

The Revival of the Ibādī Imāmate in Oman and the Threat to Muscat, 1913–20

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By the beginning of 1913 Oman was reaching the nadir of its fortunes, marking the middle of a century of frustration and decline. Although the Sultān, Faiṣal b. Turki Āl Bū Sa'idi, was the nominal ruler of all the country, he only exercised full control over the capital area of Muscat and Maṭraḥ, and the coastal strip to the northwest known as al-Bāṭinah. Otherwise, the interior of Oman went its own nearly-independent way, hindered only by the presence of a few *wālīs* (representatives of the Sultān) in the principal towns, such as Nizwā or Samā'il.

The period of rebellion from 1913 to 1920 is important in the history of Oman for a number of reasons. The restoration of the Ibādī Imāmate, periodically revived since the beginning of the nineteenth century, was an accomplishment of this period that lasted for forty-two years. But the method of its establishment presented a grave threat to the government of the Sultanate, weakened by fifty years of decline, and continually attacked by the religious zealots of the interior for its close relationship with the British. The revolt of 1913–20 was essentially tribal in nature, with the institution of the Imāmate superimposed on it in order to lend legitimacy and unity to the uprising. There were two factors which made it a deadly menace to Muscat and gave it as good a chance of wresting control of the entire country away from the Sultān as had the movement of 1868–71.¹ The first was the revival of the Imāmate, without which little tribal cooperation could have been expected and the revolt could have only repeated the attack of 1895 at most.² The second factor was the development of this uprising into a unified stand of co-operation between both the Ghāfirī and Hināwī factions, something that even the 1868–71 movement had not been able to achieve.³ Thus the combination of forces set in motion in the spring of 1913 posed the most dangerous threat to the regime in Muscat since Muscat had become the capital of the country. On this occasion, the British were to become more involved in the defence of the Āl

Bū Sa'īdī regime than at any other time in Omani history, with the possible exception of the suppression of the rebellion in 1957-9. They had both moral and practical obligations to the Sultanate which had to be upheld. Morally, they had been responsible for much of the dissatisfaction the interior felt, due to acquiring the assistance of the Sultān in the suppression of the slave trade and the arms trade, and upholding the rights and commerce of various British subjects (generally Indian traders), up and down the coast. In practical terms, the British could not afford to allow the Sultanate to disappear, since the Sultān had proved so malleable to their interests (either through the use of financial inducements or persuasion through the use of force), a situation which would certainly change under a fanatically religious, xenophobic and inward-looking Imāmate. Thus the British hand was forced to the extent of providing troops for the defence of the capital and eventually, in order to allow the removal of those troops, the introduction of the Sultān's own armed force of regular troops was instituted. This was distinct from the Sultāns' usual practice of reliance on small garrisons composed of Wāhhābī and Ḥaḍramī mercenaries, coupled with doubtful alliances of tribal levies for the conduct of specific campaigns. But in order to produce a regular force, a complete reform of the administration and finances of the country was required, an undertaking initiated and completed by the British.

The end result of these seven years of strife was a stable situation whereby the interior assumed an autonomous position under the Imāmate, only marginally dependent on the Sultān. This situation was only altered in December 1955, when Sultān Sa'īd b. Taymūr forcibly took over physical control over the interior, with an added consequence being the (probably permanent) disappearance of the Imāmate.

The origins and the significance of the Imām in the Ibāḍī sect can not be discussed here,⁴ but suffice it to say that the institution of the Imām had generally been in abeyance since the Āl Bū Sa'īdī rulers had dropped the title at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Its occasional reappearances (and near-reappearances) over the course of the next century were primarily due to tribal intrigues coupled with religious indignation over the course that the Muscat government was pursuing.

The immediate causes of its revival in 1913 are several. There was a swelling of religious feeling, as emphasised by the increased influence of the *muṭāwī'ah* movement⁵ led by the blind theologian, 'Abdullāh b. Ḥumayd al-Sālimī. A second factor was the unrest due to the gradual economic decline of the country; especially as manifested in the loss of Oman's superior trading position and in the

inability of the Sulṭān, Fayṣal b. Turkī, to continue the monthly stipends to important shaykhs, as well as to take an active role in the affairs of the interior. A further cause was the indignation at the position of influence the British were assuming over the Sulṭān. Their action in forbidding the slave trade and in the compulsory establishment of an arms warehouse in Muscat in 1912 struck the interior tribesmen not only as restricting activities perfectly legal under Islām, but also struck at their economic prosperity. A final, and the most important, factor was the secular ambitions of the two major shaykhs of the interior: Ḥimyar b. Nāṣir al-Nabhānī, the leader of the Ghāfirī faction; and ʿĪsā b. Ṣāliḥ al-Hārithī, the leader of the Hināwī faction and son of Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī who had been the leader of the 1895 attack on Muscat.

At the beginning, the role played by Ḥimyar was by far the most important. He was responsible for calling an assembly of notables at his headquarters at Tanūf (near Nizwā) in May 1913. The upshot of this convention was the election of Sālim b. Rāshid al-Kharūṣī as Imām. His selection was due to a combination of his personal character and religiosity, his impeccable lineage from a line of medieval Imāms, his relationship to al-Sālimī (son-in-law), and the close relationship that his tribe, the Banī Kharūṣ, had with the Banī Riyām, the tribe of Ḥimyar. It is significant to note that ʿĪsā b. Ṣāliḥ was not present at this assembly, and his (and consequently Hināwī) participation did not come until the capture of Izkī a month afterwards.⁶

With the election of an Imām an army was raised, consisting mostly of Banī Riyām and Banī Hinā. Nizwā was the first objective and a letter was sent off to the Sulṭān's wālī, Sayyid Sayf b. Ḥamad Āl Bū Saʿīdī, demanding his surrender. When he refused, the town was attacked in a pincer movement, the Banī Hinā attacking Nizwā al-Safālah (Lower Nizwā) and the rest of the army Nizwā al-ʿAlāyah (Upper Nizwā). After intensive fighting, both the Round Tower and al-Masjid al-Jāmiʿ (where the wālī had barricaded himself and later committed suicide) fell on 5 June. The prestige that followed this success was enough to cause the shaykhs of the ʿIbriyyīn, the Janabah, the Durūʿ, the Ḥājariyyīn and the Yaʿqūb to tender their allegiance to the Imām.⁷

By this time, Muscat had become thoroughly alarmed. Sulṭān Fayṣal sent his son Nādir in early June to defend the fort of Samāʿil with 2,000 men, mostly Ḥaḍramīs and Wahnābis, reinforced by some Shiḥūḥ brought down from the Musandam Peninsula in the north.⁸ After the success at Nizwā, the Imām's forces moved on to Izkī and its wālī, Sayyid Saʿūd b. Ḥamad Āl Bū Saʿīdī, was forced to surrender the fort on 20 June. Five days later, ʿĪsā b. Ṣāliḥ arrived

in Izkī to join the movement, the leadership of which he gradually took over. 'Īsā was also instrumental at this time in convincing most of the Banī Ruwāḥah to join with the Imām, thus opening the way to Samā'il.⁹

