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**A Quarterly Refereed Journal
Specialized in Basrah Heritage**

Issued by

Al-Abbas Holy Shrine

Department of Islamic Knowledge and

Humanitarian Affairs

Basrah Heritage Center

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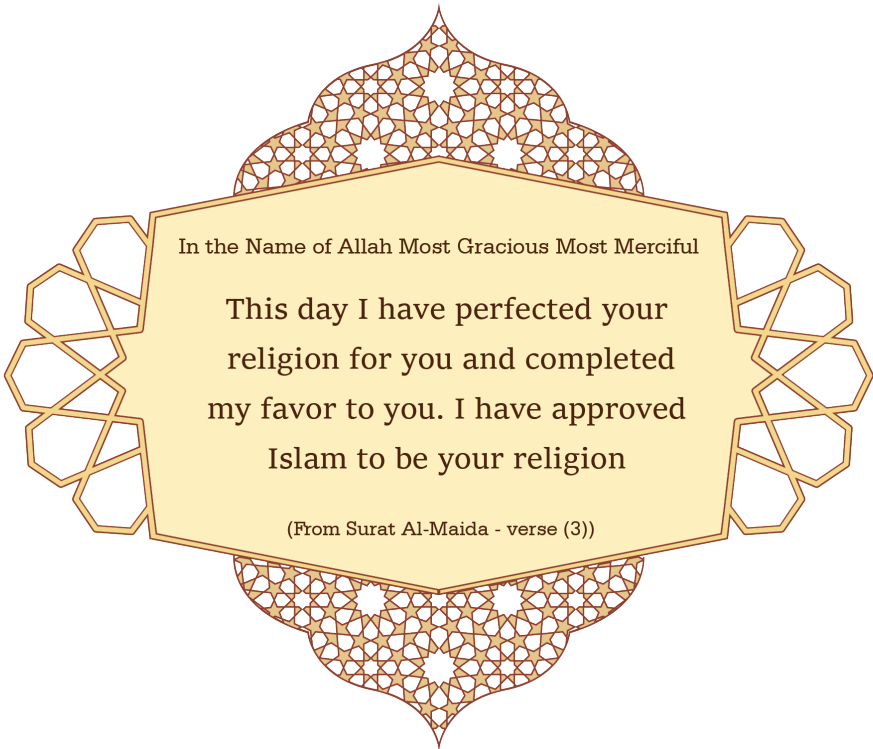
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In the Name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful

This day I have perfected your
religion for you and completed
my favor to you. I have approved
Islam to be your religion

(From Surat Al-Maida - verse (3))

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3- The paper should be printed on (A4). Three copies and a (CD) having ,approximately, 5000-10000 words using simplified Arabic or Times New Roman font and in pagination should be delivered to the Journal Editor in Chief.

4- An abstract in Arabic or English, not exceeding one page,150 words, with the research title, should be delivered with the paper.

5- The front page should have the title, the name of the researcher/researchers, occupation, address, telephone number and email. Name(s) of the researcher / researchers in the context should be avoided.

6- All sources used in the research paper should be fully documented in the endnotes, taking cognizance of the common scientific procedures in documentation including the title of the book, editor, publisher, publication place, version number, publication year and page numbers. Such procedure is used in the first reference to the source. But if it is used again, documentation should include only the title of the book and the page number.

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Editorial

For a long time, Basrah has been a meeting place for commercial caravans and also for various thoughts and cultures. Basrah for this reason used to play an important role for its cultural activities and contributions.

With the emergence of Islam, Basrah mentality has been well-prepared to interplay and deal with the principles, values and thoughts of this new religion. Specifically, the role played by Basrah Grand Mosque and The Mirbad (grand poetic festival) has been very effective both intellectually and culturally. Be that as it may, the cultural products have been distinguished by creativity and open-mindedness.

The cultural activities in the city attracted creative scholars and authors from different countries, which added to Basrah cultural heritage. Besides, Basrah became a destination for scholars, savants and culture-loving

students. Throughout history, Basrah contributions in various fields have been quite apparent.

