CHAPTER-III

TRIBAL OPPOSITION AGAINST THE SULTANS OF MUSCAT:
OMAN UNDER TURKI BIN SAID AND FAISAL BIN TURKI (1874-
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Introduction
Unlike Thuwaini bin Said, Salim bin Thuwaini and Imam Azzan bin Qays, Turki bin Said was the first ruler in the post-1856 period to be able to rule without being toppled or assassinated. Except for a brief period when Abdul Aziz bin Said was regent at Muscat, Turki bin Said managed to maintain his rule until his death in 1888. This was achieved with the support of the British who found it in their interests to protect Muscat and the coastal towns from tribal raids because of the presence of British Indian subjects in these settlements. The protection of these Indian merchants was in British interests as they controlled the trade in these ports. The trends that were witnessed in the early years of Turki bin Said’s rule continued during the 1880s and under Faisal during the 1890s. There was the increasing frequency and ferocity of tribal revolts against Muscat. The major opposition leaders were Salih bin Ali, the leader of the Harithis, Ibrahim bin Qays, who was the brother of the late Imam Azzan bin Qays and Abdul Aziz bin Said, another son of Said bin Sultan.

This chapter will trace the domestic events that took place in Oman till the end of the period under consideration in this thesis. An important element that had been explored in the first chapter will be retaken here which is mainly the political activities of the non-state tribal networks of Oman and their relations with Zanzibar through the port of Sur. The domestic politics of Oman towards the end of the nineteenth century was affected by the British-French competition for supremacy in the region. An important impact of this competition on Omani domestic politics was the attempt by Faisal bin Turki to assert his autonomy from the British. The chapters on Oman’s domestic politics will deliberately leave out the affairs of Dhofar as that province was added on to Oman as part of the latter’s landward expansion and does not directly influence Oman’s maritime activities.
The Return of Abdul Aziz bin Said and his Regency at Muscat

As mentioned earlier British recognition did not bring about an end to the problems of Turki bin Said. In fact the intensity of Turki's problems increased to such an extent that he was forced to call back Abdul Aziz from British India and gain his assistance in matters of administration. A series of events took place before Turki was compelled to take this decision. Turki's position began to worsen from the beginning of 1874. Turki's health problems led to the circulation of false reports about his death. On the basis of these reports, Salih bin Ali marched against Muscat with a force of three hundred tribesmen consisting of the Bani Hirth, Habus, Hijariyin, Al-Wahiba and a few Bani Ruwaha. Salih brought with him the twelve year old Hamud bin Azzan, the eldest son of the late Imam Azzan bin Qays in the hope of making him a puppet ruler. Azzan bin Qays's sons had been under Ibrahim bin Qays's protection since 1870.

During the attack conducted in the beginning of 1874, Salih took a different route as opposed to the Wadi Aqq which was controlled by Ghafiri tribes and arrived in Ruwi, a village near Muttrah unexpectedly on 17th January 1874. Turki sent a force of 125 Wahhabi mercenaries to oppose him but they were defeated and Muttrah was occupied by Salih the same day. Plundering occurred at Muttrah and British citizens were targeted but the rebels did not target the enclosure of the Khojas as the British flag was flying over

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4 Lorimer, n. 1, p. 495.
5 As the loyalty of the Omani tribes could not be assured, the Sultan recruited mercenaries from among non-Omanis who were not involved in Omani tribal politics. These included four hundred Wahhabis during the time of Turki bin Said from the Najd and al-Hasa. There were also Hadramis, Baluchis from the Makran coast and Negro slaves and freedmen. During one of their raids into Oman, the Wahhabis massacred a large number of Hadrami mercenaries of Said bin Sultan at Buraimi before they reached the Omani coast in the early years of Said's rule. The rulers of Muscat mostly employed Persians as their gunners.
Turki appealed to the Political Agent for British military aid to beat back the rebels. Before British help arrived, negotiations took place and the rebels agreed to evacuate Muttrah after they received six thousand dollars and one hundred bags of rice. As a part of the agreement, the actions of the rebels were condoned, the confiscation and sale of property by the former Imamate authorities to the Bani Hirth and Bani Ruwaha tribes were confirmed, all of Khalili's property was restored to his family and Turki was made to pledge not to attack Ibrahim bin Qays. Salih in turn promised to restrain Ibrahim. Turki had to bear with the effects of this raid even after the rebels had left. As Turki had pardoned Salih, he had to pay the compensation for the losses suffered by British Indian subjects at Muttrah.

