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ALLEN, CALVIN H., JR.
SAYYIDS, SHETS AND SULTĀNS: POLITICS AND
TRADE IN MASQAT UNDER THE ĀL BŪ SA'ĪD,
1785-1914.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, PH.D., 1978

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Sayyids, Shets and Sultāns:
Politics and Trade in Masqat Under
the Āl Bū Sa'īd, 1785-1914

by

Calvin H. Allen, Jr.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

1978

Approved by Gene L. Bacharach
(Chairman of Supervisory Committee)

Program Authorized
to Offer Degree History

Date November 29, 1978

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Date: July 19, 1978

We have carefully read the dissertation entitled Sayyids, Shets and Sultans:
Politics and Trade in Masqat under the Al Bu Sa'id, 1785-1914

submitted by

Calvin H. Allen, Jr.

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

and recommend its acceptance. In support of this recommendation we present the following joint statement of evaluation to be filed with the dissertation.

Mr. Allen's study of the economic and political life and institutions of nineteenth-century Masqat is the product of a sound, thoroughly researched investigation. He has utilized a wide variety of source materials including Arab chronicles, commercial, diplomatic and political materials from British and American archives, contemporary travel literature and private papers of Indian mercantile families of Masqat. Mr. Allen's discovery and use of this last body of documentation represents a significant contribution to the bibliography of Middle Eastern economic history. It has provided him a basis for a broad reexamination and reinterpretation of the main lines of development of Masqat's history. His research entailed library and archival work in Britain, the United States and Uman as well as field work conducting interviews in Uman and India.

Mr. Allen has argued that the Masqat economy did not collapse in the late nineteenth century with the change of the mercantile interests of its royal house. Instead he has demonstrated that control of the trade shifted from the ruling Arab elite to an enterprising Indian merchant community. He has provided a basis for questioning the emphasis on economic decline that has characterized previously published interpretations of Masqat's history in the modern works of Lorimer, Miles, Wilson, Kelly and Landen.

Mr. Allen's review of the history of Masqat and Uman has raised several other important points of interpretation which are not fully developed. He argues that the Ibadī Imamate regime in Uman grew out of a need to manage incipient tribal conflicts rather than concern for religious reform. Also, he has urged a reexamination of the widely accepted dichotomy of coastal and inland zones of Masqat and Uman, which has obscured the important social and economic links between them. His review of the shift of the Al Bu Sa'id family from Masqat to

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Zanzibar emphasizes that it must be understood in economic terms arising from British restrictions on piracy and the slave trade.

Masqat was a pivotal center of political and commercial activity where the worlds of the Middle East, Africa and South Asia met. It is the special merit of Mr. Allen's research that he has enlarged our knowledge of Masqati history through the discovery and interpretation of a previously untapped body of Indian mercantile records, to which must be added the merit of a thoughtful and interpretive reexamination of the economic and political history of an important Arabian center. In our opinion Mr. Allen's dissertation exhibits a high quality of research, writing and argument and on the basis of this and his previous work, we recommend the awarding to him of the Ph.D. degree.

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Doctoral Dissertation

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Dedicated to Becky

Chapter One

Introduction

This study is concerned with the commerce of Masqaṭ, a port on the southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, from 1785 to 1914. The subject is not new. Many authors, including Lorimer, Miles, Kelly and Landen, have discussed the history and trade of Masqaṭ. One theme has been constant in all the above works, the decline of Masqaṭ in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The decline has been attributed to two factors. First, the separation of Zanzibar from the Masqaṭi empire in 1862 disrupted trade between Masqaṭ and East Africa. This problem was compounded by the entry of steamships into the Indian Ocean. Masqaṭ lost its status as an entrepôt for the western Indian Ocean, and its sailors were put out of work. Dissatisfaction with these explanations led me to re-examine the problem of Masqaṭ's decline.

The traditional interpretation of Masqaṭ's decline is deficient in three respects. The port seems not to have prospered under the early Āl Bū Sa'īd rulers to quite the degree that has previously been believed. Secondly, Masqaṭ did suffer a short period of economic depression, but it began earlier than 1862 and is attributable to causes other than those cited by previous authors. Finally, the second half of the nineteenth century was not a period of economic depression in Masqaṭ for an active

Indian merchant community prospered at the port.

The first half of the study (chapters 1-3) re-examines the period from 1785 to 1868. Chapter one deals with the question of the relationship between Masqaṭ and 'Umān. Geographical factors have historically resulted in strong ties between the two regions of 'Umān. The people of the semi-isolated mountainous interior require the services provided by the international port on the 'Umāni coast both as a market for their agricultural produce and supplier of imported necessities. However, tribal opposition to the power that control of the international port brought to the ruler of 'Umān made it virtually impossible for that ruler to retain his hold on both 'Umān and its international port. These two factors led to the establishment of an independent state at Masqaṭ in 1785. This differs from the traditional interpretation of 'Umāni history in which it has been argued that Masqaṭ became the capital of a unified 'Umāni state.

Masqaṭ's independence helps to explain what has heretofore been viewed as the disruptive policy of the Āl Bū Sa'īd sayyids (title of the ruler) who allegedly ignored events in 'Umān while engaging in foreign military adventures. These activities, which included the support of piracy in the Gulf and attacks on Bahrain and, later, East Africa, were actually part of a commercial policy

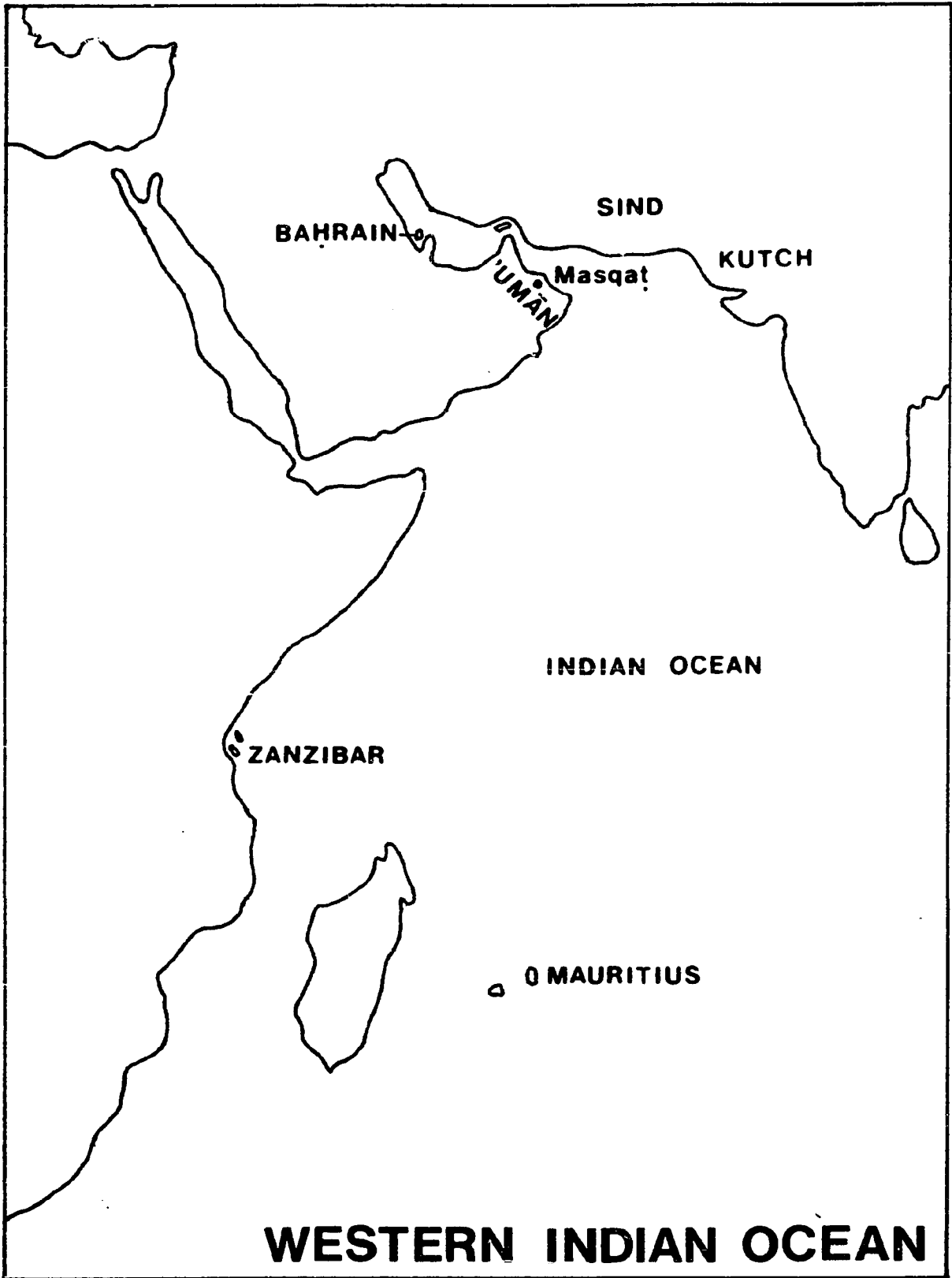
designed to increase the trade of Masqaṭ through domination of foreign markets and elimination of competitors. The Āl Bū Sa'īd commercial policy met with only partial success and ultimately failed due to British interference. Sayyid Sa'īd b. Sultān then abandoned Masqaṭ in favor of Zanzibar in 1830. Masqaṭ did not benefit from Sa'īd's actions as he directed his attentions toward trade with the west and virtually ignored Masqaṭi commercial affairs. Under Sayyid Sa'īd's governors and successive rulers of the port, commercial affairs slipped from the hands of the Āl Bū Sa'īd and became the concern of the Indian merchant community.

In the second half of the study (chapters 4-5) the focus shifts from the Āl Bū Sa'īd to the Indian merchant community. This group has heretofore been unstudied and, having been ignored, its contributions to the trade of Masqaṭ have not been appreciated. In fact, after 1870 Masqaṭ experienced an economic resurgence as the Indian merchants adopted commercial policies that brought trade back to the port.

Chapter four is a history of the shets (prominent Indian merchants) of Masqaṭ. The Indian merchant community, composed of both Hindus and Muslims, has resided in the port since at least the sixteenth century and throughout its history has undergone changes in both its compo-

sition and role in commercial affairs. During the 1860's a group of young Hindu merchants took advantage of a disruptive political situation in Masqaṭ to become established at the port. In the 1870's these merchants began to lessen Masqaṭ's dependence on the Indian Ocean/Arabian Gulf trading network and to internationalize the trade of the port. This policy, which is discussed in chapter five, included the sale of dates to the United States and the distribution of European arms and ammunition to traditional markets in the Gulf. Trade returned to Masqaṭ and the Indian merchants prospered. However, prosperity ended with the outbreak of World War One when Indian contacts with the west were disrupted and a shortage of shipping, an important factor in the success of the Indian commercial policy, resulted in a temporary lull in Masqaṭi trade.

The final chapter offers a conclusion on the supposed decline of Masqaṭ. The policies of the Āl Bū Sa'īd rulers of Masqaṭ between 1785 and 1830 produced only minor successes with the result that the port was abandoned by Sayyid Sa'īd in favor of Zanzibar. The Indian merchants of Masqaṭ then moved into the commercial vacuum left by Sayyid Sa'īd. While the Indian merchants were encouraging trade and growing wealthy as a result, the successors of Sayyid Sa'īd, after 1865 entitled sultān, were becoming increasingly involved in 'Umāni political affairs. Faced



with the heavy costs of defending their territories against the attacks of the tribes of 'Umān and only meager income from customs duties, the Āl Bū Sa'īd became impoverished. The poverty of the ruling family has been interpreted as representing a decline in trade. That is not the case. The trade of Masqaṭ remained fairly constant throughout the nineteenth century. However, the wealth from that trade that had previously gone to the Āl Bū Sa'īd merchant princes now went to the Indian shets.

Chapter Two

Masqat and 'Umān to 1785

A major theme in the history of 'Umān has been the split between 'Umān and its international port, which from the sixteenth to twentieth century was Masqat. Various interpretations of this division have been offered, with supporting arguments based on geography, religion, trade or combinations of these factors. A common thread in those explanations, which will be reviewed below, has been the discussion of "dichotomies" which tend to divide 'Umān. A different interpretation, based on the economic and socio-political unity of 'Umān is offered here. The most important factors to be considered are the role of international trade in the economy of all of 'Umān and the relationship between the tribal hierarchy and the elected ruler of 'Umān, the imām. A struggle between the tribal leaders and the imām over the latter's control of international trade is seen as having motivated the establishment of an independent state at Masqat in 1785.

'Umān is a term that has been used by different people to mean a number of different things, albeit all quite correctly.¹ For the purposes of this study, 'Umān refers to a geographical region bounded by the Buraimī Oasis, Khawr Fakkān, Ṣūr and the al-Rub' al-Khālī desert. It must be emphasized at the outset that the term 'Umān

bears no political connotation. Although 'Umān is composed of a number of vaguely delimited regions, there is little need to discuss each individually as 'Umān is conveniently divided into the mountainous area of the interior and the coastal plain.²

The interior of 'Umān is situated entirely in the Hajar Mountains and is a rugged, arid region. The core of the interior, also known as 'Umān or 'Umān proper in Western literature,³ is al-Jabal al-Akhdar, actually a high plateau rather than mountain, and the surrounding territory. The area contains a number of important towns, including Bahlā, Nazwā, Izkī, Samā'il and Rustāq, and is relatively densely populated.

Without the mountains, the interior of 'Umān would be as uninhabitable as most of the rest of the Arabian Peninsula. Moisture laden warm air moves off the Indian Ocean toward the 'Umāni coast during the winter months. This air is trapped by the mountains and forced to rise and cool. The result is rain, though admittedly infrequent. The run-off from these rains is trapped in the gravelly beds of the wadis that criss-cross the interior and stored in large underground aquifers. This ground-water is brought to the surface for crop irrigation by a complex man-made system, known as falaj, which includes a network of underground tunnels (qanat) and surface channels.⁴

Although a number of fruits and vegetables are grown in the interior, including bananas, limes, sugar cane and pomegranates, the date is paramount. The hot, dry 'Umāni climate is perfectly suited to the date palm, about which an American date expert has written:⁵

The most intense heat, the most excessive dryness of the air, the absence of all rainfall for months at a time during the growing season, and even the hot dry winds that blow in desert regions are not draw-backs but positive advantages to the date palm, enabling it to mature fruit of the highest excellence.

The combination of almost uninterrupted sunshine and the water provided by irrigation produces some of the finest dates in the world.

The importance of the date and the date palm to the people of the interior cannot be overstated. The date was the staple of the 'Umāni diet, and approximately one-half of the annual crop was consumed locally.⁶ The date palm also served a myriad of purposes (the ancient geographer Strabo counted 360), among them providing shade for other fruits and vegetables, fodder for cattle, building materials and many, many others.⁷

Interior 'Umān also had a number of "industrial" centers. Nazwā was known for its metal work. The craftsmen of the city produced copper containers of various kinds as well as silver jewelry and the daggers, known as khan-jar, that every 'Umāni man wears about his waist. Bahlā

produced a special type of pottery, although many towns made their own earthenwares. Weaving was done throughout the interior, but certain towns produced specialty items. For example, Bahlā was famous for its goat hair cloaks⁸ and Samā'il for cotton cloths. Nazwā and the neighboring village of Firq were the center of an indigo dying industry, and Nazwā also refined a little sugar of poor quality.

This description of the interior of 'Umān has led the geographer J.C. Wilkinson to describe the area as isolated and self-sufficient with little need or opportunity for contact with the outside world.⁹ While it may be true that a majority of the people never had contact with foreigners, Wilkinson has overstated the case. The interior was neither isolated nor self-sufficient.

Most of the towns and villages of the interior were, and still are, situated on the banks of wadis. This not only provided water for irrigation, as mentioned above, but these wadis also served as highways linking the settlements of the interior. Even al-Jabal al-Akhdar was accessible as steps were carved in the rock to facilitate communication and trade between the villages of the plateau and the surrounding territory. Finally, the interior was connected with the coastal region by three major passes located in the north, center and south of

'Umān. Throughout history, at least one of these passes has served as a direct link between the interior and an important international port. Other minor routes also crossed the mountains permitting ready contact between smaller interior and coastal settlements.

From all indications, these routes were utilized for trade. Bahlā pottery was found throughout 'Umān as early as the sixteenth century.¹⁰ Copper pots from Nazwā eventually replaced pottery (metalware was found to be cheaper in the long run because it did not break), and the metal workers of the town supplied all of 'Umān with containers.¹¹ Significantly, though, the copper for these pots, as well as the silver for jewelry and bone for the hilts of daggers, had to be imported. Even the weaving industry was dependent on imports as 'Umān did not grow sufficient cotton to meet local demand and it had to be brought from India and southern Persia.¹² Finally, the people of the interior did not live by dates alone. Consumption of dates accounted for approximately one quarter of a minimum daily caloric intake.¹³ Other food stuffs to supplement the diet, such as fish from the coast, rice from India and coffee from Yaman, were obtained in exchange for surplus dates and other dried fruits at the coastal ports. Even many of the other fruits and vegetables grown in the interior were not native to 'Umān but had been adapted from

abroad.¹⁴

An indication of the relationship between the interior and the coast is the settlement pattern in 'Umān. Nearly every interior town is served by a particular coastal port.¹⁵ The conclusion that can be drawn is that the interior was not only not isolated or self-sufficient, its economy was dependent on the goods that the coast had to offer.

The coastal region of 'Umān, known as Bāṭinah, is a crescent shaped plain extending approximately 150 miles along the Gulf of 'Umān. Bāṭinah, like the core area of the interior, is relatively densely populated with a number of important towns dispersed along the coast. These include Shinās, Ṣuḥār, Khābūrah, Muṣna', Birkā and Sīb, all of which are ports.

Like the interior, the coast has benefitted from the Hajar Mountains. The infrequent rains that fall on the western face of the range are absorbed into the soil and flow below the surface toward the sea. As fresh water is less dense than sea water, the fresh water "floats" on the salt water that extends inland below the ground. The result is that even wells dug right on the beach contain fresh water. There is sufficient ground water available to irrigate a "forest" of date palms that runs the entire length of the coast and extends inland for as much as

seven miles, making it one of the largest date groves in the world.¹⁶

Due to the humidity and salinity of the coastal air, Bāṭini dates were inferior to the varieties grown in the interior.¹⁷ Because of this, the date was not widely eaten. Once boiled and dried, though, Bāṭini dates were in great demand in India, and it was the single most important commodity available for export from 'Umān. The surplus dates of the interior that had been brought to the coast to exchange for imported goods were then consumed by the people of the coast. The date diet was supplemented with other fruits and vegetables grown in the shade of the date palms of the Bāṭinah and with products obtained both from and via the sea.

Their close proximity to the sea has caused the people of the Bāṭinah to turn to maritime pursuits to augment their agricultural activities. The coast of 'Umān lay within the zone of an upswelling of cold, mineral rich water which, when it interacts with the hot Arabian sun, produces one of the finest fishing grounds in the world.¹⁸ Many 'Umānis became fishermen, and their abandoned boats litter the beaches of the coast today. Fish, like the date, had a variety of uses. They were consumed both fresh and dried and were an important part of the diet. The large surplus was used as cattle feed and fertilizer.

Dried fish were also exchanged for the dates and other produce of the interior and, with dates, were an important item for export to the rest of the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean region.

Many 'Umānis were involved in maritime trade. The Bāṭinah coast was ideally situated to participate in the trade of the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean region. It shares the Arabian Gulf wind system and is also located on the edge of the monsoon system.¹⁹ The seasonal monsoon winds are modified by the mountains of 'Umān in such a way that sailing patterns between India and Africa have tended to include a port on the Bāṭinah coast.²⁰ The result of this advantageous position was that the merchants of India, Africa and the Gulf all called on the 'Umāni coast. At any one time, only one of 'Umān's ports served as the entrepot for this trade with textiles, spices and rice from India; ivory, gold, slaves and hides from Africa; and gold, silver and copper from the Middle East and Europe all being exchanged by the international merchant community settled at the port.

Ṣuḥār was the first 'Umāni port to play the role of entrepôt. It prospered during the tenth century due to the increased trading activity of the Gulf occasioned by the 'Abbāsīd court's demands. Ṣuḥār retained its importance for approximately two hundred years, but the port

suffered because of the political troubles in Iraq during the declining years of 'Abbāsīd authority.²¹ By the twelfth century Ṣuḥār was supplanted by the port of Qalhāt in southern 'Umān. The shift from northern to southern 'Umān is representative of the change in focus of Indian Ocean trade away from the Arabian Gulf and toward the Red Sea.²² It is significant, though, that Qalhāt, like Ṣuḥār, was situated at the coastal terminus of one of the three important routes that connect interior 'Umān with the coast. The location of these ports gives some indication of the importance of trade with the interior as these major routes served areas of concentrated population that provided both markets and products for the international port. If there had been little need for access to the interior, the international port could have been located at one of the more isolated but equally fine harbors elsewhere on the coast.

Qalhāt began to decline late in the fifteenth century. This decline, which probably began with an earthquake that struck in the area about mid-way through the fourteenth century, was encouraged by the Portuguese, who brought death and destruction to the 'Umāni coast at the beginning of the sixteenth century.²³ In their attempt to monopolize the trade of the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese utilized neither Qalhāt, which they had destroyed, nor

Ṣuhār, whose port had become silted up, as the base of their operations; the Portuguese chose the port of Masqaṭ.

Masqaṭ lay at the western terminus of the Ḥajar range where the mountains plunge into the sea forming a series of small but excellent bays. It is situated in one of the finest of these bays, thus giving it a very good harbor. The quality of the harbor is contrasted, however, by the fact that Masqaṭ is virtually isolated from the rest of 'Umān by the same mountains that formed the bay. The only access to the city by land was via a narrow, rugged path that leads inland. It is barely passable by foot, as attested by this writer's personal experience, and impossible for large beasts of burden such as camels. It was the nearly impregnable position of the city that led to its development as a commercial center. Its excellent harbor provided a base for the Portuguese navy and the surrounding mountains afforded security from attack by the hostile inhabitants of 'Umān.

Masqaṭ's isolation in no way detracted from its position as an entrepot for 'Umān. The neighboring port of Maṭraḥ, just two miles by sea from Masqaṭ, lay at the coastal end of the central pass that links the Bāṭinah with the interior. During the Portuguese period, Maṭraḥ became a collection point for goods coming overland from the interior and a distribution center for foreign goods going inland. It

is doubtful that Maṭraḥ would have developed as a port if the coast and interior had not had strong economic ties. 'Umāni goods were also collected at the various secondary ports along the coast and brought by ship to Masqaṭ where the dates, fruits and fish were exchanged for the imports that the people of 'Umān required.

The fact that it was Masqaṭ rather than Maṭraḥ that rose to prominence is attributable to Portuguese policies. All ships operating in the Indian Ocean were required to stop at Masqaṭ and pay customs duties, and 'Umāni ships had to carry a pass from the Portuguese commander at Masqaṭ.²⁴ Furthermore, it was at Masqaṭ that the international merchant community settled. Christians, Jews and, especially, Hindus, with their commercial networks, actually controlled the trade of Masqaṭ and, thus, 'Umān.

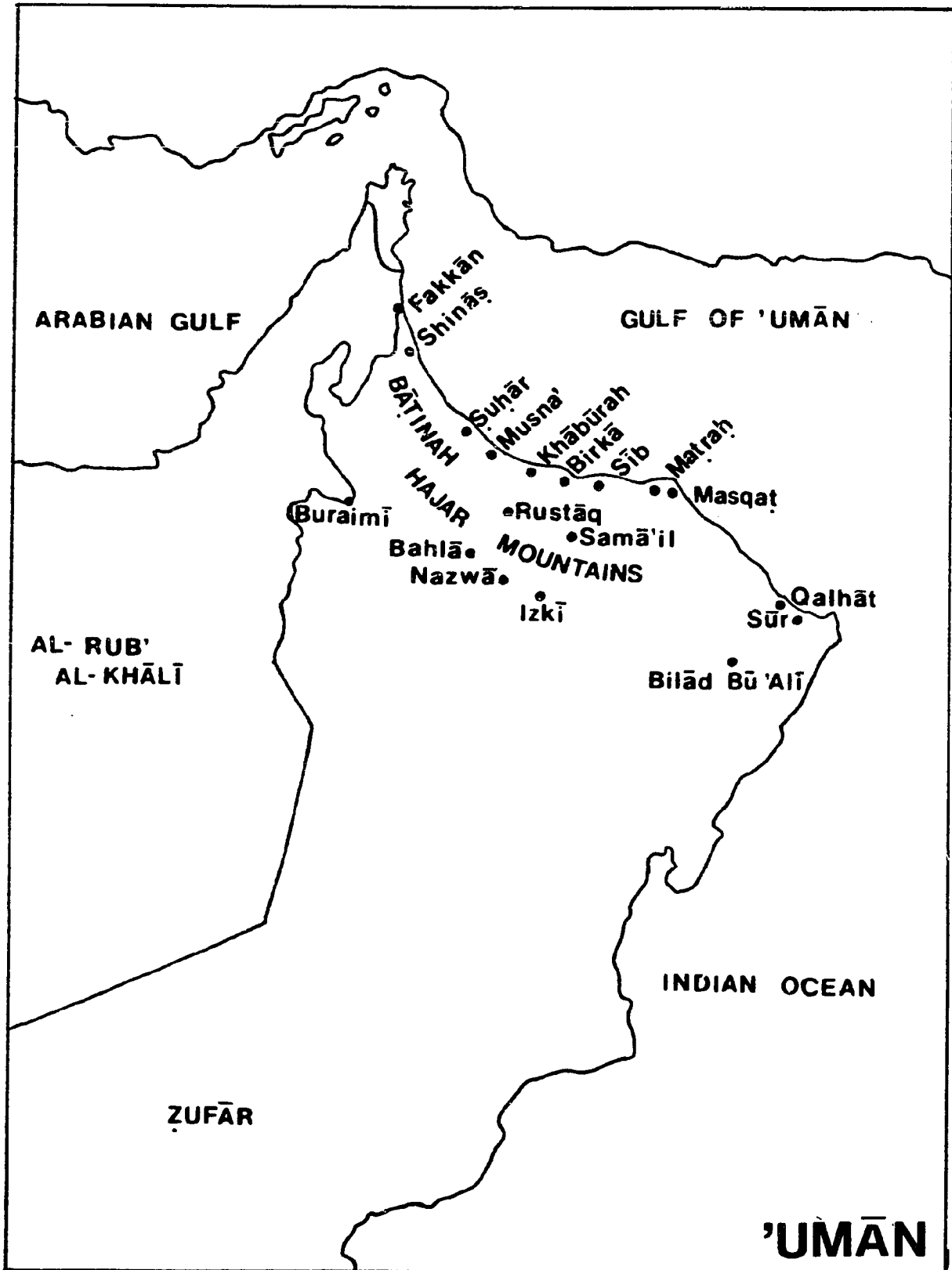
In 1624 a member of the Ya'āribah clan united the 'Umānis against the Portuguese. It was not until 1650, however, that the Ya'āribah, with the support of the Hindu merchant community of Masqaṭ,²⁵ were able to expel the Europeans from their stronghold. Once in control of Masqaṭ, though, the Ya'āribah continued to encourage the trade of the port through various measures,²⁶ including the encouragement of the Hindu merchants.²⁷ The policy was successful for as Bathurst has stated:²⁸

Muscat became a major mart town. It was resorted to for drugs, such as Socotra aloes, asa-

foetida, olibanum (frankincense), putchcock and myrrh, minerals such as alum and sulpher, ivory from East Africa, coffee from Mocha, pearls from the Gulf, and horses, dates, fish, livestock, fruits and vegetables as produce of Oman. Its role as an entrepot as well as a provisioning place for water, livestock and cereals made it one of the most important ports in the Arabian Sea.

Despite its prominence, Masqaṭ became a source of trouble to the Ya'ārībah, as the tribal and religious elite of 'Umān objected to the ruling family's participation in the commercial activities of the port.²⁹ The standard interpretation of this conflict between 'Umān and its international port is religious tension. Before reviewing this explanation, however, some background to the 'Umāni religious tradition, the Ibādī sect of Islam, is necessary.

Ibādism developed in Baṣra during the first century A.H./ seventh century A.D. as a moderate branch of the Kharijite movement. The most significant aspect of this sect was that the Ibādīs rejected the rule of caliphal government. The Ibādīs believed that the Muslim community was to be ruled by an imām who was to be elected by the community of believers from among the eligible males without regard for family or tribal origin. The office was not to be hereditary. The community also reserved the right to depose an imām should he be found unfit for the office. The office could also remain vacant if there was



'UMĀN

not a suitable candidate available for election.

In theory, the imām ruled within clearly defined guidelines. The individual chosen had to be very knowledgeable in religious matters as his principal duty was to administer the religious law, although he was not the absolute authority in this regard and his decisions could be challenged. The imām was also to administer the territories of the community and the religious taxes. Even in this regard, his powers were restricted as all decisions were made only after consultation with the tribal and religious leadership. In matters of war and peace, the imām was entirely dependent on the community because there was to be no standing army. It was an obligation for every Ibādī to support the imām and render aid to the community against its enemies.³⁰

This tradition was common to all of 'Umān. However, the standard explanation of the split between 'Umān and its international port is based on a dichotomy between conservative and moderate Ibādism. Supporters of this interpretation argue that conservative Ibādīs lived in the interior of 'Umān where isolation resulted in the development of an inward looking society concerned with the maintenance of the religious ideal and the establishment of the "city of god on earth." In contrast, the coastal Ibādī, with his contacts with foreign people and

cultures, was more tolerant and cosmopolitan. Once the imām was able to establish 'Umāni control over the international port, the argument continues, troubles invariably resulted as the ruler began to compromise with religious ideals. The most serious problem was that the imāmate became hereditary. The result was civil war.³¹

The case for the dichotomy between a conservative interior and moderate coast has been overstated. In the first place, some doubt has already been raised about the degree of isolation of the interior. Secondly, as even a proponent of this dichotomy points out, all 'Umānis adhere to the same religious ideal and the same religious teachers are admired throughout the country. Furthermore, the Ibādī sect is marked by its tolerance of non-Ibādī Muslims, who could marry, inherit and give testimony against Ibādīs. Christians were regarded with unusual tolerance,³² as was the case, more remarkably, with Hindus.³³ The degree of difference between coastal and interior Ibādism was minimal.

It is not surprising, though, that an interpretation based on religion has been offered. Our few sources on 'Umāni history, especially for the early imāmate, are the writings of Ibādī religious leaders. These "histories," in good Islamic tradition, were written not so much to inform about the past as to provide models for proper

action and warnings against evil as depicted in the lives of the ancestors. Given the pervasive nature of Islam, these events can only be described in religious terms. Religion does not, however, explain the problems that existed between 'Umān and its international port. The major influence was tribalism.

'Umān is a tribal society with the entire country divided into a series of small tribal territories. The origins of this social organization, which is common to both the interior and the coast, are in the second century A.D. when Arab tribes began to migrate into 'Umān and settle among the indigenous inhabitants. The process of migration and sedentarianism continued for a number of centuries, during which time tribal groupings became widely dispersed and intermixed and new tribes were formed.³⁴

The period of Arab migration coincided, especially in its later stages, with an era of strong Persian rule in 'Umān. The Persian governors appointed by the Sassanians were able to maintain security throughout the region. However, the coming of Islam and its acceptance by the Arab tribes of 'Umān in the seventh century resulted in a social revolution in the country. The Persian aristocracy was expelled from 'Umān and the paramouncy of the tribes established. At first, all went well under strong

governors appointed by the central governments in Madīnah and then Damascus. However, during the later years of the Umayyads, 'Umān was virtually ignored, and incessant tribal warfare throughout the country threatened to destroy the agricultural base.³⁵

Into the midst of this tribal anarchy came Ibādī missionaries and refugees bearing notions of an elected leader. J.C. Wilkinson has argued that the appeal of the imāmate was not so much religious as tribal. His evidence for this interpretation is the office of the imām. The imām was elected by the tribal leaders and those leaders insured their supremacy by requiring that: 1) all decisions be made in consultation with them; 2) the imām not have independent military power; 3) the office not be hereditary so that wealth and power would not be centered in one family; and 4) the imām could be deposed. To Wilkinson, the imām was little more than a tribal shaikh whose function was to guarantee the continued existence of the tribal structure rather than to supersede it.³⁶ The first imām was elected in 750 during the period of tribal fighting.³⁷

During the period of the first imāmate (eighth-ninth centuries A.D.) 'Umān entered a period of relative prosperity. The 'Umānis were able to establish control over Suhār, the entrepot for the 'Umāni coast but not yet the

prominent port it was to become in the tenth century, and the government utilized the income from trade to encourage an expansion of agriculture. The prosperity was short-lived, however, as a civil war erupted, and the imāmate was overthrown. Significantly, the civil war that ended the first imāmate late in the ninth century was neither religiously or territorially inspired, as one would expect were the conservative interior/moderate coast dichotomy accurate. The war was based on tribal divisions with Nizār (northern) fighting Yaman (southern).³⁸

A similar situation prevailed in the years following the election of the first Ya'āribah imām in 1624. 'Umān was unified and control over the international port, Masqaṭ, was established in 1650. Then in 1714 a civil war erupted. Once again, the divisions were not religious or territorial but tribal as the Hināwī (Yaman) and Ghāfirī (Nizār) confederations fought for control of the imāmate.

Tribal opposition to imāmate government was motivated by a shift in ascendancy from the tribal leadership to the imām occasioned by the latter's control of the international port. The income from trade freed the imām from the limitations of the religious taxes and provided a relatively great amount of wealth. This encouraged three developments. First, wealth from trade provided sufficient funds for the imām to build up a private army, as in the

case of both the first imāmate and the Ya'āribah.³⁹ This freed the imām from dependence on the tribal leadership for military support. Secondly, both the wealth and investments from the trade encouraged desires to maintain the office in the tribe or clan.⁴⁰ The imāmate became hereditary. This was accomplished by securing the support of one of the two tribal confederations, Nizār and Yaman, which attempted to turn their support of the dynasty to local advantage.⁴¹

The Ya'āribah imāmate was effectively ended with the civil war that erupted in 1719. The tribal factions elected competing imāms, one of whom invited Persian intervention to support his cause. This action did serve to unite the 'Umāni tribes as the Persian army paid little heed to their 'Umāni ally and sought to occupy the country. 'Umāni opposition was led by Aḥmad b. Sa'īd Āl Bū Sa'īdī, a former governor of Ṣuḥār under the Ya'āribah. Aḥmad b. Sa'īd was able to expel the Persians and secure his election to the imāmate.

In many respects, Aḥmad b. Sa'īd's reign is only a continuation of the Ya'āribah imāmate. His election to the imāmate was not universally acclaimed, and his rule was based on the support of the Hināwī confederation. Furthermore, Aḥmad utilized the income from the trade of Masqat to purchase African slaves and hire a mercenary

army of Baluchis which were used against his enemies in 'Umān. The parallel continued with Ahmad's death in 1783 for the imāmate passed to his son, Sa'īd.

Sa'īd was probably the least qualified member of the Āl Bū Sa'īd family, which may account for his tribal support as the tribal leaders may have felt they could dominate him. He had neither the prestige nor ability of his illustrious father, and 'Umān broke up into a series of petty states as the tribes reasserted their authority. In the face of this situation, Sa'īd's son Hamad assumed control of state affairs in 1785. Or did he?

Hamad b. Sa'īd did a very strange thing for a prospective ruler of 'Umān. He did not remain in Rustāq, the traditional capital which lay close to the tribal support upon which control of the country had previously been based. Nor did he move the capital to Nazwā, a second traditional seat of government, or even Bahlā, an ancient capital. Instead, he moved the capital to Masqaṭ, the international port and the source of tension between the prospective ruler of 'Umān and the tribes.

In traditional terms, the transfer of the capital was a serious mistake. This has not gone unnoticed in the literature on 'Umān. J.G. Lorimer saw the shift of the capital to Masqaṭ as a step that:⁴²

...was fraught with lasting and momentous consequences. It removed the rulers of 'Oman from a

situation in which they could only maintain themselves by military and political efficiency; it placed an assured and easily collected customs revenues within their reach, enabling them to maintain a semblance of authority by bribery alone; and it eventually exposed them to the influence of a foreign civilization which estranged them from the tribes of the interior and diminished their popularity with their subjects.

Lorimer's analysis is flawed by two assumptions. First, he assumed that Ḥamad had, indeed, supplanted his father as the ruler of 'Umān. This is a widely held but inaccurate assumption.⁴³ The belief originated with the nineteenth century Āl Bū Sa'īd court historian ibn Ruzaiq, who aggrandizes the role of all the Āl Bū Sa'īd rulers. He even goes so far as to describe Ḥamad as imām.⁴⁴ However, the fact is that Ḥamad was never elected to the imāmate. Furthermore, the more reliable al-Sālimī, who holds Ḥamad in highest regard, does not present him as even the ruler of 'Umān. Ḥamad is only one of many who revolted against the despised Sa'īd b. Aḥmad, who continued to rule the territory around Rustāq until c. 1820.⁴⁵

Secondly, Lorimer is an excellent example of the nineteenth century British-Indian civil servant who believed that the ruler of Masqaṭ was the ruler of all 'Umān. This belief, which arose out of the misunderstanding of Ḥamad's actions, and persisted due to either British ignorance of 'Umāni affairs⁴⁶ or aggrandizement of allies,⁴⁷ was to be the source of trouble for successive rulers of

Masqat, as will be discussed throughout this study.

