar Hoela".

⁷⁰ ARA, *VOC* 2546, Koenaad to governor-general, 31 March, 1741, f. 35-37; *Ibid.*, Captain of *Middenrak* to Koenaad, 10 September, 1740, f. 407/18 September, 1740, f. 1408-10; Dagregister *Middenrak*, f. 1415; *Ibid.*, Schoonderwoerd to Koenaad, Bushire, 11 October, 1740, f. 1355.

troops and supplies to Kong and Julfar. The Dutch refused, though by December, with piracy increasing in the gulf and the situation of the Iranian garrison in Julfar growing more difficult, they wanted to assist Imam Verdi Khan. However, by that time Iranian vessels could sail unprotected to Julfar.⁷¹

In April 1741 the darya begi again asked the Dutch for naval assistance. This time they refused in spite of threats of incurring the shah's disfavor.⁷² This was a month after negotiations between some of the rebels, who had quarrelled amongst themselves, and the Iranian authorities had failed to produce a settlement.⁷³ In June and August the darya begi again asked for the Dutch ships; they again refused. The growing friction between the Dutch and the Iranian authorities bode ill for the former. Therefore, when Imam Verdi Khan arrived in Bandar Abbas in September, they complied with his request for a short trip by one of their ships to Qeshm. They also took a force of 25 soldiers aboard. On their return, these passengers refused to leave. As a result, it seemed for some time as if hostilities would break out. The Dutch put their forces on alert, while Imam Verdi Khan trained his cannon on the Dutch factory. Then Imam Verdi Khan gave in and withdrew his soldiers from the de Ketel. He told the Dutch, however, they would either have to lend him two ships to fight against the Hulas, or transport Mozaffar Ali Khan to Thatta. In order to defuse the potentially dangerous situation, the Dutch agreed to the trip to Thatta. Imam Verdi Khan then changed his mind and again asked them to help him against the Hulas. They refused, and Imam Verdi Khan again threatened to attack the Dutch factory.

The Dutch were divided about which course to take. A minority of their council was willing to fight, if need be; but the majority wanted to avoid such extreme measures. They finally decided to give in to Imam Verdi

⁷¹ The two Dutch ships were faced by two big ships, viz. the *Fattishahi* and the *Capitaine*, as well as one 2-master, and 110 well-armed frankis, in addition to which many more frankis were lying on the beach, which the rebels had as yet not put into action. Soon after the battle started the Iranian frankis accompanying the Dutch ships fled. It should be noted here, that the ships of the Iranian fleet were used for transportation, shelling of enemy positions, and for fighting sea-battles. The European ships were superior in firepower, but as is clear from the various accounts, the smaller gulf vessels played an important part during these battles. For detailed information see ARA, *VOC 2546*, Dagregister (diary on events near Keyts/Qaish/ and Sjab/Abu Shu'aib/), F. 1423-37, and *Ibid.*, Resolutie Scheepsraad, 1 October, 1740, f. 403-14; *Ibid.*, Imam Verdi Khan to Schoonderwoerd, 24 October, 1740, f. 1153-54/to Koenad, 28 October, 1740 (received/from Nakhilu), f. 1756-58, 1759-60 (30 October, 1740), f. 1765 (11 November, 1740); *Ibid.*, Koenad to governor-general, Gamron, 31 march, 1741, f. 38-46; *Ibid.*, Koenad to Sjeeg Sjahin and Sjeeg Rhama at the long island (=Qeshm), Gamron, 20 April, 1741, f. 1961-63, see also f. 1814-17; *Ibid.*, f. 49-50 in January 1741 returned his vessels through the good offices of Mohammad Taqi Khan; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, p. 212.

⁷² ARA, *VOC 2538*, Darya begi to Koenad, 4 April, 1741, f. 187-88; *Ibid.*, Imam Verdi Khan to Mohammad Taqi Khan, 3 April, 1741 (received), f. 182-85.