As a result of the raid, the influence of Salih bin Ali and the Hinawi tribes increased which led to the dismissal of all the Ghafiri guards and garrisons and their replacement by Hinawi guards. This created a wedge between Turki and the Ghafiri tribes who had been his allies since the time of the campaign against the Imamate which brought Turki to power. Some of Turki's problems were created as a result of decisions taken immediately after Turki came to power. One of this was the murder of Said bin Khalfan al-Khalili and his son. Khalili was not merely an influential cleric. During the eighteenth century the Bani Ruwaha tribe of the Hinawi confederation who inhabited the western parts of Upper Samayil and some other areas had become weakened due to internal feuds and encroachment by the rival Ghafiri tribe the Bani Riyam. An offer was then extended to the Khalili clan of the Bani Kharus tribe to provide the tamimah or paramount sheikh of the Bani Ruwaha. Khalili accepted the offer and Said bin Khalfan al-Khalili was

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6 Lorimer, n. 1, p. 495.
7 Section 265, Precis of Muscat Affairs, n. 2, p. 62.
8 Miles to Ross, 6 Feb., 1874, Muscat, MSA, PD, Vol. 154, # 530, 1874, p. 105.
the *taminah* of the Bani Ruwaha tribe during the time of the Imamate. In revenge for Khalili’s murder, the Bani Ruwaha had murdered the *wali* of Barka who was a member of the Al Bu Saidi family in the beginning of 1872. Turki marched against the Bani Ruwaha to Samayil in April 1872 but had rush back to Muscat because of the threat of an attack by Salim.

The threat of the Bani Ruwaha remained and in July 1873 the Bani Ruwaha raided the Sultan’s date plantations at Samayil and carried off the ripe fruit during Turki’s absence at Muscat due to his campaign against Ibrahim bin Qays at Sohar. Finally a settlement was brought about between Turki and the Bani Ruwaha following this event when the tribal leaders and *ulama* of the Bani Ruwaha arrived at Muscat. As part of the settlement, the Bani Ruwaha promised to abandon their hostility towards Turki on certain conditions. These were that they would be forgiven the murder of the *wali* of Barka, that part of Khalili’s property would be restored to his family, that they would receive the customary subsidies from Turki and that two of their *ulama* would receive a regular stipulated allowance. While these events took place before 1874 they are relevant as the murder of Khalili continued to cause political problems for Turki.

In March 1874 immediately after Salih’s raid against Muscat, Ibrahim bin Qays instigated a rebellion among the Yal Sad of the Batina and led an attack against Mussnah. Mussnah was strategically important for Ibrahim as it was the sea-port closest to Rustaq. A Hindu Banian merchant was killed during the plundering of the bazaar at Mussnah.

This led to active British intervention in the crisis at Mussnah. When the Political Agent, Major Samuel B. Miles arrived at Mussnah, Ibrahim’s forces were besieging the fort.

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14 Section 369, Precis of Muscat Affairs, n. 10, pp. 101-02.
Despite a warning from Miles, the rebels occupied the fort when it surrendered. Miles then ordered the British warship Philomel to bombard the fort forcing the rebels to evacuate it. When Miles came back to Mussnah after a few days accompanied by Major Ross, the Resident in the Persian Gulf, the rebels had reoccupied the fort. After Ibrahim and his rebels had evacuated the fort, the British bombarded the fort to such an extent as to make it unusable.\(^\text{15}\) This was done also in the interests of Turki bin Said who believed that such forts on the Batina coast was a threat to his authority as they were likely to become centres of rebellion.\(^\text{16}\)