Hamad b. Sa'id's actions have a far greater significance than the moving of the capital from Rustaq to Masqat or even, as J.B. Kelly has suggested on a more theoretical level, a shift in the basis of ruling power in 'Umān from the land to the sea.⁴⁸ In 1785 Hamad b. Sa'id made a clean break with 'Umān, which was left to Sa'id b. Ahmad and the feuding tribes, and established an independent state at Masqat. During his and successive reigns, the affairs of Masqat were no longer to be concerned with 'Umān and tribalism; Hamad and his successors were content with control of the trade of 'Umān without the difficulties involved in attempting to control the country politically. That control required an allocation of resources for tribal subsidies and military expenditures that were more profitably directed toward the acquisition of new markets outside of 'Umān. The next two chapters will deal with the attempts of the Āl Bū Sa'id sayyids of Masqat to expand the trade of their city-state.

Notes

1. A detailed discussion of the problem of defining the term 'Umān is to be found in J.C. Wilkinson, "The Oman Question: The Background to the Political Geography of South-east Arabia," Geographic Journal, vol. 137, part III (September 1971), pp. 361-71.
2. The traditional provinces of 'Umān during the nineteenth century were, beginning in the south, Ja'lān, Badīyah, Sharqīyah, 'Umān, Bāṭinah, Ḥāhirah, Shimālīyah, Ṣīr and Ru'ūs al-Jibāl. Descriptions of each of these regions are to be found in J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Omān and Central Arabia, vol. II, Calcutta, 1915.
3. See Lorimer, vol. II, pp. 1369-76.
4. An excellent discussion of the falaj system is to be found in J.C. Wilkinson, Water and Tribal Settlement in South-east Arabia, Oxford, 1977, pp. 73-134.
5. Walter T. Swingle, "The Date Palm and Its Utilization in the Southwestern States," United States Department of Agriculture Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin, no. 53, Washington, D.C., 1903, p. 11.
6. Wilkinson, 1977, pp. 30-31.
7. Paul Popenoe, The Date Palm, Miami, 1973, pp. 118-35.
8. Lorimer, vol. II, p. 209.
9. Wilkinson, 1977, p. 27.
10. Donald S. Whitcomb, "The Archaeology of Oman: A Preliminary Discussion of the Islamic Periods," Journal of Oman Studies, vol. 1, 1975, p. 129.
11. "Report on the Administration of the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Muscat Political Agency for the Year 1876-77," Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, #CXXXVIII, Calcutta, 1877, pp. 80-81.
12. Ibid., p. 78; United States National Archives, Microfilm Publication T638, Muscat Consular Records, Louis Maguire to Department of State, Muscat, June 14, 1893.
13. Wilkinson, 1977, p. 30; The United States Department of Agriculture list of Nutritive Value of Foods gives the following data for one cup of pitted dates (ap-

proximately 178 grams).

calories	490
carbohydrates	130 grams
water	39 grams
protein	4 grams
fat	1 gram
calcium	105 milligrams
iron	5.3 milligrams
niacin	3.9 milligrams
riboflavin	0.17 milligrams
thiamin	0.16 milligrams
vitamin A	90 International units

14. Samuel B. Miles, Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf, second edition, London, 1966, pp. 390-99.
15. Beginning with Ṣuḥār in the north the following alignments occur: Ṣuḥār-Buraimi; Khābūrah-'Ibrī; Musna'-Rustāq; Birkā-Nakhl; Sīb-Wādī Samā'il and Ṣūr-Ibrā.
16. Lorimer, vol. II, p. 284; Miles, pp. 453-60.
17. Swingle, p. 52.
18. Wilkinson, 1977, p. 19.
19. Andrew Williamson, Sohar and Omani Seafaring in the Indian Ocean, Muscat, 1973, p. 5.
20. G.R. Tibbets, Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean Before the Coming of the Portuguese, London, 1971, pp. 360-82.
21. On the rise of Ṣuḥār see Williamson, passim.
22. J.C. Wilkinson, "Ḳalhāt," Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition, vol. IV, Leiden and London, 1974, pp. 500-01.
23. Afonso de Albuquerque, The Commentaries of the Great Afonso Dalaboquerque, Second Viceroy of India, edited and translated by Walter de Gray Birch, London, Hakluyt Society, 1875, vol. 1, pp. 97-100.
24. R.D. Bathurst, "Maritime Trade and Imamate Government: Two Principal Themes in the History of Oman to 1728," in Derek Hopwood, Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics, London, 1972, p. 100.

25. Humaid b. Muḥammad b. Ruzaiq, al-Fath al-Mubīn fī Sīrat al-Sāda Al Bū Sa'īdiyyin, Masqaṭ, 1977, p. 286-91; G.P. Badger, History of the Imams and Seyyids of 'Omān by Salil ibn Razik from A.D. 661-1856, London, 1871, pp. 81-87; 'Abd Allah b. Ḥumaid al-Sālimī, Tuḥfat al-A'yān bi-Sīrat Ahl 'Umān, 5th edition, Kuwait, 1974, vol. II, pp. 65-7.
26. Ibn Ruzaiq, p. 302; Badger, p. 100. One of the Ya'āribah rulers removed the duty on imports.
27. Most significantly by freeing them from taxation, ibn Ruzaiq, p. 291; Badger, p. 87; al-Sālimī, p. 67.
28. Bathurst, p. 103.
29. Ibid., p. 101.
30. J.C. Wilkinson, "The Ibādī Imāma," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, vol. 39, part 3 (1976), p. 535-51, and Wilkinson, 1977, pp. 137-40.
31. Robert Landen, Oman Since 1856, Princeton, 1967, pp. 38-39, 52; Wilkinson, 1977, p. 27 and 32.
32. Landen, p. 50; T. Lewicki, "Ibādīyya," Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition, vol. III, Leiden and London, 1971, p. 658.
33. For example, Hindus had temples in Masqaṭ complete with idols and were even free from paying the poll tax. Furthermore, Hindus travelled freely in the interior and loaned money to the people of the interior.
34. J.C. Wilkinson, "The Origins of the Omani State," in Derek Hopwood, The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics, London, 1971, pp. 73; Wilkinson, 1977, p. 198.
35. Wilkinson, 1971, p. 74.
36. Wilkinson, 1977, p. 140; 1976, p. 545.
37. This imām is not considered by Wilkinson to be a true Ibādī. See J.C. Wilkinson, "The Julanda of Oman," The Journal of Oman Studies, vol. I, 1975, pp. 97-108.
38. Nizār is a descendent of 'Adnān, the eponym of the

northern Arab tribes, and the Yaman are the southern (Qahtan) Arab tribes. It should be mentioned that this northern-southern delimitation does not refer to 'Umān. The tribes are intermixed throughout the country. It should also be noted that politics probably played a much greater role in the alliances than did mythical ancestors.

39. Wilkinson, 1977, p. 143; Bathurst, p. 99.
40. During the first imāmate the office was not truly hereditary but it did remain in the Kharūsī clan.
41. See Wilkinson's discussion of Izkī in 1977, pp. 216-17.
42. Lorimer, vol. I, part 1A, 1908, p. 419.
43. See Lorimer, Miles and Landen, cited above, as well as the various works by J.B. Kelly. All assume that Ḥamad was the ruler of 'Umān. The British did not recognize the fact of Masqaṭ's separate existence from 'Umān until the Treaty of Sīb in 1920. It was not until 1957, when the British, with the sulṭān's acquiescence, conquered 'Umān that Masqaṭ became the capital.
44. Ibn Ruzaiq, pp. 401-15; Badger, pp. 201-13.
45. Al-Sālimī, vol. 2, p. 176.
46. The British really seem not to have understood Masqaṭi affairs. This becomes most evident in their references to the ruler as imām (imaum) of Masqaṭ. None of the sayyids were ever elected to the imāmate, which remained vacant for a half century following the death of Sa'īd b. Aḥmad.
47. There is the alternative possibility that this was a conscious policy on the part of the British to increase the importance of their friends in Masqaṭ.
48. J.B. Kelly, "A Prevalence of Furies: Tribes, Politics and Religion in Oman and Trucial Oman," in Derek Hopwood, The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics, London, 1972, p. 108.

Chapter Three

Masqat and the Gulf: 1785-1820

When Hamad b. Sa'īd came to power in 1785 he disassociated himself from events in the interior of 'Umān, where his father, the Imām Sa'īd b. Ahmad, and the various tribal leaders continued to struggle for control.¹ Instead, the sayyid² adopted a policy that was designed to maximize Masqat's share of the trade of the Arabian Gulf. This policy was directed at the specific problem of competition. New commercially oriented groups, principally the 'Utūb of Bahrain under the Āl Khalīfah, were becoming active in the Gulf and threatened Masqati mercantile activities. Hamad was not able to eliminate this competition during his short reign (1785-92), but his successors continued to implement the Gulf policy until 1820 when British interference ended any hope that Masqat might dominate its competitors.

Hamad was faced with a secondary problem when he took control of Masqat. Trade in the Arabian Gulf during the last quarter of the eighteenth century was at a low level. The political insecurity that had resulted from the collapse of the Persian state following the death of Karīm Khān Zānd in 1779 had had a negative effect on the three principal Gulf ports of Bandar 'Abbās, Bushire (Bū Shihr) and Baṣra. Bandar 'Abbās and Bushire had been cut off from their trade with the interior of Persia as a result

of the struggles among the various claimants to power that raged throughout the country. By 1790 the once flourishing trade of Bandar 'Abbās had slowed to a trickle.³

The decline of Baṣra was attributable to more complex reasons. The town had been devastated by plague, and this, coupled with Persian attacks during the reign of Karīm Khān, had caused many prominent merchants to flee the town. The situation was only aggravated by Karīm Khān's death as tribes freed of the shah's strong control began attacking shipping enroute to the port, as demonstrated by the Bani Ka'b attempt to capture the Masqaṭi coffee fleet in 1791. To make a bad situation worse, the Ottoman government's involvement in European wars drew resources from Iraq providing an opportunity for rebellious groups in Baṣra to stir up trouble. Local tribes also began to prey upon the city. The result of all of this activity was an acute shortage of specie.⁴ Without gold and silver, there was no market for the Indian traders who had little need for the dates grown in Iraq.

Baṣra's decline had a far-reaching effect which threatened the commercial prospects of the Gulf. Due to the shortage of Indian textiles in Baṣra's market, local industry sprang up in Syria and Iraq, and locally produced textiles replaced the cheaper Indian piece-goods. The

only Indian imports that still found a limited market in Baṣra were the luxury cloths⁵ that the few remaining wealthy people purchased.

Ḥamad took a number of actions designed to lessen the impact of this decline in the Gulf trade on Masqaṭ. Import duties at Masqaṭ were regularized at $6\frac{1}{2}\%$ ad valorem.⁶ This served to encourage merchants to call at Masqaṭ, especially Hindu traders who had paid a discriminatory duty of 9% under Aḥmad b. Sa'īd.⁷ The sayyid also encouraged the establishment of commercial relations between Masqaṭ and Afghanistan via the Indus River valley.⁸ In this endeavor, Ḥamad was helped by the political and economic problems that were befalling the Hindu merchants of Sind and disrupting their control of this trade.⁹ These contacts with Afghanistan also opened another opportunity in that Masqaṭi ships began transporting Afghan and Central Asian pilgrims to and from Hijāz.

With at least some action taken to lessen the effect of the Gulf's depression, Ḥamad was able to direct his attention to the new commercial centers in the Gulf. Although Baṣra and Bushire were the central markets for the Gulf trade, smaller markets were available in Eastern Arabia and the southern shores of the Gulf. This trade had been controlled by the Masqaṭis throughout much of the final decades of the eighteenth century, but by the 1790's

that position was being challenged by the 'Utbi tribe of Bahrain.¹⁰ Bahrain had been occupied by the Āl-Khalīfah branch of the 'Utūb in 1783, and these new masters of the island set about to transform it from a center of the Gulf pearl fishery to a commercial power. 'Utbi merchants acquired ships that enabled them to sail directly to Surat and return with Indian goods that had been exchanged for pearls. The Bahraini merchants were thus not obliged to stop at Masqaṭ and pay the customs duties levied by the port. Furthermore, the Āl-Khalīfah assessed no tariffs, thereby enabling the Bahrainis to undersell the Masqaṭi merchants in eastern Arabia. As early as 1790, Masqaṭi merchants were being challenged by 'Utūb for the meager trade of Baṣra.¹¹

Besides the 'Utūb, other players were beginning to enter the commercial game. The Qawāsim of Rās al-Khaimah, who had become independent of 'Umān during the early years of Sa'īd b. Aḥmad's reign, were becoming more aggressive in their search for trade. Furthermore, "pirates," such as Raḥmah b. Jabr of Zubārah, were becoming active in the Gulf.¹²

The pressure exerted by the new merchant groups was eased somewhat by the general movement of Arabs toward the coast and the growth of new towns, such as Abū Zabī. While the potential for new and profitable markets was

increasing, so was the danger of a struggle for control of those markets.

Ḥamad adopted an aggressive policy designed to eliminate this competition. The policy was based on securing Masqaṭi control of shipping through the Straits of Hurmūz. In 1787 he sent a Masqaṭi fleet against the Qawāsīm and occupied the ports of Khawr Fakkān, on the Shimālīyah coast, and Jazīrat al-Ḥamrā, located just south of Rās al-Khaimah.¹³ This action succeeded in establishing a Masqaṭi presence on both ends of the straits. To further bolster the Masqaṭi navy, which was critical to the control of Gulf shipping, Ḥamad ordered the construction of a frigate.¹⁴

The policy of expanding commercial contacts while regularizing customs dues and attempting to control shipping in the Gulf had a beneficial effect on Masqaṭi trade and enabled the port to supplant Bandar 'Abbās as the principal entrepôt for the Arabian Gulf. Masqaṭ was the most active port in the area during the reign of Ḥamad.¹⁵ This is not to say, however, that Masqaṭ was a wealthy, flourishing commercial center. In light of the general depression, Masqaṭ's claim to prosperity must be viewed in perspective; it was the best of a bad lot. The comments by the British traveler William Francklin, who visited Masqaṭ in 1787, are, perhaps, more to the point.

He described Ḥamad's capital as, "badly built, and the streets very narrow, they have, however, a good and well furnished bazaar."¹⁶ No fine houses of wealthy merchants or government officials were described, and the market was not piled high with exotic goods from India and Africa. This point is especially important as the myth of a "silver age" of Masqaṭi commerce during the early years of Āl Bū Sa'īd rule has resulted in later periods suffering, unfairly, by comparison.

Ḥamad's death in 1792 threw Masqaṭi trade and politics into turmoil for a time as the Imām Sa'īd b. Aḥmad and his brothers Sulṭān b. Aḥmad and Qais b. Aḥmad, the ruler of Ṣuḥār, struggled for control of the port. Sulṭān eventually gained control of Masqaṭ, and the three brothers formally recognized each other's territorial rights in the Pact of Birkā in 1793.

Sulṭān's active and colorful career has elicited comment from nearly every western observer of this period of 'Umāni history. Most of the comments have been less than flattering. Indian civil servants of the early nineteenth century were especially vitriolic in their assessment of Sulṭān's reign. For example, Francis Warden of the Bombay Government offered the following comment:¹⁷

The enterprising character of Syud Sultan, the Imaum of Muscat, who has usurped the government from his elder brother, led him to serious disputes with the Arabs, which brought on a war with

many of them...The troubles that prevailed from this period to the death of Syud Sultan, in 1804, are wholly attributable to the conduct of this chieftain in the prosecution of his ambitious views of aggrandizement.

Modern writers on the British role in the Gulf are equally critical of Sultān. J.B. Kelly having stated that the Bombay Government was "content to leave the protection of the Gulf seaborne commerce to Saiyid Sultan, believing him to be a steady influence in Gulf politics" observes that this was "a view not wholly justified by his conduct."¹⁸

These observations all contain a grain of truth, especially when viewed in light of British needs and interests in the Gulf. However, Sultān was the ruler of Masqaṭ and his actions must be analyzed on the basis of Masqaṭi needs.

Conditions in the Gulf had not been improved by the time Sultān assumed power in Masqaṭ. In fact, the brief hiatus between the death of Ḥamad in 1792 and the Pact of Birkā the following year had resulted in a deterioration of Masqaṭ's position as the Qawāsīm had regained Khawr Fakkān and Jazīrat al-Ḥamrā, and the 'Utūb had been free to develop their commercial network unobstructed. As the 'Umāni chronicler al-Sālimī has related, Sultān set out to re-establish Masqaṭ's maritime empire.¹⁹ To accomplish this he adopted a policy combining control of Gulf shipping and attacks upon his commercial rivals.

The initial moves of Sultān's Gulf policy were the acquisition of the ports that controlled the southern access to the Straits of Hurmūz. Sultān already had a base at Gwādūr, on the Makran coast, by virtue of a 1784 agreement with the ruler of the region. Once established in Masqat, the sayyid added the neighboring port of Chahbār to his possessions. Thus, by early 1793 Sultān controlled the two most important ports on the Makrān coast and strategic points on the Indo-Gulf trade route.

Sultān's next move was a successful campaign against the Persian governor of Qishm which resulted in his obtaining the tax farm on the customs of Bandar 'Abbās.²⁰ It is obvious that Sultān did not seek control of Bandar 'Abbās because of its commercial value. As described earlier, the port was carrying on only an inconsequential trade. The real importance of Bandar 'Abbās to Sultān was in its strategic position. Along with the port went its "dependencies" of Qishm, Mīnāb, Hanjām and Hurmūz. Possession of these islands gave Sultān a stranglehold on the straits.

With control of most of the Persian coast from Gwādūr to Qishm, Sultān could conceivably control the trade of the Gulf. It is probably at this time that the sayyid attempted to impose a license on all Gulf shipping. This license raises an interesting problem. The traveler Fraser

claims that "from time immemorial, a duty of one-half percent upon all boats trading to India, the Red Sea and the coasts of Arabia and Africa, upon their return to the Gulf, was considered the right of the ruler of Oman."²¹ This license actually originated with the Portuguese, who had required it of all ships trading in the Indian Ocean, and who had also required that all ships headed for the Gulf stop at Masqaṭ and pay customs duties on their goods.²² Sultān was simply copying this system. However, despite his control of both shores of the Straits of Hurmūz, the sayyid found it especially difficult to compel all Gulf shipping to call at Masqaṭ. His navy simply was not large enough to patrol the entire area.

A second aspect of Sultān's attempt to control Gulf shipping was his relationship with various Gulf "pirates," especially Naṣir al-Sūwaidī. Sultān had offered refuge to al-Sūwaidī when he fled Rās al-Khaimah, where he had offended the shaikh of the Qawāsīm, and settled him and his followers on Hurmūz Island with instructions to plunder 'Utbi and Qāsīmī shipping. Although Sultān eventually had to drive his protege from Hurmūz because of the pressure from British authorities in India,²³ the fact remains that the sayyid encouraged piracy as part of his Gulf policy.

Also interesting in this regard is Sultān's relation-

ship with the Qawāsīm. Masqaṭ was at constant war with the Qawāsīm as the latter fought to gain some share of Gulf commercial activity. However, where Ḥamad seems to have tried to gain control of Rās al-Khaimah, Sulṭān's goal was to take advantage of the threat of Qāsīmī attack to help enforce his pass system. Therefore, no attacks were made upon Rās al-Khaimah, and the Qawāsīm were left free to attack 'Utbi and Indian merchants operating in the Gulf. By the turn of the century the situation had become so advantageous to Sulṭān that he could suggest to the British that any goods the East India Company wished to send up the Gulf should be consigned to him or his agents as he could insure their safe delivery. Not surprisingly, on a number of occasions goods not consigned to the sayyid were captured by pirates and appeared soon after in the markets of Masqaṭ.²⁴

The third pillar of Sulṭān's Gulf policy was to bring the trade of the 'Utūb of Bahraīn under Masqaṭī control. The commercial gains of the 'Utūb begun in the 1780's had continued more or less unabated as they came to control much of the piece-good trade between Surat and north-eastern Arabia. Despite the activities of the Qawāsīm and Raḥmah b. Jabr, another pirate who was allied with Sulṭān, the 'Utūb did not obtain the license that Sulṭān hoped to impose on all Gulf shipping. Since Bahraīn was also the

center of the lucrative pearl trade which was also of interest to Sultān,²⁵ he decided to subjugate the island.

Sultān's various campaigns against the 'Utūb usually resulted in far more negotiating than fighting, a principle that guided the sayyid's actions throughout his reign and which was certainly in keeping with the mercantile nature of the two parties involved in these conflicts. The first campaign against Bahrain in 1799 set the pattern. Sultān captured three 'Utbi ships which did not possess his transit license.²⁶ He then planned an attack on the island but the Āl-Khalīfah sought Persian assistance and compelled Sultān to abandon his plans. Eventually, the two parties negotiated a settlement whereby the 'Utūb agreed to pay the transit fee and remit at least part of the back fees that Sultān felt were due.²⁷

An interesting side-light of this first campaign against Bahrain was an attempt by Sultān to obtain control of the customs of Khāraj (Karrack) Island. This action was taken in response to the assistance that the shaikh of Bushire had offered to the Āl-Khalīfah. It would have put the sayyid in an excellent position to siphon off the trade of Bushire. It also serves to demonstrate the opportunistic nature of Sultān, who was willing to take advantage of every opportunity that promised to secure Masqaṭ's domination of Gulf commerce. Faced with an abortive campaign

against Bahrain, Sultān turned his attention to Khāraj as a potential site for commercial development. Unfortunately for him, the Persian government refused his offer of five years advance payment on the customs farm for the island.²⁸

The greatest difficulty facing Sultān as he attempted to insure his tenuous hegemony over the economy of the Gulf was the interference of the Sa'ūdi state of Najd which, fired by the zeal of the teachings of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, was expanding its control over the entire Arabian Peninsula.²⁹ Sultān's first contacts with the Sa'ūdis occurred in 1799 when tribes from the Buraimi area and the Darū' of interior 'Umān began raiding 'Umān and disrupting internal trade.³⁰ Although as a rule the sayyids had refrained from involving themselves in the disputes of the interior, these raids affected Masqaṭi access to the markets and produce of 'Umān. As a result, Sultān joined with his brother Qais, the ruler of Ṣuḥār, to suppress these activities.

Sa'ūdi involvement in Ṣīr was also of concern to the sayyid. The Qawāsīm had allied with the Sa'ūdis against Masqaṭ. The alliance made good sense as the Qawāsīm had no territorial interests, and a protracted Sa'ūdi-Masqaṭi war would benefit their mercantile interests. Furthermore, Sa'ūdi influence, which obviously was closer

to Qawāsim interests than Masqaṭ's, freed Rās al-Khaimah of the tenuous influence that Sultān had exerted over the Qawāsim. With these facts in mind, Sultān marched against the Sa'ūdi headquarters at Buraimī in hopes of expelling the Najdis from southern Arabia and restoring Masqaṭi influence in Ṣīr. The Masqaṭi force was defeated, but Sultān did succeed in gaining a truce from the Sa'ūdis.

The truce with the Sa'ūdis enabled Sultān to direct his attention to the 'Utūb, who had stopped paying the transit fee. In May 1801, Bahrain was occupied, and twenty-five members of influential families were arrested. However, just when it seemed that Sultān's Gulf policy would succeed, the Sa'ūdis intervened on behalf of the 'Utūb and expelled the Masqaṭi garrison in 1802.³¹

Sultān now realized, if he had not before, that the Sa'ūdis were the greatest threat to his hopes of dominating the Gulf trade. Therefore, in January 1803³² the sayyid proceeded to Mecca, ostensibly to perform the pilgrimage, where he met with the sharīf and agreed to support him with men and supplies against the Sa'ūdis, who were advancing on the Hijāz. Unfortunately for Sultān, word of his meeting with the sharīf and the pleas of Badr b. Saif, a Sa'ūdi sympathizer who had staged an unsuccessful coup in Masqaṭ during Sultān's absence, resulted in a Sa'ūdi attack on 'Umān later in 1803. When

the Sa'ūdi army began to advance on Masqaṭ, Sulṭān sent a delegation to the Sa'ūdi capital and obtained a truce in return for an annual tribute of MT\$12,000 and the stationing of a Sa'ūdi agent in Masqaṭ. It was a victory for Sulṭān in that the loss in trade due to a continued war, if the sayyid could have continued to resist, would have been much greater than the annual tribute sent to the Sa'ūdis.

The truce with the Sa'ūdis did serve to restrict Sulṭān's activities somewhat as any action taken by the sayyid in the Gulf would have resulted in a conflict with the Najdis. However, the assassination of the Sa'ūdi ruler late in 1803 and the subsequent succession dispute at Dir'īya served to restore Sulṭān's freedom of action. He immediately turned to Gulf affairs. Masqaṭ's position had deteriorated markedly in the Gulf as a result of Sulṭān's preoccupation with the Sa'ūdis. The Qawāsim had occupied Qishm Island and used it as a base for attacks on Masqaṭi shipping. Furthermore, the pasha of Baghdad had been withholding the annual subsidy that the Ottoman government set to Masqaṭ in return for the assistance that Aḥmad b. Sa'īd had extended to Baṣra in 1775. Sulṭān sailed for Baṣra in 1804 to collect the subsidy³³ and to lay plans for a joint Ottoman-Masqaṭi campaign against the Sa'ūdis.³⁴ The latter never developed, and

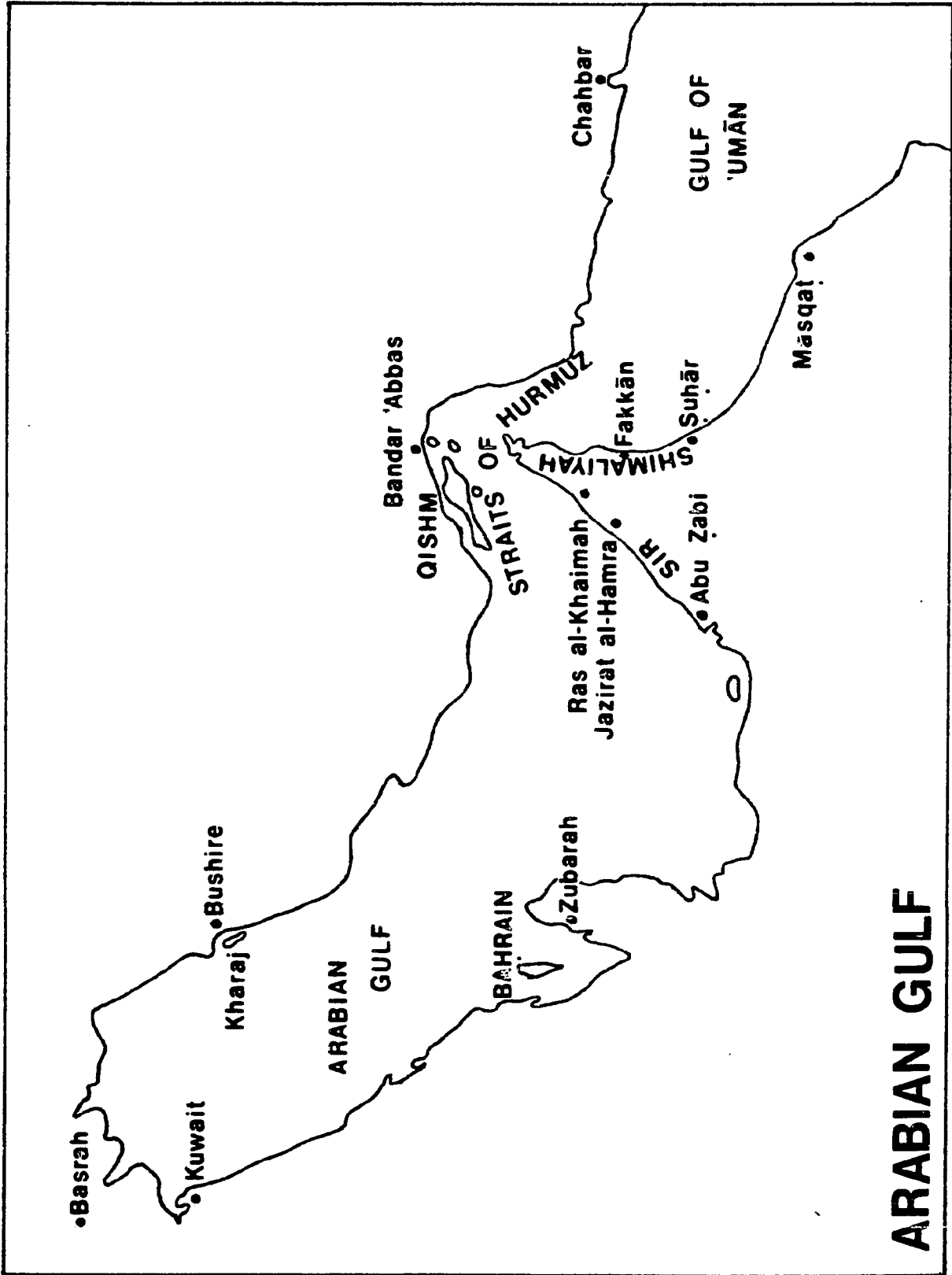
Sultān departed for Masqat in November. He never completed the journey. During an engagement with some Qawāsīm and 'Utūb off his former possession of Qishm, he was killed.

Before concluding with Sultān's decade of activity in the Gulf, it is necessary to examine the sayyid's relations with the British in India for, although the British were of little consequence in Gulf affairs at the turn of the century, they were ultimately to have a profound impact on the Masqati state. Also, Sultān's relations with the British serve to demonstrate the commercial nature of his policies.

British India's initial concern for Masqati affairs had resulted from the close ties that existed among Masqat, the French at Mauritius and Reunion and Tipū Sultān of Mysore. Tipū Sultān maintained an embassy in Masqat (his was the only foreign state permanently represented at the sayyid's capital) and Sultān employed a number of Frenchmen, including one as his personal physician. In 1798 the British were at war with both Tipū Sultān and the French and concerned lest Masqat actively support its two friends and sever the British communications network that ran up the Gulf and overland to London.³⁵ Therefore, in October a mission was dispatched to Masqat in an attempt to secure Sultān's goodwill toward the British.

In the agreement that was signed by Sultān³⁶ the sayyid proclaimed his friendship toward the British, forbade the establishment of a French factory at Masqaṭ, invited the British to open a factory at Bandar 'Abbās and promised to dismiss an unnamed Frenchman from his employ. In return, although not specifically stated in the agreement, the British permitted Masqaṭi ships to land 5,000 maunds³⁷ of salt at Calcutta rather than the 1,000 maunds allowed other Arab ships.

Sultān had given up very little. His relations with the French were commercial almost exclusively, a fact which the British did not fully realize, and the treaty in no way inhibited Masqaṭ's trade with Mauritius. It also provided Sultān with the justification for his steadfast refusals to French requests for a factory at Masqaṭ. However, the biggest gain was the salt concession. In one act, the sayyid's Persian holdings, originally acquired for the control they offered of the Straits of Hurmūz, became an important source of revenue. By 1802 the revenues from Bandar 'Abbās, drawn mostly from salt exports from Hurmūz, had risen to MT\$100,000, one-third of Sultān's total annual income.³⁸ These benefits were well worth the sacrifice of a single French employee. The treaty was reaffirmed in January 1800³⁹ after British fears of Masqaṭi-French-Mysore cooperation were renewed



after the interception of letters from Napoleon addressed to Sultān and Tipū Sultān.

The words of Warden and Kelly quoted at the beginning of this discussion of Sayyid Sultān seem grossly unfair when viewed in light of the sayyid's desire to secure Masqaṭ's control over the trade of the Gulf. Security for Masqaṭ's competitors in the maritime trade would not have been of benefit to Masqaṭ, hence Sultān's attitudes toward "piracy." His attacks on the 'Utūb were motivated by a desire to eliminate an important competitor rather than by an unquenchable desire to wage war for war's sake. Even the apparently contradictory policy against the Sa'ūdis, whereby Sultān accepted Sa'ūdi occupation of 'Umān while fighting them in the Gulf, makes sense in view of the sayyid's commercial interests. 'Umāni trade could only go through Masqaṭ, and it mattered little to Sultān who maintained the security in the interior that permitted trade to flow unhindered. So long as the Sa'ūdis allowed him control of Masqaṭ, Sultān controlled the profits of 'Umān. However, when the Sa'ūdis threatened his control of the Gulf, where Masqaṭi profits were not so secure, the sayyid would fight. Finally, Sultān's relations with the British were clearly governed by economic concerns. The treaties with the British were advantageous to Masqaṭi commerce. On the other hand, Sultān

was not opposed to attacking the British in the Gulf, although through his "pirate" allies, when Indian merchants competed with Masqaṭis.

The death of Sultān threw Masqaṭ into a turmoil. The sayyid had left behind two young sons, Sa'īd and Sālim, who found their hold on the port threatened by various members of the Āl Bū Sa'īd clan. Their only recourse was to invite the assistance of their uncle, Badr b. Saif, whose strong ties with the Sa'ūdis removed at least that threat to Masqaṭ's independence. Badr assumed control of Masqaṭi affairs and adopted a disastrous policy of attempting to subjugate 'Umān. The attempt cost Masqaṭ dearly both in money⁴⁰ and influence in the Gulf as the Qawāsim captured Hurmūz and Bandar 'Abbās. Only Bandar 'Abbās was restored to Masqaṭi control during Badr's reign. Badr's short, disastrous reign came to a close in March 1807 when Sa'īd b. Sultān cut him down and assumed control of Masqaṭi affairs.

Sa'īd b. Sultān was a seventeen year-old boy with few friends and many enemies when he assumed control of Masqaṭ. The Gulf ascendancy constructed by Sultān b. Aḥmad had collapsed. Sa'īd controlled only Gwādur and Bandar 'Abbās minus its island dependencies, and both the Qawāsim and 'Utūb had had nearly three years of unhindered commercial development. Sa'īd, who realized that Masqaṭi

interests lay in the Gulf and not 'Umān,⁴¹ set out to restore Masqaṭi preeminance in the Gulf.

Before turning his attention to Gulf affairs, however, the sayyid had to see to his relations with the Sa'ūdis and French. The murder of Badr b. Saif had concerned the Sa'ūdis in 'Umān, but they made no move against Masqaṭ. Sa'īd, immediately upon taking power, informed the Sa'ūdis that relations would continue as before, and he would continue to pay the annual tribute of MT\$50,000.⁴² That satisfied the Sa'ūdis.

Masqaṭi-French relations had suffered during the reign of Badr b. Saif as the British political agent in Masqaṭ had exerted great influence over the sayyid.⁴³ The result was that the French had begun attacking Masqaṭi shipping in the Indian Ocean. In June 1807 Sa'īd dispatched an agent to Mauritius to restore friendly relations and, more importantly, commercial contacts. The British, seeing only the political implications of a Franco-Masqaṭi detente, informed the sayyid of their opposition to any French presence in the Gulf and claimed that Masqaṭ would be treated as an enemy should the French be granted an establishment at Masqaṭ.⁴⁴ Sa'īd, claiming neutrality, permitted a French consular agent to settle at his capital. Commercial interests continued to govern Masqaṭ's relations with Indian Ocean powers, and the British offered no con-

cessions in return for Sa'īd's refusal of the French consulate.

The greatest problem facing Sa'īd as he turned his attention to Gulf affairs was the challenge of the Qawāsim. The Qawāsim fleet had risen to 63 large vessels and 19,000 men, and the tribe controlled not only the Shimāliyah coast but the Straits of Hurmūz by virtue of their occupation of the island dependencies of Bandar 'Abbās during Masqaṭ's political difficulties. In May 1808 Sa'īd did attack Khawr Fakkān but the Qawāsim drove him back. In negotiations that followed, however, Sulṭān b. Ṣaqr, the Qāsimi shaikh, agreed to cede both Khawr Fakkān and Dibbah to Masqaṭ. Shaikh Sulṭān did this at some cost. The Sa'ūdis, objecting to his actions, arrested and imprisoned him in Dir 'īyah and appointed a new shaikh.⁴⁵

The new Qāsimi ruler adopted an aggressive maritime policy aimed at placating dissident members of the tribe who continued to support Sulṭān b. Ṣaqr. As a result, the Qawāsim became the scourge of the Gulf, attacking merchant shipping with extreme ferocity. The shaikh even had the temerity to suggest to the Bombay government that he be granted a salary in return for the protection of British shipping.⁴⁶

Continuing Qawāsim pressure on Masqaṭ compelled Sa'īd to take direct action against the tribe. Following restor-

ation of Masqatī control over Chahbār,⁴⁷ thereby re-establishing Masqat's hegemony over the southern coast of Persia from Gwādur to Bandar 'Abbās, Sa'īd attacked Rās al-Khaimah. The attack failed when Sa'īd's allies, Rahmah b. Jabr and some dissident Qawāsīm loyal to Sulṭān b. Ṣaqr, failed to appear as expected.

Fortunately for Sa'īd, his defeat came at a time when the British were becoming increasingly concerned with Qawāsīm attacks on merchant shipping. In September 1808 a single British warship shelled Rās al-Khaimah although to no avail. A second expedition was planned for 1809, and Sa'īd agreed to participate in return for British assistance in regaining control of Shināṣ and Khawr Fakkān, which had both recently been occupied by Sa'ūdi and Qāsīmī forces. The joint venture was a complete failure as the British were reluctant to engage Sa'ūdi forces directly and broke off military action at both Rās al-Khaimah and Shināṣ upon learning that Sa'ūdi reinforcements were en route to help in the defense of the besieged towns.

