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"(PoI. No. 1718/05) تقرير المتحف البريطاني حول الخليج الفارسي كمطقة محتملة لإنشاء مصادد إسفنجد ناجحة"

المكتبة البريطانية: أوراق خاصة وسجلات من مكتب الهند

IOR/L/PS/18/B152

نوفمبر ١٩٠٥ (ميلادي)

الإنجليزية في اللاتينية

ملف واحد (ورقتان)

رخصة حكومة مفتوحة

المؤسسة المالكة

المرجع

التاريخ/ التواريخ

لغة الكتابة

الحجم والشكل

حق النشر



حول هذا السجل

أعدّ التقرير راندولف كيركباتريك الذي يعمل بالمتحف البريطاني (متحف التاريخ الطبيعي) في
نوفمبر ١٩٠٥ حول الإمكانيات التجارية لإنشاء مصادد إسفنجد بالخليج العربي.

التقرير مُنسق في شكل أقسام صغيرة كما يلي:

- الظروف المواتية لنمو الإسفنجد التجاري؛
- الظروف غير المواتية التي يمكن أن تمنع القيام بعمليات صيد ناجحة للإسفنجد؛
- وسائل الحصول على الإسفنجد؛

• هل يمكن جمع الإسفنج بدون إضرار قاع المحار في الوقت ذاته؛

• الملخص والنتائج.

"تقرير المتحف البريطاني حول الخليج الفارسي كمناطق محتملة لإنشاء مصائد
إسفنج ناجحة (Pol. No. 1718/05) [و١] (٤/١)"

B. 152.

British Museum Report on the Persian Gulf as a Possible Area
for Successful Sponge Fisheries. (Pol. No. 1718/05.)

There is no definite information in literature concerning the existence of commercial sponges in the Persian Gulf; and, although the Natural History Museum possesses specimens of horny sponges from that region, some of which were collected by the writer of this Report in the course of a voyage from Basra to Karachi, there are among them no typical commercial sponges. In spite of this negative evidence, which is of small importance, it is very probable that commercial sponges do exist in great abundance in certain localities in the Gulf, especially, for instance, on the extensive pearl oyster beds.

The fact that there has hitherto been no trade in sponges from the Persian Gulf is no proof against their existence. Previous to 1840 the sponge trade of the West Indian region did not exist, and its origin at that date was due to an accident; now thousands of men are employed in the industry.

The Persian Gulf, or "the Green Sea," is a shallow enclosed sea, the depth of which rarely exceeds 55 fathoms. Numerous islands and shallows occur in its south-western portion and near the entrance to the Straits of Ormuz. The bottom is formed of mud, clay, sand, and rocks, the last two being favourable ground for sponge growth. Outside the Gulf and along the coast of Muscat, the 10-fathom line extends out several miles from the shore; and beyond this line the great depths are reached.

Conditions Favourable to the Growth of Commercial Sponges.

These sponges flourish in warm temperate and tropical waters in depths of from 10 to 30 fathoms, though their bathymetrical range is from 2 to 70 fathoms. They grow best on rocks and reefs in currents of three or four knots an hour. Too strong currents cause the growth to be irregular.

Unfavourable Conditions that might Prevent Successful Sponge Fishing in the Persian Gulf.

Mud is obnoxious to most sponges. There is no likelihood of commercial sponges being abundant in the northern end of the Gulf, where the diluvium brought by the Shat-el-Arab is being deposited.

The "Shamal," or Dust-wind, a north-west wind that fills the air for days together with dust from the plains of Mesopotamia, would probably be rather detrimental to certain forms of submarine life, for the impalpable sand and dust fall on to the water, and are partly suspended and partly sink to the bottom.

Lastly, occasionally the temperature may be too great for healthy sponge life.

An air temperature of 179° Fahr. has been recorded on the Muscat coast; this would give rise to a water temperature nearly as high (*i.e.*, within 33° Fahr. of boiling water) in shallow water of only a few fathoms depth.

S. 33.

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At the sponge fishing grounds of Florida, the highest air temperature during the two years 1895-6 reached 88·58° Fahr., the water temperature on the same date being 86·58° Fahr. Probably the temperature on the Bahrein Banks never attains so great a height as that recorded from the Muscat coast where local conditions, such as encircling rocks, may have contributed to the reaching of such a record as that given above.