Despite all this, Basrah has been inflicted with top authorities who have undertaken its responsibility and have consequently exposed the city to ordeals and troubles. As such, it has become necessary to tackle this turbulent situation. The first important procedure in this respect was taken by Imam Ali bin abi Taleb who could bring out reformations, following Al-Jamal Battle. He could also convince the people of Basrah that they are knowledge-loving in addition to their goodness, wisdom and generosity. In addition to that, he granted Basrah Mosque a new cultural dimension besides its religious role.

As Basrah has witnessed attempts for distorting, perverting and undermining its cultural heritage, the Abbasid Holy Shrine, out of high responsibility, took upon itself the task of highlighting Basrah cultural masterworks. It therefore established Basrah Heritage Center with the aim of reviving the rich heritage of this city. Since its inception, the Center sought to attract researchers and academic

scholars specialized in Basrah issues. It held a number of symposiums and seminars, published books and magazines, and organized various cultural programs. Recently, the Center published a refereed academic bulletin entitled Basrah Heritage—an outlet for rigorous research work on Basrah various cultural aspects. The bulletin is open for all researchers and writers to secure more research on Basrah.

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Tavernier's Trip to Basrah in
the 17th Century

البصرةُ في رحلةِ (تافرنبيه)

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Abstract

Tavernier's trip to Basrah in mid-17th Century is considered to be one of the important trips abroad. It contains a lot of useful information on Basrah at that time. It covers historical documentation on Basrah old remains, Safavid-Ottoman relationships, Afrasiab Emirate, Al-Mghamis rule, together with the type of commerce prevailing at that period, agriculture, taxes imposed, coins minting etc. For most of his trip, Tavernier wrote in details about the Sabean sect in Basrah. The paper has identified and corrected a number of mistakes made by Tavernier regarding historical issues, names of places, on Sabeans whom he wrongly considers as Christians.

ملخصُ البحثِ

تُعَدُّ هذه الرَّحْلة من الرَّحلات المَهْمَّة في منتصف القرن السَّابع عشر؛ لاحتوائها على معلوماتٍ تُفيد الباحثينَ عن البصرة في هذه المدَّة، وتنوَّعت المعلومات ما بين جغرافيَّة، مثل: ذكر مناطق في ولاية البصرة بأسماء غير صحيحة، وبين أحداثٍ تاريخيَّة عن أطلال البصرة القديمة، والعلاقات (الصَّفويَّة-العثمانيَّة)، وانعكاساتها على البصرة في مدَّة زيارته، وكذلك معلومات عن إمارة أفراسياب في البصرة، وعن حكم آل مغامس قبلها، واهتمَّ بذكر القضايا الاقتصاديَّة، فتحدَّث بشكلٍ مختصرٍ عن التَّجارة والتَّجار، والزَّراعة وأهمَّيتها لأمير البصرة، والضَّرائب وأماكن استيفائها، وذَكَر وجودَ دارٍ لسكِّ النُّقود في البصرة، وقد خَصَّص الجزء الكبير من رحلته للكلام عن طائفة الصَّابئة في البصرة.

لقد احتاجت دراسة هذه الرَّحْلة إلى بذلِ الجُهد لتصحيح الأخطاء التي وَقَع فيها (تافرنبيه) في القضايا التاريخيَّة، وأسماء الأماكن، وعن الصَّابئة، التي عدَّها فرقة دينيَّة مسيحيَّة، وتناول معتقداتهم بشكلٍ غيرٍ صحيحٍ، ولم تُصحَّح تلك الأخطاء من الباحثينَ الذين اقتبسوا منها بعض المعلومات.

1. Introduction

Trips made to Arab countries, in general, and to Iraq in particular, are of prime importance in terms of knowledge gained and also for historical perspective. These trips encompass information gathered by witnesses which may not be found in other written sources. In this context, Tavernier's trip to Basrah at the beginning of the 17th Century is an important information source on the city at that time.

Tavernier visited Basrah in 1638 and wrote down his own observations and information gained directly from the people he met. Although he stayed in Basrah for three weeks only, he dealt with a number of political, economic, historical, geographical and religious issues.