Sa'īd suffered the consequences of his activities when the Sa'ūdis launched a full-scale campaign against 'Umān in 1810. Apart from his aggressive activities against the Qawāsīm, the Sa'ūdis were also dissatisfied with Sa'īd's refusal to accompany a Qāsīmī-'Utbi attack on Baṣra and Kuwait in 1809. Fortunately, as the military pressure on

Masqaṭ was slight, Sa'īd was able to fight back in an area that was of greater interest to him - the Gulf. In the summer of 1810, while Sa'ūdi forces were involved with the tribes of 'Umān, Sa'īd attacked the Sa'ūdi garrisons at Zubārah, Qaṭar and Baḥrain, meeting with some success.⁴⁸

Sa'ūdi involvement with the Egyptian campaign in the Hijāz further reduced the pressure on Masqaṭ, and late in 1811 Sa'īd launched a second attack on Zubārah and Baḥrain, this one having the support of the 'Utūb, who were having their own difficulties with the Sa'ūdis. The campaign was successful in expelling the Sa'ūdi garrisons and even captured the Sa'ūdi governor of the Gulf. Sa'īd then permitted the Āl-Khalīfah shaikhs, who had recently been freed by the Sa'ūdis from their imprisonment at Dir'īyah,⁴⁹ to return to Baḥrain in exchange for recognition of Masqaṭi suzerainty and payment of an annual subsidy.

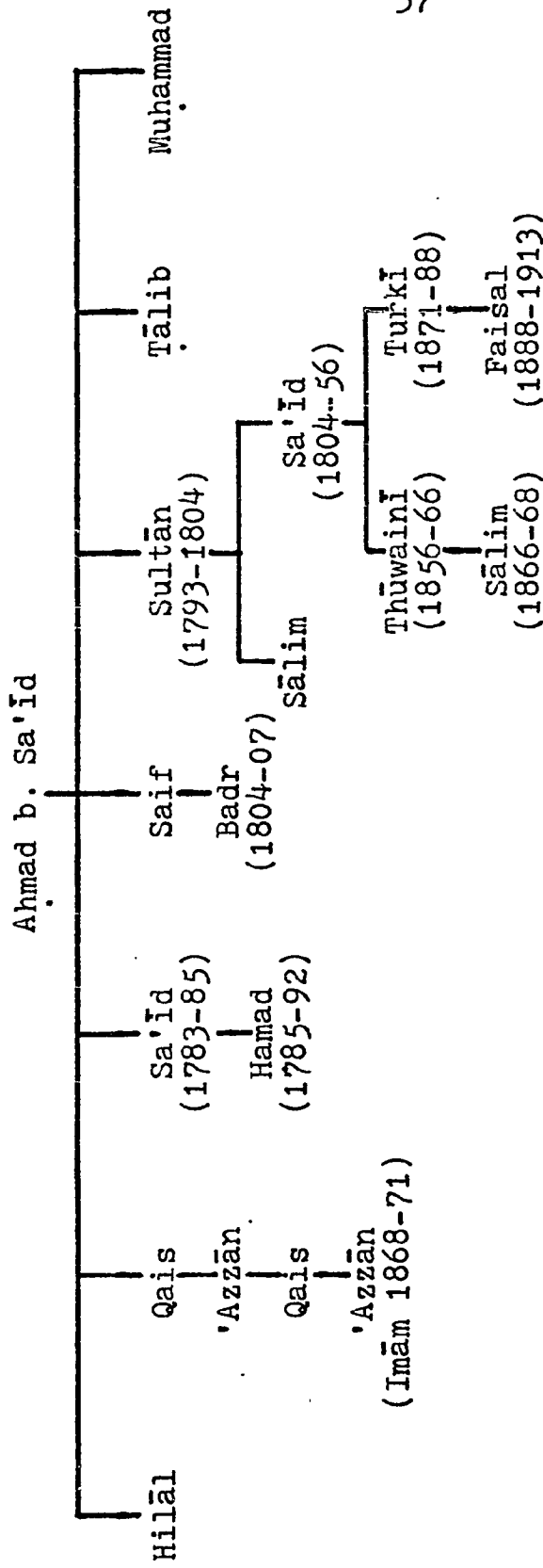
With control of Baḥrain finally accomplished, Sa'īd turned his attention to the Qawāsīm, the only challenge remaining to complete Masqaṭi control of Gulf trade. In this endeavor, he was assisted by the escape of Sulṭān b. Saqr, the former shaikh of the Qawāsīm, from his imprisonment in Dir'īyah. Sa'īd extended protection to his erstwhile enemy, and the two laid plans for the restoration of Sulṭān to Rās al-Khaimah. Sa'īd could have been motivated by only one consideration in offering to assist Shaikh

Sultān - control of Qawāsīm maritime activities.

A first attack on Rās al-Khaimah in 1812 failed and brought an unwelcome Sa'ūdi intervention. Sa'īd bribed the Sa'ūdi commander,⁵⁰ who bypassed Masqaṭ and proceeded to southern 'Umān. In 1813 a second attack on the Qawāsīm resulted in Shaikh Sultān being installed at Shār-īqah (Sharjah) and Sa'īd obtaining a truce from the ruler of Rās al-Khaimah freeing Masqaṭi ships from attack. Lorimer's belief that Sa'īd had no intention of restoring Rās al-Khaimah to Sultān b. Ṣaqr is probably true.⁵¹ Sa'īd realized that Shaikh Sultān would have been less amenable to control once firmly ensconced at Rās al-Khaimah with the full support of the Qawāsīm, or at least making efforts to obtain that support. However, rival Qāsīmi shaikhdoms were more likely to be concerned with fighting each other than attacking Masqaṭi shipping. The truce with Rās al-Khaimah only improved the situation for Masqaṭ's commercial interests.

Sa'īd was able to enjoy his supremacy in the Gulf for only a short time as first the Qawāsīm and the 'Utūb broke with Masqaṭ. In 1815 the Qāsīmi fleet attacked Maṭraḥ and was driven off with difficulty. Sa'īd retaliated with a four month siege of Rās al-Khaimah in 1816. This was met with little success, and while the Masqaṭi fleet was in the Gulf, the Qawāsīm occupied Khawr Fakkān.

Al Bū Sa'Id Dynasty to 1913



Ruler of Masqat indicated by reign dates

Following the unsuccessful siege of Rās al-Khaimah, Sa'īd proceeded to Bahrain where the 'Utūb had stopped paying both the transit tax and annual subsidy. Sa'īd was joined by Tahmah b. Jabr, who was in line to govern the island on behalf of Sa'īd should the campaign be a success. It was not, and the sayyid returned to Masqaṭ, his Gulf policy in shambles.

British concern with Qāsīmi attacks upon Gulf shipping continued despite the failures of 1809, and new plans were made for an attack on Rās al-Khaimah. The British sought the cooperation not only of Masqaṭ but also the Egyptians, who were just completing their conquest of the Sa'ūdīs. The British intended to turn over control of Rās al-Khaimah to Muḥammad 'Alī.⁵² Not surprisingly, Sa'īd refused to participate on these terms. Sa'īd undoubtedly saw no reason to supplant the Sa'ūdīs with the Egyptians and realized that the latter were a far greater threat to his commercial interests than the Qawāsīm. Muḥammad 'Alī, however, was not interested in British plans for the Gulf, and Sa'īd gladly participated in the December 1819 campaign that occupied Rās al-Khaimah. Sulṭān b. Ṣaqr was restored as paramount shaikh of the Qawāsīm after signing the General Treaty of 1820⁵³ that abolished piracy in the Gulf.

With the Qawāsīm neutralized, Sa'īd turned his attention to Bahrain. The sayyid hoped to obtain the assistance of

the British against the 'Utūb as Bahrain had served as the distribution center for goods captured by the Qawāsim. This actually worked to Sa'īd's disadvantage as the 'Utūb requested permission to be included in the General Treaty despite the fact that their ships had never actually been involved in "piracy." The British agreed. As a further precaution, the 'Utūb negotiated an agreement with Sa'īd whereby they would recognize Masqaṭi suzerainty and pay an annual tribute of MT\$30,000 in addition to the Masqaṭi transit fee.⁵⁴ The 'Utūb had learned a valuable lesson as a result of their forty years of dealing with Masqaṭ; it was far more advantageous to pay tribute and retain political control than to risk an extended struggle.

By 1820 Masqaṭ had reached the limits of its control of Gulf commerce but to little real advantage. The few figures that are available on customs duty give us a picture of a stagnant economy. Niebuhr quotes the customs of Aḥmad b. Sa'īd at about MT\$50,000 per year.⁵⁵ Under Sultān b. Aḥmad that had risen to MT\$200,000, but by 1820 customs had fallen to MT\$100,000.⁵⁶ In truth, these figures tell us little given the fluctuations in the customs tax, possible inflation, inaccurate records and a host of other problems, but they do support the contention that there was a downward trend in Masqaṭi trade during Sa'īd's reign. This impression is supported by Buckingham's observation

that during the reign of Sultān b. Aḥmad trade had been much greater.⁵⁷

Descriptions of the port of Masqaṭ also serve to belie the assertion that Masqaṭ was experiencing an era of prosperity under Sa'īd b. Sultān. Buckingham, visiting the town in 1816, described it as "meanly built, having no good edifices in it, excepting the residence of the Imaum (sic) (which was built during the reign of Sultān b. Aḥmad), and a few of his nearest relatives."⁵⁸ Heude, visiting the port a year later, confirms this description, as does Fraser, who called on the port in 1821.⁵⁹ The town had improved little since the time of Ḥamad b. Sa'īd.

The Gulf policy first adopted by Ḥamad b. Sa'īd and continued by his successors failed in its attempt to insure Masqaṭi control of Arabian Gulf commerce through elimination of competition. After forty years of warfare with Bahrain and Rās al-Khaimah, the 'Utūb and Qawāsīm continued to draw trade away from Masqaṭ. This situation was only aggravated by increased British activity in the Gulf which also served to diminish Masqaṭ's share of the Gulf's trade. Furthermore, British security requirements, designed to protect the overland communications route between India and Britain as well as Indian merchants in the Gulf, were detrimental to Masqaṭi interests. Both Sultān and Sa'īd had been able to resist British pressures to

tailor Masqaṭi policies toward British needs, especially as regards the French. However, there was little that Sa'īd could do once the British decided to end "piracy" in the Gulf. For many years the attacks on merchant shipping in the Gulf had benefitted Masqaṭi interests by driving merchants to the security of Sulṭān b. Aḥmad's fleet. By 1820, though, the Qawāsim had become too powerful, and Sayyid Sa'īd was compelled to support British measures against all pirates, by they friend or foe. As a result, all Gulf shipping was secure.

If the Masqaṭis had been successful in their attempts to subjugate Baḥrain, the elimination of piracy might not have been so disastrous. Despite 'Utbi recognition of Masqaṭi suzerainty in 1820, the Baḥrainis were still free to compete with Masqaṭ in Gulf markets. Furthermore, 'Utbi recognition of Masqaṭi hegemony had become a regular tactic of the Āl-Khalīfah when faced with a threatened attack from Masqaṭ. Once the Masqaṭi fleet was out of sight, tribute was forgotten. The threat of the Masqaṭi fleet was drastically reduced by British acceptance of Baḥrain into the General Treaty of 1820. Any attempt by Masqaṭ to subjugate the island had to come from the sea, naturally. Any maritime attack ran the danger of being defined by the British as piracy and warranting their intervention. Masqaṭ was no longer free to follow an independent policy in the Gulf.

Every action required British acquiescence. Sa'īd b. Sultān determined to turn to other areas for commercial expansion. Zanzibar became the focus of Masqāṭi policy.

Notes

1. The only mention of a campaign in the interior comes from ibn Ruzaiq, who claims that Ḥamad attacked Bahlā. Al-Sālimī attributes this campaign to the Imām Sa'īd b. Aḥmad, which is more reasonable. Ḥumaid b. Muḥammad b. Ruzaiq, al-Fath al-Mubīn fī Sīrat al-Sāda Al Bū Sa'īdiyyin, Masqaṭ, 1977, p. 408; G.P. Badger, History of the Imams and Seyyids of 'Oman by Salil ibn Razik from A.D. 661-1856, London, 1871, p. 207; 'Abdallah b. Ḥumaid al-Salimī, Tuhfat al-A'yan bi-Sīrat Ahl 'Umān, fifth edition, Kuwait, 1974, volume two, pp. 175-81.
2. Used here to mean "lord" or "sir" rather than the technical meaning of descendent of the prophet Muḥammad. The term was first used by Aḥmad b. Sa'īd to distinguish members of the Al Bū Sa'īd royal family. The title sultān was not used in Masqaṭ until the reign of Thūwaini b. Sa'īd (1856-68) but probably originated with Sultān b. Aḥmad, whose name was confused for a title. One also sees the title Imām often spelled Imaum, as referring to the ruler of Masqaṭ. This resulted from British confusion about the political situation in Masqaṭ.
3. "Report on the Commerce of Arabia and Persia by Samuel Manesty and Hartford Jones, 1790" in Ahmad M. Abu Hakima, History of Kuwait, Kuwait, 1970, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 21-82; pp. 59-60. (hereafter, Manesty and Jones)
4. Ibid., p. 40.
5. Ibid., p. 41.
6. Ibid., p. 28.
7. Carsten Niebuhr, Travels Through Arabia and Other Countries in the East, Edinburgh, 1792, vol. 2, p. 116.
8. Manesty and Jones, p. 67.
9. See chapter five.
10. Manesty and Jones, p. 23. On the early history of Bahrain and the 'Utbi tribe see Ahmad M. Abu Hakima, History of Eastern Arabia: 1795-1800, Beirut, 1965.
11. Manesty and Jones, p. 29.

12. Piracy is a problem that has fascinated nearly every writer on the Arabian Gulf. The standard interpretation is that these acts were inspired by the fanatical Wahhābi sect that the Sa'ūdi rulers of Najd attempted to impose on the Arabian Peninsula, see J.B. Kelly, pp. 99-138. Robert Landen, Oman Since 1356, Princeton, 1967, p. 8, has called piratical activities a war by the "have nots" against the "haves." My favorite definition, however, comes from the former Sultān of Masqaṭ and 'Umān, Sa'īd b. Taimūr, who said, "The epithet pirate tended a century and a half ago to be indiscriminately applied by Christian and Muslim seafarers alike to disparage successful and competitive non-coreligionists." H.F. Eilts, "Sayyid Muḥammad b. 'Aqil of Dhufar: Malevolent or Maligned?" Essex Institute Historical Collections, volume 109, number 3 (July 1973), p. 181.
13. S.B. Miles, The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf, second edition, London, 1966, p. 284.
14. Sirḥān b. Sa'īd al-Izkawī, Kitāb Kashf al-Ghumat al-Jāma' Li-Akhhbār al-Umma, (Beirut, 1977), p. 156; ibn Ruzaiq, p. 403; Badger, p. 204. It was supposedly built at Zanzibar.
15. Manesty and Jones, passim.
16. William Francklin, "A Tour from Bengal to Persia in the Years 1786-7," in John Pinkerton, A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the world, London, 1811, vol. 9, p. 237.
17. R.H. Thomas, ed., Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government, Historical and Other Information, Connected with the Province of Oman, Muscat, Bahrain, and Other Places in the Persian Gulf, new series, #XXIV, Bombay, 1856, pp. 57-58.
18. J.B. Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf: 1795-1880, Oxford, 1968, p. 107.
19. Al-Sālimī, vol. 2, p. 192.
20. J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman and Central Arabia, Calcutta, 1915, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 421; Miles, p. 287. The farm cost Sultān MT\$4,000 per year.

21. James B. Fraser, Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan in the Years 1821 and 1822, London, 1825, p. 13.
22. R.D. Bathurst, "Maritime Trade and Imamate Government: Two Principal Themes in the History of Oman to 1728," in Derek Hopwood, The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics, London, 1972, p. 100.
23. J.A. Saldanha, Precis of the Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801-53, Calcutta, 1906, pp. 30-32.
24. Ibid., p. 32.
25. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 423.
26. Thomas, p. 122. The source alleges that these were the only ships owned by the 'Utūb, but that seems very unlikely.
27. Miles, p. 292.
28. Thomas, p. 173.
29. On the history of the first Sa'ūdī state see the four volume work by Munīr al-'Ajlānī, Tārīkh al-Bilād al-'Arabīya al-Sa'ūdīya: al-Dawla al-Sa'ūdīya al-Ulā, n.d. (Beirut); 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm, Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Sa'ūdīya al-Ulā, second edition, Cairo, 1977. There are no detailed studies in English
30. Ibn Ruzaiq, pp. 430-31; Badger, p. 229. Kelly, p. 102 is incorrect when he states that the Sa'ūdīs entered the Buraimī area in 1800. They were there five years earlier.
31. 'Uthmān b. 'Abdāllah b. Bishr, 'Unwān al-Majd fī Tārīkh Najd, Riyāḍ, 1394, vol. 1, p. 161. There is some confusion concerning the chronology of events on this campaign as per Kelly, p. 104 n. 1. Ibn Bishr's account makes it clear that the major campaign occurred in 1801-02.
32. Ibn Ruzaiq, p. 433; Badger, p. 232. Ibn Ruzaiq's date of 1218 A.H. is one year too late as during that year the Sa'ūdīs had occupied Makkah. He performed the pilgrimage in 1217.
33. Ibn Ruzaiq, p. 438; Badger, p. 238.

34. Al-'Ajlāni, vol. 4, pp. 74-75.
35. See H.L. Hoskins, British Routes to India, New York, 1928.
36. Text in C.V. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighboring Countries, Calcutta, 1933, vol. 11, pp. 287-88.
37. maund. A weight equal to about $9\frac{1}{2}$ pounds in Masqaṭ. It is assumed that the agreement refers to Masqaṭi maunds. This is a fairly common measure of weight and the conversion is highly variable depending upon the area under discussion.
38. Saldanha, p. 25.
39. Aitchison, p. 288.
40. Al-Sālimī, p. 193; ibn Ruzaiq, pp. 470, 474-75; Badger, pp. 269, 274-75.
41. A letter quoted by ibn Ruzaiq, p. 488; Badger pp. 289-90 can be interpreted as Sa'īd's expressing concern for Badr's preoccupation with the interior while ignoring events on the coast.
42. Al-'Ajlānī, volume 4, p. 75.
43. Saldanha, p. 38.
44. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
45. Ibn Ruzaiq, pp. 517-18; Badger, p. 321.
46. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 183.
47. Ibid., p. 603.
48. Kelly, p. 126.
49. Ibn Bishr, volume 1, p. 205.
50. Ibn Ruzaiq, p. 521; Badger, p. 325.
51. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 446.
52. Ibid., p. 197.

53. Text in Aitchison, vol. 11, p. 245-49.
54. Fraser, p. 15.
55. Niebuhr, p. 116. Niebuhr quotes income at Rs. 100,000. There were approximately Rs. 2 to the MT\$ at that time.
56. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 469.
57. J.S. Buckingham, Travels in Assyria, Media and Persia, 2nd edition, vol. II, London, 1830, p. 400.
58. Ibid., p. 394.
59. William Jeude, A Voyage Up the Persian Gulf and a Journey Overland from India to England in 1817, London, p. 32; Fraser, p. 7.

Chapter Four

Sayyid Sa'īd b. Sultān's African Policy and the Decline of Masqat: 1820-1871

Masqati domination of Arabian Gulf trade became an impossibility once the British forbade naval warfare in the region. That Sayyid Sa'īd understood this situation is best illustrated by the abrupt change in Masqati commercial policies after 1820. East Africa became the focus of Sayyid Sa'īd's attentions rather than the Gulf. At its inception, the African policy was not dissimilar to the Gulf policy in that the goal was to maximize the amount of trade that flowed through Masqat. However, competition in East Africa, from both Europeans and Africans, and the greater economic potential of Zanzibar, the "capital" of Sa'īd's African provinces, led to the sayyid's abandonment of Masqat in 1829. Sa'īd's move had serious implications in Masqat where the new rulers, still members of the Āl Bū Sa'īd family, abandoned commerce in favor of politics.

In 1820 there occurred what Lorimer called "a curious isolated episode in the history of 'Umān,"¹ the Banī Bū 'Alī expedition. A joint Masqati-British force attacked the town of Bilād Banī Bū 'Alī, located in the Ja'alān region of 'Umān, in retaliation for some acts of "piracy" committed by the Banī Bū 'Alī from their port of al-Ash-Kharah. The town was eventually destroyed and the lead-

ers of the tribe imprisoned.²

British motivations in participating in this campaign are quite clear; they were suppressing piracy, a practice that had become the backbone of British policy in the Gulf, and were helping their ally Sayyid Sa'īd restore Masqaṭi control over a rebellious tribe. Sa'īd's reasons are less clear. Kelly has interpreted these actions as simply an attempt by the sayyid to regain control of the tribe.³ Nicholls sees the campaign as having far more significance asserting that Sa'īd was using it as a test of British resolve to "uphold the integrity of his territory."⁴ The problem is that neither Sayyid Sa'īd nor any of his predecessors in Masqaṭ had ever controlled the Banī Bū 'Alī.⁵ This fact has no bearing on British motives, although it does serve to prove British ignorance of 'Umāni affairs, but does raise some questions about Sa'īd's activities in an area so far removed from Gulf affairs.

The key to Sa'īd's motives lies in the fact that before he undertook to attack the Banī Bū 'Alī the Masqaṭi fleet had been dispatched to East Africa to extend the sayyid's interests on the Swahili coast. The Banī Bū 'Alī expedition is actually the first action in an African policy adopted by Sayyid Sa'īd which closely paralleled the Gulf policy introduced by Hamad b. Sa'īd in both its

motive, the maximization of Masqati trade, and actions.

The Banī Bū 'Alī, from their base at al-Ashkhara, were a threat to the uninterrupted flow of shipping between East Africa and Masqat, much as the Qawāsīm had been in the Gulf. However, because of British opposition to piracy, Sa'īd could not utilize Banī Bū 'Alī piracy as a tool of Masqati mercantile policy, as Sulṭān b. Aḥmad had attempted to do with the Gulf pirates. Furthermore, if Sa'īd had not taken the initiative, the tribe might have obtained a treaty from the British which would have guaranteed their freedom to compete with Masqat. The major problem facing Sayyid Sa'īd was that he had no army with which to conquer the tribe. Unlike the Qawāsīm in the Gulf, the Banī Bū 'Alī were not exclusively maritime people and could live off the large date plantations at their inland capital at Bilād Banī Bū 'Alī. Sa'īd obtained British assistance and the tribe was suppressed. A potential threat to his African policy was removed.

Before examining Sayyid Sa'īd's African policy some background to 'Umāni contacts with East Africa and the factors that drew the sayyid to that area are necessary. Southeast Arabia's contacts with East Africa began centuries ago as Arab mariners, utilizing the regular monsoon winds, sailed to the coast in search of ivory, gums, building materials, gold and slaves for the markets of

India and Arabia.⁶ The constant contacts between Arabs and Africans resulted in the formation of a new civilization, the Swahili, whose religion was Muslim and language greatly influenced by Arabic. Various Swahili states developed along the coast, and they remained independent until conquered by the Portuguese during the sixteenth century.

Swahili and 'Umāni interests were first united behind the hope of expelling the Portuguese. Once the Ya'āribah had accomplished that goal in Masqaṭ in 1650, they began assisting the various Swahili states so as to free the coast of Portuguese commercial restrictions. During the next half century the Portuguese were driven from the coast. However, the Swahili soon found that their struggle against European domination had resulted only in 'Umāni control of their territories as the Ya'āribah placed garrisons at Pemba, Zanzibar, Kilwa and Mombasa,⁷ with the last serving as the "provincial" capital.

Swahili opposition to 'Umāni control met with little success until the 1730's when the 'Umānis were preoccupied with their own civil war. However, once Ahmad b. Sa'īd had established Āl Bū Sa'īd hegemony over 'Umān he reasserted the 'Umāni presence on the Swahili coast. Zanzibar became the center of Āl Bū Sa'īd interests in Eastern Africa with Ahmad b. Sa'īd dispatching a governor who

would collect the customs revenues or tribute from the Swahili rulers of Kilwa, Lindi, Mafia, Pemba, Mombasa and Barowa.⁸

Control of the Swahili Coast passed to Masqaṭ when Ḥamad b. Sa'īd declared his independence of 'Umān in 1785. He and his successors continued the administrative system developed by Aḥmad b. Sa'īd. The rather indirect and tenuous nature of Masqaṭ's position on the Swahili Coast should be stressed. This is most apparent from the practice of changing governors fairly regularly to insure that they did not establish a local power base with which to challenge the sayyid's authority. Furthermore, only men with substantial property holdings in 'Umān were chosen for the East African post to insure their continued loyalty.⁹

This administrative system seemingly worked to the satisfaction of all concerned for there were only two instances of Masqaṭi intervention into Swahili affairs before 1820. In 1784-85 Saif b. Aḥmad staged an unsuccessful revolt against his brother the Imām Sa'īd b. Aḥmad and fled to East Africa in search of supporters for another attempt. He was pursued by Ḥamad b. Sa'īd and Sultān b. Aḥmad to Lamū. Saif decided to remain in Lamū and Ḥamad and Sultān intervened briefly in Mombasa affairs before returning to 'Umān.¹⁰ A second incursion

came in 1812 when Sa'īd b. Sultān occupied Lamū and forced the rulers of the island to pay tribute to Masqat.¹¹ Despite these two episodes, so long as the Swahili rulers paid their tribute, they were free to rule their small states without interference from Masqat.

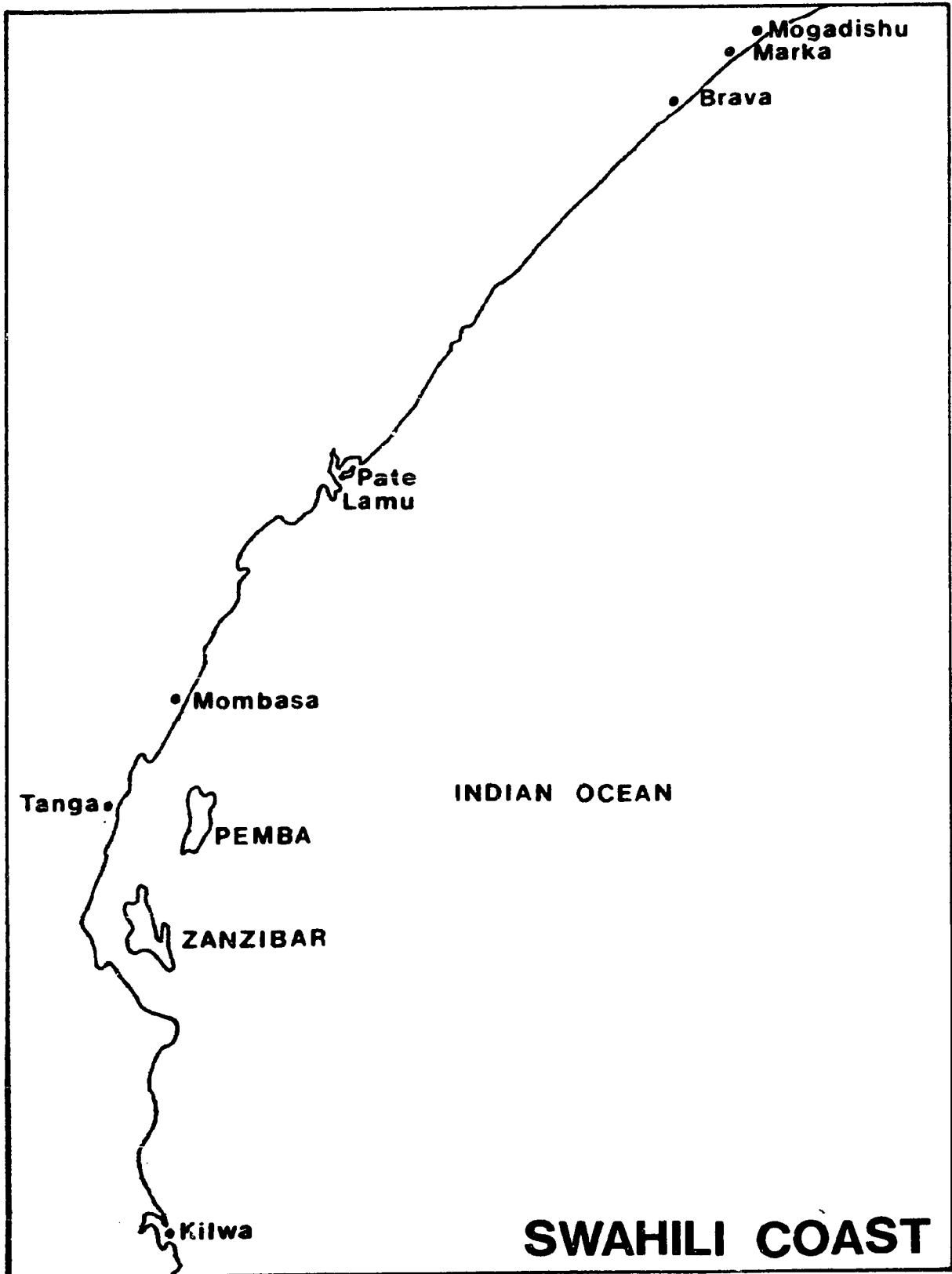
In 1820 the situation changed drastically as in the fall of that year Sayyid Sa'īd dispatched the Masqati fleet to East Africa for a campaign against the Mazārī' of Mombasa. The Mazārī' were originally an 'Umāni tribe that had established hereditary rule over Mombasa during the Ya'āribah period. Following the election of Aḥmad b. Sa'īd they had declared their independence of 'Umān,¹² but they did continue to pay lip-service to 'Umāni suzerainty. In 1814, however, a new, more independent minded Mazrū'ī ruler broke all ties with Masqat.¹³ Sayyid Sa'īd, at that time actively involved in Masqat's policy of securing commercial domination of the Gulf, paid little heed to the incident.

During the three years between 1820 and 1823, Masqati influence on the Swahili coast spread rapidly. Enroute to East Africa in 1820, the Masqati fleet stopped at Marka and Brava on the Somali coast and demanded that these two ports recognize Masqati suzerainty. These successes were followed by the expulsion of the Mazārī' from Pate, and then Pemba. Other East African ports,

such as Mogadishu, Wasin and Tanga, were attacked and compelled to recognize some form of Masqaṭi domination.¹⁴ Finally, in 1823, Mombasa itself was besieged. The attack failed, but Sa'īd b. Sulṭān hired some reprobate Qāsīmi pirates to sail the East African coast and harrass Mazrū'ī shipping.¹⁵

This sudden change in policy was a result of the threat to Masqaṭ's commercial position occasioned by Britain's intervention in Gulf affairs. As discussed in the previous chapter, the establishment of the British presence in the Arabian Gulf effectively precluded Masqaṭi domination of the Gulf trade as it permitted the 'Utūb of Bahrain, as well as others, to compete unhindered with the merchants of Masqaṭ. This situation was disastrous as the port was dependent on its status as an entrepot with profits coming from shipping charges and mark-ups. Sa'īd had to bring trade through Masqaṭ or at least find alternative sources of income. The Swahili coast provided both.

Ivory and slaves were the most important products that East Africa had to offer,¹⁶ but it was the latter that was the focus of Masqaṭi interest as the sayyid collected a head-tax on every slave that was exported. This tax had been fixed at MT\$5. by Ḥamad b. Sa'īd in 1788 but was as high as MT\$12. at Kilwa during the reign of Sulṭān b.



Ahmad.¹⁷ Most of these slaves were purchased by French slavers for transport to Mauritius and Reunion to work the sugar plantations that French colonists had introduced to the Mascarenes. Some, however, were carried to Masqat and other Arabian ports for sale in the Arab world. Masqat had a small slave market which was reported to be operating three days a week in 1817.¹⁸ Control of East Africa had the potential then for great wealth from both the head-tax on slaves and imports to and exports from the coast, which would all flow through Masqat.

The pattern of Sa'id's African policy is very similar to that followed by his father Sultān in the Gulf a quarter of a century earlier. Access to the Swahili coast was first secured by establishing control over the Banī Bū 'Alī and the Somali ports. Direct Masqati control was then established over a number of Swahili ports with garrisons of Masqati troops appearing on the coast for the first time since the Āl Bū Sa'id had come to power. The sayyid then set out to subjugate his principal competition, the Mazūrī', going so far as to utilize pirates. Unfortunately for Sayyid Sa'id, the parallel between the Gulf and East Africa continued as he soon found his plans thwarted by British intervention.

British concerns in East Africa were with the slave trade. However, British officials in India sought an

indirect solution to the problem. Rather than attacking the slave traders in East Africa, an area with which India had few contacts, the Indian government sought to dry up the large Gulf market by negotiating anti-slave trade agreements with the various Gulf rulers. It was a slow and rather unsuccessful endeavor. There were those, however, who favored more direct action against the slave trade. Among them was William Owen, a British naval commander. In February 1824 Owen sailed to East Africa on an anti-slavery mission and, in the course of his activities, declared a British protectorate over Mombasa in return for an anti-slave trade agreement from the Mazār'ī. This action brought joy to the Mazār'ī, who had been seeking just such an accommodation for many years.¹⁹ The protectorate was illegal, not having been authorized by either Bombay or London, but slow communications between Bombay and London, and Bombay and Mombasa allowed Owen's Protectorate to continue until October 1826. During the intervening two years Sayyid Sa'īd remained relatively inactive. Not surprisingly, his principal activity was an aggressive diplomatic effort to secure British withdrawal.

Once Owen had been ordered to abandon Mombasa, Sayyid Sa'īd resumed his attempt to secure control of East Africa. The sayyid was unable to launch an immediate attack on

the Mazārī', his fleet was involved in a dispute with Baṣra,²⁰ but he did begin negotiating with the ruler of Mombasa in hopes of securing the town without recourse to military action. When the negotiations failed, Sa'īd personally led the Masqaṭi fleet down the African coast. The fleet arrived off Mombasa in January 1828, and Sa'īd reopened negotiations with the Mazārī'. Faced with the threat of the Masqaṭi fleet, the rulers of Mombasa agreed to the stationing of a small garrison of Masqaṭi troops and an even split of the port's customs revenues. Sa'īd broke the agreement almost immediately and occupied the town, expelling the Mazārī' from their stronghold at Fort Jesus. Now in control of the Swahili coast, the sayyid visited Zanzibar long enough to purchase some land and establish his son as governor before returning to Masqaṭ.²¹

There is little doubt that Sa'īd b. Sulṭān had no intention of settling at Zanzibar at this early date. Masqaṭ still remained the focus of the sayyid's mercantile endeavors as the African policy, at this point, was little different in its goals from the earlier Gulf policy. Sa'īd still sought to maximize the trade flowing through Masqaṭ so as to insure continuing profits to the Masqaṭi middlemen, the most important of which was the sayyid himself.

This interpretation is best supported by the fact that Sayyid Sa'īd remained active in Gulf affairs as the area

was an important market for African goods, especially slaves. As early as 1822 Sayyid Sa'īd had planned on an attack upon the 'Utūb of Bahrain but had been prevented from doing so by British intervention.²² During the hiatus occasioned by Owen's protectorate over Mombasa, the sayyid had done some active fence-mending in the Gulf, including a diplomatic effort to retain Masqaṭi control over Bandar 'Abbās, the concluding of a marriage alliance with the Persian royal family and military action against Baṣra to insure Masqaṭ's trading privileges at that port.²³ Then in September 1828, fresh from his victory over the Mazārī', Sa'īd b. Sultān made a final attempt to subjugate Bahrain. The campaign was an utter failure, and Sa'īd concluded a formal agreement with the 'Utūb which recognized the independence of Bahrain and promised mutual defense in the event of an attack by a third party.²⁴ Rather than having conquered the 'Utūb, Sa'īd had accepted them as his equal.

The defeat at the hands of the 'Utūb has been viewed as a turning point in the career of Sa'īd b. Sultān by nearly every observor of 'Umāni history. Kelly has argued that the 'Utbi victory caused the sayyid to abandon Masqaṭ in favor of the East African coast.²⁵ While that interpretation is essentially correct, there were a number of other factors which contributed to Sa'īd's decision,

including the continuing competition of the Mazārī' and European activities against the slave trade.

Despite the conquest of Mombasa early in 1828 and the garrisoning of the town with Masqāṭi troops, Sa'īd did not retain control of the port for very long. Soon after Sa'īd left the coast and the monsoon ended any possibility of his returning, the Mazārī' gathered their supporters and besieged the Masqāṭis in Fort Jesus. The garrison survived the siege for seven months but was forced to surrender and withdraw to Zanzibar.²⁶ The Mazārī', like the 'Utūb of Bahrain, obviously required constant attention if they were to be controlled effectively.

A third factor which contributed to Sa'īd b. Sultān's decision to abandon Masqāṭ and the Gulf in favor of Zanzibar was European attempts to suppress the Indian Ocean slave trade. Masqāṭ's role in the slave trade has been discussed sufficiently by other authors as to make a lengthy digression here unnecessary.²⁷ Suffice it to say that slaves were an important commodity to Zanzibar's exports and a valuable source of income to Sayyid Sa'īd. Pressures on Sa'īd to end this trade had begun as early as 1812, but it was not until 1822 that the sayyid signed a formal treaty with the British prohibiting the export of slaves from his territories to any Christian countries.²⁸ That treaty did not, however, preclude the sale

of slaves to the Gulf or those Indian territories not under direct British control, such as Kutch.²⁹ The trade continued to prosper, much to the chagrin of many British Indian officials.