Following the events at Mussnah, the Yal Sad tribe captured Suwaiq in June 1874. The Yal Sad vacated Suwaiq after receiving a warning from the British.\(^\text{17}\) The British held Ibrahim bin Qays and the Yal Sad tribe jointly responsible for the losses suffered by British Indian subjects at Mussnah and demanded compensation to the amount of $15,000 from them. The British preferred to demand compensation from the Yal Sad as Ibrahim bin Qays being located at Rustaq away from the coast was not vulnerable from the sea. He also had no property on the coast. On the other hand, the Yal Sad tribe had extensive date groves extending two to five miles from the sea and extending about twenty-five miles along the coast. It was easy for the British to target the Yal Sad from the sea.\(^\text{18}\) As far as Turki was concerned, the attacks by Salih bin Ali and Ibrahim bin Qays was proof that his rule was not secure without active British assistance. It was not just certain events and tribal attacks that weakened Turki’s position. The general character of Turki’s administration was weak and ineffective and was beset with financial


problems. Turki’s expenses could not be borne even after receiving the Zanzibar subsidy from the British as the subsidies paid half-yearly to the tribes were raised to nearly double what they had been in the days of Said bin Sultan. As a part of wrong policies pursued by Turki he gave money or subsidies only to those he feared and wished to conciliate and not to his friends or adherents which contributed to disturbances whenever he fell short of money. Another problem was that he depended on favourites of low status rather than relations or influential friends.

Turki’s biggest weakness was the lack of good advisors. Turki had dismissed his wazir Thuwaini bin Muhammad Al Bu Saidi for corruption in 1873. Turki appointed Nasir bin Ali in his place. But Thuwaini got Nasir bin Ali killed by some men in April 1873. While Turki had him placed in surveillance, Thuwaini escaped to Bandar Abbas and tried to go to Bombay but was intercepted with British help and brought back to Muscat. Even though Turki pardoned him, Thuwaini was eventually shot dead by a slave of Nasir bin Ali in August 1873. It was his lack of advisors that prompted Turki to call back Abdul Aziz from exile in India. Abdul Aziz was during this time living in detention in Karachi getting a monthly pension of $ 300 from Turki which was adjusted from the Zanzibar subsidy paid by the British to Turki. In reality, Turki feared Abdul Aziz more

21 Section 369, Precis of Muscat Affairs, n. 10, p. 102.
22 Peterson, n. 11, p. 72.
26 R/15/6/36, Section 264, urther Proceedings of Abdool Azeez After His Retirement from Gwadur”, “Continuation of Narrative of Muscat Affairs, June 1873 to July 1874: Section II”, “Chapter 8: Precis of
than Salim as the latter had lost all influence and prestige in Oman while Abdul Aziz was the most energetic among Said bin Sultan’s sons and had influence among the Ibadi conservative forces. Therefore, when the British advised Turki to appoint Abdul Aziz as his wazir, Turki demanded that the British should guarantee his obedience. Even though the British refused to provide such a guarantee, Turki eventually asked them to bring Abdul Aziz to Oman. Abdul Aziz came to Muscat in May 1874 and was made the wazir.

The first problem that Abdul Aziz faced was the issue of gaining compensation from the Yal Sad tribe for the attack against Mussnah. Abdul Aziz successfully gained the compensation with British help. It led to the Yal Sad vacating Mussnah and the pacification of the Batina coast. While the situation on the Batina coast was turning to Turki’s favour, Ibrahim bin Qays persisted in his attempt to create a base in the interior. With help from the Ibraiyin tribe, Ibrahim occupied Awabi and Wadi Bani Kharus. At the same time he came to terms with Turki and made peace with him. Turki agreed to give Ibrahim a sum of two thousand dollars immediately and also a monthly allowance of one hundred dollars.

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The next major problem that Turki and Abdul Aziz encountered was the dispute between the Hinawi tribes of Nizwa and Zikki and the Bani Riyam of Jabal al-Akhdar over possession of the fort of Birkat al-Moz. This developed into a major conflict between all the Ghafiri and Hinawi tribes of the Samayil Valley which had the potential to turn into a civil war. The Hinawis and Ghafiris of Samayil came to a final agreement in June 1875 bringing an end to the conflict.\(^{31}\) Soon Turki started facing problems in Muscat itself. These problems were related to the increasing influence of the Hinawi tribes in the Muscat region since Salih bin Ali's raid in 1874. Since that time, Turki had been gradually dismissing his Wahhabi mercenary garrisons at Muscat and replacing them with guards from the Bani Bu Hassan and Hijariyin tribes of the Hinawi confederation. This severely affected the neutrality of his administration affecting its ability to intervene in tribal disputes. The foreign mercenaries were dependable because of their neutrality in the tribal disputes of Oman. In January 1875, Turki dismissed the remainder of his Wahhabi mercenaries from Najd and al-Hasa and replaced them with Hinawi tribals.\(^{32}\) But differences arose between Turki and his Bani Bu Hassan guards in May 1875 and led to disturbances in Muscat.