⁷³ Lockhart, "Navy", p.11, "In March, 1741, however, the mutineers, as before, quarrelled amongst themselves, and some of them opened negotiations with the Persian authorities. Strangely enough, these negotiations were conducted in English, as an English renegade acted as spokesman for the mutineers, while the Agent or one of his assistants interpreted for the Admiral. No settlement, however, was reached".

Khan's request and allow Iranian troops to board. This led to difficulties with the Dutch crew; they refused to sail with that many Iranians, who were behaving very arrogantly, aboard. When the situation did not improve, the majority of the crew and officers jumped overboard. They refused to return if the Iranians remained on board.

Thereupon Koenad, the Dutch director, charged them with mutiny.⁷⁴ Imam Verdi Khan decided to sail to Qaysh with the Dutch skeleton crew, who were assisted by a few Arab sailors. On October 25, 1741 the two Dutch ships, the *Fati Sianga*, the two gallivats and 40 other vessels engaged the Hulas at Qaysh. The Arabs put up a fierce resistance, and Imam Verdi Khan, to encourage his troops, himself loaded a cannon with too much powder. The cannon burst and killed him. The Dutch-Iranian fleet continued to fight the Hulas but disengaged at sunset. The next day the darya begi was appointed acting *sardār* (general). Because the Dutch refused to continue the operation -- having promised assistance for a period of one month, which had long since passed -- and his own troops were discouraged, the darya begi gave orders to return to Kong. He refused to allow the Dutch ships, as previously promised, to return to Bandar Abbas. Koenad planned a rescue operation, but the arrival of Hatem Khan made this unnecessary. He allowed the ships to return, but told Koenad that one of his ships had to make the trip to Thatta.⁷⁵ Since this was a direct order from Nader Shah, Koenad did not dare to refuse. He therefore put *de Ridderkerk* at the disposal of Mozaffar Ali Khan. It sailed to Thatta on January 5, 1742. It was shipwrecked at Karachi on its return voyage in May 1742.⁷⁶

In the second half of 1741 Nader Shah took measures to build his own ships and cast his own cannon in the gulf. A gun foundry at Bandar Abbas actually turned out two copper cannon, and it was intended to cast another 300. The ship yard was at Rishahr. Nader asked the European companies in December 1741 to send him carpenters and ship building materials. He had put four officials in charge of the project: Sulayman Beg, Mohammad Ali Beg, Hasan Ali Beg, and Mohammad Zaman Beg. The latter two were

⁷⁴ ARA, VOC 2583, Resoluties Gamron, 15 August, 1741, f. 395-99/21 September, 1741, f. 493-545/7 October, 1741, f. 558-596; VOC 2584, Koenad to governor-general, Gamron, 22 January, 1742 (secret), f. 2495, 2504-15.

⁷⁵ ARA, VOC 2584, Contract Imam Verdi Khan for the use of Dutch ships, 8 October, 1741, f. 2117-19; *Ibid.*, Imam Verdi Khan to Koenad, 14 October, 1741, f. 2125-29; *Ibid.*, Darya begi to Koenad, 11 November, 1741 (received), f. 2134-35; *Ibid.*, Ibrahim Sahid to Koenad, 18 November, 1741 (received), f. 2229-39; *Ibid.*, Koenad to Zion, Deeldekaas (commanding officers of the two ships), 1 December and 20 December, 1741, f. 2664-70 (secret); *Ibid.*, Zion to Koenad, 11 November, 1741, f. 2692-2701/ 21 November, 1741, f. 2712-17; Hatem Khan to Koenad, 6 December, 1741 (received), f. 2150/17 December, 1741 (received), f. 2167-69/25 December, 1741 (received), f. 2771-73 (all from Kong).