Pressure was continually exerted on Sayyid Sa'īd to abandon the trade, especially in 1825-26. Sa'īd provided an excellent indication of his thoughts on the abolition of slavery when he wrote to his agent in Bombay that he would consider ending the trade in human beings if one of three conditions were met: that the British defend him by land and sea against his enemies in Arabia and the Gulf, that they obtain Portuguese Mozambique for him or they provide him with sufficient funds to enable him to withdraw from 'Umān altogether and settle at Zanzibar.³⁰ When the British declined this offer, Sa'īd seemingly determined to implement the plan himself, although not going so far as to abolish slavery. This accounts for the 1828 campaign against Bahrain, which might well have been a test of British intentions as well. When that campaign failed, and all hopes of dominating the Gulf were dashed, the sayyid determined to abandon Masqat in favor of Zanzibar and to develop an alternative source of income to the slave trade. That policy was instituted in 1829 when Sayyid Sa'īd settled in Zanzibar. By the time that the slave trade had been

abolished in the late 1830's the sayyid had the income from clove exports to offset his losses.³¹

Sa'īd realized that his abandoning Masqaṭ would have serious implications for the political stability of 'Umān. Despite the fact that Zanzibar was to become his corporate headquarters, Masqaṭ could still provide some income as the port retained important Gulf ties, such as the Baṣra coffee trade, and he wished to retain control of its commercial affairs. This interpretation accounts for a series of actions undertaken by the sayyid before departing Masqaṭ in 1839 that otherwise appear to be a radical departure from previous policies. First of all, the popular ruler of Sūwaiq, a member of the Āl Bū Sa'īd family, was arrested while on a visit to Masqaṭ. This action eliminated one potential threat to Sa'īd's absentee control of Masqaṭ. A second action was that Sa'īd began paying subsidies to both the Banī Yās and Qawāsīm tribes of Sīr,³² in hopes of insuring the neutrality of these tribes in any action against Masqaṭ. It was also probably at this time that the practice of farming the customs was instituted as this would have insured the sayyid of his customs revenues even in his absence.³³

Enroute to East Africa late in 1829 Sa'īd launched a short campaign in Zūfār where Muḥammad b. 'Aqīl had been assassinated. This intriguing "pirate"³⁴ had established

his own moderately successful commercial empire in southern Arabia, and Sa'īd's temporary occupation of Salalah insured that a successor did not emerge to challenge the sayyid's position in East Africa and Masqaṭ. From Zūfār the sayyid proceeded to East Africa where he briefly besieged Mombasa and forced the Mazārī' to recognize his suzerainty. Sa'īd then sailed to Zanzibar to lay plans for his new commercial empire.

The struggle for control of Masqaṭ that Sayyid Sa'īd had feared erupted soon after the sayyid's departure for the Swahili coast. First, the Bāṭinah Coast rose in revolt in support of the imprisoned ruler of Sūwaiq. Then Ḥamūd b. 'Azzān Āl Bū Sa'īdī, in an unrelated event, attacked and captured Ṣuḥār and other northern coastal towns. When Ḥamūd b. 'Azzān began preparing an attack on Masqaṭ, the governor of Masqaṭ had little recourse but to recall Sa'īd from Zanzibar. He also wrote to the British authorities in the Gulf in search of assistance.

Sa'īd returned to Masqaṭ from Zanzibar in May 1830 to find a relatively stable situation. He immediately released the ruler of Sūwaiq, thereby quelling that revolt, but Ḥamūd b. 'Azzān remained a serious problem. The sayyid staged an unsuccessful campaign against Ṣuḥār in February 1831. The attack must have had sufficient impact on Ḥamūd, however, to check his ambitions for the time

being as in the spring of 1832 Sayyid Sa'īd boarded ship to return to Zanzibar. In his absence Masqaṭ was ruled by a triumverate that included Hilāl b. Sa'īd, the sayyid's eldest son, Muḥammad b. Sālim, a nephew, and Sa'ūd b. 'Alī, a cousin and former deputy in East Africa.³⁵ This was an attempt to unite at least two branches of the large and troublesome Āl Bū Sa'īd family.

This solution to Masqaṭ's political problems was no more successful than the previous. Sa'ūd b. 'Alī arrested his ruling partners, allegedly in revenge for the murder of Badr b. Saif twenty years earlier, and caused a political crisis in Masqaṭ. Ḥamūd b. 'Azzān and the ruler of Sūwaiq then joined forces to attack Rustāq. Furthermore, the Qawāsim occupied Khawr Fakkān and Dibah. Sa'īd again returned to Masqaṭ in September 1832 in order to restore order. On this occasion, Sayyid Sa'īd appointed Sa'ūd b. 'Alī as governor of Rustāq,³⁶ where it was hoped that his ambitions would be neutralized and, in return, neutralize those of Ḥamūd b. 'Azzān. The sayyid also entertained hopes of retaking Dibah and Khawr Fakkān, but his appeals to the British for assistance were rebuffed. British advice to Sayyid Sa'īd was to devote his energies to his Arabian domain and abandon "foreign adventures."³⁷

The British reply to Sa'īd's request for assistance in regaining control of Khawr Fakkān and Dibah is indicative

of British ignorance about 'Umāni affairs in general and the policies of the Āl Bū Sa'īd rulers of Masqaṭ in particular. To the British, the ruler of Masqaṭ was the ruler of all of 'Umān, and the role of the ruler was to insure the security of his territories. They saw in Sayyid Sa'īd, as in his predecessors in Masqaṭ, an individual who grossly neglected this duty in favor of expansion against his neighbors. Khawr Fakkān and Dibah were seen by the British as Qāsīmi territory coveted by Sa'īd. Of course, to Sa'īd they were ports that supplied the Qawāsīm with goods from India and Africa and had to be controlled to insure Masqaṭ's prosperity. Had the British not become involved in Arabian Gulf affairs, their ignorance would have caused little harm to Masqaṭ. Unfortunately for the Āl Bū Sa'īd, the British had become the principal power in the Gulf, as we have seen, and were to become an important, albeit destructive, influence in Masqaṭ, as we shall see.

Sa'īd ignored the British advice, although he did not regain control of Dibah and Khawr Fakkān. This time he went to the Sa'ūdis in search of security for Masqaṭ and essentially placed his Arabian territories under the protection of the central Arabian dynasty.³⁸ After reaching this agreement with the Sa'ūdis in November 1833 the sayyid returned to Zanzibar. Thūwainī b. Sa'īd, one of

the sayyid's many sons, was left as sole regent in Masqat.³⁹

Thūwainī had no better luck than his predecessors in controlling Masqat's affairs. Sa'ūd b. 'Alī was murdered in Rustāq and Ḥamūd b. 'Azzān quickly sought to expand his influence by occupying the town. The treaty with the Sa'ūdis proved useless as the Sa'ūdi family was involved in an internal crisis occasioned by the assassination of the ruler in May 1834. To further complicate matters, Muḥammad b. Nāsir al-Jabrī, Sa'īd's most influential tribal ally and the protector of Masqat during earlier attacks by Ḥamūd, died later in 1834.⁴⁰ The British demonstrated their support for Thūwainī by sending a cruiser to Masqat, but it did little good.⁴¹ Sa'īd, who was besieging the Mazārī' at Mombasa, was forced to abandon that endeavor and return to Masqat in April 1835. Word of the sayyid's imminent return resulted in Ḥamūd abandoning his campaign against Masqat. Sa'īd realized that his cousin would continue to cause problems once he left Masqat, and the sayyid prepared a campaign against Ṣuḥār to eliminate this threat. However, after spending some MT\$300,000 in the effort to subjugate Ḥamūd,⁴² the sayyid abandoned the campaign and resorted to negotiations. Contributing to this decision was word that a succession dispute had split the Mazārī' of Mombasa. Sa'īd rushed

back to East Africa to take advantage of the situation which promised success to his goal of controlling the Swahili coast.

The six years of instability in 'Umān occasioned by Sa'īd's abandoning Masqaṭ in favor of Zanzibar ultimately resulted in a political accommodation among the various factions. Ḥamūd b. 'Azzān, who had gained much during this period, including control of Rustāq, Ṣuḥār and most of the northern Bāṭinah, formally accepted the new situation in a treaty with Sayyid Sa'īd in 1829.⁴³ The result was that Thūwainī, Sa'īd's regent in Masqaṭ, was able to reign in peace for nearly a decade while the sayyid was free to pursue his commercial policy in Africa.

The apparent tranquility of the 1840's was marked, though, by developments in the interior of 'Umān that eventually caused serious problems for Masqaṭ. Sayyid Sa'īd's preparations prior to leaving Masqaṭ in 1829 and the subsequent political turmoil had involved Masqaṭ in 'Umāni affairs to a greater extent than at any time since the reign of Ḥamad b. Sa'īd. These activities are understandable in light of Sa'īd's desire to secure Masqaṭ in his absence, but the effect in the interior was to raise fears that the sayyid was attempting to secure Masqaṭi control over all of 'Umān. The tribal leaders reacted by forgetting their differences in the face of the exter-

nal threat to their hegemony. They rallied around Ḥamūd b. 'Azzān, who was even considered for the vacant office of imām.⁴⁴ The problem had not yet reached the level, though, where the tribal leaders were willing to restrict their activities to that degree.

In 1849 Thūwainī further alienated the 'Umānis by invading the port of Shināṣ in Ḥamūd's territory. To make matters worse, the regent arrested Ḥamūd, who died under mysterious circumstances in a Masqaṭi jail. The political crisis that followed was serious enough to require Sayyid Sa'īd's presence. Sa'īd remained in Masqaṭ only long enough to occupy Ṣuḥār and install his son Tūrki as governor. The 'Umānis, temporarily without a leader, turned to Ḥamūd's brother Qais b. 'Azzān, who had fled to Rustāq during the Masqaṭi offensive against Ṣuḥār.⁴⁵

Fortunately for Thūwainī, the 'Umānis had more immediate problems to contend with than the expulsion of the Āl Bū Sa'īd from Masqaṭ. During the mid-1840's and then early 1850's the Sa'ūdis were again active in 'Umān. Thūwainī negotiated a new treaty with them which renewed the 1833 mutual defense pact. However, the regent did not endear himself any further to the 'Umānis when he used Sa'ūdi troops to force some of the tribes of the Bāṭinah to pay their taxes.⁴⁶

A greater problem for Thūwainī was a Persian threat to Masqaṭ's position at Bandar 'Abbās. The regent was unable to settle the dispute himself, and he recalled Sa'īd from Zanzibar in 1854. The sayyid was able to negotiate a settlement with the Persian government which recognized Masqaṭi control over Bandar 'Abbās, although at terms which were much more beneficial to Persia.⁴⁷ This accomplished, the sayyid set sail for Zanzibar. He never reached his beloved island, however, as he died enroute in October 1856.

Sayyid Sa'īd's death had a tremendous impact on the political and economic affairs of Masqaṭ. Sa'īd had made no provisions for his succession. The entire issue was complicated by the fact that he had left three sons in positions of authority, Mājid in Zanzibar, Thūwaini in Masqaṭ, and Tūrki in Ṣuḥār, and all laid claims to Sa'īd's empire. There followed six years of squabbling among the various parties, the details of which are available in Lorimer and Kelly.⁴⁸ The situation was settled in 1862 when the Canning Award officially split Zanzibar from the control of Masqaṭ and created the independent Sultānates of Zanzibar and Masqaṭ. As compensation for the loss of Zanzibar, the ruler of Masqaṭ was to receive MT\$40,000 a year.

The partition of Sayyid Sa'īd's commercial empire has

been interpreted as a turning point in the economic history of Masqaṭ with the separation of Zanzibar being the first, and perhaps most important, of a series of events that lead to the port's ultimate demise.⁴⁹ Actually, Masqaṭ's decline was well underway by 1862, and its cause had been the African policy adopted by Sa'īd b. Sulṭān after 1829.

While it is not the purpose of this study to examine the development of Zanzibar under Sa'īd b. Sulṭān, a few comments are necessary in order to clarify the impact of that development on Masqaṭ. Once Sa'īd settled in Zanzibar his commercial practices underwent a fundamental shift in focus. The sayyid was no longer a middle-man and shipper dependent on other merchants bringing goods to him for transfer to other areas, as had been the case in Masqaṭ. Instead, Sa'īd became a producer. What is most important, though, is that the goods he produced in Zanzibar, including gum copal and cloves, were bound not for Masqaṭ and the Gulf but for the west, especially the United States.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the profits that Sayyid Sa'īd made in Zanzibar stayed in Zanzibar as the sayyid invested in land to expand his clove plantations and in slaves to work the new lands. This later trend was further aggravated by the anti-slavery agreements of the late 1840's. Masqaṭ certainly did not benefit from

Sa'īd's prosperity in Zanzibar.

A second consideration is the political effect of Sa'īd's transfer of his capital to Zanzibar. The difficulties with the interior tribes that resulted from Sa'īd's attempts to secure Masqaṭ have already been discussed. However, this was actually only a symptom of the problem. During Sa'īd's absence in Zanzibar his regent in Masqaṭ was concerned solely with political affairs. Fiscal administration and commerce were left to the city's Banyan merchants.⁵¹ This established a new pattern in Masqaṭi affairs as throughout the reign of Thūwainī b. Sa'īd (1856-66) the Banyans continued to control commercial affairs while the sultān⁵² directed his attentions to the politics of 'Umān.⁵³ The British, of course, contributed to the decline of the Āl Bū Sa'īd dynasty in Masqaṭ as the political agent, who took up residence in Masqaṭ in 1861, encouraged Thūwainī in his actions in the interior.⁵⁴

The full impact of Sa'īd b. Sultān's African policy was not felt until 1868. The tribes of the interior became so concerned with Masqaṭi interference that they elected an imām, 'Azzān b. Qais, in 1868 to lead the opposition to Masqaṭ. Later in 1868 the 'Umānis actually succeeded in overthrowing the Āl Bū Sa'īd regime in Masqaṭ. For three years Masqaṭ remained under the control

of the political movement that had been stirred into action by Sa'īd b. Sulṭān's transfer of his capital to Zanzibar in 1829.

The establishment of British hegemony in the Arabian Gulf resulted in the abandonment of the commercial policy that had been the basis of Āl Bū Sa'īd rule in Masqaṭ. Sayyid Sa'īd b. Sulṭān, faced with the possible collapse of his commercial empire, turned to Africa and Zanzibar to insure Masqaṭ's continued prosperity. However, the final failure to secure control of the 'Utūb of Bahrain combined with similar failures against the Mazārī' of Mombasa and British pressures to abolish the slave trade led Sa'īd to abandon Masqaṭ entirely in favor of Zanzibar. The new commercial policy was founded on production, utilizing slaves, rather than toward the carrying trade. Furthermore, trade was directed toward the west rather than the Gulf and Masqaṭ. This new policy was disastrous for the Āl Bū Sa'īd position in Masqaṭ. Politically, the actions taken by Sayyid Sa'īd to secure the position of his governors in Masqaṭ antagonized the tribes of interior 'Umān. Of greater significance, though, is the fact that the ruler of Masqaṭ abandoned trade in favor of political activities in the interior of 'Umān. In the absence of strong commercial leadership in Masqaṭ, a new group of merchants assumed control of the city's commerce. The

new merchants, for the most part Indian Hindus, and their commercial policy will be the focus of the next two chapters.

Notes

1. J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman and Central Arabia, Calcutta, 1915, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 463.
2. The details of the two Banī Bū 'Alī expeditions are available in J.B. Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1795-1880, Cxford, 1968, pp. 171-80.
3. Kelly, p. 172.
4. C.S. Nicholls, The Swahili Coast: Politics, Diplomacy and Trade on the East African Littoral, 1798-1856, London, 1971, p. 117.
5. At most, the sayyid controlled the port of Šūr. This was not to be the last time that the Banī Bū 'Alī were to have difficulties with a ruler of Masqat resorting to the superior power of his British allies in an attempt to establish his control over the tribe. In the late 1920's the British used the threat of aerial bombardment to coerce the tribe into recognizing the authority of Masqat. For the history of Masqati-Banī Bū 'Alī relations see India Office Records, Persian Gulf Political Residency, Files R/15/1/441-44; Muscat Political Agency, R/15/6/21-23, 63, 64, 205 and Political and Secret Department, L/P&S/10/1215.
6. See George Hourani, Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times, Beirut, 1963, pp. 79-82 and G.R. Tibbett, Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean Before the Coming of the Portuguese, London, 1972, passim.
7. Nicholls, p. 23.
8. "J. Crossons de Medeuil: The French Slave Trade in Kilwa c. 1784-5," p. 193; "James Prior: Voyage of the Nisus Frigate," p. 204; "The Ancient History of Lindi," p. 228; "The Ancient History of Kilwa Kisiwani," p. 224; "The History of Pate," p. 264, all in G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, The East African Coast: Select Documents from the First to the Earlier Nineteenth Century, second edition, London, 1975.
9. "Captain P. Dallons: Zanzibar in 1804," p. 198, in Freeman-Grenville.
10. J. Crossons de Medeuil: The French Slave Trade in Kilwa c. 1784-5," p. 194-95; "History of Pate," p.

- 279-80, in Freeman-Grenville; John Gray, "The Recovery of Kilwa by the Arabs in 1785," Tanganyika Notes and Records, no. 62 (March, 1964), p. 24.
11. Nicholls, pp. 123-24.
 12. "Anonymous: History of Mombasa c. 1824," p. 217; "History of Pate," p. 279, in Freeman-Grenville.
 13. John Gray, The British in Mombasa: 1824-1826, London, 1957.
 14. "History of Pate," pp. 281-84 in Freeman-Grenville; Nicholls, p. 133.
 15. Gray, 1957, p. 34.
 16. The standard work on the history of trade on the East African coast is Reginald Coupland, East Africa and Sayyid Said in 1856, Oxford, 1938, but this work has been superceded by E.A. Alpers, Ivory and Slaves in East-Central Africa, London, 1975; Frederick Cooper, Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa, New Haven and London, 1977 and Nicholls.
 17. "Captain P. Dallons: Zanzibar in 1804," p. 200; "James Prior: Voyage in the Nisus Frigate," p. 204 in Freeman-Grenville.
 18. William Heude, A Voyage Up the Persian Gulf and a Journey Overland from India to England in 1817, London, pp. 24-25.
 19. Nicholls, pp. 139-40. The standard work on the British protectorate in Mombasa is Gray, 1957. Owen has also provided his personal observations in W.F. Owen, Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Eastern Shores of Africa, 2 vols., London, 1833.
 20. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1B, p. 1320.
 21. Gray, 1957, p. 177.
 22. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1B, pp. 851-52.
 23. Ibid., vol. 1, part 1A, pp. 449-50; vol. 1, part 1B, p. 1320; vol. 1, part 2, pp. 1913-15; Kelly, pp. 219-20.
 24. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1B, pp. 852-56.

25. Kelly, p. 330.
26. According to the account of an American ship captain who called at Mombasa in 1828, the siege was still going on in September. "Log of the Brig 'Virginia,' 1828-1829," pp. 153-54, Norman R. Bennett and George E. Brooks, Jr., New England Merchants in Africa: A History Through Documents 1802 to 1865, Boston, 1965; Nicholls, p. 306.
27. On the slave trade see Alpers, *passim*; Kelly, pp. 411-51 and Nicholls, pp. 197-245.
28. Text of the treaty in C.V. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighboring Countries, Calcutta, 1933, vol. 11, pp. 289-91.
29. Marianne Young (Mrs. Postans), Cutch, or Random Sketches of Western India, London, 1838, pp. 10-14; James Tod, Travels in Western India, Delhi, 1971, pp. 448-51 both have discussions of the Kutchi role in the African slave trade.
30. Kelly, pp. 427-29; Nicholls, p. 226.
31. Cooper, pp. 47-59.
32. Ḥumaid b. Muḥammad b. Ruzaiq, al-Fath al-Mubīn fī Śīrat al-Sādah Āl Bū Sa'īdiyīn, Masqaṭ, 1977, p. 539; G.P. Badger, History of the Imams and Seyyids of 'Omān, by Salīl-ibn-Razīk, from A.D. 661-1856, London, 1871, p. 350; Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 452.
33. The actual date when the practice of farming the customs was instituted is unknown, Kelly, p. 15, claims that the customs was farmed as early as the reign of Sulṭān b. Aḥmad but gives no source for that assertion. From ibn Ruzaiq, pp. 251-52, and Badger pp. 158-59, we know that under both Aḥmad b. Sa'īd and Ḥamad b. Sa'īd the customs was administered by an 'Umāni, in this case the ancestors of ibn Ruzaiq. During the 1820's the customs of Zanzibar was farmed to a Banyan merchant, a practice that was probably adopted for administrative convenience. It seems that there would have been little reason to farm the customs so long as Sa'īd remained in Masqaṭ. For more information, see chapter five.
34. For an account and interpretation of the career of

- Muhammad b. 'Aqil see Herman Frederick Eilts, "Sayyid Muhammad b. 'Aqil of Dhufar: Malevolent or Maligned?" Essex Institute Historical Collections, vol. 109 (July 1973) pp. 179-230. Eilts presents various explanations for Sa'id's attack, but none are concerned with African interests, p. 213.
35. Ibn Ruzaiq, pp. 539-41; Badger, pp. 350-53; Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, pp. 452-53; S.B. Miles, Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf, second edition, London, 1966, p. 332.
 36. Ibn Ruzaiq, pp. 541-43; Badger, pp. 353-55; Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 453.
 37. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 453; Miles, p. 334.
 38. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 456; R. Bayly Winder, Sa'udi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century, New York, 1965, p. 81.
 39. Ibn Ruzaiq, p. 543; Badger, p. 355.
 40. Ibn Ruzaiq, p. 543; Badger, p. 356; 'Abdallah b. Humaid al-Sālimī, Tuhfat al-A'yān bi-sīrat ahl 'Umān, fifth edition, Kuwait, 1974, vol. 2, pp. 215, 224; Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 454; Miles, p. 337.
 41. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 454; Ḥamūd's reply to British intervention was to occupy Sūwaiq.
 42. Ibn Ruzaiq, pp. 544-45; Badger, pp. 357-58; Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 454.
 43. Text in Aitchison, vol. 11, pp. 320-21.
 44. Ibn Ruzaiq, p. 548; Badger, p. 361; al-Sālimī, pp. 218-23; Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 455.
 45. Ibn Ruzaiq, pp. 549-51; Badger, pp. 362-67; al-Sālimī, p. 225; Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, pp. 455-56.
 46. 'Uthmān b. 'Abdallah b. Bishr, 'Unwān al-Majd fī Tārīkh Najd, Riyād, 1394 A.H., vol. 2, p. 183; Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 458; Winder, pp. 194-202.
 47. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 460.
 48. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, pp. 469-72; Kelly, pp. 535-51.

49. Kelly, pp. 775-76, 830-31; Robert G. Landen, Oman Since 1856, Princeton, 1967, pp. 276-77.
50. On the growth of American contacts with Zanzibar see Philip Northway, "Salem and the Zanzibar-East African Trade," Essex Institute Historical Collections, vol. 90 (April, 1954); Clarence C. Clendenen and Peter Duignan, Americans in Black Africa Up to 1865, Stanford, 1964, pp. 15-44.
51. See chapter five for a discussion of the development of the Indian merchant community in Masqaṭ.
52. The ruler of Masqaṭ became sultān officially in 1862 as a result of the Canning Award which established the independent "sultanates" of Zanzibar and Masqaṭ.
53. The best sources for the reign of Thūwainī are al-Sālimī, vol. 2, pp. 230-35; Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, pp. 469-77; Landen, pp. 278-87 and passim.
54. In 1866 Thūwainī undertook a campaign against the Sa'ūdis at Buraimī on the advice of the British political agent. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 1A, p. 474.

Chapter Five

The Shets of Masqat:

The Indian Merchant Community

In 1836 J.R. Wellsted described the "Banians"¹ as constituting "a body of the principal merchants of Masqat."² By the 1870's the Indian merchants dominated the commercial life of the port³ and had replaced the Āl Bū Sa'īd rulers as the paramount economic power in 'Umān. Despite their prominence, these merchants have not been discussed adequately by previous writers on 'Umāni history, who have been more concerned with the plight of the royal family. This chapter will focus on the origins and development of the Indian community of Masqat, which included not only the Hindu Banyans but also an important Indian Muslim group known as Khojahs (Khwajahs). Besides the history of these two groups in Masqat, their social organization will be discussed as this is an important component of their economic success.

Contacts between India and 'Umān go back to at least the earliest days of recorded history when an active trade was carried on between Sumer and the Harrapan civilization of the Indus valley.⁴ It is believed by some archaeologists that the copper that was an important commodity of that early trade came from the Hajar Mountains in 'Umān,⁵ thus encouraging merchants to call on the various coastal villages. Archaeological work is only just be-

ginning in 'Umān, however, and many questions remain to be answered about this ancient trade.

We do not know when the first settlements of Indian merchants were established at Masqaṭ or anywhere else on the Bāṭinah coast. Andrew Williamson does not mention any evidence for Indian settlements at Ṣuhār, the first important 'Umāni port, in the tenth century.⁶ S.B. Miles reported the ruins of a Hindu temple at Qalhāt,⁷ a port that flourished in the fifteenth century, and the argument for early Indian settlement in 'Umān is further supported by the observation that Hindu merchants from Gujarat escaped from Khawr Fakkān with their property before the Portuguese sacked that town in 1507.⁸ It seems fair to assume that Indian traders were also living in Masqaṭ.

The earliest Indian commercial community in 'Umān about which we have any information is that of the Bhattias from Sind. The Bhattias⁹ are kshatriya (warrior) caste Vaishnavite Hindus who trace their ancestry to Rajasthan. During the attacks of Maḥmūd of Ghaznī into western India (eleventh century) the Bhattias were driven southward into Sind and Kutch where they abandoned their warrior heritage to become farmers and merchants. Those who became merchants soon travelled from the ports of western India to the coasts of the Arabian Gulf, 'Umān and Africa

in search of trade.

No firm date has been established for the beginning of the Bhattia community in Masqat, which is considered to be the oldest outside of India, but a noted Bhattia historian who collected data in Masqat believes that they probably began to settle in that port during the seventeenth century.¹⁰ My own inquiries among many of the older Bhattia merchants in Masqat and India yielded a similar response but included the added tradition that the earliest Bhattias in Masqat were from Sind and especially the city of Tattha.¹¹

These oral traditions do not contradict in any way the few shreds of documentary evidence that are available, mostly from the scattered travel accounts and the factory records of the East India Company. Tattha was an important center for trade to Central Asia from at least before the Portuguese sack of the city in the sixteenth century.¹² During the period of Portuguese control of its trade Tattha continued to be an active commercial center, boasting of "40,000 weavers of calico and loongees¹³...and artizans of every other class and description to the number of 20,000 more, exclusive of bankers, money changers, shopkeepers and sellers of grain, who were estimated at 60,000 more."¹⁴ Among the goods exported by Tattha were cloth, including elegantly embroidered

cashmere shawls¹⁵ and silk,¹⁶ cotton yarn, opium, ghee, indigo¹⁷ and sugar.¹⁸

Most of this trade was conducted by the Hindu merchants of Tattha in Portuguese ships, and many Tattha merchants had warehouses and establishments at Masqaṭ.¹⁹ In fact, the trade between Masqaṭ and Tattha was so important that the British believed that the Portuguese trading establishment was entirely dependent on trade with Sind as the Europeans could compel all goods bound from that part of India to the Gulf and Africa to stop at Masqaṭ and pay customs duties.²⁰

A second bit of information about these early Hindu settlers comes from the 'Umāni chroniclers ibn Ruzaiq and al-Sālimī who report that a Banyan merchant acted as supply agent for the Portuguese garrison in Masqaṭ. This merchant eventually became dissatisfied with Portuguese rule, especially as the Portuguese commander wished to marry his daughter, and helped the Ya'āribah to expel the Europeans from Masqaṭ in 1650. In exchange for this assistance, the Banyan's descendents were exempted from paying the poll tax (jiziya).²¹ This event is significant for two reasons. First, it leads to the conclusion that the early Hindu merchants brought their families with them to Masqaṭ, a practice that was abandoned during the nineteenth century. Furthermore, it explains why the

Hindu merchants of Masqaṭ paid no taxes to the Masqaṭi government.

The Sindi Bhattias continued to thrive under the Ya'āribah. Besides the exemption from the poll tax, the Ya'āribah apparently granted the Banyans other privileges, including the construction of a temple in Masqaṭ. Although the details need not concern us here, legend attributes the founding of the temple to the Sindi Bhattias some 300 years ago. The idol, a representation of the deity Govindraḡ, was transported to Masqaṭ from Baṡra, where the Hindu community was experiencing difficulties. Once established in Masqaṭ the idol had included an 'Umāni dagger in its vestments, an indication of the strong ties the Banyan merchants felt for their adopted home.²²

The Hindu community was not affected adversely by the civil war which established the Āl Bū Sa'īd dynasty in the 1740's, and it prospered under Aḡmad b. Sa'īd (1743-82). In January 1765 the Danish explorer Carsten Niebuhr spent two weeks at Masqaṭ and has left the following description of the Banyan community:²³

In no other Mahometan (sic) city are the Banians so numerous as in Maskat; their number in this city amounts to no fewer than twelve hundred. They are permitted to live agreeably to their own laws, to bring their wives hither, to set up idols in their chambers, and to burn their dead.

Aḡmad b. Sa'īd certainly did not discourage the Sindi

Bhattias from settling in Masqat, and they, in turn, responded by founding a Havali or Pushtimargi temple in the town. Other Hindu sects also set up their own temples so that Masqat eventually had four Hindu places of worship.²⁴

Despite the early successes of the Sindi Bhattias, the community was faced by a number of problems which resulted in a decline in both its size and influence. By 1900 there were only two Sindis still residing in Masqat and by the first world war there were none, although a few continued to live in the coastal towns.²⁵ Three factors interacted concurrently between 1795 and 1820 to drive the Sindis from Masqat. The economy of Tattha collapsed. Secondly, in Masqat an independent Āl Bū Sa'id dynasty was established. Finally, Bhattias from Kutch began to challenge Sindi Bhattia commercial activity in Masqat.

Sindi Bhattis commercial activity in Masqat was dependent on selling the exports of Tattha either for cash or the few goods available in Masqat, which included dates, coffee, ivory and African slaves. Unfortunately, Tattha was on the road to becoming an economic backwater with nothing to export and no market for imports. The city's problems had begun with the expulsion of the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean during the last half of

the seventeenth century. The collapse of the Portuguese trading network and its replacement by the British network centered on Surat and, later, Bombay was detrimental to Tattha's business interests.²⁶ This problem was compounded by other developments. On some unknown date the Indus River changed course and Tattha found itself some five miles from its waterway. This depressing situation was further aggravated by the establishment of the Talpur dynasty in Sind during the 1780's. These intolerant Muslim chieftains persecuted all Hindus.²⁷ In 1809 it was said of the city,

...The only manufactures now carried on in Tatta are those of a few white cloths and coloured loongees, and in lieu of the bustle of a great trading city, the streets are deserted, the few ships that remain are scarcely worthy of being called such, in view of the disreputable figure they cut, and the whole bazaar exhibits a deplorable picture of poverty and depressed commerce.²⁸

The situation was so bad in Tattha that the Sindis abandoned it and began developing Karachi as an alternative.²⁹

While the Sindi Bhattias might have established alternative markets to Tattha and continued to supply Masqat with Indian goods via Karachi, the rise of strong competition in both Masqat and India precluded that possibility. In Masqat, the new state founded by Hamad b. Sa'id in 1785 had its own commercial interests which rivaled those of the Sindis. Rather than being content with the customs revenues and some trade, as had been the case under

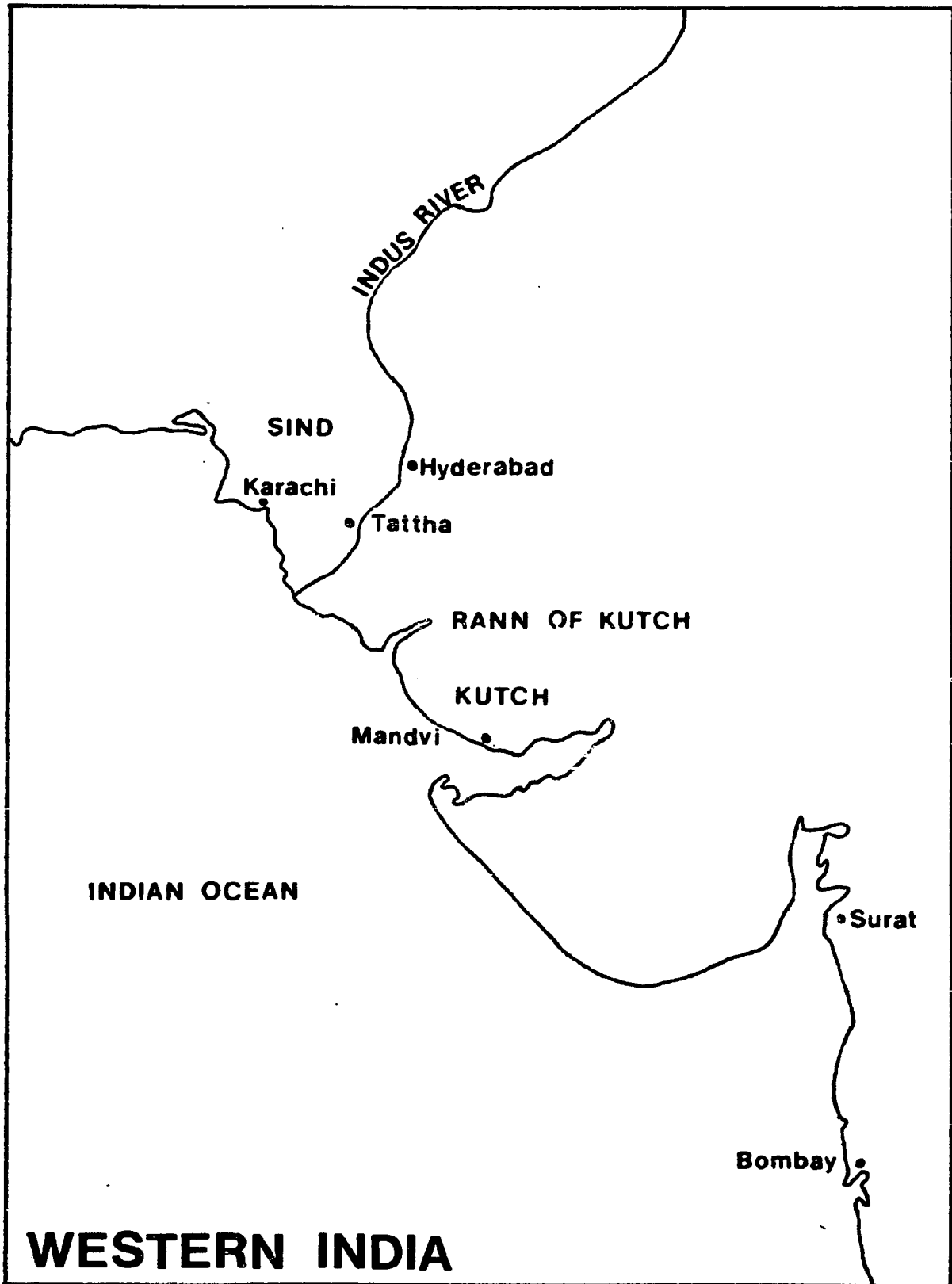
the Ya'āribah and Aḥmad b. Sa'īd, the new rulers of Masqat sought to monopolize the trade and become the principal merchants of the port. This situation was, obviously, detrimental to the Sindi merchants with their warehouses and trading establishments in Masqat as they found themselves in direct competition with the ruling family, as is most clearly demonstrated by Ḥamad b. Sa'īd's development of mercantile contacts with Afghanistan.³⁰ Although there are no indications of direct efforts by the Āl Bū Sa'īd to expell the Sindis, the sayyids did not encourage their competitors to remain.

A third factor which contributed to the Sindi decline in Masqat was the development of competition in India from another group of Bhattia merchants, the Kutchis. Kutch, lying to the east of the Indus River mouth, is, in many ways, very similar to 'Umān as it is an arid, rugged country that is virtually cut off from the rest of India by the sometimes impassable Rann of Kutch. As a result, contacts with neighbors have always been easier by sea. This contact was facilitated by the many fine ports along the Kutchi coast, with the best being Mandvi (the mart).³¹

These natural conditions combined with a series of events in the late eighteenth century to encourage the Kutchi Bhattias to become active in the Gulf trade. Most

of the credit has gone to the Kutchi ruler Godji II (1760-78) who developed the shipbuilding industry of Mandvi and took an active role in designing ships. At the time of Godji's death, Mandvi laid claim to some 400 ships, and Mandvi sailors had accomplished a journey to England.³² However, Godji's actions, which have never been analyzed, were probably encouraged by the collapse of Kutchi agriculture as a result of the damming of the Indus by the ruler of Sind in 1764.³³ A new dam in Sind in 1802, a famine and plague in 1812, and an earthquake in 1819 all served to cause Kutchis to leave the land. Further inducement came in the form of Fatih Muhammad, the chief deputy of the Hindu Maharao, whose continuous wars during the last years of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth encouraged migration.³⁴ Despite these dislocations, Kutch was relatively prosperous as the court encouraged the arts and crafts. Mandvi, like Masqat, retained a quasi-independence of the interior and flourished as a result of the trade that provided raw materials for Kutchi craftsmen.