This research paper tackles these various aspects reflected mainly in Chapters Three and Eight of the Second Book of his second trip. The researcher opted for paraphrase to convey the ideas in the paragraphs written

by Tavernier for more clarity. A number of sources have been used to support the views put forward. The paper has been divided into nine sections that tackle historical, political, geographic, economic and religious issues. In the historical sphere, Tavernier called the Ottomans as Turks as did other European travelers and historians. The researcher, however, used the word 'Ottoman' as it represents the official nomination of the Ottoman state. The word 'trip' will be used in this paper to indicate Tavernier's trip to Basrah.

The researcher made use of the comments made by Dr. Abdul Jabbar Abdulla, the famous Iraqi physics scholar and the second president of the University of Baghdad. The translators of Tavernier's book sought the help of Dr. Abdulla (himself a Sabean) to clarify what Tavernier has written on Sabeans, as the writer has attacked this sect severely and looked at them with contempt.

2. The Aleppo – Asfahan – Aleppo Routes

In Chapter Three of the Second Book of the second trip, Tavernier⁽¹⁾ listed five routes between Aleppo and Asfahan. All these five routes pass through the Great Desert, known

also as Basrah – Aleppo commercial route ⁽²⁾ where the convoys heading for Basrah move with the beginning of rainfall season as they need water badly on their way to Basrah, Tavernier wrote. He mentioned that raining would rarely stop up to December every year. This, in fact, is not right ⁽³⁾ as rain usually starts falling in Basrah from October up to April.

Tavernier described the desert route used by commercial convoys and the cities on the way until he reached a place nearby to Basrah. There he met a convoy of an Arab emir surrounded by his entourage, heading for the Arab desert. The emir sent one of his followers to Tavernier's convoy as he knew that there were a few Europeans travelling with him. That person asked for a surgeon to help them. Tavernier, together with a surgeon, went to the emir. The surgeon noticed herpes on the emir's left hand. Therefore he went with some of the emir's followers to buy medicine from Basrah city center. Not feeling desirous for treating the emir, he did not search seriously for the medicine in the city. ⁽⁴⁾

3. Historical Sphere

The convoy moved through the desert near Basrah until it reached the ruins of the First Basrah (the Basrah of Utba bin Ghazwan). Tavernier saw the remains of some houses on both sides of the convoy route, and guessed that they should have been remnants of a formerly big city at that location.⁽⁵⁾

Tavernier identified Basrah city center at the distance of two leagues (10 Kms) at the side of the Arab Peninsula, specifically at the ruins of a city known previously as Teredon⁽⁶⁾. He states that its old location is in the desert. It gets water from the Euphrates using a canal built and coated with bricks. The present Basrah city (the Second Basrah)⁽⁷⁾ is about 2 kilometers and a half from the Euphrates and known as the Shatt Al-Arab⁽⁸⁾. The Basrah people constructed a canal extending for about half a league (in fact it is more than one league and a half, equal to 5 kilometers) where ships of fifty or one hundred tonnes can sail. At the end of the canal there exists a castle controlling all passing ships. The sea (namely, the Gulf waters in Fao)

is about 15 leagues from Basrah (Tavernier here is wrong again as the real distance between Basrah city center and Fao is 95 Kms and not about 75 Kms as he claims).

Tavernier then gives an account of the arrival of Ottomans to Basrah in 1546 and after a fierce battle they could conquer it. Like most European travelers and writers, he called Ottomans as 'Turks'. He adds that the Arabs of the desert surrounding Basrah were making raids against the city plundering spoils they could get. The Ottomans were forced to conclude an agreement with them giving them the freedom to move in the desert, five kilometers from the outskirts of the city while the city itself was controlled by the Ottomans. This agreement, however, did not last for a long time. The government headquarters in the city was inside a castle built by the Ottomans in a place known as hosh al-Pasha (the Office of the Ruler) ⁽⁹⁾. The city garrison consisted of Turkish soldiers. The Arab citizens were always revolting against them. These troops were responding by using force against them. The desert Bedouins used to give aid to Basrah people and besiege the Pasha in his castle.