The situation in Samā'il quickly became precarious, as the fort where Sayyid Nādir and his followers had taken up their position was completely surrounded by the rebels. The Sultān received another blow with the fall of the town and fort of al-'Awābī (the family home of the Imām, near al-Rustāq on the coastal side of al-Jabal al-Akhḍar) on 24 June. Sultān Fayṣal's supply lines were imperilled when his Shiḥūḥ allies fled from Nakhl (near the base of al-Jabal al-Akhḍar, and which was held by Fayṣal's son Ḥamad) to Ṣuḥār (on the coast) and his Banī Bū 'Alī allies fled from Bidbid (just down the wādī from Samā'il, and held by another of Fayṣal's sons, Taymūr) to al-Waṭayyah (about four miles from Maṭraḥ). At this point, the Sultān had no alternative but to address an urgent plea for help to the British on 6 July.¹⁰ Troops were readily granted and the Intelligence Officer in Muscat, Major C. C. R. Murphy, recommended that they be landed at Maṭraḥ and stationed at the fort of Bayt al-Falaj, located in the valley between Maṭraḥ and the village of Ruwī, which was the entrance to the interior of Oman. On 9 July, 256 men of the 2nd Queen Victoria's Own Rajputs under the command of Major F. P. S. Dunsford arrived from Bushire and were duly disembarked and settled in according to Murphy's suggestions. Overall command of the defence of Muscat was entrusted to Lt.-Col. F. A. Smith, the Officer Commanding Troops in the Persian Gulf.¹¹

But although the Government of India were prepared to defend the capital, they had no intentions of intervening in the interior, and so repeated at this time their warning issued after the attack in 1895: that the Government of India would brook no attack on Muscat or Maṭraḥ.¹² Letters to this effect were sent out to the Imām and the other tribal leaders. The Imām replied to the Sultān with his terms for peace, which included breaking off relations with the Christians, the surrendering of the Wādī Samā'il, Nakhl and Ṣūr (on the coast to the south-east of Muscat) to the Imām's forces, and a reduction in the Sultān's customs.¹³ The Sultān, of course, rejected the terms. The Government of India subsequently repeated their statement on their position even after both the Political Agent in Muscat, Major S. G. Knox, and the Political Resident in the Gulf (and former Agent in Muscat), Major P. Z. Cox, had advanced the suggestion that an Indian Army advance to relieve the desperate garrison of Samā'il would effectively put an end to the uprising and also do away with the probable need for a garrison at Muscat for an indefinite

period of time to come.¹⁴ The Sultān's forces at this time were estimated at 1,000, consisting of his ineffectual Wahnābī and Ḥaḍramī garrisons, as well as a large number of unreliable tribal contingents from the Banī Bū 'Alī, Banī 'Umar, Shiḥūḥ, Na'im and Banī Yās.¹⁵

At this juncture, a mine was exploded in Samā'il fort, exposing the interior to outside fire and destroying much of the ammunition. Sayyid Nādir was forced to withdraw, leaving the fort in the hands of the shaykh of Samā'il, 'Abdullāh b. Sa'id al-Khalīlī, who left it to his son 'Alī when he left for Muscat. 'Alī in turn left it to his brother Muḥammad when he also went to Muscat, and after a week or so, when the Sultān had not reclaimed the fort, Muḥammad turned it over to the forces of the Imām.¹⁶ Bidbid had already fallen on 31 July and Sayyid Nādir was thus forced to retreat all the way to Muscat, which he reached on 11 August.

Meanwhile, another prong of the rebel offensive was underway on the coastal side of al-Jabal al-Akhḍar. 'Īsā b. Ṣāliḥ visited al-Rustāq and convinced its young ruler, Sayyid Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm Āl Bū Sa'idī, to make his allegiance to the Imām.¹⁷ Simultaneously, there had been an attack against Nakhl, and the town fell on 4 August, although the fort continued to hold out.

The situation was now extremely bleak. The safety of the capital depended on the Rajputs and some 250 various tribesmen, stationed at al-Waṭayyah under Muḥaffar b. Sulaymān, the wālī of Ṣuḥār, as well as the unruly Banī Bū 'Alī under their shaykh, Muḥammad b. Nāṣir, who were now billeted at the Naṣīb Khān mosque in Muscat.¹⁸ But the expected attack did not materialise, and the days stretched into weeks and then months of waiting. In September the Rajputs were joined by the 102nd King Edward's Own Grenadiers, who also took up picket positions beginning at the head of al-Wādī al-Kabīr (south of Muscat) almost to the village of Dār Sayt (on the coast west of Maṭraḥ).¹⁹ The picket line consisted of small fortifications built of rock along the ridge of limestone hills separating al-Waṭayyah from the Wādī Bayt al-Falaj, and along the edge of the barren rock-hills to the south of Muscat. In case Muscat should have relaxed its vigil, the Imām sent a haughty letter proclaiming the Sultān's dismissal to the Political Agent in October:

We inform your honour that the people of Oman have agreed by common consent to depose their Sultan, and have assembled to rise against him disliking the innovations he has brought about in Islam, by contravening the Shara commands and committing what is forbidden therein and setting the people against one another, and thereby disturbances are rife in the country and the order of things is disturbed, crimes have been committed, blood has been shed, property looted, legal punishments dispensed with and rights destroyed. Thereupon, the Muslims felt shame for the sake of

their religion and were angered on account of what they saw of corruption. So they assembled and agreed on this happy rising-up and hope thereby to secure the reform of their country and people.²⁰

In the midst of all these troubles, Sulṭān Fayṣal became ill. His condition gradually worsened and he lost consciousness and finally passed away on Saturday, 4 October 1913.²¹ On the 8th, his son Taymūr announced his accession to the throne, which was agreed to by all the family except his uncle, Sayyid Muḥammad b. Turkī. But Muḥammad eventually accepted the decision after Taymūr had agreed to an adjustment of his allowance.

Saiyid Taimur appears to have grasped the reins of Government firmly and to be inclined to work through his brothers, Saiyid Nadir and Muhammad and his cousin Dhiyab-bin-Fahad-bin-Turki. Great reforms are promised, especially in the Customs; public smoking and drinking are to be prohibited and prostitutes are to leave the town, the local authorities at Matrah have received warnings against the taking of bribes and justice has been promised to high and low. Most of these reforms are in deference to the presumed wishes of the Shaikh Abdullah-bin-Hamaid As-Salimi, one of the moving spirits of the rebellion.²²

Sulṭān Fayṣal's death was soon followed by the death of al-Sālīmī towards the end of January 1914.²³

The new Sulṭān's position was far from enviable. Taymūr was in the unfortunate position of being beset on all sides and having very few allies on whom he could count. The garrison of Nakhl were said to be pressing for more money or they would turn the fort over to the Imām's forces: the fort finally fell at the beginning of April when the Sulṭān's reinforcements from the Wādī al-Mu'āwil all deserted.²⁴ Sayyid Nādir was sent to defend Barkā against the rebels and before April was out, both Barkā and Quryāt had to be bombarded by British cruisers to dislodge the rebels.²⁵ The Sulṭān had to go to Quryāt himself later to quell the Banī Baṭṭāsh raiders (who were also responsible for sniping at the picket line set up by the Indian Army troops).²⁶

The situation calmed somewhat with the peace-making efforts of Shaykh Ḥamdān b. Zayd b. Khalīfah of Abū Ḍabī in November, who arranged for a meeting at al-Sib (on the coast thirty-five miles north-west of Muscat) with 'Īsā b. Ṣāliḥ and his brother 'Alī (the other shaykhs refusing to come). The only result of this was a meeting in Muscat on 9 December between the Sulṭān and 'Īsā—no agreement was reached and the Imām continued his plans.²⁷ By the end of 1914 the rumours were persistent that the rebels were gathering forces to attack Muscat:

Further confirmation has been received by letters addressed to Sultan of undoubted determination of Imam to attack Muscat. All the local Sheikhs

have undertaken to supply quotas of men at their own expense and it has been arranged that the Imam with his forces are to concentrate at Bidbid whence a combined attack will be directed on Mascat about the 2nd Moharram (21st November).