The Kutchi Bhattia advantage over the Sindi was that the former was a shipper while the latter was a middleman. Kutchis transported the few products of Kutch, predominately cotton yarn and piece-goods, as well as goods from Bombay and the Gujarati ports, to Masqat. The Sindis



offered the same goods, but the significant difference was that Sindi goods were placed on the market for sale by Sindis or re-exported to other Sindi merchants in Africa or the Gulf while the Kutchi merchants, who did not have businesses in Masqaṭ, could sell to the sayyid and his agents. Furthermore, the Kutchis had a market for a wide range of the products that Masqaṭ had to offer, including dates, rhinoceros horn, ivory and African slaves.³⁶ Faced with all of these problems, the Sindi Bhattias began to abandon Masqaṭ in favor of Bahrain, where they were active in the pearl trade.³⁷

Kutchi settlement in Masqaṭ and the growth of their own commercial establishment to the point where Kutchi Bhattias dominated the trade and economic affairs of the city grew in two stages. As already mentioned, initial Kutchi contacts with Masqaṭ were as carriers of goods between Masqaṭ and India. This system did not require an extended presence in the city, although a merchant may have remained a few months before picking up a suitable cargo for a return voyage. However, Kutchi Bhattias gradually established commercial outlets in Masqaṭ which would be operated for only a few years before the merchant retired to Mandvi.³⁸ Sayyid Sa'īd b. Sulṭān (1807-56) played an important role in this settlement as he encouraged their mercantile activities, probably allowing Kut-

chis to act as his agents and brokers, and hiring them to important positions in his administration.

Two examples will serve to demonstrate the early development of the Kutchi Bhattias of Masqat. Virji Purshottam Toprani today owns a small shop in Maṭrah, but his family has had contacts with Masqat for seven generations. The family originated in the vicinity of the Rann of Kutch and moved to Mandvi as the Rann encroached on their farmlands. Once settled in Mandvi, the family turned to commerce, and late in the eighteenth century one Aranji sailed to Masqat to conduct business. He was followed in later years by his son and then grandson, Umarsi, who established a business house in Masqat.³⁹ A second example is Umarsi's contemporary, Gopal Mawji Bhimani. Family legend claims that Gopal's great-grandfather was the first Bhimani to trade in Masqat late in the eighteenth century.⁴⁰ In time, the family established a business in Masqat, and Gopal Bhimani began to play an active role in Masqati politics. Gopal was among the Banyans that encouraged Sa'īd b. Sulṭān to conquer Zanzibar, and his business manager was active in the suppression of piracy.⁴¹

Sayyid Sa'īd's transfer of his attentions to Zanzibar after 1830 served to encourage further Kutchi Bhattia commercial expansion in Masqat. This occurred for two reasons. First, during Sa'īd's extended absences in East

Africa, he left most of Masqaṭ's commercial affairs in the hands of resident Bhattias. Both the treasurer and customs officials were Bhattias,⁴² and it was probably at this time that the practice of farming the Masqaṭ customs was instituted. An indication of this is that a member of the Bhimani family was allegedly the first Banyan to hold the customs farm.⁴³ A second factor that encouraged the Kutchi Bhattias to extend their interests was that Sayyid Sa'īd's shift from middleman to producer left a commercial vacuum in Masqaṭ. The Kutchi Bhattias poured into Masqaṭ, and by 1840 the Banyan population had reached 2,000.⁴⁴ As stated by Wellsted, in the quote that opened this chapter, by that date they had become the principal mercantile power in the city.

Conditions in Masqaṭ following the death of Sa'īd b. Sultān in 1856 were in no way detrimental to the Kutchi Bhattia commercial interests. As already discussed in the preceding chapter, the ruler of Masqaṭ had assumed an almost purely political role during the regency of Thūwainī b. Sa'īd (1839-56). This trend continued when Thūwainī became ruler in his own right after 1856. While this development was disastrous for the Āl Bū Sa'īd dynasty, which became dependent on customs revenues at a time when their expenses increased due to intervention in 'Umāni affairs, it was advantageous to the Kutchi

Bhattias as they were no longer competing with the state.

The apparently bright prospects were clouded by the rumblings in the interior that resulted from Masqaṭi interference into 'Umāni affairs. A real crisis for Bhattia interests occurred when the Imām 'Azzān b. Qais assumed control of Masqaṭ and established a fundamentalist Ibādi regime (1868-71). The new conservative government not only removed the Bhattias from their important financial posts but also sought to extend Ibādi social regulations, including a ban on the use of tobacco, the playing of musical instruments and dress requirements, to all the inhabitants of Masqaṭ. Despite 'Azzān's assurances to the British that he supported freedom of religious practice, the Hindus, who employ bells, gongs and drums in their ceremonies, often fell afoul of the authorities, and there were a number of attacks on Banyans.⁴⁵ The result was that the Banyan population of Masqaṭ dropped from the 2,000 of 1840 to about 250 in 1870.⁴⁶

This rapid population decline has been used as evidence to support the argument that Masqaṭ suffered a serious economic depression during the years following the death of Sayyid Sa'īd.⁴⁷ While there is little doubt that Masqaṭ was faced with economic problems at this time, they were neither so serious nor permanent as has been heretofore believed. In the first place, many

of those who left Masqaṭ during this period were family members rather than the merchants themselves. An indication of this is that by 1900, when family members were again coming to Masqaṭ, the Banyan population was back up to 1500.⁴⁸ The second group of Banyans that was affected by the unsettled state of Masqaṭ was the older generation of merchants who also apparently abandoned the city for safe retirement in India. Events of this period might also have encouraged the few remaining Sindis to depart. This situation was, in fact, beneficial to Masqaṭ as it permitted a new, younger business class to become established and adopt a new commercial policy that restored the port's trade, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

'Azzān b. Qais' overthrow and death in 1871 paved the way for the reestablishment of a more moderate government under Turkī b. Sa'īd. While Turkī concerned himself with 'Umāni political affairs, the Kutchi Bhattias turned their attention to the commercial development of Masqaṭ. During the next three decades the Banyans assumed control of the port's trade and fiscal administration, and a number of prominent Hindu merchants amassed great fortunes, probably approaching that of Sa'īd b. Sultān. It was the Āl Bū Sa'īd Sultāns and not Masqaṭ that suffered the serious economic losses that have been the focus of the

earlier studies on 'Umān. The wealth of the city's trade did not disappear; it was transferred from the ruling dynasty to the new merchant princes, the Indians.

An examination of one of the leading Banyans of Masqaṭ, Shet⁴⁹ Ratansi Purshottam Purecha, will serve as an example of the new business class that came to dominate the commerce and finances of 'Umān after 1871. Ratansi first went to 'Umān in 1857 as a boy of 14 or 15 probably to obtain business experience at his uncle's shop in Masqaṭ. He worked as a clerk for ten years until 1867 when he established his own business, possibly with capital borrowed from his uncle.⁵⁰

Ratansi Purchottam, like most Bhattia businessmen, dealt in a wide range of goods, including grain, textiles and dates. Acting as a commissions agent, Ratansi both imported and exported these products on consignment and received a percentage of the profits, when there were profits.⁵¹ To aid this commercial operation, Masqaṭi Banyans often established working agreements with merchants in foreign ports. These were quite often family members, such as was the case with Ratansi whose brother owned a business in Bombay and who, himself, owned a business in Karachi. In the absence of family members, these arrangements would be made with other Bhattias, although it was not unusual to deal with a non-Bhattia

or even a Muslim if the need arose.⁵²

Most of the Banyans lived and worked in Masqaṭ, within the walled portion of the city and close to the sultān's palace. Ratansi was no exception, although the family did move to Maṭraḥ in 1915 when that port supplanted Masqaṭ as a commercial center. Early in the 1880's Ratansi began to acquire land along the waterfront of Masqaṭ and eventually came to own all the waterfront property with the exception of the palace, customs house and British Political Agency.⁵³ This was only one of many parcels of land that Ratansi came to own,⁵⁴ and by the end of the nineteenth century he and his Banyan colleagues owned most of the best property in Masqaṭ and Maṭraḥ.⁵⁵

Land was the one strong tie that the Banyans had to Masqaṭ, a factor that would argue against any notion that the community was transient. This should not lead, however, to the presumption that property was a favorite investment of the Banyans, as Landen has asserted.⁵⁶ The simple fact is that the local Arabs had nothing to offer but their land as security for a loan. Even if holding a mortgage, the Banyan lender was not always guaranteed that a debt would be repaid as it was not uncommon to have an obscure waqf property mortgaged on the pretense that it was private property. When the debtor defaulted or died and the Banyans brought charges,

the waqf document was brought forward and the mortgages cancelled.⁵⁷ Investments in unmovable property were more secure in India than they were in 'Umān.

The Banyans of Masqat retained a fairly high degree of community solidarity, this despite economic competition. The community was represented in political matters by the nagashet or mukhi, the most respected man of the community. During the latter nineteenth century this office was hereditary to the Bhimani family.⁵⁸ The Hindus celebrated their religious festivals, such as new year (Diwali), with social gatherings and dinner parties. Usually, a dish of the best food would be sent to the sultān. Banyans were also invited to the palace on special occasions, although they would not eat the food prepared by the ruler's non-Hindu cooks.⁵⁹ For the most part, dietary laws were kept, and the community maintained a herd of cows to insure a ready supply of dairy products.⁶⁰ Kutchi or Gujarati remained the principal languages spoken, although most did learn Arabic for business purposes, and accounts were kept in Gujarati. Indian dress styles were not abandoned.⁶¹ In general, then, the Masqati Hindu made no attempt to assimilate.

Aside from the Bhimani family and Ratansi Purshottam, there were a number of important Hindu merchants in Masqat during the late nineteenth century. Among them were

Dowlatgirji Manrupgirji, a Gosai Brahman from Kutch who owned a business in Masqat but entrusted it to a manager while he continued to reside in a monestary outside of Mandvi, Virji Ratansi, an important banker and Damodar Dharamsi, who occasionally farmed the customs. These three, along with Ratansi, were considered to be the "four pillars" of Hindu society.⁶² Upon this base a number of other Banyans established prosperous businesses that have continued to flourish in Masqat. These include Khimji Ramdas, Dayal Purshottam, Danji Kurarji, Valabdas Umarsi and Gopalji Walji:

A second group of Indian merchants lived within the domains of the Sultān of Masqat, the Khojahs. The Khojahs are the Nizārī branch of Ismā'īli Shi'ism and consider the Aghā Khān to be the imām.⁶³ The sect is strongest in Sind where Pir Sadr al-Dīn met with great success in converting Hindus, especially members of the Lohana caste, during the fifteenth century. Sadr al-Dīn called the new converts Khojah, a term which he defined as "honorable and worshipful convert" but which had been used by Sindis for centuries as a term of address for visiting Muslim merchants.⁶⁴ The social status of the early converts is unknown, but given the Lohana mercantile tradition,⁶⁵ they were probably not lower class peasants. They may have had economic motivations for accepting the new faith.

The Khojah religion, known as Satpanth, is an interesting mixture of Islam and Hinduism, and while there is little need to go into the details here, there are a few aspects of the faith which are of significance to 'Umāni affairs. The Khojahs accept the "Five Pillars" of Islam but have adapted them to their own use. The Khojah prays only three times a day and does not attend a mosque but goes, instead, to a Jāma'at Khāna (literally a gathering place); the Khojah pilgrim does not go to Makkah but to the residence of the Aghā Khān and the zakat, known as dassondh, is paid directly to the Aghā Khān and is for his personal use.⁶⁶ The legal system is only partially dependent on the Qurān and hadīth and draws quite heavily on Hindu personal law. Most interesting in this regard is the law of inheritance. Unlike Muslim law, women are excluded from inheritance, and there are no limits on the amount of property that can be disposed of in a will.

Very little is known about the Khojah community of 'Umān, which goes by the name Lūtī,⁶⁷ and virtually nothing has been written. The Luwātiyah claim origins in Hyderabad, Sind and are, hence, occasionally referred to as Hyderabadī. The origins of the community are obscure with many different legends persisting about from whence the Luwātiyah come. A small pamphlet written by a member

of the community and based on classical Arabic sources and a manuscript by one al-Hyderabadī asserts that the Luwāṭiyah are the descendents of one al-Ḥakam b. 'Awanah al-Lāt. According to this account, al-Ḥakam accompanied the first Arab campaigns against India and eventually became a governor in Sind.⁶⁸ A second legend claims that the Luwāṭiyah were originally Banī Lu'ay Arabs from Hijāz who went to India with Muḥammad al-Qāsim and were eventually converted to Shi'ism.⁶⁹ A variant of this account is that the Banī Lu'ay were Khārijites who fled to 'Umān but were later expelled from this sanctuary and moved on to India. They then returned to 'Umān.⁷⁰ It is fairly certain that they were originally Indian Hindu converts. The name Lūtī provides some clue to this belief. Among the clans of the Bhattias is the Panchlutiyah (the Five Martyrs, commemorating an important event in Bhattia history).⁷² As many Bhattias in Sind did convert to Islam,⁷³ it is not inconceivable that the Luwāṭiyah are Bhattia converts from the Panchlutiyah clan.

None of the elders of the Lūtī community know when the first Lūtī migrated from India to 'Umān. However, most will claim that there have been Luwāṭiyah in 'Umān for 400 years. This is supported by an inscription on one of the gates that leads into the Lūtī quarter of Maṭraḥ. It is possible that Khojah merchants did come to 'Umān

from Sind either preceeding or during the period of Portuguese rule on the 'Umāni coast just as the Hindus did. There is no documentary evidence to support this contention; the date only tells us that the gate was built in the sixteenth century. The earliest mention of Luwātiyah in the literature occurs in ibn Ruzaiq who tells us that the Luwātiyah were among the principal occupants of Maṭraḥ during the reign of Aḥmad b. Sa'īd (1749-82).⁷⁴ However, it is possible that ibn Ruzaiq based that statement on the fact that the Luwātiyah were prominent in Maṭraḥ in 1856.

There is strong evidence for much later Lūtī settlement in 'Umān. As mentioned earlier, the Luwātiyah claim to have originated in Hyderabad, Sind. Hyderabad was not founded until 1768.⁷⁵ Therefore, anyone claiming to be a Hyderabadī could not have migrated to 'Umān before that date, and the liklihood is that it would have been much later. Migration from Sind to 'Umān during the last quarter of the eighteenth century would have been encouraged by developments in both areas. In Sind, the Talpurs were harrassing the Hindu population with disasterous results for the mercantile community (see above, p. 105). This might have encouraged the expansion of Muslim commercial activities. Furtherfore, during the reign of Ḥamad b. Sa'īd (1785-92) in Masqaṭ trade between 'Umān

and Afghanistan was encouraged, and the Indus river was the main artery of this trade. Khojahs could have played an important part in this trade. The best available evidence for Lūtī settlement in 'Umān during the late eighteenth century is an 1889 dispute in which the Luwātiyah claim privileges going back for a century.⁷⁶ Observations by the American mission of 1835 show that the Lūtī community was well established in Maṭraḥ by then.⁷⁷

A second factor to consider is that a number of Khojahs were British subjects. This could occur only if they had migrated to 'Umān after 1840 when the British assumed control of Sind.⁷⁸ Geneological studies among contemporary Luwātiyah would support mid-nineteenth century migration as most can remember only back as far as their great-grandfather.⁷⁹

All of this evidence leads to the conclusion that Lūtī settlement in Maṭraḥ closely followed Kutchi Bhattia in its form. The earliest settlers came in the wake of the early success of the Āl Bū Sa'īd dynasty in Masqaṭ. This early group was followed by a second during the second half of the nineteenth century. The disruptions of 'Azzān b. Qais' reign may have had the same impact on the Lūtī commercial community as it apparently had on the Bhattia⁸⁰ as most, if not all, of the prominent Lūtī merchants were from the later group of immigrants.

The Lūtī merchant was not dissimilar to his Banyan colleague, although there were very few prominent merchants among the Khojahs and they never had close ties with the government during the nineteenth century. Luwātiyah operated within the same kind of mercantile system that the Banyans utilized, and there were Khojahs in most of the Gulf ports, Bombay, Karachi, Zanzibar and Mombasa. Besides dealing in the standard products, like textiles, grain and dates, the Khojahs did have a virtual monopoly in the trade in dried fish from Masqaṭ as this is a product in which the Hindu merchants, for religious reasons, would not deal. Khojahs were also involved in various skilled crafts, like carpentry and boat building.⁸¹

Unlike the Hindu, the Luwātiyah were permanently settled in 'Umān and brought with them their women and children. The community was concentrated in a walled quarter of Maṭraḥ adjoining the market. This area, known as Sūr Luwātiyah, was entered by two gates and access was limited solely to Luwātiyah.⁸² The Sūr was strictly a residential area, and the Lūtī merchant would commute to his shop in the markets at Masqaṭ and Maṭraḥ, unlike the Banyan who generally lived above his shop. The community worshipped in a jāma'at khāna within the walls of the Sūr.

Despite the permanent settlement of the Luwātiyah in

'Umān, they remained socially isolated from their Arab neighbors. Although Khojah men would occasionally take 'Umāni women for brides, the women always married within the community. This practice is possibly a holdover from Hindu marriage rules where the male can marry below caste but the desire to keep wealth within the community was a most important consideration. Khojkī, a mixture of Kutchi and Sindi, was the principal language of the Luwā-tiyah, but Arabic was fiarly widely spoken. The Luwā-tiyah did adopt Arab dress. The community had an elected shaikh and council of elders which governed communal affairs.

The Khojah community of Maṭraḥ was affected by the controversy that erupted in India during the 1840's concerning the Aghā Khān's rights to the dassondh. This dispute came to a head in 1862 with the initiation of legal proceedings by the dissidents who argued that the tithe belonged to the community and not the Aghā Khān.⁸³ All but twenty families in Maṭraḥ supported the dissident cause which was defeated in a Bombay court. The dissidents were then excommunicated by the Aghā Khān, and they became Ithnā 'Ashiri Shi'as.⁸⁴ The jāma'at khāna became a Shi'a mosque, and the community requested that a qadi be dispatched from Najaf to serve Luwātiyah legal needs.⁸⁵ The twenty families who chose to support the Aghā Khān

were expelled from the Sūr and established a new community and jāma'at khāna just outside the northwestern wall of their old home.⁸⁶

By far the most important Lūtī merchant of the later nineteenth century was Muḥammad Faḍl. Muḥammad Faḍl was born in Bombay in 1858,⁸⁷ and eventually settled in the Sūr Luwātiyah. He appears to have begun his business career as a clerk in the American firm W.J. Towell, which was founded in 1865.⁸⁸ Muḥammad Faḍl worked his way up through the firm, becoming a partner in 1894 and full owner in 1906.⁸⁹ Muḥammad Faḍl was joined by other Luwātiyah such as Habib Murād and Baqir 'Abd al-Laṭīf, although the Lūtī merchants, as a rule, did not become prominent until after the first world war.

Muḥammad Faḍl and Ratansi Furshottam had in common with nearly all the Indian merchants, both Banyan and Lūtī, protection of the British authorities. The general rule in determining who was or was not a British subject was that anyone who had settled in Masqaṭ after the British had assumed direct control over his native territory in India could obtain British protection. If he had lived in a native state that was under British protection, he was a British-protected subject.⁹⁰ The benefits were the same.⁹¹ The status of these individuals often resulted in difficulties with the Masqaṭi govern-

ment as there were disputes over jurisdiction in legal cases. The accused party often chose citizenship based on the possible punishment for his crime. Most of the controversy was settled in 1867 when the British made provisions for the registration of British subjects and protected persons. However, registration was not a prerequisite to obtaining protection.⁹²

British protection had a number of advantages, including exemption from having houses entered and searched, exemption from direct interference by the local authorities, exemption from any taxes levied by the ruler of Masqat on his subjects, the right of full discharge from creditors if bankrupt, aid in recovery of debts and participation of the British Political Agent in any trial resulting from crimes committed.⁹³ In addition to these broad privileges, British subjects and protected persons could obtain the assistance of the British authorities in collecting damages for losses due to attacks by the local population.

It was this last provision that caused the greatest number of difficulties with the sultāns as he was held responsible for these damages ultimately.⁹⁴ Despite warnings by various sultāns about trading in insecure areas, such as the southern port of Sūr, Indian merchants continued to spread throughout the coastal areas. If

they were attacked, the British would take all necessary action to insure that losses were made good.

The significance of British protection of the Indian merchants should not be over-emphasized. In fact, the argument can be made that association with British interests was detrimental to the Indian commercial community. In the previous chapter, the ruler of 'Umān's involvement in 'Umāni affairs was discussed. The British, who believed that the sultān was the ruler of all 'Umān, played an important role in this new policy. The result was increased resentment on the part of the 'Umānis which reached its peak with the attack on Masqaṭ and establishment of the 'Azzān b. Qais regime. The situation did not improve with the re-emergence of the moderate regime in 1871. As Landen has pointed out, much of the 'Umāni resentment against the sultāns of Masqaṭ had resulted from their belief that the Āl Bū Sa'īd were mere puppets in the hands of the British.⁹⁵ Many of the problems experienced by Indian merchants during the final decades of the nineteenth century may have resulted from their close association with the British. The Indian merchants, to whom many 'Umānis were indebted, were viewed as agents of British designs for 'Umān.

Over the course of the nineteenth century Indian merchants came to dominate the economic life of Masqaṭ, re-

placing the Āl Bū Sa'īd rulers as the principal merchants of the city and acquiring the fortunes that had once gone to the members of the royal family. The Hindu Banyans who had first come from Sind as junior partners to the Portuguese and flourished under the Ya'āribah suffered as a result of the combined strains of political and economic dislocation at home and a more aggressive Masqatī commercial policy adopted by Ḥamad b. Sa'īd and followed by his successors. Khojahs from Sind and Bhattias from Kutch began to replace the Sindis, who moved to other Gulf ports. The Kutchis allied themselves with Sayyid Sa'īd, and when he moved his capital to Africa, they assumed control of the financial apparatus of Masqat. The Kutchis were also faced by difficulties when 'Azzān b. Qais and his Ibādi supporters assumed control of Masqat in 1868 and instituted a fundamentalist policy that drove many Indians from the city. However, the disruptions served to allow many younger, more adventuresome merchants to become established in Masqat. Once the more moderate regime was re-established in 1871 this new merchant group once again assumed control of the fiscal administration of the state and adopted a new commercial policy designed to restore their continued prosperity in 'Umān. The next chapter will examine that policy.

Notes

1. Banian or Banyan derives from the Gujarati Vāṇiya (p. Vāṇiyān), a man of the trading caste. The term has been adopted to mean all Hindu merchants regardless of caste. See Hobson-Jobson, London, 1903, pp. 63-64. Robert Landen, Oman Since 1856, Princeton, 1967, p. 131 claims that the term is "evidently a corruption of the word 'Battia'." This is not correct.
2. J.R. Wellsted, Travels in Arabia, London, 1838, vol. 1, pp. 18-21.
3. Landen, p. 138.
4. As this is being written Thor Hyerdhal is sailing a reed boat from Iraq to the Indus to prove his theory that the contacts between Mesopotamia and India are very ancient. The boat made a stop at Masqaṭ. See also George F. Hourani, Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times, Beirut, 1968.
5. Geoffrey Bibby, Looking for Dilmun, New York, 1969, p. 220.
6. Andrew Williamson, Sohar and Omani Seafaring in the Indian Ocean, Masqaṭ, 1973.
7. S.B. Miles, Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf, 2nd edition, London, 1966, p. 526. On Qal-hāt see J.C. Wilkinson, "Kalhāt," Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition, vol. 4, pp. 500-01.
8. Alfonso de Albuquerque, The Commentaries of the Great Afonso Dalaboquerque, Second Viceroy of India, edited by Walter de Gray Birch, London, Hakluyt Society, 1875, vol. 1, pp. 99-100. Miles, p. 151, incorrectly claims that these Hindus were Kutchis. This view probably derived from the fact that the Hindus in Masqaṭ during Miles' residence (late nineteenth century) were Kutchi.
9. The name Bhattia is derived from Bhatti which, in turn, comes from subhatta, a warrior. On this caste see R.E. Enthoven, The Tribes and Castes of Bombay, 1920, vol. 1, pp. 133-45 and James Campbell, ed., Bombay Presidency District Gazetteer, vol. V (Cutch, Palanpur, and Mahi), Bombay, 1880, pp. 53-54.
10. Dungarsi Dharamsi Sampat, "Bhattia Sanstanono Itiyas;

- Part 6: Masqat," Bhattia Yuvak Magazine, Maghar 1989 Samant, pp. 111-15. Here after cited as Sampat. This series, written in Gujarati, is an extremely important source for the history of the Bhattia community throughout India and the Indian Ocean basin. I wish to express special thanks to Mr. Dilip Ukka of Mandvi, Kutch for his assistance in translating the articles.
11. Personal communication to the author from Ranchordas Lalji Purecha, the grandson of Ratansi Purshottam, the great Masqati merchant of the late nineteenth century who will be discussed in greater detail later.
 12. James Burnes, A Visit to the Courte of Sinde, Karachi, 1974, p. 27. Burnes had visited Tattha in 1828.
 13. Loonghee, s. from Hindi lungī, a scarf or length of cloth to wrap around the body. See Hobson-Jobson, p. 519. In 'Umān these loonghees, known locally as wazar, are worn by all males.
 14. E.H. Aitken, Gazetteer of the Province of Sind, Karachi, 1907, p. 116. Aitken was quoting a British official, Henry Pottinger, who was a member of the British Mission to Sind in 1809.
 15. Burnes, p. 92. In 'Umān and the rest of Arabia these shawls are used as turbans.
 16. Al-Sālimī relates a story about how the Imām Sa'īd b. Ahmad (1784) wore a silk "diwālī" or wrap, Tuhfat al-A'yān bi-sīrat Ahl 'Umān, 5th edition, Kuwait, 1974, vol. II, p. 176.
 17. William Foster, The English Factories in India: 1634-1636, Oxford, 1911, pp. 127-34. 'Umān had a local indigo dying industry centered on Nizwā and Firq.
 18. William Foster, The English Factories in India: 1637-1641, Oxford, 1912, p. 135.
 19. Foster, 1911, p. 127.
 20. William Foster, The English Factories in India: 1646-1650, Oxford, 1914, p. 153.
 21. Ḥumaid b. Muḥammad b. Ruzaiq, al-Fath al-Mubīn fī

- Sīrat al-Sādah Āl Bū Sa'īdiyīn, Masqat, 1977, pp. 286-91; G.P. Badger, History of the Imams and Seyyids of 'Omān by Salil ibn Razik, London, Hakluyt Society, 1871, pp. xxvi, 81-87. Al-Sālimī, pp. 65-67. The account given by al-Sālimī differs from that of ibn Ruzaik in that the former claims that the principal Hindu was named Sakabīlah and his assistant was Narūtim. Ibn Ruzaik mentions only Narūtim. Carsten Niebuhr, Travels Through Arabia and Other Countries in the East, Edinburgh, 1792, vol. II, p. 116 contains the earliest (1765) published account of this story, although it offers no details. In Mandvi, Kutch, a similar story was related to me in which a prominent nineteenth century merchant family, known in Masqat as Bait Shabika, was alleged to have assisted the Āl Bū Sa'īd in a similar manner.
22. Sampat, "Part 7: Muscat," Fagan 1989, pp. 172-78. Sampat doubts that the idol went from Baṣra. This whole episode is of interest to Indian scholars as it might provide some clues to early Bhattia religious practices. The majority of Bhattias were converted to the Pushtimarghi sect, a Vaishnavite group with principal deities of Krishna as a baby and as a flute player and the household deity Shri Natji founded by the Mahaprabhu Shri Vallabhacharya, during the last decade of the seventeenth century. The movement began in, interestingly enough, Tattha and spread to Kutch and Kathiawad. The fact that it was a Govindraja temple rather than a Pushtimarghi temple, known as Havali, serves either to date the temple to before 1700 or may be an indication of a certain amount of conservatism within the Bhattia community of Masqat. On the spread of Pushtimargh in India see Sampat, "Part 86, The Beginning of Pushtimargh in Kathiawad," Bhadurwa 1992, pp. 508-12. Ranchordas Lalji has informed me that this temple, which was located near the old palace, was torn down in 1971 to make way for the new palace and the idol was returned to India.
23. Niebuhr, p. 116.
24. These included the Govindraja temple (see note 22), the havali, known as Bawaji, which is one of two temples that still exist in Masqat, a Kalka temple situated on the Masqat side of the pass to Riyām and a large Shiva temple, known as Motishwar, located in the Rāwiyah section of Masqat. The Kalka

temple, utilized by the small but influential Gosai Brahmin community in Masqaṭ, included a graveyard to accommodate the practices of the Gosais, who are buried in a sitting position rather than cremated. The temple was torn down to make way for the new (1970) Masqaṭ-Maṭraḥ road and the idol transferred to Bawaji. Motishwar was built near a large Banyan tree and contained two wells and became the center of Hindu social life in Masqaṭ as well as the water source for the community. It has been rebuilt recently, and contains, besides the lingam representing Shiva, Nandi, Shiva's mount, and a turtle. The temple also contains a small shrine to Hanumant. The Hindu community also had, and continues to have, a burning ghat for the cremation of its dead, a cow pen, no longer in use, and a gupta, or holy place, located in the mountains near Sidab.

25. At least one Sindi merchant family continued to reside in Şuḥār as late as 1977. The principal Sindi merchant in Masqaṭ today is Meghji Laxmidas Ved from Shahbunder, but this family, which was established in Maṭraḥ in 1907, has no direct ties to the early Sindi merchants. Personal communication to the author from Meghji Laxmidas Ved.
26. On the decline of the Tattha see the massive work by William Foster, The English Factories in India, passim. Also, for a more succinct description of the plight of the former Portuguese trading centers in India see The Travels of the Abbe Carre in India and the Near East 1672 to 1674, edited by Charles Fawcett, London, Hakluyt Society, 1947, vol. 1, pp. 214-15 for his description of Goa.
27. Aitkin, pp. 116-17.
28. Ibid., p. 116. This is Pottinger's description based on personal observations.
29. Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government, new series, no. 17, pp. 1-245. Two articles on Karachi from 1838 and 1840. Sampat, "Part 3: Karachi," Posh 1989, pp. 26-29.
30. See chapter three, p. 35.
31. Mandvi is also known as Musca-Mandvi after the neighboring village of Musca. This name is very intriguing as Masqaṭ is often referred to as Muskah

in the Arabic chronicles. I visited Musca in May 1977 in search of information on the origin of the name of the town but met with little success. I would speculate that this village is probably named after Masqat just as the name of Mandvi's newest suburb, Swalli, commemorates the former bustling trade with the Swahili coast. On the early history of Mandvi see Campbell, pp. 1-227 passim.

32. L.F. Rushbrook Williams, The Black Hills: Kutch in History and Legend, London, 1958, p. 41. Sampat, "Part 65: Bhattias of Mandvi," Fagan 1992, pp. 133-38.
33. Campbell, p. 10, states that the rice fields of western Kutch were reduced to grazing lands as a result of this action.
34. Ibid., pp. 10, 17, 40; Sampat, "Part 73: Customs of Bhattias," Aushow 1992, pp. 313-16.
35. Marianne Young, Cutch, or, Random Sketches of Western India, London, 1838, pp. 10-14; James Tod, Travels in Western India, Delhi, 1971, pp. 448-51.
36. Ibid. Both of the above sources give excellent accounts of Mandvi's role in the slave trade.
37. Sampat, "Part 4: Sindh," Pos 1989, pp. 29-31. Sindi Bhattias still play an important role in the commerce of Bahrain and Dubai.
38. Dungarsi Dharamsi Sampat, Kutchnun Vepartantha, Karachi, 1991, pp. 17-18; Sampat, "Part 105: Trade with Masqat," Kartak 1994, pp. 863-65
39. Personal communication from Virji Purshottam Toprani. The geneology of the family is:

Aranji
 |
 Ramdas
 |
 Umarsi
 |
 Valabdas
 |
 Damodar (c. 1857-1932)
 |
 Purshottam (1888-1976)
 |
 Virji

40. Personal communication to author from Premji Jamnadas Bhimani of Mandvi. The geneology of the Bhimani family in Masqaṭ is:

Rawji
|
Bhimji
|
Mawji
|
Gopal
|
Mulji
|
Jivandas
|
Mawdawji
|
Jamnadas (d. 1942)
|
Premji (b. 1900)

41. Sampat, "Part 62: Towards Kutch and Kathiawad," Bhadura 1991, pp. 527-34. The association of the Bhattia merchants with Sa'id's African policy is very significant. The standard interpretation of the establishment of Hindu commercial influence at Zanzibar has attributed it to Sa'id b. Sulṭān encouraging their migration to that port. Abd al-Muḥammad Ḥusain Sharīf, in his Ph.D. dissertation "The Rise of a Commercial Empire: An Aspect of the Economic History of Zanzibar, 1770-1873," U. of London, 1971, expresses doubt about this theory. He argues that the Hindu merchants encouraged Sa'id. Sampat's evidence supports that view, although it may be more proper to argue that the development of Zanzibar was a joint endeavor.
42. Sampat, "Part 105: Trade with Masqaṭ," Fagan 1992, pp. 864-65.
43. The earliest mention of a Banyan holding the customs farm is in 1827. R.H. Thomas, Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government, new series, no. 24, 1856, p. 632. Sampat, Kutchnun Vepartantha, p. 19 states that Sa'id b. Sulṭān gave the customs farm to a Bhimani.
44. Thomas, p. 631.
45. A good account of the problems of 'Azzān b. Qais' reign, based on India Office Records, Muscat Political Agency, R/15/6/2, is available in Landen, p. 309-10.

46. India Office Records, Muscat Political Agency, R/15/6/2, Disbrowe to Gonne, Muscat, 26 April, 1869. As is usually the case in dealing with statistics from the nineteenth century British sources, some error is assumed. For example, Disbrow puts the population at 250 with dependents. It is possible that the actual population was as high as 1000.
47. Landen, p. 134-35.
48. India Office Records, Muscat Political Agency, R/15/6/67, Memorandum, Cox, Muscat, 30 July 1900. This once again raises the problem of numbers, as Landen, p. 141 puts the population at 250 merchants. Ratansi Purshottam's family came in 1900 and was one of the first to do so.
49. Shet, singular, from the Hindi seth meaning head of a corporation, merchant or banker. See Hobson-Jobson, p. 813. In Masqaṭ it was used as an address of respect for Hindu and Muslim alike, similar to but on a much higher level than "boss."
50. Most of the facts concerning the life of Ratansi Purshottam were related to me by Ranchordas Lalji, Ratansi's grandson, who also provided the following geneology:

Makund
 ↓
 Natha
 ↓
 Thakersey
 ↓
 Damodar-Mawji
 ↓
 Purshottam
 ↓
 Virgi-Ratansi (d. 1906)
 ↓
 Lalji-Nanci
 ↓
 Ranchordas
 ↓
 Vimal

On the training of a young Banyan see Sampat, "Part 6: Masqaṭ," Maghar 1989, p. 115.

51. Landen, p. 137, has been very critical of this system, especially as it related to the practice of holding foreign agencies. I will have more to say about this in the next chapter.

52. In the course of numerous interviews with many of Masqaṭ's merchants, both Hindu and Muslim, this fact was stressed.
53. This property was sold to the British Indian government in 1901 and is now included in the British Embassy compound. See Ruth Hawley, The British Embassy in Muscat: A Short History, Muscat, 1974, pp. 9-10. India Office Records, Muscat Political Agency, File R/15/6/26 contains a detailed record of how Ratansi originally acquired all of this property.
54. In 1906, the year of his death, Ratansi owned 1 large residence with office building and 12 warehouses, 5 of which had upper-story residences and 1 with a courtyard, in Masqaṭ; 2 houses, 1 with a garden, in Sidāb; 2 houses with lower story offices and 2 warehouses, 1 with an attached courtyard, in Maṭraḥ and 2 farms with water-rights in outlying villages. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, Account Book for 1905-06.
55. Cox to Landsdowne, Maskat, 21 September 1902, India Office Records, Muscat Political Agency, Filr R/15/6/67.
56. Landen, p. 139.
57. Cox to Government of India, Muscat, 27 September 1902, India Office Records, Muscat Political Agency, File R/15/6/25.
58. Personal communication, Ranchordas Lalji. The Hindu Association, known as the Mahajan, was formally incorporated in the 1930's with the president becoming an elected official. During the twentieth century it administered most aspects of Hindu communal life, including the schools, temples and cow herd and the estates donated to the community by merchants who died without heirs or otherwise.
59. Sampat, "Part 7: Masqaṭ," Fagan 1989, pp. 172-78.
60. The cow-pen, pajnipur, was located next to the Shiva temple in Rāwiyah. These cows, unlike most cows in Masqaṭ, were not fed fish, which resulted in a fishy taste to the milk. Surplus milk was sold for the benefit of the community. When the 'Umān National Dairy was opened, the cows were donated to the state with the agreement that when the cows stopped pro-

ducing they would be sent to India rather than be slaughtered.