Methods of Obtaining Sponges.

The methods of sponge fishing vary with the local traditions and circumstances, the depth being one of the chief of these latter. Sponges are obtained in four different ways :—

- (1.) By naked divers who descend, with the aid of a heavy stone, to depths up to 10 fathoms. The men can remain under from two to three minutes, the last period being almost the outside limit of endurance. The sponges are cut from their attachment and hastily gathered into a basket, the diver then being hauled up to the surface. [The Bahrein pearl fishers, who usually descend in about 10 fathoms, go down feet first, and remain under about two minutes. They close the nostrils with a small clip resembling a clothes-peg, to prevent the entry of water.]
- (2.) By means of divers in diving dresses. Where capital is available, the catch is greatly increased by employing diving dresses. A diver in dress can remain under water up to depths of 10 fathoms for a long period, but in greater depths of 20 fathoms he can only stay under for a few minutes. Both in the Mediterranean and West Indies the native population is usually hostile to the users of diving dresses.
- (3.) By means of forks with a very long stem or handle and two or three prongs. This method is employed in Dalmatia and all over the West Indies, and is available in depths of 5 to 8 fathoms, in clear water. In the West Indies (Florida, Bahamas, &c.) a schooner-rigged vessel of several tons will take several small dinghies on board, and a crew, allowing two men to each dinghy. When a suitable reef is reached the boats are put out. While one of the two men very gently sculls the other inspects the bottom through a submarine telescope or a pane of glass let into the bottom of a bucket. The object of this is to do away with the effect of surface ripples. When the man sees the black sponge on the bottom he transfixes it with the fork, which may be over 30 feet in length. Great skill is required to operate successfully without damaging the sponge too much.
- (4.) By means of dredge nets usually made of camel's hair, and fitted with an iron frame at the mouth. The dredge is worked from a sailing ship, and in considerable depths of from 50 to 70 fathoms, where the other three methods would be unavailable. The dredge can be used in lesser depths, but would be injurious to pearl oyster beds.

Would it be possible for a syndicate to collect sponges without at the same time bringing up oysters or damaging their beds?

The collecting of sponges on the Pearl Oyster Banks would be likely to cause some damage at certain seasons, when the young oysters would

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be injured by being trodden upon. If the methods of naked diving, diving in a dress, or hooking were employed, there would be no danger of bringing up oysters to the surface.

It is probable that the local tribes would be extremely hostile to any syndicate working on the Pearl Oyster Banks, unless they were convinced that it was to their interest to co-operate with the syndicate. The pearl fisheries occupy about 30,000 men and 5,000 boats during five months of the year, from June to October. All the inhabitants think about is pearls. "We are all, from the highest to the lowest, slaves of one master—pearl," said Mohammed bin Thanee to me." (Palgrave).

Even in Europe the experiments made in the Adriatic on sponge cultivation by Professor Oscar Schmidt on behalf of the Austrian Government in 1867-72 were abandoned, chiefly on account of the hostility of the ignorant natives. In America, too, the local populations have frequently shown themselves hostile to strangers endeavouring to introduce new methods.

It may not be out of place to mention here that, assuming the existence of rich sponge beds, successful enterprise in connection with them would depend on certain conditions being observed. The most important of these conditions are :—

- (1.) To avoid fishing up or damaging small specimens.
- (2.) Not to fish in a locality that has been temporarily exhausted, for at least three years.
- (3.) To ascertain, by careful research and observation, the period at which sponges in any particular area mature the eggs, and to observe a "close time" during that period, for nothing can be more wasteful than to fish up a sponge full of embryos just on the point of becoming larvae. Legislation enforces a close period in Tunis from 1st March to 1st June.

Summary and Conclusion.

The writer of this Report is unable to state definitely whether or not rich beds of commercial sponges exist in the Persian Gulf and along the Muscat coast; but he is of opinion that many of the conditions requisite for the healthy life of such sponges occur there.

The sponge harvest is, perhaps, the most profitable of all marine harvests, and the price of sponges in the market appears to be continually increasing.

In view of the increasing demand of the world for sponges and of the diminishing supply, sponge fisheries have now become a most valuable asset; accordingly, if sponge grounds are present to any extent in the Persian Gulf, a syndicate would stand a very good chance of success.

(Signed) R. KIRKPATRICK.

British Museum,
November 1905.

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