As the agreements between the Turkish ruler and the intervening Bedouins proved futile, the wali (ruler) Ali Pasha⁽¹⁰⁾, whose rule witnessed a lot of conflicts and revolts, decided to get rid of this heavy fatiguing burden, and so he sold his government for 1.000 piasters⁽¹¹⁾ for a rich and noble man named Efrasiab who began immediately to recruit a number of his followers, and so imposed his authority in the city. Besides, he adopted the title of the Emir of Basrah. Ali Pasha was hanged⁽¹²⁾ when he immediately reached Constantinople. When the Ottoman Sultan Murad captured Baghdad in 1638, the Emir of Basrah Ali Pasha Afrasiab (1602-1645) got used to send precious gifts to the Sultan including pedigreed horses well known in the region.

4. Political Sphere

During Tavernier's stay in Basrah for three weeks, the ambassador of the powerful leader of the Mongols⁽¹³⁾ arrived in Basrah. He has already left Constantinople to Baghdad to congratulate the Sultan for conquering the city⁽¹⁴⁾. The Sultan gave him a small watch inlaid with diamonds and

corundrum as a gift to the Emperor of the Mongols. Unable to operate it, the ambassador broke it. In Basrah, he called for the Carmelite priests and asked them to repair the watch as he feared death penalty in case he went back to his Leader with the broken watch.

On his part, Ali Pasha Afrasiab established cordial relations with various foreign nations. At that time there was peacefulness and order in Basrah as one can walk in the city any time at night, even after midnight, and yet feel quite safe and reassured.

Tavernier said that he dwelt in the Carmelites Residence⁽¹⁵⁾. They could not repair the broken watch, so they asked him to use his skills to fix it. He took it and put a new spiral for it, and therefore it started working again. The ambassador expressed his deepest thanks for Tavernier for that invaluable service. The Carmelite priests, on their part, begged Tavernier to ask the ambassador to secure safety for them, their houses, and their churches in case the Sultan decided to conquer Basrah. However, the Ottomans did not make any attempt to capture Basrah⁽¹⁶⁾ as they knew

that Persians were heading for it.

When Shah Abbas the Great ⁽¹⁷⁾ conquered Hormoz in 1622, he sent a very strong army led by Quli Khan, the Ruler of Shiraz, to take over Basrah. When Emir Ali Pasha Efrasiab found himself unable to face that big army, he agreed with the Arabs of the desert to break up the dam that holds sea water (marshes water). Doing so, the sea water flooded an area amounting to 15 leagues towards Basrah. The salinity of sea water, following the reflux of water later on, considerably affected the productivity of the orchards, groves, and planted areas of Basrah.

5. Economic Sphere

The Tigris and the Euphrates meet at Qurna. This city, Tavernier writes, has three castles. The first is located at the meeting place of the two rivers and is the most fortified of the three. In this castle lived the son of the Emir Hussain bin Ali Pasha Afrasiab who was the ruler of the city. The second castle was located at Kaldiya, and the third one was located at the Arabs land. Although the ruler of the first castle was

the son of the Emir, he was imposing full customs duties on all passing ships.

Tavernier arrived in Qurna and its big castle, and saw the other smaller castles at both sides of the city. The main castle had a cannon⁽¹⁸⁾. He wrote down that one could not pass through the water route in Qurna without taking the authorities approval there. In fact, ships had to pay taxes to be able to leave to Baghdad or to Basrah. He met the man in charge of the castle at that time.

In writing about the Arab horses, he said that they were very costly. He cited the example of the Mongol ambassador who paid 3.000, 6.000, and 8.000 crowns⁽¹⁹⁾. As the cost of the horse was no less than 10.000 crowns, the ambassador refrained from buying it.

Talking about the international trade with Basrah, Tavernier revealed that the Dutch were bringing spices to Basrah every year. The British were bringing peppers and carnation, while the Portuguese did not have any trade with Basrah. The Indians, on their part, used to bring Calcutta textile, indigo, and many other goods. Besides, traders from

various nationalities were present in Basrah at that time from Constantinople, Azmir, Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo and some other Turkish cities to buy their needs of goods ⁽²⁰⁾.