61. On the dress distinctions among the various levels of Banyan society in Masqaṭ, see Sampat, Kutchnun Vepartantya, Karachi, 1991, p. 19.
62. These four merchants were given nicknames corresponding to the four high cards in a deck. Dowlatgirji was the "ace" (Acca), Ratansi was "king" (Batsa), Virji was "queen" (Rani), but was also called bait bīzah (after the coin) because of his banking activities, and Damodar was the "jack" (Ghulam). See also Sampat, "Part 7: Masqaṭ," Fagan 1989, pp. 172-78 for a reference to Ratansi as Batsa.
63. On the confusing geneology of the Aghā Khāns see J.N. Hollister, The Shi'a of India, London, 1953, pp. 306-19, 331-38.
64. Ibid., p. 397.
65. Aitken, pp. 185-86.
66. For a more detailed account of Khojah religious practices see Hollister, pp. 378-95, 356-57. The later two pages have an excellent discussion of Hindu influences. Satish C. Misra, Muslim Communities in Gujarat: Preliminary Studies in Their History and Social Organization, Bombay, 1964, is also useful.
67. Lūtī, p. Luwātiyah. The origin of the name is unknown, but both the Arabic and Persian roots are perjorative terms.
68. Muhammad Taqī Hasan al-'Umānī, Dalīl al-Sa'il, no place, no date, 6 pages.
69. Personal communication from Ḥajjī 'Alī Sulṭān of Maṭraḥ.
70. Personal communication from Muḥammad Mūsā Matwānī of Maṭraḥ.
71. See the comments by Ian Skeet, Muscat and Oman: The End of an Era, London, 1974, pp. 28, 192, on the status of the Luwātiyah.

72. Girjir Ratansi Sapat, Bhattiaoni Prachim Stiti, Bombay, 1899, p. 69. Enthoven also lists the clans or nookhs of the Bhattias.
73. Sampat, "Part 8: Tattha," Bhadurwa 1991, pp. 525-27; "Part 73: Customs of the Bhattias," Aushow 1992, pp. 313-16.
74. Ibn Ruzaiq, p. 356; Badger, p. 163.
75. Aitken, p. 113.
76. J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman and Central Arabia, Calcutta, 1915, vol. I, part I, p. 535.
77. W.S.W. Ruschenberger, Narrative of a Voyage Round the World During the Years 1835, 36, 37, vol. I, London, 1970 (reprint of 1838 edition), p. 125.
78. India Office Records, Muscat Political Agency, File R/15/6/8, passim.
79. Dr. Nihami Levtzion, based on oral traditions collected in West Africa, has found that migrant groups usually recall geneology only as far as the first settler in an area. Personal communication. The following geneologies are offered as examples:
- 1) 'Alī Sultān: Fadl
 |
 Muhammad (d. 1916)
 |
 Sultān
 |
 'Alī
- 2) Amīn Malallah: Wansiyah
 |
 Murād
 |
 Habīb (d. 1938)
 |
 Malallah
 |
 Amīn
- 3) Muḥammad Mūsā: Ghulām
 |
 Ja'far (d. 1894)
 |
 Mūsā (1889-1967)
 |
 Muhammad (b. 1928)

80. See note 45. The Luwātiyah suffered equally under 'Azzān.
81. Landen, p. 140.
82. The Sūr Luwātiyah retains its exclusivity. My one attempt to walk through the quarter was unsuccessful as I did not get past the main gate before I was met by a concierge and told to leave. Ruschenberger was told in 1835 that outsiders were not admitted because Lūti women went unveiled, p. 125.
83. Hollister, pp. 364-70.
84. Lorimer, vol. I, part 2, appendix H. Religions and Sects of the Persian Gulf Region, pp. 2377-80 and vol. II B, Calcutta, 1908, p. 1034-35.
85. Personal communication from 'Alī Sultān.
86. The few Aghā Khānis who remained in Maṭrah left in 1965 on the orders of the Aghā Khān who feared for their safety following the revolution in Zanzibar. Their jāma'at khāna, located in front of the girls school in Maṭrah next to the Jibrū roundabout, was bought by W.J. Towell Company and torn down to make way for an office building.
87. United States National Archives, Muscat Consular Records, Microfilm Publication T638, Macquire to Wharton, Muscat, 19 February 1893.
88. See next chapter.
89. The early history of the W.J. Towell Company is unclear. Towell apparently disposed of the company during the 1870's as in 1880 an Irishman named William Maguire, who became the first American consul in Masqat, described himself as the "sole partner" in the company, which, despite Towell's absence, retained his name. Kamāl 'Abd al-Riḍa Sultān of W.J. Towell believes that his great-grandfather, Muhammad Faḍl, became a partner in the company in 1884 when he purchased shares valued at RO 11,000. That seems unlikely according to American consular records which show that a Scot Archibald Mackirdy became Maguire's partner in 1887 and then inherited the company, and the American consulship, in 1893. Muhammad Faḍl also served as first clerk and then Vice and Deputy American Consul for many years, and

it was he who closed the consulate in 1915. United States National Archives, Muscat Consular Records, Microfilm Publications T638 and T639, passim.

90. India Office Records, Muscat Political Agency, File R/15/6/8 passim.
91. Political Sec'y Gov. of India to Resident Persian Gulf, Simla, 19 October 1875, R/15/6/8.
92. Ibid.
93. Landen, p. 202.
94. On the various difficulties between the British and the sultān see sections in Lorimer entitled "Protection of British Subjects in Oman," vol. I, part 1A, pp. 513-16, 535-38, 553-55.
95. Landen, p. 392.

Chapter Six

Dates and Guns: The Resurgence of the Masqaṭi Economy, 1871-1914

The main problem facing the new class of Indian merchants that emerged during the short, disruptive reign of 'Azzān b. Qais (1868-71) was essentially the same one that had troubled the Āl Bū Sa'īd sayyids of Masqaṭ: control of markets. The policy of military domination and elimination of competitors adopted by the Āl Bū Sa'īd had failed, with the resulting decline in Masqaṭ's trade as the 'Utūb of Bahrain became the primary carriers in the Arabian Gulf and African goods were directed toward western markets in Europe and America. The Indians, naturally, did not have the military option and had to find new means to bring trade back to the port of Masqaṭ. Their policy, which is the subject of this chapter, consisted of the integration of the Masqaṭi economy into international commerce in an attempt to lessen its dependence on the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean trading network. This new mercantile policy is best illustrated by two new commercial endeavors undertaken by the Indian merchants, the sale of dates to the United States and the distribution of western manufactured arms and ammunition to the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean region.

As discussed in the first chapter, dates were the foremost product of 'Umān and Bāṭinah and by far the most im-

portant commodity available for export. In 1689 the British traveller J. Ovington observed about Masqaṭ that "They have so much plenty of this Fruit (dates), for which they have so ready a vent in India, that several Ships are sent thither loaded from hence without any other Cargo."¹ Generally, the exports to India were limited to the lesser Bāṭini varieties which were picked when not yet ripe, boiled, dried, and packed in mat bags for shipment to India. This market was dominated by the Indian merchants of Masqaṭ, who established networks up and down the coast to obtain supplies. The dates were collected at Maṭraḥ, where the government collected the zakah on them,² and then sent on native craft to the sub-continent, where the candy-like fruit was in great demand for wedding celebrations and other festivals.

Wet dates, the higher quality, more expensive varieties of the interior, were also exported, although in nowhere near the quantities of dry dates. This market, which was traditionally South Arabia, received a boost when Sayyid Sa'īd moved to Zanzibar. Many 'Umānis followed the sayyid to the East African island, which, despite its agricultural productivity, was not blessed with the date palm. Therefore, 'Umāni dates were exported to Zanzibar. This enabled the Indian merchants to extend their commercial network further into the interior of 'Umān.

This, however, was the traditional trading pattern of the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean region, and even here the Indian merchants faced competition from outside of 'Umān, most especially Iraq, whose cheap dates even found a market in Bāṭinah where they were used for cattle feed.³ The Indians looked outside of the Indian Ocean network to the United States, Sa'īd's old trading partner in Zanzibar,⁴ for an alternative market.

American commercial contacts with Masqaṭ began very early in the history of the republic with the earliest published account of an American ship calling on that port occurring before the War of 1812.⁵ Masqaṭ was not, however, the focus of American interests in the Indian Ocean, that honor went first to Mauritius and then Zanzibar,⁶ and very few ships called on the port.⁷ The first official contacts between Masqaṭ and the United States occurred in 1835 when Special Agent Edmund Roberts called on Sayyid Sa'īd in order to exchange ratification of the commercial treaty that the two countries had concluded the previous year. As the published account of this mission asserts, though, the value of the commercial treaty was the privileges that were extended in Zanzibar rather than in Masqaṭ.⁸

American merchants most probably became acquainted with 'Umāni dates in Zanzibar and sought greater supplies

in Masqat. It is not known when the first shipment of 'Umāni dates went to the United States, but American consular records show that in 1843, eight years after the Roberts embassy, ships from Salem and New Bedford were loaded with dates at Masqat bound for New York.⁹ There are no records that give any indication of the volume of the trade or the principals involved during these early years, and the impression is, given that the United States did not open a consulate, that the trade was not very active. It was not until the latter third of the nineteenth century that the date trade became important.

In 1866 an American named William Jack Towell established a company in Masqat for the purpose of shipping dates to the United States.¹⁰ What motivated Towell, who was a New England seaman or, possibly, ship's clerk, is not known. It is not inconceivable, though, that Towell was encouraged in this endeavor by one of Masqat's Indian merchants. That the Indian merchants would actively pursue new markets is best illustrated by one Shivji, a Banyan merchant from Zanzibar, who allegedly sailed to Madagascar to encourage American merchants to trade at Zanzibar.¹¹ Even if Towell did not settle his business in Masqat at the encouragement of a local merchant, he had to work closely with the Indian commercial community. Towell did not reside at Masqat permanently and, there-

fore, required a local partner to look after his affairs in his absence. Furthermore, he was dependent on the Indian merchants for supplies of dates to export.

Towell did not enjoy a monopoly on date exports to the United States for very long, if indeed he ever did. During the last decades of the nineteenth century the Indian merchants came to dominate the trade as they established direct contact with American importers. The principal exporters in Masqaṭ became Muḥammad Faḍl, the prominent Lūtī who became a partner in the Towell Company in 1894,¹² and Gopalji Walji, a Bhattia from Kathiawar.¹³ These two merchants were joined by Ratansi Purshottam during the twentieth century. Significantly, all three were members of the new merchant class that had been established in Masqaṭ during the reign of 'Azzān b. Qais. It was these Indians who developed the Masqaṭ date sales to the United States.

Details on the American date trade are scarce before the twentieth century. Fortunately, however, American consular records, especially those following the reorganization of the consular service at the beginning of this century, and surviving records from the Ratansi Purshottam Company, permit some general comments on the operation of the trade and its significance to the economy of Masqaṭ.

The American date market was particular as the fruit was a seasonal delicacy that sold only during the holiday season between Thanksgiving and New Year. As David Fairchild, the well-known botanist and plant explorer, relates about his own childhood:¹⁴

About Thanksgiving time, every American grocer used to have a solid mass of sticky dates on his counter, which he tore apart with the aid of an ice pick and sold to his customers. These dark-brown dates were mostly "Fards," and thousands of tons of them were shipped each year from the town of Muscat.

In order to be profitable, therefore, the dates had to be in New York by early November to meet the initial holiday demand. That meant at least an early October pack in Musqat.

'Umān had a particularly suitable date for the American market, the fard mentioned above by Fairchild. The fard date is restricted to the Samā'il region of 'Umān where both the water for irrigation and the hot, dry summer winds needed to ripen the fruit are readily available. The date is not the most delicious variety available in 'Umān, and the 'Umānis generally disdained the dark, strong-flavored fard in favor of more delicate varieties, such as the khalas, khanaizi and naghal. The real appeal of the fard to the American market was not, therefore, its taste but rather its packing and shipping qualities. In fact, if the fard was properly handled during packing,

its skin would remain intact and dry, thereby permitting it to be served by the piece rather than as a congealed mass. Aside from a few North African varieties, the fard was the only date that could be served in this manner, and, hence, it brought premium prices in the United States.¹⁵

A second feature of the fard was that it kept for so long, up to one year, after picking. This was an important consideration in the early years of the trade when commerce was dependent on wind and sail. The fard was alleged to be the only variety of date that could survive the long journey between the Gulf and the United States.¹⁶ Of course, the advent of steam and the opening of the Suez Canal served to lessen the importance of this characteristic, but the cheaper freight rates allowed the date to compete with the North African varieties. A final factor that contributed to the suitability of the fard for the American market was that it began to mature in late August and was, therefore, available for early shipment.

Dates were usually bought on the tree by the Indian exporters either through agents in the interior or brokers, both of whom were paid by the extension of goods on credit. It was not uncommon for Indian merchants, even the Hindus, to travel to the Samā'il valley to purchase dates directly,¹⁷ and an exporter might even purchase the pro-

duction of a certain number of palms for one or a number of years in advance.¹⁸ Capital was usually provided by the American importer in the form of a letter of credit deposited in a Bombay bank.¹⁹ There were no banks in Masqat.

With only two or three exporters operating in Masqat, there was a danger that the merchants would form a combination to control prices.²⁰ This appears to have happened, occasionally. In a 1907 letter to Ratansi Purshottam, William Hills mentioned that Gopalji Walji, who shipped to the Hills Brother Company of New York,²¹ and W.J. Towell, who was the agent for Arnold, Cheyney Company also of New York, had agreed to cooperate in their date purchases so as to keep the price down and corner the market. Hills encouraged Ratansi to join the combination. Ratansi replied that it was impossible to form a monopoly in Masqat as competition for the available dates was too great and advised Hills that it would be better to have the American buyers reach some sort of agreement.²² The stiff competition, both in Masqat and the United States and between Masqat and North Africa, kept prices fairly stable with most of the rise in price from US\$.01 in 1880 to US\$.04 a pound in 1910²³ attributable to the decline in the value of the Maria Teresa Dollar.²⁴

The date exporters operated packing factories in Maṭraḥ where the dates, which were brought to the coast by caravan from the interior, were sorted and repacked for the American market. The earliest exports were apparently in the same kinds of palm frond bags in which the 'Umānis had originally packed the dates.²⁵ However, the practice that was eventually adopted was for the American importer to supply wooden crates to be used for the shipments to the United States. All the exporters packed two grades of date. The poorer quality dates, those that had been broken or squashed, were mashed into large boxes for sale as the "solid mass of sticky dates" that required an ice pick to separate them. The higher grade, single dates, known locally as nuthur,²⁶ were layered into small packages and received special care.²⁷ The packing was generally done by women laborers who were paid by the box.²⁸

Conditions in these packing houses, as in the interior, were not always the most sanitary. The following description by Fairchild, even allowing for his obvious biases, is probably not far from the truth:²⁹

Dates are no doubt one of the stickiest, most difficult fruits in the world to keep clean, and the Persian Gulf varieties are perhaps particularly hard to pack in an attractive shape; but nevertheless the stories which one hears in the region of the conditions in the packing sheds and the personal uncleanness of the men, women and children who put up the dates are enough to

disgust a sensitive person and to prevent his ever eating packed dates again without having them washed...The sale of dates in America might fall off decidedly were it generally known how intimately the unwashed hands, bodies and teeth of the notably filthy Arabs often came into contact with the dates that are sold by every confectioner.

The American firms tried to eliminate the more obvious sources of contamination, the mashing of the dates into the crates by foot, by sending presses to their agents. Conditions were improved further when the American consuls instituted sanitation requirements and an inspection program.³⁰

Once the dates were packed, they were carried in barges to the steamships waiting in Masqat harbor for shipment to the United States. The first shipments of the year usually went in direct steamers chartered by the American importers. This insured rapid delivery of the large amounts of the fruit that were required for the beginning of the holidays. Later shipments, which usually continued to late December, were sent via the regular freight routes that connected Masqat with Bombay, London and New York.

If the available three years correspondence between Ratansi Purshottam and William Hills is any indication of the operation of the date trade, September and October were months of hectic activity in Matrah and anxiety in New York. The exporters were attempting furiously to meet

the deadlines imposed by their American partners to get as many dates packed as possible, using inferior varieties if necessary, for the first shipments so as to insure adequate quantities for the beginning of the holidays. The increased demand in Masqaṭ caused the prices to rise as brokers and speculators held back stocks in anticipation of the rush. The dealers in New York were worried lest they not receive sufficient quantities or the price be driven too high to allow sufficient profits. Once the first shipments had been made, the pressure would decrease somewhat until the realization hit that the American market was saturated or demand low or date prices too high, and the Masqaṭi exporters would be advised to sell off their surpluses. Once the season came to an end in December, there would be a period of quiet inactivity as the exporters tallied their accounts and submitted them to New York. The accounts would be settled with some modifications by the American dealers and the expected complaints about the quality of the dates sent, losses due to late or insufficient shipments and the high prices paid for dates. Finally, plans would be set for the upcoming season.³¹

It is difficult to determine the actual monetary value of the date exports to the United States. Figures are available from both British and American consular offi-

cials in Masqat. British officials submitted detailed trade returns with their annual agency report, and from 1884 on included in that report a separate entry for the dates exported to the United States. American consular reports begin with the opening of the consulate in 1881, but because of the lax nature of early consular officials, especially before a reorganization of the service in the twentieth century, the reports are scanty. Fortunately, we do have comparative sets of data for the years 1905-13, which are presented in Figure 7.

These figures make for very interesting analysis and have a much wider significance than simply the American date trade. The American and British figures show almost exactly opposite trends. This is most evident in the period 1908-11 when American records show a steady increase to a peak of US\$154,000. The British figures, on the other hand, show a steady decline in the trade. American statistics are by far the more accurate as they are based on the consular invoices that were required by the exporters to facilitate entry of 'Umāni dates into the United States. The accuracy of these invoices is supported by the facts that they served as documentation for the exporter when he sought payment from the American importer³² and that the consul was stationed in Masqat to insure the accuracy of the declared amounts and value.

Figure 7: British and American Date Export
 Figures 1905-1913³³

<u>Year</u>	<u>British</u>	<u>American</u>
1905	13,000	\$ 59,704
1906	16,000	\$130,022
1907	43,200	\$105,137
1908	40,213	\$ 52,485
1909	38,800	\$ 64,523
1910	31,459	\$ 94,082
1911	36,399	\$154,662
1912	33,307	\$121,410
1913	49,166	\$111,336

British records, though, were figures supplied by the superintendent of the sultān's customs house. Since there were no duties on exports, accurate statistics were not kept, and the figures are strictly estimates. Despite the fact that nearly every British official in Masqat has stated this fact in the trade reports,³⁴ both bureaucrats and historians have persisted in using the figures to support their arguments about economic conditions in Masqat.³⁵ Any interpretation based on British figures is as meaningless as the figures themselves; they do not even help to establish trends.

From the irregular figures available in American trade records and consular reports, the following general picture of date exports can be drawn. The trade began to

assume its importance in the 1870's and really took off during the 1880's when the trade had an annual average of over US\$100,000.³⁶ In 1889 exports plunged to a low of US\$12,000 and remained depressed throughout the 1890's.³⁷ This decline is attributable, at least in part, to the political disturbances that plagued 'Umān during the decade, such as the 1895 attack on Masqaṭ by 'Umāni tribesmen unhappy with the sultān's interference in 'Umāni affairs. However, some consideration must also be given to the economic depression that struck the United States in the 1890's, especially following the Panic of 1893 and the Silver Campaign Depression.³⁸ Masqaṭ's entry into the international market did have its dangers; the country became more susceptible to world market fluctuations than had previously been the case. The trade did pick up again during the first decade of the twentieth century, reaching new highs just before the outbreak of World War I.

Of greater interest than the trends just discussed is the impact of the date trade on the economy of 'Umān in general and Masqaṭ in particular. The export of fard dates was essentially a new market for the 'Umāni plantation owner. The date could not be dried and was, therefore, not exported to India. The fard was also of minimal value locally as it was only one, and not a

very good one at that, of a great many varieties of wet date.³⁹ The opening of the American market, then turned out to be a great boon to the Samā'il date growers who found that they could sell all that they could harvest.⁴⁰ Their earnings on the date harvest amounted to about 80% of the annual export value.⁴¹ The growers responded to this economic stimulus by planting more and more fard palms.⁴²

The export of dates to the United States also had an impact on the economic situation in Masqaṭ and Maṭraḥ, the center of the industry. The operations of the sorting and packing factories of Maṭraḥ have already been described but not their economic contribution. The unpacking, sorting and repacking of the dates for the American market required that the exporter hire a work force for the date packing season, which ran from mid-August to early December or about a hundred days. From the records of Ratansi Purshottam it is possible to reconstruct the following daily payroll for one season:

Figure 8: Average Daily Payroll for the 1912
Date Season: Ratansi Purshottam⁴³

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Wage</u>
1 carpenter foreman	MT\$ 1.25
7 carpenters (@ MT\$.75)	MT\$ 5.25
1 woman supervisor	MT\$.66

24 servants (@ MT\$.30)	MT\$ 7:20
women packers	MT\$21.00
porters	MT\$ 2.50
water carriers	MT\$ 1.50

Aside from these wages, Ratansi also provided holiday gifts and incurred other local expenses, such as boat hire, weighing and the loading of the steamers. In all, about 13% of the value of the annual export was returned to the economy of Masqat and Maṭraḥ in wages and gifts.

Two observations can be made about the export of dates to the United States and the effect of these exports on the economy of Masqat. First, it does represent an effort by the Indian merchants to solve the port's economic problems through the adaptation of a traditional product to a new market. It is difficult to measure the success of that effort in monetary terms, although it is significant that the United States was, after India, the second largest importer of 'Umāni goods and the only foreign market for 'Umāni goods.⁴⁴ Secondly, and more importantly, the American date trade profits benefitted many more people than any previous mercantile activity. 'Umān has always exported dates to India and the Indian Ocean basin through Maṭraḥ and Masqat. That trade, however, benefitted only the grower, who did the packing

himself, the exporter and the government, which collected zakah on the dates. This is fairly typical of Masqat's trade as a whole, especially under the Āl Bū Sa'īd. Masqat was a transfer point with little need for support industries to service the trade, such as the date packing houses. Goods were simply unloaded and reloaded. The ruler, the principal merchant of the port, and his few agents profitted from the trade, but those profits did not filter down to the populace. The American date trade, in contrast, did return money to at least a portion of the local population. For many people, if not most, this was the only wage labor available to supplement their subsistence gardening, fishing and handicrafts. This is especially true for women. In busy years demand for laborers was so high (on one day in September 1912 Ratansi Purshottam employed over a hundred people⁴⁵) that women packers had to be brought from Baluchistan.⁴⁶ While the amounts involved were not great, they were significant for, for the first time, the benefits of Masqati commerce were reaching a far wider segment of the population.

Date exports were not the only means by which the Indian merchants contributed to the expansion of the Masqati economy, as well as to their own prosperity. During the 1880's and especially in the 1890's and the first decades of the twentieth century, Masqat became the cen-

ter of the arms trade for the Indian Ocean/Arabian Gulf area. Indian merchants in Masqat played a prominent role in the development of this trade.

Much has already been written about the arms trade in the Arabian Gulf and Masqat.⁴⁷ The trade was of great concern to the British who feared that the arms would most likely be used against them. This concern is reflected in most of the previous work on the trade and the implications of that policy on inter-European affairs. The significance of Masqat to these studies lies in that the port was the scene of serious Anglo-French rivalry. European affairs are not of concern here. Much more important to this study are the factors that brought the arms trade to Masqat and the impact of that trade on the economy of the town.

Although, as mentioned above, the history of the Arabian Gulf arms trade has been presented in the works of Lorimer, Landen and Busch, a brief outline of events will serve to clarify the discussion that follows. The arms trade originally developed as a branch of the East African slave trade. American and European arms and ammunition would be exchanged for slaves, and then the weapons would be used by the Africans to obtain more slaves. There also existed a small market for arms in the Arabian Gulf, Afghanistan and Baluchistan. In the early years of the

trade, then, Zanzibar served as the primary distribution center with secondary points at Bushire and Masqat.

Attempts to abolish the slave trade, beginning in the 1820's, did discourage arms sales in East Africa, and the focus slowly shifted to the Gulf and Afghanistan. The latter became much more important as a market for weapons than had previously been the case due to the increased pressures that were being exerted on the Afghan frontiers by both the Russian and British Indian governments. British concerns about the flow of arms to Afghanistan emerged when relations between Delhi and Kabul became strained in the 1870's, reaching a peak during the second Afghan War (1878-1881). British authorities began to fear that western arms would turn "hardy warriors, poorly equipped into hardy warriors, well equipped."⁴⁸ Pressures were exerted on the Persian government to end Bushire's role in the arms trade. The shah complied in July 1881 by banning all imports of arms and ammunition into Persian territory.

Despite the Persian ban, arms continued to flow through Bushire to Afghanistan throughout the 1880's. The British showed little concern for the traffic, and Lorimer has observed that the number of rifles imported was very small.⁴⁹ Indeed, British officials along the Afghan frontier did have difficulties finding any weapons that

were identifiably imports from the Arabian Gulf.⁵⁰

A potentially crippling blow to the arms trade occurred in 1890 when an international congress convened in Brussels, Belgium for the purpose of discussing the slave trade. Incorporated in the General Act of the Brussels Conference, which was ratified by the principal European powers in 1892, was an article banning all arms exports to territories below the 20th north parallel. The Zanzibari arms merchants, their supplies cut off, were out of business. However, during the next two decades the arms sales in the Arabian Gulf flourished as never before, and Masqat, lying a comfortable four degrees north of the prohibited zone, became the new center of the traffic in weapons.

Masqat's emergence as the principal entrepot for the arms trade has been attributed to the fact that the sultān had commercial agreements with England, France and the United States that prohibited the ban of any item of import or export.⁵¹ The arms merchants were protected by international law. The development of the arms trade is seen, thus, as occurring by default with little or no effort on the part of the Masqati merchants. Furthermore, Europeans are depicted as playing a prominent role in the development of the market.

This is not an adequate, or accurate, explanation of

the phenomenon. After all, the French continued to sell arms at Jibuti despite the Brussels agreement, and that port could have served equally well as an alternative to Zanzibar for the distribution of arms. A more satisfactory explanation of Masqaṭ's development lies in that the merchants of the town were faced with an economic crisis that required development of new markets and their commercial experience facilitated entrance into the arms trade.

It is probably no coincidence that the rise of the arms trade in Masqaṭ occurred concurrently with a serious decline in date exports to the United States. The Indian merchants were in need of either an alternative market for dates or a new commodity for their traditional Indian Ocean/Arabian Gulf market if they were to continue to conduct business profitably in Masqaṭ. There were no new markets for dates, but the Afghans wanted arms and ammunition. The Masqaṭi merchants, encouraged by the sultān's commercial agreements, which secured imports of arms from the west, set about to develop that market.

The success of the Masqaṭi merchants in the arms trade is attributable to three factors: their traditional ties with Zanzibar, traditional ties with Afghanistan and existing contacts with western businesses. Mercantile relations between Masqaṭ and Zanzibar were close despite the political differences that existed between the two

Āl Bū Sa'īd states. The commercial community of Zanzibar was dominated by Kutchi Bhattias,⁵² many with relatives in Masqaṭ. When it came time for the transfer of arms stocks following the Brussels agreement, the weapons logically went to Masqaṭ rather than one of the other Gulf ports, where Sindi Bhattias were dominant, or even Jibuti, which was a French port. Furthermore, the Zanzibari arms merchants had contacts with European arms merchants and manufacturers and could assist their Masqaṭi colleagues in establishing their own contacts.

A second factor that contributed to Masqaṭ's predominance in the arms trade was the historical ties that existed between the port and Afghanistan. Commercial contacts had first developed under the Portuguese and were then encouraged by Ḥamad b. Sa'īd.⁵³ Even after the decline of Āl Bū Sa'īd fortunes, the many pilgrims that sailed to Hijāz in 'Umāni ships and the Khojah merchants from Hyderabad, Sind, who had settled in Maṭraḥ insured continuing contacts.⁵⁴ While the traditional trade route via the Indus River could not be utilized because of British opposition to the arms trade, a few weapons did manage to reach Afghanistan through Karachi.⁵⁵ The main traffic went, however, through the sultān's possession, Gwadur, on the Makran coast.

Finally, the Masqaṭi merchants, as a result of their

date exports to the United States, had experience with western business practices. This experience was lacking in all the other Gulf ports. It not only facilitated the entry of the Indian merchants into the arms trade, it also provided them with references other than their Zanzibari partners.⁵⁶

With these factors working to their advantage, the Masqati merchants began to exploit the arms market in the Gulf and Afghanistan. The Indian role in this development must be emphasized. Published accounts of the arms trade tend to leave the impression that it was the European firms that deserve the credit or onus, depending on one's outlook, for making Masqat the center of the arms trade in the Gulf. However, Goguyer, Kevorkian and A. and T. Malcolm came to Masqat only after Ratansi Purshottam, Muhammad Fadl, Gopalji Walji and Damodar Dharamsi and others had established the market.⁵⁷ Not insignificantly, these Indian merchants are the same ones that had helped develop the American date export market, and they began to divert their attention from the arms trade back to the date trade when the American market revived at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The basic operation of the arms trade has been adequately described by other authors.⁵⁸ The arms were purchased from European firms, which shipped them to Masqat.

There, the arms were unloaded and stored in warehouses where Arab and Afghan customers came to buy. Once sold, the arms were loaded into dhows for shipment up the Gulf or to southern Iran from where they were transported overland to Afghanistan.

This trade was, in many ways, very similar to that under the early Āl Bū Sa'īd rulers. The great profits that came to the port benefitted a very small segment of the population, essentially the merchants and, to a lesser extent, the government, which raised tariffs on arms and ammunition to 6% despite treaty provisions that limited duties to 5%. The business, unlike the date trade, required no support services and provided few employment opportunities for the sultān's subjects.

Competition in Masqaṭ among the various dealers was rife. British records report that working agreements were established among some arms merchants, but this was the exception rather than the rule.⁵⁹ The greatest cause of competition was the product itself. The principal weapon offered for sale in Masqaṭ was the Martini-Henry carbine. However, the name Martini-Henry described a wide range of rifles as nearly every European firm made its own Martini model. The Arab and Afghan buyers were able to differentiate among the various makes and preferred certain models over others.

An excellent example of this is in the correspondence of Ratansi Purshottam. Ratansi purchased arms from the London merchant Schwarte and Hammer. Schwarte and Hammer had weapons made to order in Belgium and England and shipped to Masqat. In 1906 Ratansi requested that Schwarte and Hammer deliver "LaFrancotte" Martinis. Schwarte and Hammer refused, explaining trademarks to the Banyan. Ratansi was, however, adamant in his desire to obtain "LaFrancotte" rifles. His attempts to obtain the weapon included requesting that Schwarte and Hammer provide rifles with similar markings (slightly different arrangement of numbers and trademark), a letter to LaFrancotte and to LaFrancotte's London agent. All failed, but Ratansi continued to plague Schwarte and Hammer with requests for minute design changes designed to secure Arab and Afghan buyers. Ratansi was not the only Masqati arms merchant who sought to purchase arms from a more successful competitor's supplier. Even Schwarte and Hammer received requests from other Masqati dealers seeking arms. Of course, the arms merchants in Masqat received a steady flow of offers and brochures from European dealers and manufacturers describing every sort of weapon.⁶⁰

Opposition to the arms trade was strongest from the British authorities in India, who were concerned with

the flow of arms not only to Afghanistan but to 'Umān where they could be used against their ally the sultān. The first attempt to at least control the flow of arms came in 1898 when all British subjects and protected persons in Masqaṭ were required to register all arms transactions. The Indians circumvented the order by conducting their arms business through Arab agents. The regulations actually served to aggravate the situation for French, Armenian and other foreign dealers started to locate in Masqaṭ, hoping to benefit from the restrictions imposed on the British dealers that did not pertain to them. The British authorities, preferring that any profits accrue to British merchants and manufacturers, did not administer the regulations very diligently.⁶¹

British attempts to abolish the trade continued through diplomatic channels. There was little that the Indian merchant could do in the face of British opposition to the trade. Most gave way to the foreign merchants that crowded the port, devoting more attention to the American date market. However, British subjects did remain active but did make attempts to insure that their losses, should the traffic be banned without notice, would be minimal. An example of this is the action taken by Ratansi Purshottam when the Brussels Conference was reconvened in 1907 to reconsider the arms trade. Ratansi

sought to protect his interests by obtaining an insurance policy that would have covered the value of any arms that were in transit at the time of a ban on imports. Schwarte and Hammer's insurance broker would not write a policy.⁶² By the time that the trade was effectively abolished in 1912,⁶³ most of the Indian merchants were no longer involved in the trade and had disposed of their stocks of arms.⁶⁴

Both the date and arms trade had a much wider significance than the profits that they brought to the Indian merchants of Masqat. Of course, the adoption of a new market, in the case of date exports to the United States, and a relatively new product, arms and ammunition, serves to show the flexibility of the Indians in adapting to changing conditions, an ability that has been questioned by some.⁶⁵ This is further demonstrated by the use of some of the benefits of modern technology, such as the telegraph, that the merchants adopted with a vengeance. Among these must be included the steamship that brought arms to Masqat and carried dates to the United States.

The impact of the steamship on the Indian Ocean trade after 1856 has been discussed in some detail by Robert Landen, who saw this intrusion of modern technology as a destructive influence on Masqati commerce as the faster, cheaper transport offered by the steamship re-

sulted in a loss of jobs for 'Umāni seamen.⁶⁶ This argument is based on British statistics which show a decline in the number of sailing ships that called at Masqaṭ while the number of steamships increased. There are a number of problems involved with these statistics.

In the first place, the shipping statistics that do exist apply strictly to Masqaṭ and were supplied to the British by customs officials who were more concerned with imports than ships. Furthermore, Maṭraḥ and not Masqaṭ was the principal port for "native" craft. Even so, the number of steamers that called at Masqaṭ never equalled the number of sailing ships before World War I.⁶⁷

A second problem is that there is no indication of what is meant by a sailing ship. The term is not defined in the administrative reports. It seems as fair an assumption that these were European and American sailing ships that were being replaced by steamers rather than 'Umāni "country craft."

The third, and most serious, problem concerns the goods that those steamers were carrying, which raises the question of whether or not the steamships were taking trade from 'Umāni ships. That seems not to be the case. Lorimer has pointed out that during the first decade of the twentieth century most of the trade within the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean region was still carried in "native"

craft.⁶⁸ Furthermore, a British official in Masqaṭ has stated that if it had not been for dates to America and the arms trade, which came from Europe, steamships would never have called at the port anyway.⁶⁹ The impression is that the steamships served the western trade rather than competed with 'Umāni seamen in the Indian Ocean.

If the steamship had any impact on the 'Umāni economy, it was generally beneficial. As already mentioned, the fard was originally desirable because of its ability to survive the long voyage by sailing ship to the United States. Steam navigation cut down on the importance of this characteristic and the fard might have disappeared from the American market to be replaced by North African varieties had not the cheaper freight rates kept it competitive. Cheap freight rates might also explain why Masqaṭi arms merchants were able to compete with those of Jibuti.

The increasing number of steamships that called at Masqaṭ, especially during the early years of the twentieth century when the arms trade flourished, encouraged the Indian merchants to expand their business interests to the west and lessen their dependence on the Indian market. There are many examples in the correspondence of Ratansi Purshottam of his attempts to obtain supplies of Western goods. In 1907 Ratansi requested information

from William Hills on American merchants who could supply him with coffee, sugar, wheat, rice, arms and gold.⁷⁰

The Banyan also sought information on purchasing pens, pencils, safety pins, stationary and textiles in London and tobacco and sugar from a German arms merchant.⁷¹

Ratansi was not only interested in obtaining European and American goods but also in exporting 'Umāni goods to Europe. He asked Schwarte and Hammer for information on a London merchant who would be interested in importing dates.⁷²

These attempts by the Indian merchants to expand Masqat's commercial contacts came, like this study, to an end with the outbreak of World War I. The export of dates to the United States, the earliest extension of Masqati trade beyond the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean region, was seriously affected by the absence of shipping to transport the fruit, and the arms trade had already been halted by the British. Masqati contacts with Europe and American were terminated, and the Indian merchants awaited the end of the conflict and a resumption of trade.

Notes

1. J. Ovington, A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689, edited by H.G. Rawlinson, London, 1929, pp. 246-47.
2. The rulers of Masqaṭ seem never to have collected zakah in the interior, choosing rather to collect it on produce that was brought to market in Maṭraḥ or Masqaṭ. This is yet another indication that the ruler of Masqaṭ was not the ruler of 'Umān. The Indian merchants did not pay the tax but collected it for the government.
3. Personal communication from Dhanji Mulji, Managing Director of Khimji Ramdas Company of Masqaṭ.
4. See Chapter Five.
5. G. Bhagat, Americans in India, 1784-1860, New York, 1970, p. 33.
6. On the history of American commercial relations with the Indian Ocean see Bhagat; Clarence C. Clendenen and Peter Duignan, Americans in Black Africa Up to 1865, Stanford, 1964, pp. 15-44; and Auguste Tousaint, Early American Trade with Mauritius, Port Louis, 1954, passim.
7. W.S.W. Ruschenberger, Narrative of a Voyage Round the World During the Years 1835, 36 and 37, London, 1970 (reprint of 1838 edition), vol. 1, p. 137. Only one American ship had called at Masqaṭ in the seven years preceding the American embassy's visit in 1835.
8. Ibid., p. 136.
9. Daily Consular and Trade Reports, #307, December 31, 1912, Washington D.C., p. 1641.
10. Personal communication from Hajji Alī Sulṭān, the managing director of W.J. Towell Company.
11. Normal R. Bennett, "Americans in Zanzibar: 1825-1848," Essex Institute Historical Collections, vol. XCV, no. 3 (June, 1959), p. 241.
12. On the history of W.J. Towell Company, see chapter five, note 89.
13. Personal communication from Ranchordas Lalji, Ratansi Purshottam Company.