Isa bin Saleh is reported to have definitely thrown in his lot with the Imam and the Ibriyin tribe have joined the movement: All the above reports are dated prior to the declaration of war with Turkey and it is now thought that the latter announcement will tend to act as a further incentive and induce many to join the Imam's standard who would otherwise not have done so. I am well aware that similar threats in the past on the part of the Imam have proved to be nothing more than bluff but there is now ample justification for treating the present threat and general situation more seriously.²⁸

In January the threat became real. On the 7th it was reported that the Imām had actually gathered with 400 men at Bidbid.²⁹ Al-Waṭayyah was raided on the 8th, and on the 9th firing was heard in the nearby hills.³⁰ The Imām had advanced to the village of Bawshar with part of his forces; the rest were gathered at the village of al-Khuwayr under the leadership of 'Īsā b. Ṣāliḥ. The two forces merged and advanced to al-Waṭayyah by the 10th. They were opposed by 750 Indian Army troops, composed of the 102nd Grenadiers, led by Col. S. M. Edwardes (now in overall command), stationed at Bayt al-Falaj; and the 95th Russell's Infantry, commanded by Major F. F. Major, and stationed at Ruwī village. A small detachment of Arab retainers was to protect Dār Sayt (but actually fled when firing commenced).³¹

On the night of the 10th-11th it was dark from 6.30 p.m. till 2 a.m. when there was a faint moon. Ten minutes later a tremendous fusillade opened on the picket line, especially against the right of the 102nd Grenadiers, where after two hours' fighting the picket was driven in. At 6.30 a.m. Major A. C. Edwardes, with as many fit men as could be collected, and two machine-guns, was ordered to clear the hills and retake the lost picket-post. The frontal attack advanced towards a point known as Red Hill, and soon came under fire. Captain S. B. Coates, who was in command, was wounded but continued to advance. Having gained Red Hill they pushed on by regular stages, keeping up a brisk fire to assist the development and progress of the flank attack, which had moved out under command of Major Edwardes towards the centre of the 102nd Grenadiers' picket line. One by one the various ridges and passes were cleared, the enemy losing heavily and those retiring being hurried along by the approach of the 95th Regiment towards Sadd Ruwi. When the flank attack had wheeled to the right up on to the high ground, Major Pratt with a platoon of the 95th joined in on the left and assisted in the advance. The total strength of the enemy must have been nearly 3000, but in spite of these numbers and the difficult nature of the ground, they were defeated with losses estimated at 300, the rebel chief Isa bin Salih being wounded and his brother killed.

Our own casualties were slight, most of them occurring amongst the 102nd Grenadiers.³²

British casualties were later determined to be seven killed and fifteen wounded, while the Arabs had 186 killed out of some 350 casualties.³³ German agents were reported among the tribes, originating, it was said, from Dār al-Salām and distributing money throughout Ṣūr and the Sharqīyyah province.³⁴

In spite of the victory, the British urged caution on the Sulṭān. The elated Taymūr had expressed his desire to send a force of his *ʿaskaris* and the Banī ʿUmar on the heels of the defeated rebels, with the intention of recapturing the forts of Bidbid and Samāʿil, but he was dissuaded by the Political Agent who argued that the risks of losing the fruits of the recently gained victory were too great.³⁵ When the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, visited Muscat on 11 February, he warned the Sulṭān that he should reach a settlement with the Imām as he could not rely on British troops for ever.³⁶ Consequently, the Sulṭān first sent Sulṭān b. Muḥammad al-Naʿimī to meet with the Banī Jābir and Siyābiyyīn shaikhs of the Wādī Samāʿil but this attempt at reconciliation failed, allegedly through the intransigence of Muḥammad b. ʿAbdullāh al-Khalīlī who was said to have claimed that the surrender of the fort at Samāʿil would have been a great disgrace, seeing as it had been entrusted to his tribe as neutral guardians. A more convincing explanation is that overture for peace was seen as a sign of weakness on the part of the Sulṭān and the British (due to the beginning of the First World War).³⁷ Then in May, Ḥumayd b. Saʿīd al-Fulayṭī of the Wādī al-Muʿāwil, apparently acting on behalf of the Imām, brought forth a list of conditions for peace:

- (1) Full recognition of the Shariʿa law, as practised by the Imam, in substitution for the present unjust system of dealing with civil and criminal cases. There was to be no favouritism towards people connected with the palace.
- (2) Removal of British troops and of the land blockade of imports into the interior.
- (3) Full settlement of the financial claims of the tribes of the interior.
- (4) Importation of wine, spirits, and tobacco to be prohibited.
- (5) The Sultan to be regarded as ruler of Oman, but the Imam to administer the country according to the Shariʿa, either personally or through a representative at Muscat.
- (6) Free purchase of arms and ammunition to be allowed.³⁸

The Political Agent's reply was that the following demands were unacceptable:

- (1) Any demand that implied the non-recognition of the Sultan's legitimate rights in Muscat and in the interior.

- (2) Any demand implying the contravention of treaty rights between Great Britain and the Sultan, in which connection we recognized no one but Seyyid Teimur.
- (3) Any demand that might injure or hamper our trade.
- (4) Any demand for the discontinuance of the existing arms warehouse arrangements.³⁹

In June, the Qāḍī of the Imām, ‘Abdullāh b. Rāshid al-Hāshimī, wrote to the Political Agent, setting forth the following complaints:

- (1) Of the stopping of the slave trade, a trade which is consonant with the laws of Islam.
- (2) Of the British claim to command the sea which is common to all.
- (3) That the British interfere in the affairs of the Sultans of Oman, and support them in matters contrary to their religion.
- (4) That the people of Oman are suffering from:
 - (a) The fall in the value of the dollar.
 - (b) The increase in the price of food and cloth.
- (5) Finally he lodged a general complaint against the British, from the standpoint of Islam, for permitting the forbidden, such as the sale of wine and tobacco, and forbidding the permitted, such as the trade in arms and in slaves.⁴⁰

Despite this setting forth of grievances, negotiations could not be started without the acquiescence of the Imām himself, and the Imām prevaricated.

With the Sulṭān’s capture of the shaykh of the marauding Banī Baṭṭāsh, as well as their port of Daghmar and headquarters of Ḥayl al-Ghāf at the end of July,⁴¹ his position seemed to be growing appreciably stronger. The Imām saw fit to write to the Sulṭān on 27 August, agreeing to negotiations with ‘Īsā b. Šāliḥ as his representative. The Sulṭān chose the Political Agent, Major Benn, as his representative, and he left for al-Sib on 10 September, accompanied by Col. Woolridge, the Officer Commanding Troops at Muscat, and an eleven-man escort—rather prematurely as it happened, for ‘Īsā claimed important business in the interior and failed to appear.⁴² Benn returned to al-Sib on the 15th, whereupon he met ‘Īsā, ‘Īsā’s brother and the Imām’s Qāḍī, ‘Abdullāh b. Rāshid al-Hāshimī. That day was spent discussing the rebels’ grievances and demands, and on the following day, the Sulṭān’s terms were presented. The rebels’ list was long and fanciful:

- (1) That the Sultan’s subjects may be compelled to observe all religious duties and be prohibited from committing unlawful acts.
- (2) That the enhanced export and import duties (now levied) in the interior be withdrawn.
- (3) That all murderers and offenders, who are now given an asylum by the Sultan in Musqat, may be returned to us (for punishment) according to the law of God.