The traders who came to Basrah from Diyarbakr, Mosul, Baghdad and other places used ships sailing in the Tigris to carry their commodities. That way of transport caused them a lot of fatigue and much money as these ships were sailing slowly and could not move for more than two leagues and a half per day. But if the ships were sailing against the wind, then the trip used to take 60 days from Basrah to Baghdad. In case other obstructions occurred, the trip would take 3 months!

The Customs Office in Basrah was collecting 5%, hence the general income of the Emir of Basrah amounted to 3 million liras yearly. His revenue consists of four items: money, horses, cattle, and date-palm trees, although the major part of the revenue comes from date-palm trees as farms extend from Qurna up to the sea (about 150 Kms). For each date-palm tree, three quarters of a taweela ⁽²¹⁾ or nine French swats (1/20 of the franc) had to be paid.

6. Geographical Sphere

Tavernier describes the distance (20 water leagues) between Basrah city and the beginning of Shatt Al-Arab in Qurna, wrongly called the Euphrates by him. He said that it took them ten days travelling from Baghdad to Basrah. Each night they anchored in the river and had their meal. In case they came across any village, they sent their servants to the river bank to buy food for little money. In that voyage, they passed by a number of cities including Amurat (Amara), Satarat (Shatra), Al-Mansoori (most probably Mansuriya), which was a big township, Magar, Gazer (Al-Uzair), and Gorno (Qurna) ⁽²²⁾. He also described green lands surrounding the Tigris saying that he had seen extensive pastures, blooming orchards with large numbers of tamed animals such as horses and buffalo on which the Ottoman authorities imposed taxes.

Then he sailed in the canal that was dug from the Euphrates to Basrah city center. He, in fact, means Al-Ashar River, and again he uses the Euphrates mistakenly here! On his way to the city center, he met the man in charge of the

Dutch factory who was picnicking in a boat covered with velvet clothes.

7. Social Sphere

During his short stay in Basrah, Tavernier saw large swarms of locusts that appeared from far away as dark clouds. He was told that locusts used to pass Basrah four or five times per year carried by wind. He also noticed some small shops in that area selling locusts boiled with oil to the sailors heading for Hormoz⁽²³⁾. There was in Basrah at that time a judge appointed by the Emir away from the approval of the Sublime Porte.

8. Religious Sphere

There were three groups of Christians at that time: the Jacobites, the Assyrians, and the Christians of Saint John. This is a common mistake made by most travelers or explorers who thought that Mandeian Sabeans are a Christian sect! In his records of Basrah, Tavernier wrote in detail about the Mandeian Sabeans. He called them Christians of Saint John adding that there were many of them in Basrah and the

nearby villages. Yet, he did not give any statistics about their exact numbers saying that they formerly lived near Jordan River ⁽²⁴⁾. He indicated that Prophet Mohammad's successors (the Caliphs) aimed at annihilating them (there is no proof whatsoever supporting such a viewpoint), and so they destroyed their temples, burnt out their books, and used violence against them (this is groundless!). Feeling themselves under big pressure, they migrated to Mesopotamia and Kaldiya (Babylon and Ur). After staying there for decades, they then moved to Persia, Arabia, and Basrah. He reported that these Sabeans lived in cities or villages that contain rivers only. In these new places, they amounted to about 25 thousand families working as traders, but mostly practicing craftsmanships such as blacksmiths, goldsmiths, and carpenters ⁽²⁵⁾. Tavernier attacked their creed and he believed that their faiths are loaded with myths and illusions, but he did not provide any evidence. He adds that both Arabs and Persians call them Sabeans because they have left their own religion and embraced another one. The Sabeans, on their part, call themselves

"the Sabeans of Yahya", i.e. the vassals of John of whom they took their own doctrine, books, and traditions⁽²⁶⁾.