⁷⁶ Koenad instructed his Isfahan office to obtain a firman from Nader Shah "in which it is ordered that nobody can ask for our ships without showing a royal order," ARA, VOC 2584, f. 2546. He also protested to Nader Shad about the high-handed behaviour of Imam Verdi Khan, *Ibid.*, Koenad to Nader Shah, Gamron, 18 November, 1741, f. 2559-2607. In a secret letter to Batavia, Koenad asked for permission "to have the Persian taste the sword for once, in case the oppression is too much", *Ibid.*, f. 2501, which shows that the patience of the VOC council at Gamron had almost run out.

stationed in Mazandaran in order to arrange for the transport of timber to Rishahr.⁷⁷ This royal decree was accompanied by a letter from Mohammad Ali Beg in which he asked for three carpenters in order to build ships of at least 100 gaz (about 60 meters) length. He added that Nader Shah wanted to spend some 40,000 toman on this project. The Dutch, therefore, were to send well qualified people, and not men who would waste the money.⁷⁸

Koenad wrote to the shah that the Dutch had no carpenters, for these were only available in the Netherlands where all their ships were built. In a similar vein he replied to a second letter from Mohammad Ali Beg in February 1742 asking again for carpenters and supplies.⁷⁹ After these negative reactions, the matter was not raised anymore. Nader Shah had to make do with the services of a Flemish gentleman named La Porterie, who was charged with supervising the construction of the ship. Although he protested that he was ignorant of shipbuilding, he was forced to go to Bushire. The climate undermined his health; but despite repeated requests, he was not allowed to return to Isfahan. When he finally fell seriously ill, he was allowed to go; but he died before he reached Shiraz.⁸⁰

Although Nader's shipbuilding plans failed to materialize, he nevertheless was able to get a considerable fleet by purchase, gift and seizure. By mid-1742 his fleet consisted of four 3-masters, three sloops, two gallivats, and a great many frankis, each with 4 to 6 cannon. Half of the four 3-masters had been purchased by Mohammad Taqi Khan for 7,000 toman from the English in Bandar Abbas. Each ship had 22 guns and was 110 feet long. The two other ships were at Bushire, where they had been bought from private English and French traders, each for 1,800 toman. These were 16-cannon ships, 90-100 feet long. However, according to the Dutch, they were old, worn-out ships, from which the Iranians would not

⁷⁷ Lockhart, "Navy", p. 12; *Ibid.*, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 213-14 for the possible reason for this scheme; ARA, *VOC* 2584, Raqam (decree) by Nader Shah to Koenad, 17 December, 1741 (received) (dated 21 Rabi' al-Awwal/June, 1741), f. 2161-62.

⁷⁸ ARA, *VOC* 2584, Mohammad Ali Beg to Koenad, 17 December, 1741 (received), unfoliated, see also f. 2156; the intended length of the ship was wrong and not feasible, see Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, p. 213.

⁷⁹ ARA, *VOC* 2593, Clement to governor-general, Gamron, 31 October, 1742, f. 1778 verso; letter to Nader Shah, *Ibid.*, f. 1780-81 (7 January, 1742).

⁸⁰ Lockhart, "Navy". p. 12; *Ibid.*, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 220-21; La Porterie came to Iran via Aleppo and Basra on 19 December, 1731. He had been an engineer in French employ. On 20 December, 1731 he left for Kirman (*VOC* 2254, f. 449). The fortune hunter, as the Dutch used to refer to him, arrived in Isfahan in February 1732, where he sought service with the Shah as an engineer, but he was not successful (*VOC* 2232, f. 363 verso). One year later he was with Nader's Army at Hamadan, who offered him too low a salary, reason why La Porterie returned to Isfahan, where he stayed with the English (*VOC* 2323, f. 669/10 October, 1733). In May 1738 it is reported that La Porterie had entered into Iranian service as a cannon caster (*VOC* 2476, f. 916) and that he would leave with the artillery to Kirman to fight against the Baluch of Makran (*Ibid.*, f. 936). According to the Dutch La Porterie offered his service as a ship builder to Nader Shah. When he was not successful in this, he had to give up, and left in the company of a French captain, George Eustache, who had sold his ship, the "La Fortune", to the Iranian government for 1,800 toman (*VOC* 2593, f. 1715 verso). His departure was a blow to the ship building plans, despite the fact that, according to Mohammad Ali Beg, Nader Shah wanted to pursue this activity with diligence, both in Iran, in Surat and in other Indian ports (*Ibid.*, f. 1714 verso-15).

