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Stone Circles in Arabia

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## CORRESPONDENCE

## Early History of the Sudan.

MAY I point out, with reference to your notice in the May *Journal* of M. de la Roncière's interesting account of a Genoese traveller's visit to Tuat in 1447, that, in the absence of further evidence, it is very doubtful whether *Sagoto* can be identified with Sokoto, for the latter town was built only in the early years of the nineteenth century, on a site chosen by the Fulani jihadi Usuman dan Fodio (see Barth, 'Travels and Discoveries,' 1857, vol. 4, p. 527). There is, I believe, no evidence that the Sokoto of Usuman was preceded by a town of any size or note. Probably it was a barren site. The town to-day has a comparatively modern aspect, and shows none of those signs of age which characterize such towns as Kano and Zaria.

E. W. B.

[The writer is no doubt justified in assigning a comparatively modern origin to the present town of Sokoto, and did Malfante's mention of *Sagoto* stand alone the similarity of names might be thought a mere coincidence. But that the name was older than Dan Fodio's time as a designation of some part of the Hausa domain seems confirmed by its occurrence in variant form, even before Malfante, in the "Catalan" map of 1375. Here, following in due course after Tenbuch (Timbuktu), Geugeu (Gao or Gogo), and Mayma (? Niamey), we have *Zogde* as the name of a state or city on the left side of the Niger's course, just where the modern Sokoto occurs. The point seems to deserve further investigation.]

## Stone Circles in Arabia.

In Mr. Philby's paper published in the *Journal* for March there are one or two matters referred to which much demand the future attention of travellers in eastern Arabia. One is the "stone circles," which Dr. Hogarth believes to be the remains of tumuli, the small stuff piled on the stone foundations having been washed away. He thinks they may be pre-Arab remains. Apparently he is unaware of the existence of the Phœnician tumuli, or tombs, in the Bahrein Islands, which are almost due north-east of Khardj, with which they are connected by the great highway which must once have been a trade route from the historic port of Gerrha—older than Abraham's time. These Phœnician tumuli (opened by Durand or by Bent) are circular mounds of what may once have been soft *dbris*, but which is now as hard almost as concrete covering the huge stone blocks which form the actual tombs. The puzzle to me was the nature of those blocks. I don't know now where they could have come from, but I believe them to have been limestone. An examination of the Khardj blocks might help to solve the difficulty. The Persians have occupied south-eastern Arabia intermittently from very early times, but I am doubtful about Riadh. The Carmathians (a Persian schismatic sect) actually sacked and looted Mecca in the sixteenth century, and the Persians were not actually cleared out of Oman till the middle of the eighteenth century; but they never seem to have had much hold on northern Arabia. The constant movement that existed in the early centuries of our era between Yemen and Oman and the size of the expeditions (tribal and military) which passed across the central desert sufficiently prove that there were ways and routes available of

which we know nothing now. I tried in vain to get that desert explored by native Mohammedan surveyors, but it was too risky. *Now* is the time to make another effort ; but I doubt if an aeroplane flight across from Aden to Muscat would be of much use.

T. H. HOLDICH.

10 March 1920.

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## MEETINGS: ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY: SESSION 1919-1920

**Twelfth Evening Meeting, 19 April 1920.**—The President in the Chair.

ELECTIONS.—William Edgar Andrews, M.A. ; Captain S. Bailey, D.S.O., R.N. ; Leland V. Buxton ; Rupert Erroll Victor Buxton ; Lieut. Robert Ernest Cheesman, I.A. ; Meirion Vivian Davies ; Captain A. F. Day, R.E. ; Henry Fitz-Gibbon Deshon ; Lieut. Cecil J. Durand, R.N.R. ; Colin Alexander Edmond, M.A. ; Lieut. Stanley Fielder, O.B.E., R.N.R. ; Captain William Bain Gray ; Charles Henry Hardcastle ; The Right Hon. Sir Arthur Hardinge, G.C.M.G., K.C.B. ; Austen St. B. Harrison ; Rev. John Frederick Hughes ; Major Llewellyn Rodwell Jones ; Sir John Kennaway, Bart. ; Ralph W. Lohman ; Major James McElwain ; Brig.-General Ernest Makins, C.B., D.S.O. ; Lieut.-Commander Robert A. Melhuish, R.I.M. ; Lieut. Osborn M. Miller, M.C., R.F.A. ; Dr. Charles Martin Mitchell ; Hervey Bates Perrin, M.A. ; Rev. Peter Rose ; Miss Frances E. Royce ; Captain Oliver St. John, D.S.O., M.C. ; George Reginald Stevenson ; Rennie Stevenson ; George Ronald Storrar ; Captain Frederick K. Annesley M. Webster ; Major Gerald William Williams, D.S.O., M.C.

PAPER : An Air Route Reconnaissance from the Pacific to the Amazon. Flight Commander G. M. Dyott.

**Thirteenth Evening Meeting, 3 May 1920.**—The President in the Chair.

ELECTIONS.—Major H. C. Agnew, R.E. ; Charles Perry Austin ; Joseph Henry Bagley ; Francis William Beddison ; Samuel Whittemore Boggs ; Major Herbert Brookhouse ; Henry Edwin Coley ; Captain Kenneth Noel Crawford, M.C., R.E. ; Miss C. Davidson ; Coningsby Dawson ; Brig.-General P. P. de Berry, C.M.G., R.A. ; Roberts Edward Eberhardie ; Dr. John Ambrose Foote ; The Ven. Archdeacon Arthur James E. Harris-Rivett ; Mrs. Emilie Ellen Hose ; Frederick John Knight-Adkin ; Lieut. H. M. D. Laidlaw ; Dr. Aaron Harold Levy ; Henry Osmond Lock ; Lady Macgregor ; Charles Richard Mapp, B.Sc. ; Sir Charles Markham, Bart. ; Mrs. Maud Evelyn Annie Mills ; Alfred Ernest Old ; Lieut.-Colonel Philip Frederick Pocock, D.S.O., I.A. ; Bryan Pontifex ; Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Rice, C.I.E., I.A. ; Percival Sheldon Ridsdale ; Captain Reginald A. Savory, I.A. ; William Perch Shields ; Colonel Edward Thornton Taylor ; Stanley Fletcher Taylor ; A. H. Unwin ; H. F. F. Varley ; Charles H. Vickers ; William Henry Wilkinson ; Lieut.-Colonel John Penry Garnons Worledge, R.E.

PAPER : Across Arabia : from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. H. St. J. B. Philby.

**Seventh Afternoon Meeting, 10 May 1920.**—The President in the Chair.

PAPER : Instruments for the Navigation of Aircraft. Gordon Dobson.