- (4) That we may be allowed to purchase arms and ammunition, so that our arms may not (through want of ammunition) remain as useless things.
- (5) That we may be granted allowances (lit. "help") to enable us to enforce our orders and punish those people of Oman who commit offences. (We would explain that) we cannot enforce our orders without such assistance.
- (6) That the chiefs of tribes may also be granted some allowances according to the local custom.
- (7) That the Sultan may do away with his "Nizam" (the new troops recently raised by the Sultan) together with the Band. Although such things are the custom of the Turkish Government according to our views they are unlawful. None of the Sultan's ancestors had a "Nizam" and Band; and the Sultan is forbidden by his religion to allow such things.
- (8) That the Sultan may be called upon to remove all the unjust and corrupt Walis and Qazis whom he has appointed and sent to the towns.
- (9) That the Sultan will not give protection to Omani slaves who escape from their masters when the latter want them back.
- (10) That the Sultan may be called upon to release the following persons who have been imprisoned by him, viz.:
 - The son of Shaikh Sayed bin Nasir
 - The sons of the Tewanis
 - Khalfan bin Sarhan al Moharzi and his son
 - A slave of Shaikh Isa bin Saleh
 - All the people of the village of Khoz and the Rahbiyin tribe now under confinement
 - The camels of the slave of Shubul.
- (11) That the Sultan may be called upon always to refer every kind of dispute to "Shara" (or Mahomadan law).
- (12) That the Sultan will issue orders prohibiting the dealing of Wines and Tobacco and smoking in the public Mahomadan bazaars and the dealers in the above commodities should be forbidden to do so.
- (13) That the Sultan will exempt the Ayal Sa'ad from payment of duty and zakat as they have never paid the same hitherto.
- (14) That the personal baggage of travellers from India and Zanzibar arriving at Sur may be exempted from examination according to old custom.⁴³

The Sultān's conditions were briefer and to the point:

- (1) Absolute subordination of the Imam to me as Ruler of Oman.
- (2) If and when I am assured of his loyalty and allegiance to me, I would be prepared to consider his appointment as my Deputy in the Hinterland, exclusive of the Samail District.
- (3) Immediate and unconditional surrender to me of the district of Samail within the boundaries defined by me and including the forts of Bidbid

and Samail. I reserve to myself the exclusive right as Ruler of Oman to collect all taxes and dues within the said boundaries.⁴⁴

Benn felt the issue was negotiable, but the Qādī 'Abdullāh was obstinately opposed to the surrender of the Samā'il forts (although even 'Īsā was willing to agree). Benn thereupon returned to Muscat on the 16th.⁴⁵ The Resident, Major Cox, then reported to the Government of India that the only course was to wait for the early death of the Imām and then reach financial rapprochement with Ḥimyar. If, meanwhile, the Sultān was to decide on a military initiative, then the British should by no means stop him.⁴⁶

The next step was up to the Imām, who turned his attention to consolidating his control over the interior. His forces captured Bahlā from its semi-independent ruler, Shaykh Nāṣir b. Ḥamid al-Ghāfirī, during June 1916,⁴⁷ and then 'Īsā b. Ṣāliḥ led an initial attack against al-Rustāq and Sayyid Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm who once again was compelled to seek assistance from the Sultān, such assistance coming in the form of an army led by Sayyid Ḥamad b. Fayṣal, Muḥaffar b. Sulaymān and Sultān b. Muḥammad al-Na'imī. When 'Īsā returned to the Sharqīyyah, the Imām's forces were taken over by the Imām's brother, Nāṣir b. Rāshid. Due to the desertion of the Sultān's tribal levies, the fort fell in August 1917.⁴⁸ This set up a situation which was to provide a state of open warfare for the next several years, with Nāṣir b. Rāshid entrenched in al-Rustāq and Sayyid Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm retrenched in al-Ḥazm, just down the wādī.

By this time, the Indian Army troops had been stationed at Bayt al-Falaj for more than four years, the Sultān was still unable to rely upon his tribal allies (as they deserted him more than once⁴⁹), and the Imām's position seemed to be growing stronger. Consequently, the new Political Agent, Major L. B. H. Haworth, produced a number of proposals designed to put the Sultanate on proper financial footing, thus allowing the establishment of a local levy corps and thereby open the way for the withdrawal of the Indian Army troops. These proposals were an elaboration on the idea of the Muscat Levy Corps, originally raised and presented to the Sultān in early 1914.⁵⁰ Haworth assessed the situation as follows:

- (1) The Sultan is deserted by his tribes and has only his immediate followers to rely on: he is consequently depending on the British Government.
- (2) The Imam can raise 1000 followers upon whom he can depend, if threatened these numbers would probably somewhat increase but the greater part of those who pretend to be with him are as unreliable as those with the Sultan. Many of the Chiefs got into communications with the Sultan directly they heard he was advancing.
- (3) Shaikh Isa has withdrawn from the Imam and has consistently refused

to assist him against Rustaq. I am informed that owing to the Sultan's failure Shaikh Isa is preparing to occupy the Samail valley in order to forestall the Imam who if successful at Rustaq would probably form the same idea.⁵¹

Haworth's proposals included: the introduction of a European Superintendent of Customs and a British Adviser until such time as an Indian or Egyptian could take over the administration of the State as Prime Minister; a comprehensive education for the youths of the ruling family who could then take over from the Europeans after a few years; and most important, a military force to take the Wādī Samā'il, and then 600 to 800 men to staff the garrison at Muscat and provide detachments for the *wilāyāts*. An alternative, however, would be to organise an irregular force of 1000 men with five British Officers, ten native officers and sixty non-commissioned officers, with an estimated cost of over two and a half lakhs of rupees.⁵² When Haworth failed to receive the Government of India's approval of his proposal he countered with another idea: local recruits should be found as replacements for the Indian regiments stationed at Muscat, so that one or two local companies could be formed that could be handed over to the succeeding Indian Army battalions: when the Indian Army would finally be removed from Oman, the nucleus for the Levy Corps would already be there.⁵³

But these proposals, clearly too elaborate for Muscat in that form, would in any case be something for the future. Much closer to hand was the necessity for negotiations and so Haworth began preparations for meeting the Imām's representative in April 1919. But the meeting was put off until September and Haworth finally met 'Īsā b. Ṣāliḥ on the 15th and 16th.

The situation was discussed with considerable frankness by both sides. The proposal of the Political Agent that the Sultan should be the temporal and the Imam the spiritual head of a united Oman was however immediately negated by the Omani chiefs. It was realised that a settlement on the basis of the Status Quo was the only possible solution, the Omanis ruling their country, and the Sultan his, with freedom of travel and intercourse, and guarantee on the part of both sides against attack.⁵⁴

'Īsā specifically contended that the cause of the rising was the continued bad government of the Sultāns: "The Walis had been bad while the Kazis [Qāḍis] were dishonest and took bribes. There was no redress from wrongs and the Sultans were apathetic while also dissatisfaction against Sultans existed for religious reasons."⁵⁵ 'Īsā went on to state that conditions were vastly improved in Oman under the Imāmate. The Omani demands at this meeting included: (1) the removal of restrictions on entry to Muscat; (2) a reduction of the *zakāt* on goods coming to the coast from the interior; (3) the

return of fugitives from justice; and (4) the release of four relatives of ʿĪsā b. Ṣāliḥ who had been held in Muscat since March 1918. The corresponding terms of the Sulṭān were: (1) a guarantee that the Sulṭān's territory would not be attacked nor his Government interfered with; (2) the safety of travellers and freedom of trade should be guaranteed; (3) that the Omanis should hear and decide cases against Omanis; (4) fugitives from justice should be returned; and (5) the date gardens of Samā'il previously seized should be returned.⁵⁶ When Haworth reported back to the Sulṭān, it seemed that:

The Sultan is willing to accept the situation and is aware of what took place at the meeting. He did not like the idea of having to send back to Oman refugees from justice saying that this would be acknowledging that there was a separate Government but when I pointed out to him that this already existed he said that he left it entirely up to us. This was the only point which he raised.⁵⁷

Haworth saw the Omanis' rejection of Sulṭān Taymūr's control as reasonable: "It enables the people of the interior to develop on their own lines and at the same time gives us access to them, while at no time could the Sultan control them any more than his father or his grandfather were able to do."⁵⁸

At this point, the Government of India, especially concerned over the financial drain posed by the continued garrisoning of Indian troops in the Sultanate, decided that every step possible should be taken to get them out. In October 1919 the non-Arabic speaking Haworth was replaced by an Indian Political Service officer then stationed in Mesopotamia, Ronald Wingate. At a meeting in Simla, the Foreign Secretary made it clear to the new Political Agent that settlement of the long-standing dispute was of the highest priority.⁵⁹ Almost immediately, Wingate took action by sending the respected jurist, Shaykh Sa'īd b. Nāṣir al-Kindī to Nizwā in November, where the Imām and his shaykhs were meeting, to work out a deal for the return of the disputed date gardens of Samā'il and the Wādī al-Mu'āwil in return for the release of ʿĪsā's four relatives as the first step in a settlement.

The reasons of this mission were several. In the first place he [Sa'īd] was willing to go. In the second his son holds a position of trust with the Imam, and owing to the rebellion he has not seen him for years. In the third as an emissary he is the most likely person to secure our object owing to the respect he commands (I have just heard that he has been feted at every village on his way up). Finally the whole world knows that he has gone with this object and should he fail the effect on his prestige would be serious.⁶⁰

But the fierce opposition of the *muṭāwiʿah* prevailed and in February 1920, Saʿīd b. Nāṣir returned, his mission a failure.⁶¹

Frustrated by the obstacle that this minor problem was posing for a successful settlement, Wingate wrote to his superior, suggesting that a Levy Corps be set up immediately so that it could capture the Wādīs Samāʿil and al-Muʿāwil (where the disputed date gardens were) for the Sulṭān and thus neatly dispose of the sticking point.⁶² When nothing came of this, Wingate prevailed upon the Sulṭān to raise the *zakāt* on the date exports from the interior from 5 to 25 per cent and to 50 per cent on pomegranates in an attempt to force the Imām's hand.⁶³

This action, combined with the deaths of the Imām and one of his most important and prominent supporters, was to eventually bring about a successful conclusion to the al-Sib negotiations. Shaykh Ḥimyar b. Nāṣir al-Nabhānī, the head of the Banī Riyām tribe and the Ghāfirī confederation, died in April 1920, and was succeeded by his young son Sulaymān. According to Wingate, "The Imam was the figurehead 'Isa the brains and Hamyar the strength of the Omani party. Hamyar's successor will not be able to claim full support of the Banī Riyam and there is likely to be tribal fighting. Now is the time to strike—since one of the three great personal factors on the Omani side is eliminated."⁶⁴ On the heels of this element of instability came Nāṣir b. Rāshid al-Kharūṣī's attack on al-Ḥazm. Its ruler, Sayyid Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm, once again called for help from the Sulṭān, who sent the wālī of Maṭraḥ, Sayyid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ghashāmī, with a force and picking up reinforcements along the way. When his group of Banī Harrās deserted him, Nāṣir was forced to withdraw, and the Imām suffered a further decline in influence when his calls for help were ignored by the shaykhs, particularly both ʿĪsā b. Ṣāliḥ and the new Banī Riyām shaykh, Sulaymān b. Ḥimyar. Even the Banī Ghāfir deserted to the Sulṭān's side once again. Consequently, the Imām was forced to sue for peace on humiliating terms.⁶⁵

The hardship caused by the penal *zakāt* worked its way into resentment, and it was reported that Muḥammad b. ʿAbdullāh al-Khalilī had advised the Omanis to buy the disputed date gardens from the Imām and give them to the Sulṭān, as otherwise the *zakāt* would cost some three lakhs of rupees.⁶⁶ The situation reached the crisis point when a Yāl Wahībah tribesman murdered the Imām in his sleep at a camp in the Wādī ʿAndām on 23 July 1920, ostensibly due to bitterness over the *zakāt*.⁶⁷

Contrary to the election of 1913, when Ḥimyar b. Nāṣir had taken the lead by securing the election of a candidate favourable to him, the election of 1920 was dominated by ʿĪsā b. Ṣāliḥ and consequently

his choice (allegedly his father-in law) was elected, Muḥammad b. ‘Abdullāh al-Khalīlī, the *tamīmah* of the Banī Ruwāhah.⁶⁸ Al-Khalīlī was presented to the notables in Nizwā and they readily gave their *bay‘ah* to him.⁶⁹

The new Imām’s first duty was to deal with the situation at al-Rustāq, boiling once again. Sayyid Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm, still the wālī of al-Ḥazm, had recovered strength enough to lead a considerable offensive aimed at regaining the traditional seat of his family from Nāṣir b. Rāshid al-Kharūṣī. The Imām al-Khalīlī was successful in raising enough men to protect al-Rustāq, and then replaced the unpopular Nāṣir with Sayyid Hilāl b. ‘Alī Āl Bū Sa‘īdī as his wālī.⁷⁰

With the more conciliatory ‘Isā b. Ṣāliḥ now obviously in control, the long-blocked negotiations were able to come to a swift conclusion. The ascendancy of the obstinate *muṭāwi‘ah* under Sālim b. Rāshid’s Imāmate had been considerably checked. Negotiations were again opened with the Political Agent at Al-Sīb on 23 September 1920, and concluded on the 26th. Wingate telegraphed to the Resident that “Agreement takes the form of two identical letters addressed to me by Sultan Government and Oman tribes accepting and guaranteeing terms arranged by mediation of P.A. and giving terms in full. There is no mention of recognition of Sultan or Imām.”⁷¹ The signature of the Imām as a guarantor was obtained on 28 September, and the other tribal shaykhs signed by early October.⁷² The original obstacle to the agreement, the return of the date gardens, had been readily accomplished in exchange for the release of the four prisoners in Muscat.⁷³ It is interesting to read Wingate’s account of the meetings leading up to the agreement:

At the end of September 1920, I set out in a small dhow from Muscat for Sib, a little port some thirty-five miles up the coast, where the tribal chiefs had agreed to meet me some four miles inland. I was accompanied only by the dragoman. But, in order to show that the British Government was behind the Sultan, I arranged with the British officer commanding the Indian battalion that he should come with me himself, bringing a platoon. It was a serious risk, and I do not believe that I or Bill Adams, the C.O., ever consulted anybody on the propriety of these moves. They left in another dhow and got safely to Sib, the day before.

For two days we talked, squatting on carpets, the sheikhs with their daggers and silver-mounted muskets and Ehtisham and myself drinking interminable cups of coffee, breaking off in the evening for feasting, and continuing again the next morning. We slept on the ground. Finally, what would be called in modern parlance “the heads of agreement” were agreed. They were briefly that the Imam and the tribal leaders and their tribes would live at peace with the Sultan and not interfere with his administration in Muscat and on the coast, and that the Sultan would not

interfere in their internal affairs. The Sultan would also reduce the Zakat, or export duty, on dates to the customary five per cent which had been in force before. There were some other minor provisions of only local interest.