Tavernier also stated that the Sabeans were celebrating their religious Eid (Festival) that continued for five days. During these days, they used to go in groups to their leaders to baptize children in the rivers on Sundays. In case a bishop or a priest dies and has a son, they get used to elect the son to take his father's position⁽²⁷⁾. He described the Sabeans' marriage ceremonies indicating that the relatives and invited persons by the bridegroom went to the bride's home. The bishop used to attend the ceremony and ask the bride if she is virgin. When she answers yes, she is required to take an oath to support her claim. He then goes back to the guests and asks his own wife and other experienced women to go to the bride and be sure of her virginity. When it is discovered that the bride is not virgin, the bishop abstains from continuing the marriage ceremony. In case the bridegroom feels satisfied with the bride, he should go into a religious man of a lower rank to undertake the ceremony. Generally, people find it a

shame if marriage is carried out without the blessing of the bishop⁽²⁸⁾.

The Sabians honor the 'cross' much and name themselves by it, but they could not show this openly in the presence of the Ottomans. They used also to put a guard at the gates of their temples lest the Ottomans should intrude and impose very stiff fine ⁽²⁹⁾. Their main Eids (feasts) are three: one in winter which continues for three days for the memory of Adam and Eve; the second is in August for three days, also known as Mar John Eid; and the third one is in June and lasts for five days. They have their holiday on Sundays when they are doing nothing during daytime. Besides, they do not fast ⁽³⁰⁾, experience no spiritual repentance, and do not have revealed sacred books. The only book they have is about sorcery ⁽³¹⁾.

9. Conclusion

It has become apparent that Tavernier's short trip to Basrah has covered various aspects. Although some descriptions are mostly accurate, others came hasty and imprecise. The researcher has come with the following conclusions:

a. Tavernier did his best to include as many details on Basrah as possible. He hinted at geographical, political, historical, economic, and religious aspects, together with some information on social issues.

b. In his geographic and agricultural aspects, Tavernier is most often away from precision when pointing to distances, agricultural methods and animals raising.

c. The records of the trip include an apt description of the ruins of Basrah, although the description appears incomplete in certain cases.

d. Only little description is given on the Headquarters of the Afrasiab Emirate. Yet, there is lack of information on the shift of rule to the Afrasiab Emirate.

e. Tavernier's description of the political sphere is limited

compared with other aspects.

f. In the economic sphere, he briefly highlighted taxes, currency, horses, trade, and commercial routes.

g. The social aspect is tackled only scarcely. He did not write about society, on the type of the architecture at that time, or way of living.

h. He wrote in detail on Sabeans as he gives profuse descriptions about them compared with other aspects of Basrah.

Endnoes

1. Jean Baptiste Tavernier was born in Paris in 1605. When he was 15 he migrated with his family to Western Europe and served in mansions. He took part in the battles against the Ottomans on the borders of Poland. Then he travelled to other places such as Arzrum, Persia, Baghdad, Aleppo, Aliskandarona, and came back to Paris in 1633. In 1638, he began his second trip to some Asian countries and stayed there up to 1642. His other trips covered countries such as East Indies, Japan and South Africa. His trips were collected in two volumes in 1676.

2. The Trip, p. 16

3. The Trip, pp. 30 – 31

4. The Trip, p. 31

5. He, in fact, means the ruins of old Basrah or Islamic Basrah whose inhabitants have deserted it gradually since the first decades of the 15th Century. See: Hussain Ali Al-Mustafa, Basrah at the Beginning of the Ottoman Era (1546 – 1668): A Study of the Social and Architectural History (in Arabic). Damascus, 2012, p. 64.

6. An old city built by Hamurabi in the southern level lands, to the west of the Euphrates for commercial purposes. Historically, the troops of Alexander, the Macedonian, led by Nerkhos, anchored at Tredon in 326 B.C. See: Suhaila M. Marzooq, The Social and Intellectual Structure of Basrah in the Pre-Islamic Era. Mini Basrah Encyclopedia, No. 2, Kerbala: Basrah Heritage Center, 2016.

7. See: Hussain Ali Al-Mustafa, Making of New Basrah (in Arabic). Mini Basrah Encyclopedia, No. 1, Kerbala: Basrah Heritage Center.

8. The correct distance between the Shatt Al-Arab and Pasha Quarter (the Headquarters of the Ottoman Ruler) is more than 5 kilometers. This river was called the Shatt Al-Arab six centuries ago when Nasser Khesro mentioned it in his trip. See: Nasser Khasro, Safarnama, Cairo, 1993, p. 163.