get much satisfaction. The ships of the Iranian fleet were mostly manned by Bengali sailors who deserted English and French ships calling at Iranian ports. Neither company could do anything about this, even when their sailors were pressed into Iranian service in front of their own factories.⁸¹ Moreover, Nader expected another eight ships from Surat, bought by Nizam al-Mulk. The fleet, which was well stocked with supplies, was to grow even more during 1742. Gradually the Hula mutineers were reduced to obedience, and their ships recovered, thus reinforcing Nader's fleet. Furthermore, the Imam of Masqat gave Nader two ships, one boasting 64 cannons.⁸²

In 1742 the Imam again appealed to Nader for help. The shah willingly complied with this request. After defeating the Hulas at Khasab, Kalb Ali Khan, the new sardar, accompanied by Mohammad Taqi Khan, arrived in Bandar Abbas on June 2, 1742. They made preparations for a Masqat campaign, which they planned with the imam himself, who was in their company. On June 18 they sailed to Masqat with about 8,000 cavalry. This campaign was very successful for the Iranians, for they were able to seize most towns and, by ruse, even the fortresses of Masqat. The imam found out too late that he had been deceived by his allies.⁸³ By July 1743 Mohammad Taqi Khan held the greater part of Oman.

In October Nader Shah sent a new sardar of the Garmsirat to Oman, Mohammad Hosayn Khan. According to the Dutch, Mohammad Hosayn Khan had orders to claim immediate restitution from Mohammad Taqi Khan of the costs of the Masqat campaign. Whether this is the true reason or not, by November 1743 Mohammad Taqi Khan revolted against Nader Shah. He arrested Kalb Ali Khan and stopped all communications with Iran. Sardar Mohammad Hosayn Khan escaped to Kong, however. On December 1 Mohammad Taqi Khan arrived at Bandar Abbas with the fleet. Mohammad Baqir Beg Lari, the *nā'eb* of Bandar Abbas, killed Kalb Ali Khan and some other military commanders. When Mozaffar Ali Khan arrived at Bandar Abbas from Sind with seven ships on December 22, Mohammad Taqi Khan asked the Dutch to lend him naval assistance to seize the seven ships. He had only three ships and two grabs of his own against Muzaffar Ali Khan's seven. The Dutch, however, decided to remain neutral in the conflict. During the night of December 23 Mozaffar Ali Khan captured two ships and two grabs from Mohammad Taqi Khan's fleet. The remainder fled. Mohammad Taqi Khan again asked the Dutch to attack Mozaffar Ali Khan. Again they refused. Mozaffar Ali Khan, faced with water supply problems, sailed to Bushire. Mohammad Taqi Khan was furious at the Dutch and promised that as soon as his ships were back from Julfar, he would attack the Dutch factory, completely destroy it, and kill all

⁸¹ ARA, *VOC* 2593, f. 1807 verso, see also 1715 verso-16, and 1842 verso (La Fortune, Robert Galley); The English Agent commented (Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, p. 215) "But what probability there is of such mighty Affairs being accomplished may in part be guessed at by the neabs they are obliged to use for procuring Timber Bringing it near Sixty Days, on Men's Shoulders from Mazenderoon, and They must come at every other material with equal difficulty." At that time Nader's navy consisted of 15 ships according to the English, *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁸² ARA, *VOC* 2593, f. 1808; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 215-16.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, ARA, *VOC* 2593, f. 1797, 1803, 1806, 1808 verso. Mohammad Taqi Khan also asked the Dutch to supply him with three ships, but they refused, *Ibid.*, f. 1853-59.