So far so good, but on the morning of the third day an unexpected difficulty arose. The sheikhs insisted that the agreement should be between the Sultan on one side and the Imam al Muslimin on the other. This was fatal, and I knew that I could not possibly agree to it on behalf of the Sultan, for this would mean that the Sultan acknowledged another ruler, and a ruler who was already an elected spiritual leader and an admitted temporal representative of the tribes. From such an acknowledgement it was only one step farther for the spiritual leadership and temporal representation of the tribes to develop into a claim for the spiritual and temporal leadership of all Oman. Every argument was used; that there were millions of Moslems for whom their Imam was not Imam; that this was a political, not a religious matter, and so on. But the tribal leaders were adamant, and the deadlock seemed complete till Ehtisham whispered to me in English:

“Tell them the story of the Prophet and his negotiations with the people of Mecca.”

In those days I knew a little history, and I understood his suggestion.

So I told them the story which, of course, they knew. The Prophet at Hadaibiyah had negotiated an agreement with the people of Mecca and then attempted to sign the agreement as between the people of Mecca and “Mohammed, the Prophet of God”. The delegates of Mecca had pointed out very reasonably that if Mohammed was the Prophet of God then there was no object in signing a peace with him in that capacity. How could the Prophet of God be a party to an agreement with mere mortals? The Prophet saw the point and his part in the agreement was as “Mohammed, the Son of Abdullah”. (This incident is mentioned in Gibbon in his famous chapter on the rise of Islam, where he says that Mohammed “Waived in the treaty his title of ‘Apostle of God’ ”.) The sheikhs, after a solemn confabulation, smiled. The word Imam was omitted from the body of the document, which simply read as conditions arranged between the Sultan’s Government and Isa bin Salih as representing the Omani tribes.

The document was in Arabic and began, traditionally, *In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*. So there was the Agreement of Sib. It was signed by me on behalf of the Sultan, with his full authority, and granted to the tribal leaders of Oman, all of whom signed individually, the right of self-government, or non-interference by the Sultan in their internal affairs in return for peace, and for the payment of the customary dues at the ports in the territory controlled by the Sultan. The question of sovereignty was never mentioned. Had it been, there would have been no agreement. It recognized the facts of the situation, a situation which was not a new one, but had been a source of controversy and conflict for three-quarters of a century. For in Arabia allegiance is tribal, and the tribe has no defined boundaries. Yet the existence of a Coastal Sultanate, a tribal confederation, and a religious leader, who could claim through election the temporal allegiance of the tribes, had, up till then, made impossible a

modus vivendi where, by agreement, the coast and the interior each looked after its own affairs, while remaining in friendly contact.

This peace, for peace it was, lasted for thirty-five years. During that period, the tribes of interior Oman were entirely self-governing, under the Imam, as leader of the confederation, and the Sultanate itself on the coast progressed slowly but surely, secure from attack and disturbance, to become a viable state with adequate revenues and reasonable defence.

When I left the next morning, I bade my formal good-byes to all the sheikhs in turn. Finally, as was only right, Sheikh Isa accompanied me some distance on my way, and we parted with many expressions of mutual esteem.⁷⁴

The letters of agreement were identical in the body of the text, although necessarily differing in the preamble and signatures. The body is as follows:

What concern the Omanis are these:

Firstly—On all commodities brought from Oman of all kinds to Muscat, Matrah, Sur and all the coast towns nothing more should be taken than 5 per cent.

Secondly—For all the Omanis there should be safety and freedom in all the coast towns.

Thirdly—All restrictions on entry to and exit from Muscat, Matrah and all the coast towns should be removed.

Fourthly—The Sultan's Government should not protect criminals who flee from the justice of the Omanis and that they may be returned to them if asked for and that the Sultan's Government should not interfere in their internal affairs.

The four which concern the Government of the Sultan are stated as follows:

Firstly—All the tribes and Shaikhs should remain in peace and amity with the Government of the Sultan and that they should not attack the coast towns and should not interfere in his Government.

Secondly—All travellers to Oman on their lawful business should be free and there should be no restrictions on trade and travellers should be safe.

Thirdly—All criminals and evil men who flee to them should be turned out and should not be protected.

Fourthly—The claims of merchants and others against the Omanis should be heard and decided as is just according to the *Sharah*.⁷⁵

The Omanis' letter begins:

This is what has been agreed upon in the settlement between the Government of Sultan Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal and Sheikh Isa bin Salah bin Ali-al-Hrathi on behalf of the Omanis who sign their names here through the mediation of Mr. Wingate, I.C.S., Political Agent and His Britannic Majesty's Consul, Muscat, who is authorised by his Government in this respect to be a mediator between them. The conditions are stated as follows.

Four of them concern the Government of the Sultan and four of them concern the Omanis.

And it ends with the following paragraphs:

Written at Sib on the eleventh day of Moharram, one thousand three hundred and thirty nine Hijrah, corresponding to twenty fifth day of September, one thousand nine hundred and twenty.

I have completed what was completed by Sheikh Isa bin Salah on my behalf in these conditions. Written by Imam-al-Muslamin Mohammad bin Abdullah with his own hand.

I on behalf of the Imam-al-Muslamin Mohammad bin Abdullah-al-Khalili and on my own behalf agree to the conditions written here with the authorisation of the Imam-al-Muslamin. Written by Isa bin Salah with his own hand.

Sulaiman bin Hamyar-an-Nabhani (with his own hand).

Zahair bin Ghusn-al-Hinawi (with his own hand).

Mohsin bin Zahran-as-Siyabi (with his own hand).

Hamaid bin Mussulam-an-Nidabi (with his own hand).

Saif bin Salim bin Amir-al-Habasi (with his own hand).

Khalaf bin Nasir bin Mohammad-al-Moawali (with his own hand).

Thumb impression of Mohammad bin Sultan bin Mansur-al-Wahaibi.

Mohammad bin Saif bin Said-al-Jabri (with his own hand).

Sultan bin Salim-ar-Rahbi (with his own hand).

Khalfan bin Mohammad bin Sulaiman-al-Hidabi (with his own hand).

Thani bin Harith-al-Jabri (with his own hand).

Hamdan bin Sulaiman bin Saif-an-Nabhani (with his own hand).

Muhanna bin Hamad bin Mohsin-al-Ibri (with his own hand).

Nasir bin Hamaid bin Rashid-al-Ghafiri and his son Mohammad bin Nasir (with his own hand).

Abdullah bin Hilal bin Zahar-al-Hanai (with his own hand).

This official document of agreement was brought to me which is the best sort of settlement between Sheikh Isa bin Salah on our behalf as written above and the Government of Sultan Saiyid Taimur through the mediation of Mr. Wingate, I.C.S., His Britannic Majesty's Consul at Muscat, as is written also with special authorisation. I write these lines with my own hand and thank God for it. Written by Saif bin Ali bin A'mir Al Maskari with his own hand.

The Sultan's letter began:

This is what has been agreed upon in the settlement between the Government of the Sultan Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal and the Omanis, by the acting Wazir Saiyid Mohammad bin Ahmad authorised by His Highness the Sultan through the mediation of Mr. Wingate, I.C.S., Political Agent and His Britannic Majesty's Consul, Muscat, who is authorised by his Government in this respect to be a mediator between them. The conditions are stated as follows. Four of them concern the Government of the Sultan and four of them concern the Omanis.

And it ends with the following:

Written at Muscat this fourteenth day of Moharram, one thousand three hundred thirty nine Hijrah, corresponding to twenty-eighth day of September, one thousand nine hundred and twenty.