The reason for the disturbances was due to the arrival of a section of Bani Bu Hassan tribesmen at Muscat from Ja’alan province. While the part of the tribe who were employed at Muscat as guards initially supported Turki against their compatriots who had arrived lately, the Sultan personally complied with the demands of the new arrivals. This created problems between the section of the tribe who were employed as guards at Muscat and Turki. Turki in response declared that he considered both sections as the same and desired to have nothing more to do with them. The two sections of the Bani Bu Hassan tribe thereupon united against Turki and threatened to plunder the bazaar and


leave Muscat to its fate if their demands were not met. Turki secretly quitted Muscat and boarded a merchant vessel lying in Muscat harbour leaving Abdul Aziz in charge of affairs. Turki gave full authority to Abdul Aziz to negotiate with the Bani Bu Hassan on his behalf. 33 Abdul Aziz arranged a settlement with the Bani Bu Hassan by paying all their arrears and agreeing to all their conditions. Following the settlement most of the Bedouins left Muscat leaving 150 of the Bani Bu Hassan and Al-Wahiba tribes to garrison Muscat. Following this Turki expressed his desire to the British to abdicate in favour of Abdul Aziz and retire to Karachi in India. 34 Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Miles, the British Political Agent and Abdul Aziz finally convinced Turki to drop his plan of abdicating. 35

While Turki and Abdul Aziz had cooperated with each other initially during various disturbances that occurred in the Batina and Samayil, differences began cropping up between the two in June 1875. These occurred due to the authority that Turki had provided to a confidant of his of low social status named Numesh. Abdul Aziz opposed Numesh’s access to the Muscat customs house from which the latter had drawn a huge some of money and articles without providing any proper vouchers. A former sugar-cane seller, Numesh had managed to amass a sum of $40,000 despite the fact that his salary was only $15 a month. Turki accepted Numesh’s advice more than that of Abdul Aziz or any other influential person. Abdul Aziz did not want to continue in the government unless Numesh was dismissed. 36 This was not agreed to by Turki which prolonged the dispute. 37 In July 1875, Turki agreed to dismiss Numesh from the government and Abdul Aziz rejoined the government. 38

The problems between Turki and Abdul Aziz did not end. Another source of disaffection between the two was Abdul Aziz’s influence among the Hinawi tribes of Oman. Taking advantage of the problem between Turki and Abdul Aziz, the al-Wahiba bedouin tribe occupied Muttrah and Muscat and raised several demands in July 1875. These demands included the retention of the al-Wahiba, Bani Bu Hassan and Hijariyeen tribes as his paid garrison at Muscat and Muttrah, the dismissal of the Ghafiri garrison of Samayil fort and their replacement by Baluchi mercenaries, the dismissal of the remainder of the Wahhabi guards in Muscat and that Abdul Aziz should be provided one hundred men who would accompany him whenever he proceeded into the interior to settle disputes. The intention of the Al-Wahiba and other Hinawi tribes was to shore up support for Abdul Aziz against Turki. Turki agreed to all the demands but was not capable of making the Ghafiri garrison of Samayil surrender the fort. The Ghafiri garrison refused to comply to the orders of the Sultan as they were worried about the rising influence of the Hinawis.