Dutchmen. But he could not carry out his threat, for he left for Shiraz on February 18, 1744. Nader, meanwhile, took measures to quell the revolt and asked the Dutch to prevent any rebels from escaping by sea, to look after his fleet, and to take care of Mohammad Taqi Khan's property.⁸⁴

As a result of this revolt and renewed war with Turkey, the Iranians were unable to hold their positions in Masqat and were driven back to Julfar. This reduced the demands for European ships. In fact, no more demands are reported. This circumstance may also have been due to the fact that Nader had by that time built quite a considerable fleet. According to the English, Nader had 30 ships and a large number of small craft. The English director also observed that "H. M. still seems to continue the Resolution of having a large Fleet for the support of which he has lately entered into a Scheme of Trade and has ordered two ships annually (which are now getting ready) with cargoes of the choicest Persian goods to the amount of 5,000 toman to be sent to Surat for purchasing stores and building of two other Ships."⁸⁵

However, Nader had to neglect his navy during the last two years of his reign. The war with Turkey and the increasing number of revolts in Iran required all his attention. By the time of his death in June 1747, several of his ships had been lost through shipwreck. The remainder became objects of dispute among the commanders of the fleet. Molla Ali Shah, the vice-admiral, acquired a few, while Shaykh Abd al-Shaykh and Shaykh Naser of Bushire assumed control of most of the others.⁸⁶ However, they were unable to maintain the fleet. According to a Dutch report written in 1756, "of those ships which Nadier Scha had built at such large expense two still are left, which float above water. However, they are in such a bad condition that they cannot be repaired anymore. The ship that was lying at Bender Riek and which was also still one of the best sank last year and is irreparable."⁸⁷

Like Nader Shah's other schemes, the navy had been built and developed at great human and financial cost. Nader failed to give his navy a political and financial basis which would have ensured its continued existence after his death. His proud navy, like his empire, fell apart. The kingdom was finally restored after much internecine warfare, but it would take another 150 years before a new Iranian navy came into being.

⁸⁴ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, p. 241 ff.; ARA, VOC 2680, de Poorter to Nader Shah, 19 April, 1744, unfoliated/resolutie Gamron, 20 January, 1744, unfoliated; *Ibid.*, van der Welle to governor-general, Gamron, 10 August, 1745, f. 316-49.

⁸⁵ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, p. 221; *Ibid.*, "Navy", pp. 13-14. However, in January 1745 Mozaffar Ali Khan asked again for supplies, VOC 2880, f. 59. His successor as admiral of the gulf fleet was Salim Khan (VOC 2860, unfoliated; VOC 2705, f. 200/August 1745). In 1746 Mohammad Reza Khan was admiral of the fleet sailing to Masqat (VOC 2705, f. 426/March 1746).

⁸⁶ See for example T. H. Ricks, *Politics and Trade in Southern Iran and the Gulf (1745-1765)*, (unpublished dissertation Indiana University, 1974).

⁸⁷ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 221-22; Willem Floor, "A Description of the Persian Gulf in 1756", *Persica*, Vol. 8, 1979, p. 166. See also pp. 172-73 for more details.

The picture of Iranian naval history would not be complete without mention of Nader's naval aims and achievements on the Caspian Sea. Lockhart has adequately treated this subject in his book on Nader Shah, but on one issue Lockhart's analysis must be amended. He writes that "It does not appear to be on record when he [Nader] first thought of having a fleet on those waters, but there is no doubt that he did not do so until some time after he had begun to collect his flotilla on the Gulf."⁸⁸ It seems quite likely that Nader had this idea at about the same time that he sought to create his navy in the gulf, *i.e.*, at the end of 1734. At that time Nader Shah was sorely pressed for supplies at Ganja, to which he was laying siege. The Russian commander at Darband helped him by sending ships with supplies.⁸⁹ Subsequent developments took Nader's attention elsewhere; but from the fact that he appointed Mohammad Hosayn Khan qapotan bashi, or admiral, of the Caspian Sea in early 1738, we may conclude, that Nader was quite aware of the usefulness of having a fleet on the Caspian.⁹⁰ The Dutch, who reported this appointment, did not mention whether this admiral had a fleet. However, it shows that Nader had clear ideas about his maritime needs on the Caspian prior to his decision of 1742 to build ships for the gulf.⁹¹

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⁸⁸ Lockhart, "Navy", p. 14.

⁸⁹ ARA, VOC 2357, van Leypsigh to Hey, Isfahan, 4 February 1735, f. 1145.

⁹⁰ ARA, VOC 2474, f. 890 (20 April 1738).

⁹¹ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 204-05, 289; *Ibid.*, "Navy", pp. 14-17.