Sealed signature of Taimur (H.H. the Sultan of Muscat and Oman).
(Signed) Mohammad bin Ahmad, with his own hand, on behalf of the Sultan.⁷⁶

The implications of the agreement have been treated extensively, usually in attempts to apply it to the rebellion of 1957-9; with allegations that it was the basis for the creation of an independent "Imamate of Oman" in the interior as opposed to a "Sultanate of Muscat" on the coast.⁷⁷ Looking at the articles of the agreement, it would seem that the first three articles binding on the Sulṭān and the articles numbered one, two and four, binding on the Omanis, are nothing more than a return to conditions existing previous to the outbreak of hostilities in 1913. The only part of the agreement that introduces a new element is the exchange of fugitives from justice. This is hardly a solid foundation on which to build the case that a separate government existed in the interior. Indeed, it is very similar to agreements between friendly tribes by which a fugitive from one tribe would be returned by a second tribe to the first, if for no other reason than to prevent hard feelings between the tribes. It seems conclusive that if the "people of Oman" had regarded the Imāmate as constituting an independent and sovereign government, they would not have continued to rely upon the Sulṭān for the issuance of passports and mediation in tribal disputes (even those involving the Imām as a party), and send him armed men to contest the Saʿūdī invasion of al-Buraimī in 1952, to cite only a few examples. The use of the agreement some thirty five to forty years later to attack the British as "colonialists" and "imperialists" adds nothing to understanding the purpose for which the agreement was signed: an attempt to restore peace to a war-torn countryside by the method of compromise in a manner which recognised the *status quo ante bellum*. It happened that the *status quo* before 1913 and after 1920 was a situation whereby the Sulṭān had been weakened enough so that his control over the interior was nebulous at best.

Given the circumstances existing in Muscat in 1920 and the several preceding decades, the freedom from day-to-day responsibility over the interior was probably beneficial. The Sultanate simply did not have the resources, either financially or in manpower, to administer the interior properly. And it was only with British aid (both military and financial) after the al-Jabal al-Akhḏar war of the 1950s that Sulṭān Saʿīd b. Taymūr was able to secure and then hold control over the interior.

It may be accurate to say that the seven-year period of 1913 to 1920 was a violent eruption due to the gradual build-up of disruptive trends over the previous half-century. A cooling-off period followed from 1920 to 1954, which was followed by another violent period. The end result was the unification of all of Oman. Seen in the light of the last two centuries of Omani history, these seven years are important because, first of all, they marked the nadir of the Sultanate's fortunes. Second, the events of these years resulted in a turn-about of the official British policy of non-interference in internal affairs, as only a complete shake-up of the regime in Muscat could have prevented, at best, continued British military support, and at worst, the disappearance of the Sultanate. Due to the British-implemented changes brought forth by the events of this period, Oman entered a different era: an era of gradual (and ever so slow) adaptation to the modern world. This tortoise-like transformation was only altered by the *coup d'état* of 1970.

Notes

1. The traditionally quasi-independent ruler of the town of al-Rustāq, Sayyid 'Azzān b. Qays Al Bū Sa'idī, had been elected Imām in 1868 by the Ghāfirī tribes of Oman and consequently led an army which captured and held Muscat for three years. For a detailed account, see Ravinder Kumar, "British Attitudes towards the Ibadiyya Revivalist Movement in East Arabia", *International Studies*, Bombay, III, 1962, 443-50. In Oman the term "sayyid" is used as a title of respect for members of the ruling family.
2. A Hināwī gathering of tribes, led by Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alī, the *tamīmah* (paramount shaikh) of the Hīrth tribe, captured Muscat in January 1895 and plundered the town before leaving a month later.
3. The terms "Ghāfirī" and "Hināwī" denote the confederation of tribes along lines first developed in the civil wars of the first part of the eighteenth century. Although they have some foundation in racial (north Arab vs. south Arab) and religious (Sunni vs. Ibādī) differences, the alignment into two opposing camps is primarily on political lines in a type of country-wide and local balance of power system.
4. For a closer look at the history of the various Imāmates in Oman, see Derek Hopwood, ed., *The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics*, London, 1972; especially the articles by J. C. Wilkinson, R. D. Bathurst and J. B. Kelly.
5. The singular is *muṭawwi'*; the term is used for the particularly religious Ibādīs.
6. Those notables who did make the *bay'ah* (pledge of allegiance) to the Imām included 'Āmir b. Khāmis al-Mālikī, 'Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Riyāmi, 'Abdullāh b. Rāshid al-Hāshimī, Nāṣir b. 'Āmir al-Riyāmi,

Muḥammad b. Sālīm al-Ruqayshī, Ḥamad b. Musallim al-Ḥājari, and the sons of Hilāl b. Zāhir al-Hinā'ī. See Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh al-Sālīmī, *Naḥdat al-A'yān bi-Ḥurriyat 'Umān*, Cairo, 1961, 151. Muḥammad is the son of the theologian 'Abdullāh b. Ḥumayd.

7. al-Sālīmī, 179–80.

8. Lt. Col. C. C. R. Murphy, *Soldiers of the Prophet*, London, 1921, 129–30. Murphy was Intelligence Officer for the British troops in Muscat during the rebellion.

9. al-Sālīmī, 183–4.

10. India Office Records (hereafter cited as I.O.), Major S. G. Knox, the Political Agent at Muscat, to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, no. 99 of 7 July 1913.

11. Murphy, 131.

12. I.O., Major P. Z. Cox, the Political Resident in the Gulf, to Knox, Telegram no. 1232 of 11 July 1913.

13. I.O., Knox to Foreign Department of the Government of India, no. 124 Confidential of 31 July 1913.

14. I.O., Cox to Foreign Department, Government of India, and Political Agent in Muscat, Telegram no. 1294 of 19 July 1913. After surveying the suggestions of Knox and Cox, the Government of India stated that "Nevertheless we adhere to our opinion that our action should be limited to the Coast, as we are convinced that intervention in hinterland is fraught with dangers greater than any advantages that may be expected to follow." See I.O., Foreign Department, Government of India, to Political Resident in the Gulf, repeated in Assistant Political Resident to Political Agent in Muscat, Telegram no. 1411 of 13 August 1913.

15. I.O., Knox to Cox, Daily Bulletin of 20 July 1913.

16. al-Sālīmī, 333.

17. *Ibid.*, 196. Sayyid Aḥmad, the nephew of Imām 'Azzān b. Qays, had ruled al-Rustāq for little more than a year since the assassination of his brother, Sayyid Sa'id b. Ibrāhīm. Sa'id had figured in an earlier attempt in 1903 to revive the Imāmate, along with 'Isā b. Šāliḥ. Aḥmad was later to become the Minister of the Interior for Sulṭān Sa'id b. Taymūr. His avowal of allegiance at this time was short-lived, for he soon was driven from al-Rustāq by the Imām's forces (see below).

18. I.O., Muskat News, no. 29–720, week ending 26 July 1913.

19. I.O., Knox to Cox, no no., 6 September 1913.

20. I.O., translation of letter from the Imam of the Muslims, Salim, in Knox to Cox, no. 181 of 9 October 1913.

21. I.O., Muskat News for the week ending 4 October 1913.

22. I.O., Muskat News no. 1008 for the week ending 11 October 1913.

23. I.O., Lt. Col. R. A. E. Benn, the Political Agent in Muscat, to Foreign Department, Telegram no. 28 of 4 February 1914.

24. I.O., Benn to Cox and Foreign Department, Telegram no. 78 of 9 April 1914.

25. I.O., Annual Muskat Report for 1914.

26. One soldier was killed in an exchange of gunfire in August, a Baluchi interpreter was killed and sepoy wounded in early October, and another interpreter wounded later in the same month. See I.O., Benn to Knox, no. 199 of 22 August 1914; "Note by Political Agent after Interview with Sultan", 14 October 1914; and Benn to Knox, Telegram no. 268 of 26 October 1914.