These events once again created tensions between Turki and Abdul Aziz over the manner in which the Sultan conducted his policy. British mediation led to reconciliation between Turki and Abdul Aziz. But during this time, Muscat was threatened by another al-Wahiba force led by a powerful sheikh, Sheikh Hamad al-Khalfeen who was a rival of the al-Wahiba sheikh who had already arrived at Muscat and gained an advantageous position. Sheikh Hamad was incensed at the turn of events that favoured his rival. The
force present at Muscat at that time was not strong enough to meet the impending threat.43

While the anticipated raid by Sheikh Hamad al-Khalfeen did not take place, a final rupture took place between Turki and Abdul Aziz in August 1875. This time the issue was the stationing of guards in the Jalali and Mirani forts at Muscat. During an inspection of the garrisons of the two forts by Abdul Aziz he found that the number of men were deficient though the commandants of the fort used to draw pay and rations for more numbers. Abdul Aziz asked Turki to dismiss the Baluchi garrisons and their commandants and replace them with Bani Bu Hassan guards. When Turki refused to do so, Abdul Aziz refused to be a part of the government.44 Turki refused to dismiss the garrisons as he wanted to defend the Baluchi commandant of the Mirani fort who was responsible for the murder of the cleric Said bin Khalfan al-Khalili and his son immediately after Turki came to power. The muttawiah had threatened to murder this individual and Turki wanted to defend him from the tribes who had gathered at Muscat which wouldn’t be possible if he was dismissed.45 This was another instance where Khalili’s murder continued to create political problems for Turki. To add to Turki’s woes, the Bani Bu Hassan and al-Wahiba tribes in Muscat revolted and threatened to plunder the town if he did not dismiss the garrisons of Jalali and Mirani forts and agree to Abdul Aziz’s conditions.46

In these circumstances, Turki decided that he could no longer continue as Sultan. Turki had thought of abdicating several times during his disputes with Abdul Aziz but always changed his decision. This time Turki wanted to retire from Muscat to Gwadur leaving

Abdul Aziz as regent to rule in his place. In August 1875 Turki left Muscat for Gwadur leaving Abdul Aziz as regent. Abdul Aziz had authority over all the territories of Oman except Gwadur where Turki resided.\footnote{R/15/6/8, Toorkee to Miles, 49 August, 1875, Muscat, , “Chapter 9: His Highness Sultan Saiyid Turki bin Said (1871-1888)”, in R.W. Bailey (ed.), Records of Oman: 1867-1947: Volume I: Historical Affairs to 1871, (Buckinghamshire, England, Archive Editions, 1988), p. 404.} While leaving, Turki handed over Jalali and Mirani forts to the bedouins at Muscat.\footnote{Lorimer, n. 1, p. 497.} Once Turki left Muscat for Gwadur, Abdul Aziz assumed his authority as regent and the muttawas began entering Muscat in great numbers and conservative laws were reintroduced. Salih bin Ali became Abdul Aziz’s chief advisor during this period.\footnote{R/15/6/36, Section 466,“Sayyid Abdul Aziz’s Administration”, “Continuation of Narrative of Muscat Affairs, August 1875 to December 1880”, “Chapter 8: Precis of Muscat Affairs (1872-1892), in R.W. Bailey (ed.), Records of Oman: 1867-1947: Volume II: Historical Affairs 1871-1913, (Buckinghamshire, England, Archive Editions, 1988), p. 122.} But Abdul Aziz was faced grave financial problems as the Muscat treasury was empty when Turki left for Gwadur. Abdul Aziz did not have access to the Zanzibar subsidy as the British provided it to Turki at Gwadur.\footnote{Robert Geran Landen, Modernization and Imperialism in Oman in the Late Nineteenth Century, PhD Thesis, (Princeton University, 1961), p. 281.} When Abdul Aziz asked Samuel Miles the Political Agent to provide a loan to it was rejected.\footnote{R/15/6/36, Section 463,“Sayyid Abdul Aziz’s Administration”, “Continuation of Narrative of Muscat Affairs, August 1875 to December 1880”, “Chapter 8: Precis of Muscat Affairs (1872-1892), in R.W. Bailey (ed.), Records of Oman: 1867-1947: Volume II: Historical Affairs 1871-1913, (Buckinghamshire, England, Archive Editions, 1988), p. 121.} In fact the British kept a distance from Abdul Aziz’s government which they viewed with suspicion because of its ties with the Ibadi conservatives.