14. David Fairchild, The World Was My Garden: Travels of a Plant Explorer, New York and London, 1939, p. 230. Fairchild visited Masqat in February 1902 to examine the 'Umāni date industry.
15. There are a number of sources that have contributed to this discussion of the fard including David G. Fairchild, "Persian Gulf Dates and Their Introduction Into America," United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin, #54, Washington, DC., 1903; Paul B. Popenoe, The Date Palm, edited by Henry Field, Miami, 1973; Paul Popenoe, "The Home of the Fardh Date," The Monthly Bulletin of the State Commission of Horticulture, vol. III, No. 1 (January, 1914), Sacramento, California, pp. 9-19 (Popenoe visited Masqat and Samā'il in 1912), and Walter T. Swingle, "The Date Palm and Its Utilization in the Southwestern States," United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin, #53, Washington, D.C., 1904.
16. United States National Archives, Muscat Consular Records, Microfilm Publication T638, Louis Maquire to Charles Payson, Muscat, August 1, 1881.
17. Robert Landen, Oman Since 1856, Princeton, 1967, p. 142.
18. Popenoe, 1973, p. 72. This practice is technically illegal in Islamic law but there are a number of documents in the Ratansi Purshottam papers relating to advance purchases. The practice is confirmed by Ratansi's grandson, Ranchordas Lalji.
19. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, William Hills, Jr. to Rutunsee Purshottam, Muscat, June 13, 1906. For the 1906 season Hills advanced £3,000.
20. This is an interesting problem because there were conflicting pressures on the exporters. The American buyers, of course, wanted the price to remain as low as possible. This was actually opposed to the interests of the Indian merchant as he was paid a commission based on his actual costs. Therefore, he wanted prices to go up. If a monopoly had been formed, it would have benefitted not only the Indian exporters but also the growers, who would have received higher payments.
21. Hills Brothers is not to be confused with the cof-

fee company of the same name in San Francisco. The New York fruit importers were eventually purchased by Nabisco, which continues to market date products under the Hills Brothers brand name "Promedary." To further complicate matters, William Hills, Jr. broke with the company in 1906 to start his own importing company. His Masqati agent was Ratansi Purshottam.

22. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, William Hills, Jr. to Rutunsee Purshotum, New York, March 16, 1907, appendix, p. 207, and June 12, 1907, appendix, p. 217.
23. United States National Archives, Muscat Consular Records, Microfilm Publication T638, Louis Maquire to Charles Payson, Muscat, August 1, 1881 and Daily Consular and Trade Reports, #93, April 21, 1911, Washington, D.C., p. 312. This is the price paid to the exporters. The prices paid to growers was somewhat less, going from about \$0.01 to \$0.03, which ran slightly ahead of the decline in the value of the MT\$ which lost about half its value from \$0.87 in 1881 to \$0.45 in 1912.
24. Landen has presented a lengthy discussion of the problem of the decline of the value of the MT\$ and its impact on the 'Umāni economy on pages 128-31. His argument is that the drop in the value of the dollar, due to the declining value of silver, caused a flow of specie to India and resulted in serious cash shortages. Furthermore, imports became much more expensive while the value of 'Umān's exports declined. This flow of currency has not been adequately explained, and the assumption has been that specie was simply traded as a resource, in this case silver. It seems equally likely that trade figures in specie represent cash payments and that the flow of silver to India was a result of the imbalance of trade with India rather than a trade in silver. Of course, the value of 'Umāni exports did go up, as this discussion of the date trade clearly shows. Also to be considered is the fact that much of what Masqat imported was re-exported so that price rises did not actually affect the 'Umānis. For a discussion of this problem by a British official in Masqat who disagrees with the proposition that the fall in the value of the dollar was harmful, see India Office Records, Persian Gulf Residency, R/15/1/420, Hedgecock to Political Agent, Muscat,

Muscat, 12 January 1931.

25. United States National Archives, Muscat Consular Records, Microfilm Publication T638, Louis Maquire to Charles Payson, Muscat, August 1, 1881.
26. Ibid.
27. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, William Hills, Jr. to Rutunsee Purshotum, New York, March 16, 1907, appendix, p. 210, and Bance to Purshottam, Bassorah, 7 August 1908, appendix, p. 226.
28. Daily Consular and Trade Reports, #93, April 21, 1911, pp. 312-13, and #307, December 31, 1912, Washington, D.C., p. 1642.
29. Fairchild, 1903, p. 29.
30. United States National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Asia, Microfilm Publication M722, roll 7, Homer Brett to Secy of State, Muscat, May 3, 1912.
31. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, William Hills, Jr. to Rutunsee Purshotum, New York, March 23, 1908, appendix.
32. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, A.W. Bance to Ratansi Purshottam, Muscat, 1 July, 1906.
33. Figures for American date imports are available in the series Commercial Relations of the United States, Washington, D.C.; Daily Consular and Trade Reports, Washington, D.C. and Monthly Consular and Trade Reports, Washington, D.C. British figures are available in Diplomatic and Consular Reports: Muskat, published annually after 1904 in Parliamentary Sessional Papers. Earlier trade figures are available in Administrative Report of the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Maskat Political Agency published as part of the series Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, Calcutta.
34. Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, No. CXXXVIII, "Administration Report of the Persian Gulf Residency and Maskat Political Agency for the Year 1876-77," Calcutta, 1877, p. 81; and Diplomatic and Consular

Reports #3415, Report for the Year 1904-05 on the Trade of Muskat, June 1905, London, p. 3.

35. See especially the Precis on Commerce and Communication in the Persian Gulf, 1801-1905, Calcutta, 1906 which contains a number of tables used to show the decline in trade. Landen made fairly heavy use of this data to support his argument that Masqat declined after 1856.
36. United States National Archives, Muscat Consular Reports, Microfilm Publication T638, Maquire to Payson, Muscat, August 1, 1881 and Monthly Consular and Trade Reports, #330, March 1908, Washington, D.C., 1908, p. 123.
37. Monthly Consular and Trade Report, *ibid.*, and Commercial Relations of the United States, Washington, D.C., 1897, p. 871, 1898, p. 874 and 1899, p. 1148.
38. See Charles Hoffmann, The Depression of the Nineties: An Economic History, Westport, Connecticut, 1907, pp. 159-66 for a general discussion on imports during this period. On the decline of the date imports, see William A. Taylor, "The Fruit Industry, and Substitution of Domestic Grown Fruits," Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., 1898. He states that the decline cannot be attributed to domestic production.
39. Popenoe, 1914, p. 12. It is interesting to note, though, that the fard was one of the most valuable dates in the country because it was exported. See the report by V.H.W. Dowson, who worked for Hills Brothers, in the India Office Records, Bahrain Political Agency, R/15/2/347, which reports that fard offshoots sold for double the price of other varieties.
40. Popenoe, 1914, p. 12. J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman and Central Arabia, Calcutta, 1908, vol. IIB, p. 1413.
41. This figure is based on a detailed account book for the 1912 date season that has survived in the Ratansi Purshottam papers.
42. Lorimer, 1915, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 295.
43. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, "Petty Charges Date

Account Book for the Season 1912 up to 31 December 1913." A list of prevailing wages for Masqat in the same year is available in Daily Consular and Trade Reports, #76, March 30, 1912, Washington, D.C., 1912, p. 1283.

44. The consular records from the British show the United States as the only importer of 'Umāni goods outside of the Indian Ocean. U.S. predominance as a foreign trading partner was displaced for a time in the 1890's and beginning of this century by European arms imports. See the Diplomatic and Consular Reports: Muskat.
45. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, Date Accounts for 1912.
46. Monthly Consular and Trade Reports, #322, July 1907, Washington, D.C., 1907, p. 150.
47. See especially Lorimer, "Appendix N: The Arms and Ammunition Traffic in the Gulfs of Persia and 'Oman," vol. 1, part 2, pp. 2556-93 and B.C. Busch, Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967, passim but especially Chapter IX, "Oman and the Arms Trade, 1905-16." Landen also has some material on the arms trade.
48. Busch, p. 271.
49. Lorimer, p. 2557-58.
50. C.H. Gabriel, Precis on the Arms Trade, Simla, 1904, pp. 13-15.
51. R.H. Thomas, Agreements Between the Honourable East India Company and the Native States in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, Bombay, 1851, pp. 333-40. For the implication of these treaties to the arms trade and negotiations concerning them see India Office Records, Political and Secret Department, L/PS/10/110.
52. On the Bhattias of Zanzibar, refer to Dungarsi Dharamsi Sampat, "Bhattia Sanstannono Itiyas," Bhattia Yuvak, Jat 1989 - Magshar 1990.
53. See chapter three.
54. See chapter five.

55. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 2, p. 2556.
56. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, William Hills, Jr. to Rutunsee Purshotum, New York, March 16, 1907, appendix, p. 212, mentions that Ratansi had requested information on American arms dealers. Also, in Moritz Magnus, Jr. to Rutunsee Purshotem, Hamburg, August 15, 1908, appendix, p. 242, Magnus mentions that another Hamburg firm has requested a reference on Ratansi.
57. Goguyer was the first European to actually open an office in Masqat and that did not occur until March 1899. Ratansi was the second leading arms merchant in the Persian Gulf in the 1890's. Landen, p. 139.
58. See Lorimer, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 2556-93; Busch, pp. 270-303.
59. British officials listed three such combinations in 1910 at which time there were 46 different independent arms merchants in the city. India Office Records, Political and Secret Department, L/PS/10/101.
60. Material on this paragraph from the 1907 arms trade correspondence contained in the Ratansi Purshottam correspondence. During 1907 Ratansi received offers from seven different European arms dealers.
61. Lorimer, vol. 1, part 2, p. 2567.
62. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, Schwarte and Hammer to Rutnsee Purshotem, London, 16 April 1908, appendix, p. 238. The reaction of the European arms merchants to the reconvened Brussels conference is very interesting. Moritz Magnus, Jr. to Rutansi Purshotam, Hamburg, May 22, 1908, appendix, p. 240, contains the following observation.
- We have carefully noted what you are writing about the conference held in this moment in Belgium, but we rather think your apprehensions are going too far. There are so many interests connected to the Arms Trade, & English are to good businessmen, as to spoil this important commerce of which even their subjects are taking profit of in a considerable manner.
63. On the abolition of the Masqat arms trade, see Busch, pp. 292-302.

64. "Statistics Regarding the Masqat Arms Traffic (Revised)," Simla, 1909, p. 15, India Office Records, Political and Secret Department, L/PS/10/101 shows that Indian merchants were being replaced by Europeans and Baluchis.
65. Landen, p. 144.
66. Ibid., pp. 79-86.
67. See Persian Gulf Administrative Reports and Diplomatic and Consular Reports: Muscat for statistics on shipping.
68. Lorimer, vol. 2B, pp. 1186-87.
69. India Office Records, Persian Gulf Residency, R/15/1/417, Wingate to Political Resident, Muscat, 26 November 1920.
70. Ratansi Purshottam Papers, William Hills, Jr. to Rutunsee Purshotam, New York, March 16, 1907, appendix, p. 212.
71. Ibid., Schwarte and Hammer to Ratansi Purshottam, London, June 7, 1907, appendix, p. 231; Moritz Magnus, Jr. to Ratansi Purshotem, Hamburg, August 15, 1908, appendix, p. 242, and September 4, 1908, appendix, p. 243, and December 18, 1908, appendix, p. 245.
72. Ibid., Schwarte and Hammer to Ratansi Purshottam, London, 27 September 1907, appendix, p. 236.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

In 1785 Ḥamad b. Sa'īd Āl Bū Sa'īdī established an independent state in Masqaṭ. This action offered two advantages over the unified 'Umāni state that was ruled by his father, the imām Sa'īd b. Aḥmad. First, it permitted Ḥamad and his successors (all entitled sayyid) to continue to profit from the trade of 'Umān. Although 'Umān is traditionally divided between the semi-isolated mountainous interior and the cosmopolitan coastal plain, this division is arbitrary and has served only to obscure the strong economic ties that unite 'Umān. The basis of the 'Umāni economy was date agriculture and some handicraft industries. However, most of life's necessities, including rice, coffee and natural resources for 'Umān's industries, cotton and metals, had to be imported. These goods came through the international port that has historically been situated on the 'Umāni coast. This port served not only 'Umān but was also an entrepot for goods to and from India, Africa and the Arabian Gulf. 'Umān was dependent on that international port. Despite its political independence, then, Masqaṭ, which became the entrepot during the sixteenth century, monopolized the trade of 'Umān.

The second advantage of Masqaṭi independence from 'Umān freed the sayyid from the tribal opposition that

plagued every ruler of 'Umān who retained control of the international port. 'Umān has an extremely fragmented tribal settlement pattern which has resulted in a long history of inter-tribal conflict. Two institutions emerged out of this potential for tribal conflict that lessened the risk of actual fighting: the tribal confederation and the election of a supra-tribal ruler. The entire country was divided into two confederations that were able to maintain a fairly stable balance of power. However, in those situations when civil war threatened to engulf the entire country, such as was the case in the eighth, sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the tribes have united to elect a single ruler, known as an imām. The imāmate was, as the name implies, theoretically a religious office. It traces its origins to the dominant religious sect in 'Umān, Ibādism. Despite this religious guise, however, the functions of the imām were nothing more than those of the tribal shaikh. The office was clearly designed to insure the continued existence of the tribal hierarchy and not supplant it.

Difficulties have arisen in this system because the unification of 'Umān and imāmate control of the international port has provided the funds for the imām to attempt to assert his control over the tribes. An excellent example of this is the case of the first two Āl Bū

Sa'īd rulers of 'Umān, Aḥmad b. Sa'īd and his son Sa'īd b. Aḥmad, Ḥamad's father. Aḥmad b. Sa'īd was elected to the imāmate in 1753 after having established 'Umāni control over Masqaṭ. He immediately set out to dominate the tribes via a mercenary army made possible by the wealth from Masqaṭ's trade. The result was tribal opposition. Aḥmad was able to overcome this opposition, but his son and successor was not so successful. 'Umān disintegrated into tribal units despite Sa'īd's continued efforts to suppress the tribal leaders. Ḥamad's independence removed him from these difficulties. The tribes were not opposed to an independent Masqaṭ as long as the leader of the port did not interfere in their affairs.

For the 35 years following the establishment of Masqaṭ's independence in 1785, Ḥamad b. Sa'īd and his successors adopted an aggressive military policy that included at least tacit support of piratical activities in the Arabian Gulf and attacks on the island of Bahrain while ignoring events in 'Umān. Traditionally, these activities have been viewed as being at least disruptive to Gulf trade and at worst irresponsible on the part of the sayyids of Masqaṭ. In fact, these actions were a rational commercial policy designed to maximize the trade of Masqaṭ by establishing control over Gulf markets and eliminating competitors. Thus, under Ḥamad b. Sa'īd,

the Masqati fleet occupied strategic ports on either side of the Straights of Hurmūz. His successor Sultān b. Ahmad (1792-1804) continued this policy by expanding Masqati control over the Makran coast and Bandar 'Abbās. Sultān also supported various pirates in the Gulf and took no action against others, including the Qawāsīm of Rās al-Khaimah. The activities of these pirates kept non-Masqati shipping out of the Gulf and drove them to the protection of Masqat. Finally, Sultān began Masqati attempts to conquer Bahrain. The 'Utūb tribe of the island was the principal competition to Masqat in the Gulf.

In contrast to this activity in the Gulf, Sultān remained virtually inactive in 'Umān where the Sa'ūdis of central Arabia were launching periodic attacks and had succeeded in occupying the country by 1801. Sultān's lack of concern with these developments is very much in keeping with his commercial interests. The trade of 'Umān had to go through Masqat no matter who was in control of the country. Masqati control of the country would not have increased Sultān's profits, only increased his expenses.

This point is most clearly demonstrated by the brief reign of Badr b. Saif Āl Bū Sa'idī (1804-07) who abandoned the commercial policy in favor of establishing Masqati

control over the tribes of 'Umān. The result was disastrous for the Masqatī economy. Military needs and tribal subsidies drove the treasury into bankruptcy while Masqat's competitors in the Gulf increased their share of the Gulf trade.

Badr was succeeded by Sa'īd b. Sulṭān (1807-56) who readopted the commercial policy in an attempt to reassert Masqat's dominance in the Gulf. He was doomed to fail. The inattention to Gulf affairs during the reign of Badr had enabled the Qawāsim to increase their strength dramatically, and they had begun to ally with the 'Utūb. Furthermore, Qawāsim attacks on British shipping had raised British concerns for Gulf security, and Bombay was determined to suppress all acts of piracy. Sa'īd allied with the British in an attack on Rās al-Khaimah which succeeded in destroying the Qawāsim fleet in 1820. However, the British attack on the Qawāsim was only a prelude to a general British policy in the Gulf which ended all piracy and established a virtual British protectorate over the Gulf states, including Bahrain.

British intervention into Gulf affairs ended all hopes that Sa'īd b. Sulṭān had of dominating the Arabian Gulf. The result was a switch in Sa'īd's activities from the Gulf to East Africa. Sa'īd's interest in East Africa was similar to the Gulf. East Africa was an important

market for Indian textiles and rice as well as 'Umāni dates. Furthermore, the coast supplied a number of goods of value to the Gulf and India, including ivory and slaves. Sa'īd sought to insure that Masqaṭ held a monopoly over this trade. The actions of the new African policy were not dissimilar to those followed in the Gulf. Access to the coast was secured by establishing Masqaṭi control over the ports of southern 'Umān and the Somali coast in 1821. Then followed the occupation of the ports on the Swahili coast. The greatest threat to this policy was the Mazārī' of Mombasa, and Sa'īd sought to eliminate their competition by a number of attacks on the city and the utilization of pirates to attack Mazārī' shipping.

The African policy, like the Gulf policy, did not succeed. British opposition to the slave trade, which became effective in the late 1820's, disrupted that market and the Mazārī' demanded almost constant attention. Furthermore, Zanzibar offered much greater economic possibilities than Masqaṭ as the East African island was well watered and fertile. Sa'īd's experiments with plantation agriculture, which focused on the clove, had been successful and offered the promise of greater trade than barren Masqaṭ. In 1830 Sa'īd abandoned Masqaṭ in favor of Zanzibar.

Thirty-five years of attempts to maximize the trade of

Masqat had met with only moderate success. The few bits of evidence that we have about the trade of the port do not support the view that it flourished. Estimates on the value of the trade are unreliable but show a peak during the reign of Sultān and a decline thereafter. More importantly, however, descriptions of the town remain consistently bad. If fortunes were made, they were not spent in Masqat. Also along these lines, the development of Zanzibar by Sa'īd b. Sultān between 1830-56 has been depicted as being beneficial to Masqat. That is not entirely so. In the first place, Sa'īd's attentions turned away from Masqat and the Gulf, and toward the west, especially the United States. Furthermore, Masqat, under a regent appointed by Sa'īd, became increasingly involved in 'Umāni affairs while commerce was ignored.

In the absence of governmental concern for commercial affairs, the Indian merchant community of Masqat began to assume control of the trade of the port. Hindu merchants, known as Banyans, had first come to Masqat from Sind as junior partners to the Portuguese. They continued to flourish under the 'Umāni dynasty that expelled the Portuguese in 1650. However, political and economic dislocations in Sind arising out of the establishment of an intolerant Muslim dynasty and the more aggressive commercial policy of Ḥamad b. Sa'īd and his successors all

served to contribute to Sindi decline in Masqat. Khojahs from Sind and other Hindus from Kutch began to fill the void left by the Sindis. These new groups did not compete with the sayyids but supported their commercial activities by serving as agents or craftsmen. The Kutchis allied themselves with Sa'īd b. Sulṭān, and when he moved his capital to Zanzibar, it was they, and not the regent, who assumed control of the financial administration of Masqat as they obtained the farm on customs revenues.

The regency period (1830-56) set the pattern for the remainder of the century. The ruler of Masqat, after 1862 called sulṭān, continued to interfere in tribal affairs and the Indian merchants controlled Masqat's moribund trade. This situation culminated in 1868 with the election of an imām by the 'Umāni tribes and the overthrow of the Āl Bū Sa'īd dynasty. In many ways the reign of the imām, 'Azzān b. Qais (1868-71), was therapeutic as his strict religious policies drove many Indian merchants from Masqat. However, at the same time, a number of young Indian merchants, the most notable being Ratansi Purshotam, became established in the port. It was the younger merchants that assumed control of Masqat's trade after the restoration of the Āl Bū Sa'īd in 1871.

The significance of this new group of merchants, known locally as shet, is that they instituted a new policy

designed to lessen Masqaṭi dependence on the Indian Ocean/Arabian Gulf trading network. This policy included the adaptation of a traditional product, the 'Umāni date, to a new market, the United States. Exports of dates to the United States had begun as early as the 1840's but did not reach an important level until the 1870's when the United States became the second largest consumer of the product. When this market slumped in the 1890's, due to the combined affects of disruptions in the interior of 'Umān and an economic depression in the United States, the Indian merchants turned to the arms trade, a successful adaptation of a new product to their traditional markets. Although the British eventually intervened to end the lucrative arms trade, the contacts with western businesses permitted a greater diversification of Masqaṭi commerce.

Expansion of Masqaṭi commerce outside the Indian Ocean also meant that trade was more susceptible to world economic conditions. This is best demonstrated by the effect of World War I on Masqaṭ's trade. Western contacts were ended and a shortage of shipping, which was critical to the Indian commercial policy for it carried dates to the United States, resulted in a wartime lull.

The general conclusion that can be drawn from this evidence for steady commercial activity at Masqaṭ during

the half-century preceeding World War I is that the supposed economic decline of the port did not occur. These findings are impossible to quantify as the available trade figures are unreliable, but the existence of a large merchant class and the financial successes of a number of these merchants does lend support to the assertion. The Indian entrepreneurs are in marked contrast to the impoverished Āl Bū Sa'īd royal family which had abandoned commerce in favor of politics. It was the royal family that suffered the decline that has heretofore been attributed to Masqat. The trade of the port did not dry up, it simply changed hands.

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I Oral Sources

The major sources for the histories of the various merchant families of Masqat are the recollections of family members. During 1976-77 the author interviewed the following individuals in 'Umān (unless otherwise noted).

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- 2) Hajji Amin Malallah, Habib Murad Company, Matrah
- 3) Danji Mulji, Khimji Ramdas Company, Muscat
- 4) Gopaldas Khimji, Khimji Ramdas Company, Muscat (interview conducted in Bombay, India)
- 5) Gulab Sampat, Sampat Company, Matrah
- 6) Kamal Sultan, W.J. Towell Company, Matrah
- 7) Meghji Laxmidas, Lakhoo Company, Matrah
- 8) Hajji Muhammad Musa, Matwani Company, Matrah
- 9) Mulraj Dharamsi, Dharamsi Nansi Company, Muscat
- 10) Premji Jamnadas, Bhimani Company, Matrah (interview conducted in Kutch-Mandvi, India)
- 11) Ranchordas Lalji Purecha, Ratansi Purshottam Company, Matrah
- 12) Virji Purshottam, Purshottam Damodar Company, Matrah

II Manuscript Sources

A Ratansi Purshottam Papers

The ancestors of Ratansi Purshottam, the prominent Banyan merchant of the nineteenth century, have retained a large number of business records dating

from the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries. These documents are extremely valuable to the historian interested in both the domestic economy of Masqat and 'Umān and international trade. The papers include:

- 1) Correspondence with European and American merchants and shipping companies

These papers contain detailed information on the arms and date trade. Of special interest is a daily account book for the 1912 date season. Selected letters from this correspondence have been transcribed in the appendix to this study. All the letters in this collection are in English.

- 2) Daily account books

The accounts were kept in Gujarati.

- 3) Loan agreements, mortgages and advance purchase agreements

This group of documents, all in Arabic, deal with the banking activities of the company.

- 4) Miscellaneous correspondence in Arabic and Gujarati

B India Office Records

Although the Records have been utilized heavily in earlier studies on 'Umān and the Arabian Gulf region, they remain of primary importance. It is not, however, until after 1867 that they become consistently reliable. This is because of the sporadic contacts between the Bombay Government, which was responsible for Gulf affairs, and Masqat. The po-

litical agency in Masqat was occupied for only fourteen years (1800-10 and 1840-43) during the period 1800-67, and most of the information received in Bombay was, at best, secondhand. The agency was occupied continually after 1867. Of particular use to this study were:

- 1) L/P&S/5,6,7,9,10,18-Political and Secret Department

For the years before 1867 these remain the most important source of information about Masqat in the Records.

- 2) R/15/1-Persian Gulf Residency Files

In January 1873 the Masqat Political Agency came under the administrative control of the Gulf Residency at Bushire. All correspondence between India and Masqat had to proceed through Bushire with the result that a great deal of material on the port is retained in these files.

- 3) R/15/6-Muscat Political Agency Files

These files are, obviously, of primary importance. Were they complete, the work of the researcher would be eased greatly. Unfortunately, through the years they have been weeded and material discarded with the resulting necessity of sorting through the Residency files and Political and Secret records for missing documents.

Documents on Masqat are also sprinkled through other files in the Records (a report on date agriculture in 'Umān is located in the Bahrain agency files (R/15/2)). Fortunately, the staff of the India Office Records is systematizing and subject listing the files.

C United States National Archives

American contacts with Masqat arose out of commercial interests in Sayyid Sa'id's East African territories, but American merchants eventually began trading with Masqat. By 1880 that trade became important enough to warrant the posting of a consular officer to Masqat. The consul's chief duty was to oversee commercial affairs, and reports filed by these officials between 1880 and 1915 are of some use. Information on Masqat can be found in:

1) Reports of Special Agents

Contains Edmund Roberts' report of his 1835 special embassy to Masqat.

2) Maskat Consular Records, 1880-1906

Includes letters from the consul in Masqat to the Department of State.

3) Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Asia, 1910-29

In 1906 the Department of State began a new filing system with incoming letters filed by subject rather than consular office.

III Published Primary Sources

A Arabic Chronicles

The writings of 'Umāni and other Arabian historians are the best sources for political developments in Masqat. The local histories that deal with the Al Bū Sa'id include:

- 1) Ibn Bishr, 'Uthmān b. 'Abd Allah, 'Unwān al-Majd fī Tārīkh Najd, Riyad, 1394 A.H.

Ibn Bishr was the court historian for the first Sa'ūdi state in central Arabia, and this work contains valuable information on Sa'ūdi relations with Masqat.

- 2) Al-Izkawi, Sirhān b. Sa'īd, Kitāb Kashf al-Ghumat al-Jāma' Li-Akhhār al-Umma, Bairut, 1977.

This work deals only briefly with the reigns of Ahmad b. Sa'īd, Sa'īd b. Ahmad and Hamad b. Sa'īd, but it is the earliest 'Umāni source for the history of the Āl Bū Sa'īd family.

- 3) Ibn Ruzaik, Humaid b. Muhammad, al-Fath al-Mubīn fī Sīrat al-Sada Āl Bū Sa'īdiyyīn, Masqat, 1977; also available in English translation by G. P. Badger, History of the Imams and Seyyids of 'Omān by Salil ibn Razik from A.D. 661-1856, London, 1871.

Ibn Ruzaik was a Masqati, and this work reflects his pro-Āl Bū Sa'īd bias. The manuscript was written in 1856.

- 4) Al-Sālimī, 'Abd Allah b. Humaid, Tuhfat al-A'yān bi-Sīrat Ahl 'Umān, 5th edition, Kuwait, 1974.

Al-Sālimī was considered to be the 'Umāni national historian and this work deals almost exclusively with events in the interior. It was written at the turn of the century.

B Governments of Bombay and India

Many official reports and other papers dealing with Masqat were published by the governments of India and Bombay Presidency. As with the original records stored at the India Office Library, these published documents must be used with care due to the many inaccuracies that occur in their pages. The pub-

lications that were especially valuable in preparing this study were:

- 1) Administrative Report on the Persian Gulf Residency and Maskat Political Agency, Calcutta, annually from 1875 to 1905.

These reports contain much valuable information on politics and trade. The trade reports appear to be quite authoritative, but those detailed figures are only rough estimates. Of special interest are the occasional reports on some aspect of 'Umāni history, geography and trade.

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Contains the texts of treaties between Masqat and India.

- 3) Aitken, E.H., ed., Gazetteer of the Province of Sind, Karachi, 1907.

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- 4) Campbell, James, ed., Bombay Presidency District Gazetteer, vol. V (Cutch, Palanpur and Wahi), Bombay, 1880.

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- 6) Precis on Arms Trade in the Persian Gulf, edited by C.H. Gabriel, Simla, 1904.
- 7) Precis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801-53, Calcutta, 1906.

- 8) Precis on Commerce and Communications in the Persian Gulf, 1801-1905, Simla, 1906.
- 9) Precis of Makran Affairs, edited by J.A. Saldanha, Simla, 1906.
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- 12) Precis on the Slave Trade in the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf, 1873-1905, Simla, 1906.
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- 16) Thomas, R.H., Agreements Between the Honorable East India Company and the Native States in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, Bombay, 1851.

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C Parliamentary Papers

- 1) Sessional Papers, Diplomatic and Consular Reports: Maskat.

Beginning in 1906, administrative and trade reports from Masqat were published separately. Despite the fact that these trade statistics were published by Parliament, they remain only rough estimates of the trade of Masqat and should be used with extreme care.

D United States Government

Occasional consular reports from Masqat are available in the following series:

- 1) Commercial Relations of the United States, Washington, D.C.
- 2) Daily Consular and Trade Reports, Washington, D.C.
- 3) Monthly Consular and Trade Reports, Washington, D.C.

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Appendix

Ratansi Purshottam Papers

The following are transcripts of selected letters from the personal papers of the prominent Masqati Banyan merchant Ratansi Purshottam. These letters were made available to the author by the heirs of Ratansi, Messrs. Ranchordas and Vimal Purecha of Matrah, Sultānate of 'Umān, who retain the originals. Photocopies of the letters have been donated to the National Library, Ministry of National Heritage in Masqat. Photocopies are also available from the author.

1. William Hills, Jr. to Mr. Rutunsee Purshotum,
New York, March 16, 1907.

Dear Sir:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your various letters and cables extending for the last two or three months, and I must sincerely apologize for not having replied to your letters as received and furthermore to this tardy response in detail, but the fact is as you may imagine, I have been exceedingly busy and in as much as no replies were imperatively required I have postponed answering you fully until the present.

I beg to confirm my letter to you of the 2d inst., respecting the matter of over-charge on landing the case-wood etc., and as soon as I hear from the American Consul,

William Coffin, Esq., I will write you further in the matter.

I trust you duly received the packages that were short delivered to you, or the equivalent value in cash. In the event of your not having done so, I will see what I can do in the matter of arranging a settlement at this end.

I will if possible this coming season try to arrange for the shipment to your Port by direct Steamers, although direct Steamers for your port are exceedingly scarce, and I very much doubt if it can be arranged.

I will take due care to advise Messrs. Dodge, Bliss & Co., with respect to the marking and proper bundling of the wood at this side, in as much as this firm also supplies my apponents (sic), there is no reason why my wood should not go forward in quite as good condition as the wood of the opposition.

I take due note of what you advise with respect to nails and I shall be governed accordingly in the future.

Respecting this past season's business, in as much as the packing has ceased for such a long time, I am sorry to be without your final accounts. I had hoped to have received these sometime ago, and I trust that they are now on the way to me. If not, will you please have these accounts completed at the very earliest possible moment

and forward them to me at once. At the same time advise me please as to what you have in hand on my account.

I must acknowledge that I was considerably disappointed in the quantity of dates which you were able to ship by my two direct steamers. As you were advised by me and also by my Mr. Bance that it was imperative that as large a quantity as possible should be shipped by my steamers. I was sorry that you could not pack a more important quantity. I quite appreciate however, the difficulties under which you were working and with the new house which you are now building, I trust that your facilities will be so largely increased that you will be able to pack for me a very much larger quantity for shipment by my steamers during the coming campaign.

With respect to the quality, I would advise that this has in general been satisfactory. I have had some trouble in one or two markets but on the whole I am frank to say to you that the quality has been equal to that shipped by your competitors. It is of the utmost importance that the quality of the Brands packed by you this season be fully kept up to this years standard or even improved, but at the same time the actual cost of the fruit must be taken into consideration and until I receive your final accounts it will be impossible for me to go into this subject fully.

With respect to your inquiries as to whether the packages which you were to forward via Bombay and London required to be gunnied, I wired you in the negative. It is quite necessary however, that any boxes or cases which I may hereafter request you to ship via Bombay and Hong Kong, through Pacific Ports, be gunnied as suggested by you.

Regarding the shipment of dates in baskets, I have given up all idea of (illegible) any over in these packages for the present.

With respect to the combination, it has been impossible for me in the past, and I do not expect it will be possible in the future to arrange any combination with my apponents (sic) on this side. I would suggest however, that it is highly avdisable that a combination be arranged on your side, provided of course you can secure a fair proportion of the receipts to pack for me and especially the early receipts. This is with the idea of reducing prices materially. The facts are that the early shipments cost such a high price this season, according to your estimate of the cost as cabled to me that there was no profit at all in the early shipments, and in fact the prices here on present supplies have been cut to such low figures that there is little or no profit in the business here now. Should you be able to arrange a

reasonable and equitable buying arrangement, it would no doubt work to the benefit of all concerned.

Let me advise you that my business in Bussorah this coming season will be conducted under the name of William Hills, Jr. & Co., and Mr. A.W. Bance, whom you have already met, will be the manager.

I have discussed with Mr. Bance more or less fully when he was in New York, the subject of Fard dates and you will no doubt see Mr. Bance on his way up the Gulf, ere you get this.

I was rather under the impression from reading your letter dated the (illegible) of July last, that the largest part of the Fard dates coming into the (illegible) being in your hands, that you would be able to keep our apponents (sic) from (illegible) any important quantity early.

In the event you find it impossible to form any buying combination with your apponents (sic), I trust during this coming season that you will be able to see that their pack is very largely reduced, especially for early shipments and by their direct steamers.

I would advise you however, that it is of the very greatest importance that the cost of the dates be very greatly reduced.

Referring to the shipments as made by you on through

documents to Canada, I would advise that during the coming season, this will not be necessary. All the dates as shipped by you can be forwarded in the usual course to New York. In this connection I would advise that the dates shipped by you on through documents per SS. Umzumbi to Toronto, could not go through to that market for the reason that no documents for this particular lot ever came to hand. The same have never been received by me nor by my agents in Toronto, Messrs. J.L. Watt & Scott. Please advise me what disposition you made of these documents and in as much as it was necessary to stop them here, I will require a United States Consular Invoice, covering this parcel, which kindly forward at your earliest convenience.

Referring to the competitive shipments from your market, it is of very great importance that the shipments of dates by any others than your good self, Mr. Gopaljee Waljee and Messrs. J. W. Towell & Co., be entirely eliminated. Please advise if there is not some manner in which the shipments of Barook can be eliminated and also the shipments of Margossian. While the quantities shipped by (illegible) people is not important, still it is quite sufficient to make a bad market here, and if their packing and shipping can be eliminated, it is highly advisable that this should be done.

Let me emphasize again please, that the Monogram Brand is my best Brand, and the best dates and pack are to go forward under this Brand. The Camel Brand is the second Brand, it is not nearly so important that the best dates and the best packing go forward under this Brand. Please give this your special attention.

It is also important that all the 60 pound boxes packed by you, contain a sheet of waxed paper between every four or five layers.

I note very carefully that your apponents (sic) started packing Phurphura dates this past season early, and with respect to the coming campaign, if it is necessary in the interest of getting a large quantity packed early to start packing this quality, you may do so. Please make the quantity of these dates packed, however, as small as possible, but bear especially in mind that it is of the utmost importance that as large a proportion of your entire pack as possible go forward by my own steamers.

I cannot inform you as yet, as to just when my Steamers for the coming Campaign are likely to arrive in Muscat, but you will receive this information in due course, either from here or from Mr. Bance in Bussorah.

I see that your apponents (sic) circulated many stories with respect to your business, and further that your

business would only continue for one year. You now appreciate I am sure however that this is not the fact and I am surely expecting you during the coming season to ship and pack a larger quantity for me early, (illegible) you did this past season.

I would advise you that my Brands of dates as well as those of my apponents' (sic) have been selling during the season at an even price, but I must confess that my apponents (sic) have been able to sell a larger quantity than I have, owing to the fact that their Brands were well known to the trade. I am expecting however, to do better the coming season, in as much as my Brands are now known, and are in general giving every satisfaction.

In response to your request I advised you by cable that I renewed my arrangements with you on the same terms for the coming season and with respect to the godown, I have requested that this be built and at your own expense. With the increased facilities which this new godown will give you, I have no doubt but what you will be able to turn out the increased quantity earlier, as I desire.

In this connection I would advise that it has been reported here that Towell has sold to Margossian one of his packing houses. Will you please advise me if this is a fact.

Let me here acknowledge with many thanks the receipt of the packages of fruit etc., which you so kindly sent me in care of the Captains of the Umzumbi and of the Trym. These articles were received in due course and I thank you again.

I note that you met Mr. James Hamilton on his way down the Gulf, enroute for New York, and that you explained everything to him. I would advise that Mr. Hamilton has recently been in New York but having severed my relations with him, (illegible) informed me of anything that you communicated to him. If there is (illegible) further of importance which you communicated to Mr. Hamilton for me, kindly now inform me of it.

I note that you are dealing in American sheetings, and also wish to be put in communication with some firms doing business in coffee seeds, sugar, wheat, rice, arms, ammunition etc., and I must say that I myself do nothing in these lines, but will endeavor in the near future to put you in communication with some firms doing a general business in theselines (sic).

I note from your recent letters that the godown work is going on satisfactorily and I have no doubt the same will be completed in plenty of time for next season's business.