27. I.O., "Sketch of the Careers of *Saleh bin Ali* and his Son *Isa bin Saleh*, the Stormy Petrels of Oman Politics", by Major G. P. Murphy?, 1928?

28. I.O., Benn to Knox, Telegram no. 289 of 6 November 1914.
29. I.O., Benn to Knox, Telegram no. 11 of 7 January 1915.
30. Murphy, 134.
31. I.O., Benn to Knox, no. 31 Confidential of 25 January 1915; Murphy, pp. 134-5.
32. Murphy, 135-6. A more detailed account is found in Major J. T. Gorman, *Historical Record of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Bombay Grenadiers (King Edward's Own), formerly 102nd King Edward's Own Grenadiers, 1776-1933*, Weston-super-Mare, 1933, new edition, 89-95.
33. I.O., Benn to Knox, no. 31 Confidential of 25 January 1915.
34. Ibid.
35. I.O., "Stormy Petrels".
36. I.O., Benn's "Memorandum on Interview of the Viceroy with the Sultan on board the H.M.S. *Northbrook*", 11 February 1915.
37. I.O., "Stormy Petrels".
38. Gertrude Bell, *The Arab War: Confidential Information for General Headquarters from Gertrude Bell; being Despatches reprinted from the Secret "Arab Bulletin"*, London, 1940, 24.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 25.
41. I.O., Benn to Cox, no. 171 Confidential of 16 August 1915.
42. I.O., Benn to Cox, Telegram no. 175 of 29 August 1915; and "Note by Political Agent: Visit to Sib", 11 September 1915.
43. I.O., Enclosure in Benn to Cox, no. 189 Confidential of 28 September 1915.
44. Ibid.
45. I.O., Benn to Cox at Basra, Telegram no. 181 of 17 September 1915.
46. I.O., Cox to Foreign Department, Telegram no. R189 of 16 October 1915.
47. al-Sālīmī, 238.
48. Ibid., 243-6.
49. The Banī Bū 'Alī, for example, had been allied to the Sulṭāns since Sayyid Turki had captured the throne in 1871 and only a few years after these events, their action in supporting a dissident faction in Ṣūr marked a permanent break with Muscat. Conversation with Sayyid Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm, Muscat, 26 January 1975.
50. I.O., Benn to Cox, Telegram no. 78 of 9 April 1914; and Benn to Cox, Telegram no. 94 of 19 April 1914.
51. I.O., Haworth to the Deputy Political Resident, no. 115-C of 13 June 1917.
52. I.O., Haworth to Denys Bray, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, no. 1-T Confidential of 30 October 1917. It is interesting to note that when the Muscat Levy Corps was finally established (in April 1921), it never consisted of more than 150 to 200 men and never had more than one British officer.
53. I.O., Haworth to Deputy Political Resident, no. 37-C of 24 April 1918.
54. I.O., Annual Muscat Administration Report for 1919.
55. I.O., Haworth to Cox in Baghdad, Telegram no. 82-C of 18 September 1919.
56. I.O., R. E. L. Wingate, Political Agent at Muscat, to Deputy Political Resident, no. 2052 Confidential of 14 October 1920. This despatch contains a complete report on the rebellion from 1913 to the successful conclusion of negotiations in 1920.

57. I.O., Haworth to Cox in Baghdad, Telegram no. 82-C of 18 September 1919.
58. I.O., Haworth to Cox in Baghdad, no no. of 24 September 1919.
59. Conversation with Sir Ronald Wingate, Barford Manor, Wiltshire, 13 April 1975.
60. I.O., "Situation in Muscat and Oman, November 1919", contained in Wingate to Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, no. 121-C of 26 November 1919.
61. I.O., Annual Muscat Administration Report for 1919.
62. I.O., Wingate to Deputy Political Resident, Demi-official no. 1105 of 22 May 1920.
63. I.O., Wingate to Deputy Political Resident, no. 2052 Confidential of 14 October 1920. There was a precedent for this action in the attempts of Sulṭān Fayṣal b. Turkī to get compensation for the sacking of Muscat in 1895.
64. I.O., Wingate, "Situation in Oman as Regards to Negotiations and Measures Proposed", n.d. (ca. April 1920). Sulaymān was to remain in the background in Omani politics until the election of Imām Ghālīb b. 'Alī al-Hinā'ī in 1954, when he became one of the principal backers of that Imāmate and of the rebellion of 1957-9.
65. I.O., Wingate to Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, no. 1256 Confidential of 4 June 1920.
66. I.O., Wingate to Deputy Political Resident, no. 1609 Confidential of 21 July 1920.
67. Wingate contended that "it is quite certain that he was killed because the tribes were utterly sick of his rule and that of his brothers which was a combination of utter religious bigotry combined with shameless selfishness and oppression and a complete disregard of politics or government. . . ." See I.O., Wingate to Deputy Political Resident, Demi-official, no no. of 4 August 1920.
68. Even though the Khalīlī clan was actually part of the Banī Kharūṣ tribe, its shaykhs had been invited by the Banī Ruwāhah to take the leadership of the latter tribe. Conversation with Shaykh Sa'ūd b. 'Alī al-Khalīlī, Samā'il, 31 January 1975.
69. Those giving the pledge included: 'Amir b. Khāmis al-Mālikī, Mājīd b. Khāmis al-'Ibrī, 'Abdullāh b. Muḥammad b. Ruzayq al-Riyāmī, 'Īsā b. Ṣāliḥ al-Hārithī, Muḥammad b. Sālim al-Ruqayshī, Sayf b. 'Alī al-Maskarī, Hamdān b. Sulaymān b. Sayf al-Nabhānī, Muḥinna b. Hamad al-'Ibrī, Ibrāhīm b. Sa'id al-'Ibrī, and the sons of Hilāl b. Zāhir al-Hinā'ī. See al-Sālimī, 339. It is significant to note that Sulaymān b. Himyar did not give his allegiance until later, sending instead 'Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Riyāmī as his representative.
70. al-Sālimī, 343-5. Nāṣir swiftly faded into obscurity, and years later was a pensioner of Sulṭān Sa'id b. Taymūr in Muscat.
71. I.O., Wingate to Political Resident, Telegram no. 1990 of 7 October 1920.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Sir Ronald Wingate, *Not in the Limelight*, London, 1959, 88-91.
75. As Wingate emphasised to the author of this article, the agreement itself was discussed, written and signed solely in Arabic, and thus the copies in English are only translations for information. Wingate's translation (used above), along with an explanation of the events leading up to the signing, is found in I.O., Wingate to Deputy Political Resident, no. 2052 Con-

Confidential of 14 October 1920. Other English texts are to be found in: I.O., Annual Muscat Administration Report for 1920; Robert G. Landen, *Oman Since 1856; Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society*, Princeton, 1967, 403-4 n.; Husain M. Albaharna, *The Legal Status of the Arabian Gulf States*, Manchester, 1968, 242-3; *The Question of Oman: An Analysis of the British Oman Dispute*, New York, Arab Information Center, 1960; *et al.* The Arabic text can be found in al-Sālimī, 345-9. Wingate also notes in his despatch to the Deputy Political Resident that originally there were only three obligations accruing to the Sultan: numbers two and three were then split from a single one in order to save the Omanis' face for conceding four terms.

76. I.O., Wingate to Deputy Political Resident, no. 2052 Confidential of 14 October 1920.

77. See the Arab Information Center pamphlet cited above in support of this contention. For rebuttals, see J. B. Kelly, "Sultanate and Imamate in Oman", *Chatham House Memoranda*, London, 1959; and Kelly's article in Hopwood, *op. cit.*

ARABIAN STUDIES



III

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