9. The Trip, p. 96

10. Some researchers state that the name of the Ruler of Basrah is Ayoud, which is not true. See: Haider Sabry Al-Kheqany, Writings of European Travellers: an Important Source of Writing Down the History of Basrah, Selected Samples: (in Arabic).University of Basrah, College of Arts Bulletin, No. 63, Vol. 2, 2012, p. 775.

11. In fact, the Ruler of Basrah Ali Pasha sold the city for eight sacks of money, each one having 500 piasters, which means that the total value was 4.000 piasters. See: Abbas Al-Azzawi, The History of Iraq between Two Occupations (in Arabic), Vol 4, Baghdad (n.d.), p. 139.

12. The Trip, p. 97

13. He is Shihab Eddin Shah Jihan who ruled India (1628 – 1658).

14. Ottoman Sultan Murad IV conquered Baghdad and recaptured it from the Safavids in 1638. See: Mohammad Al-Arees, Islamic History Encyclopedia: the Ottoman Period (In Arabic).Beirut, 2005, p. 66; Longrigg, Four Centuries of the History of Modern Iraq. Trans. by Jaafar Alkhayyat, Baghdad, (n.d.), pp. 96 – 98.

15. They originally lived in Al-Carmel Mountain in Palestine. They first came to Basrah in 1623 headed by Father Basilius (Portuguese). In their memoirs, they recorded their history and part of the history of Basrah. See: Sir H. Gollanez, *Chronicles of Events between the Years 1623 and 1733 Relating to the Settlement of the Order of Carmelites in Mesopotamia (Bassora)*, Oxford, 1927, XXIII.

16. Basrah at that time was under the strong rule of Ali Pasha Afrasiab. It had a semi-independent rule. See: John G. Lorimer, *The Gulf Guide: Historical Section*, Vol. 4, p. 1764.

17. Abbas H. Al-Musawi (ed.), *The Rise and Fall of the Safavi State: an analytical study (in Arabic)*, Holy Qum, 2005, pp. 121-174.

18. He is Hussain Pasha bin Ali Pasha Afrasiab (1645-1668), the last ruler of the Afrasiab Emirate. During his rule, The Ottomans tried to recover Basrah to their direct domination. They thus succeeded in

ending the Afrasiab Emirate in 1668. See: Shaikh Fathallah bin Alwan Al-Kaabi, *Zad Al-Musafer (food of the traveller)*, in Arabic. Baghdad, 1958, pp. 17-54.

19. It is also called the French lira. See: Abbas Al-Azzawi, *History of Iraqi Currency Following the Abbasid Period (1258-1917)* (in Arabic). Baghdad, 1958, p. 131.

20. *The Trip*, p. 98

21. It has been called as such because it was the longest currency in circulation at that time. See: Khalil Al-Sahily, *Money in the Arab States During the Ottoman Period* (in Arabic). The Jordanian University, Faculty

of Arts Bulletin, Vol. 2, 1971, p. 11.

22. The tomb of Ezra.

23. The swarms of locusts continued to invade Basrah up to early 1960s. People used to hunt them to be boiled and then eaten.

24. The Trip, p. 101

25. The Trip, pp. 101 – 102

26. The Trip, p. 103

27. The position of the priest is not hereditary or electory as Tavernier supposes. Such a post requires checking up the character of the priest and then testing him. One condition is that he should learn by heart some religious texts. See commentary of Dr. Abdul Jabbar Abdulla, p. 104 of The Trip. For more details on the Sabean religion, see Rasheed Khayyoon, Religions and Faiths in Iraq (in Arabic). Holy Qum, 2005, pp. 19-60; Aziz Sbahi, The Origins of Sabeans and Their Religious Beliefs (in Arabic), Damascus, 2008.

28. The Mandeian Sabeans viewpoints on Judgment Day focuses on three worlds: the world of light (Paradise), the world of fire (Hell) and the purgatory.

29. The Trip, p. 112

30. Slaughtering animals by them is done in this manner: the person concerned wears the religious dress known rasta which consists of a shirt, long pants, a turban, and a belt, all white in color. The carcass then is washed by running water.

31. The Trip, p. 114

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