With respect to the quantity of boxes and cases which

I shall require packed for the coming season, it is my present intention to order shooks and accessories for about a similar quantity as that sent you last year, but until I am definitely advised as to just what you have in hand in the way of cases and boxes, I cannot advise you of the exact quantity.

Please therefore, hasten forward your accounts with all dispatch.

During the coming season, in cabling me the estimate F. O. B. costs of the dates, please include everything, freight on the case-wood and accessories outward to be included also. While you will include case-wood and accessories as well as outward freight in the estimate of the cost which you will cable me from time to time, as soon as you have completed each shipment, you will not of (illegible) charge up these items against me in your accounts.

Looking forward to a satisfactory campaign during the coming season and (illegible) that your increased facilities will enable you to pack a larger quantity early, and can forward by my direct steamers, and further that you will in some manner arrange to see that F. O. B. cost is very much reduced, I remain

Very truly yours,

(signed) Wm. Hills Jr.

2. William Hills, Jr. to Mr. Rutunsee Purshotum,
New York, June 12, 1907.

Dear Sir:

I beg herewith to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of Feb. 27th, March 6th & 13th, April 10th, 17th & 24th and May 8th & 15th. The contents of these various letters have had my careful attention.

The accounts have come duly to hand and have been noted by me. If you have not already done so kindly forward Mr. Bance copies of these accounts in full and by so doing you will oblige. In this connection I would advise that I see the final accounts as made up by you are based altogether on the pro forma invoices as previously sent me. I was under the impression that these accounts were more or less estimates and had hoped that in making up your final figures the F.O.B. cost would be at least somewhat reduced. May I not inquire if it is possible for you to make up the final account for each shipment as it goes forward. I was under the impression that it was impossible to do this.

I note that you have not been able to collect as yet for the 83 packages of shooks short delivered and trust you will do all you can to press this claim for a prompt settlement. In the meantime I am taking this matter up with my ship brokers here and hope I may be able to as-

sist you in securing a prompt settlement.

The requisition which you make with respect to shooks, nails, etc., for the coming season duly had my attention and I believe you will find that the materials which have been put forward are just what you require.

With respect to your request that I arrange for your own agent to unload the shooks, etc., I have been unable to definitely arrange the matter at this end but have put forward through the local agents of the steamer & request that you be allowed to appoint your own man to do this work and believe you will have no difficulty in making the proper arrangements with the steamship agent at your place.

I duly notified you by cable when the shooks, nails, iron band, etc., went forward and presume you will have received them by the time you get this.

I note with satisfaction that so far the crop of Dates appears to be good and sincerely trust that it will come out early and of good quality. With respect to prices, the figures paid last year were so very high that the Dates had to be sold here at cost early in the season. Since then the market has declined and the business is now being done at a loss. I beg that you will do everything possible to see that the F.O.B. cost of the Dates is much reduced and if any arrangement can be arrived

at whereby an equitable division of the receipts is made I trust that you will so arrange in order to reduce the cost of the packed fruit.

Regarding your request that I forward you 32 golden coins of the value of 6 1/4¢ each, I am sorry to advise that there is no such coin current here, the smallest gold coin being a five dollar gold piece. I presume this will be too large for your purpose.

I note again the difficulties under which you labored last year in packing in competition with your opponents but I gather that for the coming season these difficulties will be very largely eliminated and trust that you will be able to pack for me a very much larger quantity to go forward by my two direct steamers. As I have tried to explain to you heretofore it is of the greatest importance to me that you pack the largest possible quantity to go by the first steamer, and then pack the largest possible quantity to go forward by the second steamer, completing all the cases and boxes if possible. In this connection let me say that in the event it becomes necessary to get a large quantity packed to go forward by my first steamer I give you authority to use Phuphura Dates as it is of the utmost importance, which I emphasize again, that just as large a quantity of Dates as possible go forward by the first steamer. I beg that

you will pay the strictest attention to the quality of the Dates you pack and try to keep up the quality and reduce the price as much as possible.

With respect to a combination with your opponents, I note you are quite prepared to combine with them provided they speak of the matter first. Can you not arrange to have your opponents approached by a third party who would be friendly to both and who could bring you together to discuss the matter? On this side such matters are usually arranged in this manner.

What you write with respect to the elimination of Barook and Margossion is read with interest. I note that it is very doubtful if Barook will pack this season. The party for whom Barook packed here has become disgusted with the business and I am satisfied will not try to pass him any further orders. With respect to Margossion, I understand his manager is a Frenchman and does not do the business properly. This party shipped several hundred boxes and cases of Fards to the U.S. on consignment which were sold at ruinous prices causing him a great loss. I understand that he expects to pack again this season and if he consigns to this market will make considerable trouble. If there is any way in which the packing of Fard Dates by Margossion can be stopped I shall be glad to have your suggestions.

Respecting the arrival of my two steamers in your market, it is very probable that they will reach Muscat about Sep. 23rd and Oct. 7th although either boat may be a few days earlier or later. Mr. Bance will doubtless be able to advise you on this point a little later on.

I note that you wish me to give you the names of firms dealing in sugar, coffee, etc., and would advise that I have requested Mess. Markt & Co. of this city to communicate with you as this firm is in the export trade with the east and should be familiar with what you require.

With respect to cabling the F.O.B. cost of Dates, I will send you by next mail my invoices covering the cost of shooks, paper, nails, etc. and it should be easy for you to figure out the cost of the boxes and cases nailed up and in position to ship. Please add to this cost the outward freight. I note you say that in cabling the F.O.B. cost you will add the outward and inward freights. Do I understand that you will add the freight from Muscat to New York really making a C & F price New York? So long as it is understood exactly on what basis you are cabling the matter is in order but be good enough to advise me definitely so that there may be no misunderstanding.

The consular and private invoices which you send me

covering shipments of Dates from your port per the SS. Umzumbia to Canadian ports have been received with thanks.

I see that Mr. Bance has been with you for a short time and expects to run down to Muscat again and go into affairs with you.

What you write with respect to the godown I am extremely sorry to note. It will be most unfortunate if you do not have a new one built in time to pack Dates this season. You must do everything possible to finish the godown in time. I positively must have a much larger quantity of Dates by my first and second direct steamers this year than I had last season and I fear that you will not be able to pack a largely increased quantity unless you have the new godown completed. Please do this without fail.

Trusting that you are in good health and hoping that the coming season's business will work out satisfactorily, and that you will be able to keep up the quality of your packing at a largely reduced cost, I remain,

Very truly yours,

(signed) Wm. Hills Jr.

3. William Hills, Jr. to Mr. Rutunsee Purshotem,
New York, 3/23/08.

Dear Sir:-

I wrote you last on the 25th. of Febry. and I have duly received your various letters, up to and including one dated Cutch Mandvi 7th. Janry.

On glancing through your accounts for 1906 & 1907 I find you have charged me the following items:-

In your accounts for season 1906

(1) cost of Eearthen (<u>sic</u>) Pots, baskets & Mattings	R 700
(2) Rent of two go-downs for one year	1500
(3) Examiners pay for one year	800

In your accounts for season 1907

(4) Go-down rent for one year	1500
(5) Examiners pay for one year	800
(6) Cost of Earthen pots, mattings & baskets	500
(7) Lose on 33865 mounds dates	<u>4619 7/6</u>
	R10439 7/6

and I regret to say that I cannot pass these items.

As regards the charge for Earthen Pots, baskets and mattings, I of course know that you had to buy such things in order to be able to do the packing but R1200 for the requirements of two years seems to me to be too much and Mr. Bance will go into these charges when he arrives at Muscat.

Respecting the charge of R4600 for rent of go-downs and examiners pay, before putting such items in the accounts you should have written me and obtained my authority. When this business was first arranged you did not tell me in your letters that you would wish to charge me with the salary of one of your clerks or such a high price for go-down rent, because if you had I should not have agreed. I decline absolutely to pay anything for your clerk's wages but I will pay you R500 (five hundred repees) per annum for go-down rent, and no more.

I do not at all agree to your charge of R4619/7/6 for loss on 33,865 mounds. I asked you to tell me why you bought such a very large quantity at high prices to keep in stock, but you have not given me any explanation. I do not think you acted wisely to buy this large quantity because you know very well that as the season advances the prices decline. You should only have bought sufficient dates and have kept in stock what you require for three or four days packing, seeing that prices go lower every day. You do not tell me what prices you paid for these dates in the first instance and at what prices you sold them. You merely tell me that there was a loss of 8 3/4 cents per mound. This is unsatisfactory.

Do you wish me to understand that all these 33,865 mounds were bought at one price and that you sold them

at one price? If so, you should have sent me an account showing those prices for my inspection to support the amount which you wish to pass to my debit.

I cannot see that this item is for my account and I must decline to pass it.

Our arrangement is that you have to charge me the net FOB cost of the dates and the freight when you pay it and your 6% commission and nothing more.

My opponents, the Hills Brothers Company, have come to me and proposed that I should have my dates packed by W. I. (sic) Towell & Co. & Gopalji Walji in future, but when I started this business with you I told you that in the event of it proving satisfactory I should wish to continue to do the business with you for several years to come and I wish you to continue to pack for me, and that is what I have replied to the Hills Brothers Company.

They tell me that they have lost money on their Muscat dates during 1906 and 1907 and I must say that your shipments to me during those years have also resulted in a loss, and all I intend to have packed on my account during the coming season is 5,000 cases each containing 9-12 lb. boxes, and 1,000 boxes of about 60 lb. nett.

Mr. Bance will arrive in Muscat about the 14th. May and will talk these matters over with you. I have been under the impression all the time that your private in-

voices were not exact and that at the end of the work you would send me an exact invoice stating the date of purchase and the number of mounds purchased on each day and the rate at which you bought, also stating the charges separately viz:-

Landing charges on casewood M.T.D.
Custom House duty & accessories "
Nailing up boxes "
Packingboxes "
" cases "
Shippingboxes and.....cases "
Freight on.....boxes &cases"

and this is how I want my accounts made up in future.

I shall leave Mr. Bance to explain this matter to you more particularly when he is in Muscat.

I am very pleased to see that you are sending me two of Mr. Nainsi's photographs and I shall hand one of them to Mr. Bance as you request. Mr. Bance tells me that you wish me to send you one of mine and I shall certainly do this shortly.

I shall write you further in the course of a few weeks and in the meantime I hope you are in good health.

remaining, dear Sir,

Yours truly,

(signed) Wm. Hills Jr.

4. William Hills, Jr. & Co. to Mr. Rutansi Purshotum,
Bassorah, 7th. August 1908.

Dear Sir,

I beg to confirm the arrangement made with you on behalf of WILLIAM HILLS, JUNIOR, NEW YORK, as follows:-

1st. You undertake to pack on commission for his account during the present Date season SIX THOUSAND packages of FARD Dates and any further quantity WILLIAM HILLS, JUNIOR may require.

2nd. These SIX THOUSAND packages are to consist of FIVE THOUSAND cases each containing nine small boxes weighing about twelve pounds nett, and ONE THOUSAND boxes weighing about sixty pounds nett.

3rd. The packing is to begin as soon as good quality Fard Dates arrive in your market unless otherwise arranged between you and WILLIAM HILLS, JUNIOR or MR. A. W. BANCE.

4th. The quality and packing of Dates to be equal to or better than that of your last years' shipments, and in any case it is to be equal to the quality and packing of the Dates packed by W. J. Towell & Co., Muscat.

5th. The prices to be paid for the Dates are to be the ruling market prices of the day or days on which you buy, and you will do your utmost to reduce these prices as much as possible.

6th. ----- Unless otherwise arranged in good time, the

above-mentioned quantity of SIX THOUSAND packages is
to be shipped as follows:-

1500 cases and 500 boxes by the first direct steamer to
New York to sail from Muscat
about the end of September.

1000 cases and 500 boxes by the second direct steamer
to New York.

2500 1000

2500 cases and 1000 boxes to sail from Muscat about
middle of October.

1250 cases nil by the third direct steamer to
New York to sail from Muscat
about the end of October.

1250 cases nil to be shipped by steamer or
steamers to sail from Muscat
about the end of December.

5000 cases 1000 boxes

7th. ----- Of the 5000 cases, 4000 are to bear the

MONOGRAM Brand, and 1000 the CAMEL BRAND, and of the 1000
boxes, 750 are to bear the MONOGRAM BRAND and 250 the
CAMEL BRAND.

The MONOGRAM BRAND is to be the first brand and under that brand the very finest Dates are to be packed and specially good packing thereof is required. The CAMEL BRAND is the second brand under which you will pack any Dates you may have to receive which are not of the very finest quality but the Dates under this brand must be of good quality.

8th.

The Dates are to be invoiced by you at the actual cost price which you pay for them and you are to charge the expense as actually paid by you plus a commission of SIX PER CENT this commission representing your full remuneration (sic) for all your work in connexion (sic) with this business.

It is agreed that WILLIAM HILLS, JUNIOR will pay you ONE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED RUPEES for one years' rent of your new go-down in which the Dates are to be packed.

9th.

For each shipment that you will make you will make up a Proforma Invoice in the same way as you have done during the last two years and when all the shipments are completed, you are to make up a final proper and correct account shewing the actual cost of the Dates in detail and the actual expenses as paid by you and this account is to be checked and approved by MR. A. W. BANCE.

10th. You are to keep a separate book in which you

 will shew all payments made on account of this Date busi-
 ness and when required you are to hand this book to Mr.
 A.W. BANCE for examination.

11th. In payment for the SIX THOUSAND packages

 and any further quantity you may pack, WILLIAM HILLS,
 JUNIOR will open Bankers credit in your favour and you
 are to take out Bills of Lading for the Dates shipped
 in accordance with the terms of such Letters of Credit.

12th. You are to draw under such Letters of Credit

 the amounts of your proforma invoices for each shipment
 referred to in paragraph No. 9.

13th. You undertake not to pack or ship any Dates

 to America except those packed for WILLIAM HILLS, JUNIOR
 under this arrangement.

Please confirm this arrangement.

I remain, Dear Sir,
 Yours faithfully,
 (signed) A. W. Bance

5. Schwarte & Hammer to Mr. Rutunsee Purshotum,
 London, 7th June 1907.

Dear Sir,

We confirm our respects of the 21st ult, and have since
 received your favors of the 8th & 15th ult.

No. 7 Rifles. Since our last we have again asked the Works, if they would agree to engrave the name of "Erfanothes Patent", or anything similar, on these Rifles, but they again reply that they really do not wish to make an inscription, which would only show an imitation of the Francotte Rifles. We therefore only cabled you on the 4th inst the word "Snot" to intimate that we cannot book the 100 Rifles No. 7, as required by you. Apparently, other Belgian Works are making the same kind of Rifles for your market with the inscription "Martini Muscat", instead of "Francottes Patent". Can you not also confirm these 100 Rifles with these two words" In this case, of course, we can carve the numbers 96187 & 7310 also & N.421/989S on the small cover on the butt end. We now await to hear from you what you wish us to do about this lot, but it would be useless to press the Works any further to engrave any name similar to Francotte. In our cable of the 4th inst we added that shipments will commence about next week, as we expect to be able to ship by the S/S. "Afghanistan" (leaving probably middle of next week) 250 Rifles

<u>No. 2</u>	<u>No. 4</u>	<u>No. 5</u>	<u>No. 6</u>
50	50	100	50

and 12 cases (=24000) Cartridges, and we hope to advise you definitely by cable next week of this shipment having

been made.

We are doing our best to ship a further lot early in July, but we cannot promise to make 3 shipments exactly equally divided and must arrange to ship whatever Works get ready.

Rifles No.8, five samples. We have now put these in hand with octogon (eight sided) tube, 22" long, similar to the tube of Rifle No.285, but otherwise like Model No.5, and we shall invoice these 5 Rifles shipped with the next, or the third lot at 30/- each Rifle c.t.f. without Cartridges, the cost of making the tubes with 8 sides, instead of round, being actually one shilling and three pence more than round barrels. The price for these No.8 Rifles with 100 Cartridges each Rifle would be 39/3,* but subject fluctuation of price of Cartridges.

Rifles Nos.3 & 5. The makers insist on charging 3d extra for the more elaborate engraving and gilding, and also 3d extra for the extra ring, as per your sample Rifle, as stated in ours of the 19th April, and unless you can pay these extras, we are afraid we can only supply all the Nos.3 & 5 Rifles as originally ordered, and not to your sample.

We wrote you on the 12th April that we expected the Works would supply the second shipment to your sample, provided the same did not differ much from the original

Model No.2, and in our letter of the 19th April we gave you exact particulars of the differences between Model No.2 and your sample, and the exact extra prices. We will, however, do the best we can for you as regards the second shipment, but you (illegible) please not blame us, if these are not all delivered to your sample. The Works also write us to-day that, with these repeated alterations, they hope that they will deliver all as required, as in the face of the continuous correspondence it is easily possible that mistakes in the making after all will occur, and they will not be responsible for these.

We, however, do not anticipate any difficulties and hope that you will not have the slightest reason for complaints.

Percussion Caps. We already wrote you on the 21st ult that the prices quoted you on the 12th April for B1 & B2 represented second hand caps, and if you want quite new caps and silver-lined inside, similar to the enclosed dummy (or uncharged) sample $\frac{L}{5/4}$ which we suppose is what you require. The price will be about 2/6 per 1000, packed as specified, but we are afraid your ideas of prices are quite out of question.

In accordance with your letter of the 24th April we have sent you by last week's Mail per sample post in 4 packets

1 dozen penholders
 1 " assorted red, blue & black pencils
 & 1 gross 1½" best safety pins

(unfortunately it was overlooked to register this, but is hoped they will arrive allright) which please accept as a present, and we trust same will meet with your approval.

We also sent you samples of letter paper, note paper and envelopes, for which we quote as follows:-

<u>Paper:</u>	per ream of <u>480/</u> <u>sheets</u>
Asiatic 8vo with fly leaf, ruled as sample	6/-
" 4to single " " "	5/6
Colonial 8vo with fly leaf, " " "	5/6
" 4to single " " "	5/-
Plain 1/- per ream less.	
Vellum Cream Laid, 8vo with fly leaf, plain	5/-
" " " 4to single " " "	4/6

<u>Envelopes:</u>	per 1000
No. 91½ Opaque	8/-
" 96½ "	9/-
" 59½ "	9/6
Colonial Med 8vo Court	11/-
No. 602 Cream Laid	4/6
" 800 " "	4/9

In reply to your favor of the 15th ult, we beg to

state that we safely received all your letters, dated respectively the 10th April, 17th do, 24th do, 1st May, 8th do & 15th do.

Awaiting your further news, we remain,

Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

(signed) Schwarte & Hammer

* We cannot supply these N.8 rifles @37/- including cartr. owing to the higher price for the rifles with octagon barrels & a further allowance of price of cartridges.

6. Schwarte & Hammer to Mr. Rutunsee Purshotum, London,
19th July 1908.

Dear Sir,

We confirm our letter of the 12th inst, and received your favor of the 26th ult.

Rifles Nos,3 & 5. As already written you before, we shall invoice these at 37/- without any extra price, although we have ourselves to pay the makers 6d each more for the No.3 Rifles to your sample.

Rifles No.3. We are shipping the 5 samples with 100 Cartridges each with the last lot in August, but we must charge the price of 39/3, as mentioned ours of the 7th ult.

Shipments. The 133 Rifles & 14000 Cartridges, for which we sent you in advance Invoice in our last, have been shipped by the S/S. "Tabaristan", and we cabled you today for credit of £ 264. 0. 0. which we hope to receive early next week, so that shipping documents can go out by the Mail of the 26th inst.

We have not as yet received from the Works Invoice for the parcel mentioned in our last, but fully expect in all 337 Rifles to be shipped to-morrow per S/S. "Griqua" from Antwerp, and we shall then ship 34000 Cartridges by the same steamer from London next week.
Pen holders &c. As you insist on an Invoice for these, we enclose as per a/c at cost prices, amounting to 8/3, which we have placed to your debit.

We hope you will soon be able to favor us with some further Orders and remain,

Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

(signed) Schwarte & Hammer

7. Schwarte & Hammer to Mr. Rutunsee Purshotum,
London, 27th September 07.

Dear Sir,

Since writing you on the 20th inst., we received your favor of the 4th inst.

We are pleased to say, we also received on the 23rd inst from the National Bank of India payment of £ 200.- as deposit against the Order for the 1200 Rifles No.5 (but made up like No.3), and we have therefore now put this Order in hand for November/December/January shipment hoping that we may after all be able to arrange freight at the present rate, as otherwise we should be actually loosing on this transaction.

S/S. "Haddonhall". We also thank you for credit with the National Bank of India for £ 411.- against shipments by this steamer, but we are extremely sorry and disappointed to have to advise you that, owing to the difficulties of shipping at Antwerp through strike of the dock labourers, the 7 cases Rifles have not been shipped by the "Haddonhall", although they have been at Antwerp for a week before the departure of this steamer, and as we were positively assured by the Antwerp ship brokers of the above boat that the cases would be shipped, we did not hesitate to advise shipment by cable of the 20th inst. We are all the more annoyed at the non-shipment of these 7 cases as the Rifles have been ready at the Works some time, and would have been shipped much sooner, if there had been an earlier steamer from Antwerp. Unfortunately, however, there have been, owing to the strike, great difficulties and delays in the shipping at

Antwerp, and we are still trying to find out why the 7 cases could not be put into the S/S. "Haddonhall". If you only knew the difficulties, we have had to contend with at Antwerp lately, you would be convinced that it is really not our fault.

The next steamer from Antwerp will probably be the S/S. "Luristan", expected to leave on the 16th of October, and we shall ship the 7 cases by her.

In the meantime we hand you herewith copy of Invoice for the 12 cases Cartridges, shipped by the "Haddonhall" from London, and for which we have handed Bs/L &c to the Bank against payment of £ 104. 1. 3. We also enclose copy of Invoice for the remaining 222 Rifles, for which we shall claim from the Bank after shipment £ 306.18. 9, as balance of your credit of £ 411.--. We will, however, credit you with interest @ 6% p.a. on these £ 306.18. 9 from the 23rd inst to the date of shipment, so as to compensate you at all events for the loss of interest.

You will notice from the Invoice for Rifles that we have charged the 5 samples No.8 at 37/- with only 6/- extra, so as to make up the total amount of credit for £ 411.--, but the price for these No.8 Rifles (as mentioned in our letter of the 19th of July) is actually 39/3, subject to the fluctuations of the market. We hope the samples will enable you to favor us with some larger

Orders for these.

Referring to your letter of the 26th ult., asking for a Firm for the supply of Prints &c, we should be very glad, if you would send your samples to us with full particulars of make-up, quantities &c you could buy, and if possible, with price limits. We will then carefully look into this business and either take the same up ourselves (as we have very good connections amongst the makers) or pass on the samples to some other reliable House.

Wet Dates. You might perhaps make your proposal about this article to

Messrs. H.W. Peabody & Co., 16, Eastcheap,
London, E.C.

referring them to us for information. This Firm is a very good and reliable one, and we shall be glad, if you can come to terms with them.

Yours faithfully,

(signed) Schwarte & Hammer

We enclose also a statement of account between us showing a balance of £ 403.15.10 in your favor for 23 Sept 07 & on which we shall allow you 5% p.a. Interest until the 1200 rifles have been shipped. Please say if you find this correct. We assure you that we are very very sorry that the 7 cases rifles have after all been left behind

and only hope this further delay will not cause you any serious trouble & annoyance. It is really due to circumstances beyond our control.

8. Schwarte & Hammer to Mr. Rutunsee Purshotum,
London, 16th April 08.

Dear Sir,

Since writing you on the 27th ult. we received your favour of the 24th ult.

We should be very pleased to receive a fresh Order from you but after having been in correspondence with our Belgian makers we are sorry to say we cannot really book an Order at your terms - that is - that you can cancel the remainder of an Order or return goods if the Governments should stop the importation or landing at Muscat. The Rifles ordered for your market are specially made up and cannot be sold to any other country and would therefore be practically a dead loss to the makers if not taken up.

We have been trying to obtain a rate of Insurance for this risk but from the enclosed Memo from our Insurance Brokers you will see that this risk cannot be insured against and must therefore in case of fresh business be run by yourself.

Surely you-being on the spot-should be able to ascer-

tain from the officials over there whether according to the present regulations with the Sultan of Muscat any foreign Government can interfere in the importation of Arms at Muscat. We here cannot really think that the Government can do so without at first giving sufficient time of notice.

At all events in such a case they will, we should think, have to allow the landing of any parcels which are once shipped and as it will surely take some time before any definite agreement between the Governments has been arrived at, we should say there would be not much risk to order in small parcels, so as to get at least a few hundreds Rifles imported before any restriction takes place. If you can cable us an Order for say 200 or 300 Rifles, we think they can be shipped within about 6 weeks after receipt of Order, but for any fresh Order we must have a cash deposit of 1/3 of the whole amount, before we can proceed with the same and the balance must be paid immediately after we cable shipment, as we could not take the Rifles & Cartridges back if once shipped.

The price for Rifles, same as your last order, will be 37/6 including 100 Cartridges per Rifle, provided there is no increase of freight. In any case there is no possible chance of a lower price if you wish to have

the Rifles in the same good quality and finish as before.

We now hope that you will after all be able to cable us a further Order on the above terms, and that nothing will occur to interfere with the importation over there.

On the 28th of February we quoted you for a parcel of Caps for reloading Martini Henry Cartridges but we now hear that this parcel has in the meantime been sold.

We are offered a large parcel of "Second Hand Martini Henry Military Rifles" Calibre 450, most of these Rifles being unused, as per enclosed sketch* @ 30/- per Rifle, including Bayonet & 150 Cartridges per Rifle, cif.

Muscat, net. (subject unsold)

This is a cheap parcel and it may perhaps be worth your while to give a trial Order for say 100 of these Rifles.

We await your good news and are, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

(signed) Schwarte & Hammer

* S 4002

Enclosure: Alex. Howden & Co. to Messrs. Schwarte & Hammer, London, 15 Apr. 1908.

Rifles to Muscat. Referring to your enquiry we find after numerous enquiries that the risk of prohibition is practically uninsurable.

(signed)(illegible)

9. Moritz Magnus junr. to Rutansi Pershotum Esq.,
Hamburg, May 22nd. 1908.

Dear Sir,

We are favored with your valued letter of 29th. ult.
& beg to reply, that the price of
22/6 we have quoted you for the Henry Martini Muskets is
without Cartridges, & will have to be augmented to
30/- for 1 Musket with 100 Coiled Cartridges, & to
32/- " 1 " " 100 Solid drawn best class Metal
Cartridges

All prices free Hamburg or Antwerp,
for delivery cif Muscat you must add 2/- which brings
the resp. prices as above to 32/- and 34/-.

We have carefully noted what you are writing about
the conferance (sic) held in this moment in Belgium,
but we rather think your apprehensions are going too far.
There are so many interests connected to the Arms Trade,
& English are to good businessmen, as to spoil this impor-
tant commerce of which even their subjects are taking
profit of in a considerable manner.

Have no anxiety with regard to this point, this ques-
tion will speedily be settled, and in the meantime you
should send us all those samples for which you might
desire our quotations. If, besides for ARMS & AMMUNI-
TION, you might wish us to procure you offers for any

other European products & manufacturer's goods, we will be very pleased to let you have best quotations, asking you to dispose of our services in any case we can be of good use to you.

Awaiting your further good news, we remain, Dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours

(signed) Moritz Magnus junr

Can you use cheap Shot-Guns Cal.16 & 12, transformed out of Military Rifles?

We think the best way to attract business will be to send samples, which will always be with pleasure at your disposal, of any goods you might have use for. The best way, however, will always be that YOU will send us a specimen of what you are requiring.

10. Moritz Magnus junr to Rutansi Purshotum Esq.

Hamburg, August 15th 1908

Dear Sir,

We have pleasure to acknowledge receipt of your valued favours of July 15th. & 21.st. and thank you for your order for

5 cases of Tobacco

as per „Trade-Mark" received from you, and which we shall ship you by first direct steamer.

Our commission on articles of such a nature would be,

- in case you will be able to arrange for „Confirmed Bankers Credit" with a banker in Paris or London, - 2½% only, - all manufacturers discounts to your benefit.

We should be very pleased to furnish you with any article of the European market on named terms but must ask for payment of our drafts in Europe instead of Bombay.

We are convinced you will see your advantage in arranging for this way of payment and we promise you to give to your kind orders our special & particular attention.

The firm of Hesse Newman & Co, Hamburg, have asked us to-day for informations (sic) about your honorable House, which we have given them with great pleasure.

On the other hand we beg to say that we can do the same class of business with you & for you as Messrs. H.N.& Co.

We have relations all over Europe with every manufacturer of importance and we should be only too pleased to enter in regular & agreeable relations with your good-selves.

Anticipating your further good news we remain, dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully

(signed) (illegible)

SUGAR: We beg to send you by this mail samples of this

article, & have pleasure in offering you:

GERMAN UNBLUED GRANULATED in D/S of 2 Ctw. at 25/-
 RUSSIAN GRANULATED " " " " " " 23/-
 for 100 Kos. net, November / December fob Hamburg
 free of commission.

The sample is a fair average sample.

Prices without engagement subject to the fluctuations of
 the market.

11. Moritz Magnus junr to Rutansi Purshotum Esq,
 Hamburg, Sept. 4th. 1908

Dear Sir,

Your valued favor of August 12th. crossed ours of
 15th. same month.

TOBACCO: We have pleasure in handing you enclosed invoice
 for sample shipment by S/S. "Tangistan", amounting to
L.40.14/4.

which we have taken liberty to draw on you order Comptoir
 National d'Escompte de Paris, Bombay.

As you will see by the invoice attached we had been
 obliged to debit you for interests with $1\frac{1}{2}\%$, which you
 could save in future transactions by forwarding the amount
 by check with the order.

In ordering 10 or more cases to go in one shipment
 we could get you an extra-discount of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ making 5% in

all, free of commission.

MARTINI HENRY RIFLE & SAMPLESHIP FROM YOU: We are astonished that you do not mention anything of our telegram with regard to this sample, & which we have addressed you about the 20th. of July. You ought to be thus informed long ago of our offering you these Carbines with 100 first class cartridges each, cif Muscat, at the total price of 38/-. We trust this price might enable you to pass us your (illegible).

In reply to your remarks, that the price of our LONG MARTINI MILITARY RIFLES seems you too high, we beg to ask you the favor to say us frankly which price you could afford to pay, according to which we would be very pleased to make you our offer. It is a very easy matter to somewhat reduce the price in taking inferior materials, without even influencing the utter appearance of the arm.

Assuring you anew that we shall make every effort possible to satisfy your requirements, we sincerely hope, that we shall have the pleasure to receive all your orders for whatever article you might be in want of on the European market.

Very faithfully yours,

(signed) Moritz Magnus junr

We feel extremely sorry for the heavy loss you have suffered through the decease of your good mother.

Please accept our most sincere & hearty condolences.

Yours very obediently,

(signed) Moritz Magnus

12. Moritz Magnus junr. to Rutansi Purshotum Esq,
Hamburg, Dec. 18th. 1908.

Dear Sir,

In order to prove you how much we appreciate the connection with your esteemed House & how deeply we have your interest at heart, we will not shrink from any sacrifice to extend those agreeable relations.

To this effect we have sent you a very detailed cable and will now give you some further particulars.

We think it will be best to go again carefully into the different questions of your letters of Nov. 4th & 18th. & 25th.

SUGAR: If you wish us to procure you articles of such a nature, it will be best, or, properly spoken, the only possible way, to give us a limit cif Muscat with the exact designation and mark of the goods. You will furthermore understand that it will be indispensable to have a price fixed by the buyer for an article which fluctuates like any value on the Exchange. We beg to remind you furthermore that we are very pleased to make any buying-transaction for you for a commission of two and a

half percent only, provided that you will arrange for Confirmed Banker's Credit in Europe. That is to say that your Bombay Banker will instruct his London or Paris Branch Office to honor our draft on presentation of the documents.

This way of payment is easily to be arranged by you, without any extra cost. Each Bank at Bombay has its Branch-Office in Europe & it is the customary way to present the B/L. (Bills-of-Lading) accompanied by the Insurance-Policy & the draft for the resp. amount to their EUROPEAN Office.

If for any reason whatever you may object against those arrangements, we will propose you to send us your check for a third of the amount with the order, & we will draw two thirds against presentation of the Bills-of-Lading at Bombay.

We leave it to you to choose either of the both above, for any order you will be kind enough to pass us for articles you wish us to buy for you on a commission-base or for

ARMS & AMMUNITION

which are not in stock and which are to be fresh manufactured.

We will have to refer to this condition some times more in our to-day's letter.

MARTINI HENRY CARBINES as per your sample: In your letter of 4th. ult you are only ordering us 25 pieces ea. with 100 cartridges, whereas in your letter of Nov. 18th. you are requiring 100.

RIFLE No. 59550 (Shot gun): We will ship you sample by steamer end of this month.

YOUR LETTER OF NOV. 18th: No. 1) 100 Martini Henry Carbines as per your sample: All other particulars as per the description of your letter. We have accepted your price of 35/- cif Muscat, ea. carbine with 100 cartridges, time of delivery about one month after your telegraphic confirmation of this order & after we will have received your further confirmation that you have sent us your check for L. 50.- on account. We have so many times explained you that this command only leaves us a ridiculous low profit, so that we are compelled to maintain this condition. We guaranty (sic) you irreprocheable (sic) goods, both, rifles & ammunition. The cartridges are french make but do not bear the name of the maker for the following reason: The french manufacturer, whose name has been on the labels you have sent us, has an Agent on your place, whom he has to protect & will therefore not furnish his marks to other people there, except that the commands must have to pass through the hands of that Agent. Now this manufacturer owns an other factory,

the goods of which are practically the same with regard to quality & finish, but do not bear the marks: that is really all! We will send you these cartridges and we are perfectly convinced that you will regularly pass us your commands & that we shall do a very extensive business together.

Please cable us one word:

" S t r i c t o "

and we understand that you agree to send us a check for 50.-, Pounds and that we shall draw for the balance, documents attached, on your Bombay Bank.

No.2) 3) & 4): We think it best in order to avoid any possible misunderstandings to ship you samples of these 3 numbers by the next boat.

No.5): Your sample received; we can furnish you exactly the same kind of rifles with the only exception, that the gun bears another inscription or no inscription at all if you want.

We guaranty (sic) you the finest arm possible, made by the Imperial German Government's manufacturer, irrefragable in any respect, manufactured 1908 & bearing this inscription, packed in a Canvas-cover like that of your sample, including 400 first class cartridges smokeless powder on clips at the extraordinary cheap price of L.7.17/6 cif Muscat. The only difference therefore be-

tween this rifle-offer & your sample is that instead of the name now on your rifle we shall send them without any name or the initials you may require, perhaps R.P. in a nice monogram. This price is only for an order of 100 at a time at least & so extraordinary cheap that you will be sure to beat any competition in the market, and this not only with regard to the price, but chiefly with regard to the unsurpassed NON PLUS ULTRA quality!

In giving us an order by cable, kindly mention whether you have sent us a check for a third of the amount by same post, or whether you have succeeded in arranging for Confirmed Banker's Credit in Europe. Kindly do not consider this as any feeling of distrust, but we are only acting in accordance with the principals of our House: Lowest possible prices against cash payments.

MARTINI HENRY CARTRIDGES: Having made a contract for these cartridges which is so very important that the factory will be entirely occupied with its execution until midst of next year, it will grant us a special pleasure if you will profit of this opportunity to cover your requirements in this article for the next 12 months. Our price for these first class goods is 73/- only, cif Muscat.

Code Word " C o l l e p p o l a "

This answers also to your inquiry No.7, as we will in

future only sell these french cartridges instead of the english ones, marked in our catalogue & offered from us before. We have not changed the code word "Colleppola", which therefore only means MARTINI HENRY CARTRIDGES & does not refer to the make, whether french or english. CONCRAPUIS: (Your No.8) This are 303 British cartridges, either soft-point or entirely metal-covered bullets. Our best price for quantities, which must not be less than 50,000 at a time is 88/- cif Muscat, any smaller quantity with 10% extra.

YOUR No.9. our Code word "Colonalgie" MAUSER AUTOMATIC PISTOLS Cal.7,63,10 shots: Our price for each pistol with 400 cartridges will be 89/- (eightynine shillings) cif Muscat, and if you can order us a couple of hundred or so, we will give you a respective discount. We think, you will find this price of 89/- a very cheap one. We offer you the cartridges in very! very! best & first rate quality at 60/- a thousand cif Muscat, of course only in that case that we have to make you other shipments to prevent our paying the minimum-freight. We furthermore agree to draw for any order you may give us for No.9 (Mauser Pistols) documents attached on your Bombay Banker. YOUR No.10: May we send you of 2 or 3 of the very latest models of AUTOMATIC CARBINES at very advantageous prices, if so kindly cable the word " S t r i d e n t " & we

will prepare the samples for a next shipment.

Now we have closed our cable in reminding you of our suggestions to take

1500 instead of 1000 COLAGOGOS

and in order to complete your last command by cable.

We almost every day are now getting inquiries for the Colagogos & really the moment is approaching where we have not any more to dispose of. Would you not make a contract for say 5000? in such a case we will still give you a small extra-discount.

Kindly wire as soon as possible & oblige, Dear Sir,

Yours most faithfully,

(signed) Moritz Magnus junr.

Biographical Note

Calvin H. Allen, Jr. was born on April 16, 1950 in Doylestown, Pennsylvania to Calvin H. and Helen M. Allen. Mr. Allen is a 1968 graduate of Central Bucks High School in Doylestown and has received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1972 and a Master of Arts in Near Eastern Languages and Literature from the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington in 1974.