During Abdul Aziz’s regency, Salim tried to slip into Oman to foment a rebellion in October 1875. He had been living on the island of Qishm receiving a pension from Turki until the latter left for Gwadur. He was intercepted at sea by the British who transferred him to Hyderabad in Sindh province where he was kept under detention until he died of small pox the following year.\footnote{Lorimer, n. 1, p. 503.} In this manner, a major threat to the Sultanate authorities came to an end. Abdul Aziz’s regency was viewed with suspicion by the Ghafiri tribes. They were jealous of the influence of the Hinawi tribes in the capital. The Bani Bu Ali repaired their forts and took measures to defend their quarter at Sur if attacked. Turki’s loyalists also refused to recognise Abdul Aziz’s authority. Sayyid Badr bin Sayf, the wali...
of Sohar prepared to defend the town with the aid of the Naim tribe of Buraimi.\textsuperscript{53} It was to replace the Ghafiri garrison of Samayil with a Hinawi one that Abdul Aziz left Muscat when Turki unexpectedly landed at Muttrah on 11\textsuperscript{th} December 1875. Salih bin Ali was not present at Muscat as he had already returned to the Sharqiya in September because of the jealousy that had developed between him and the Bani Bu Hassan sheikhs present at Muscat.\textsuperscript{54} As soon as Turki arrived at Muttrah he was able to occupy the town and the forts without a fight as the Arab and Baluchi guards recognised him and submitted to him.\textsuperscript{55} But the Bani Bu Hassan garrison of Muscat consisting of sixty guards refused to yield to Turki without orders from Abdul Aziz personally. Firing took place for two days before negotiations were conducted and the garrison surrendered. Turki entered Muscat and resumed charge of the government.\textsuperscript{56} Salih bin Ali had not decisively moved in support of Abdul Aziz while Turki was besieging Muscat and Abdul Aziz remained isolated at Samayil without any help.

**Tribal Rebellions Against Turki After 1875 (1876-1888)**

Once Turki came back to power, he re-established his relations with the Ghafiri tribes who had brought him to power in 1868 after defeating the Imamate forces. Thereafter he based his rule on strong support from the British Indian government.\textsuperscript{57} It was the lack of immediate British support during Salih bin Ali’s raid of Muscat in 1874 that helped the Hinawi tribes win concessions in their favour. This led to the rapid spread of their influence in the Muscat region undermining Turki’s attempts to consolidate his authority in Oman. From 1876 to his death in 1888, Turki enjoyed more stability than the pre-1876 period. But Salih bin Ali and the Hinawi tribes continued their oppositional activities against the Sultan. Turki’s rule was marked by occasional tribal raids against Muscat. In June 1877 Salih bin Ali led a raid against Muscat. Salih was supported by Hamud al

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ross, Administrative Report 1875-1876, n. 31, pp. 75-76.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Ross, Administrative Report 1875-1876, n. 31, p. 76.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Landen, n. 50, 282.
\end{itemize}
Jahafi and most of the raiding force consisted of Al-Wahiba tribesmen though it also consisted of the Hirth, Habus, Hijariyin, Bani Bu Hassan and Bani Ruwaha. Hamud al Jahafi was to play an important role in subsequent revolts against Muscat. Initially Salih bin Ali tried to persuade Abdul Aziz to join the revolt and the two had met in the Samayil valley but had failed to come to an understanding. Abdul Aziz returned to Samad where he had been living since he vacated Samayil fort. On the 14th of June the rebels occupied Muttrah unopposed. Within a few days Ibrahim bin Qays joined the rebels in Muttrah.

The British had already evacuated from Muttrah the Hindu traders and their valuables to vessels in the harbour. The Khojas preferred to remain in their walled enclosure in Muttrah. The rebels after occupying Muttrah blockaded Muscat from the landside and deprived the inhabitants of sweet water. Turki appealed to the British for help. The British warship Teazer had already arrived at Muscat. They evacuated the bania traders from the town and then fired shots into the valley behind Muscat which prevented the rebels from attacking. On the request of Turki, the Teazer the proceeded to Muttrah and dislodged from certain houses surrounding the citadel rebels from the Habus and certain other tribes. This time, the British evacuated the Khojas who were British citizens from Muttrah under cover of the Teazer’s guns and placed them in vessels in the harbour. The Teazer then returned to Muscat and repeated the step of firing into the valley behind Muscat which dampened the spirit of the rebels. Salih’s coalition then began breaking up and he signalled to Turki that he was willing to negotiate. Turki replied that he would not negotiate unless they withdrew to Ruwi, a village outside Muttrah, which was promptly obeyed by them. Turki refused Salih’s demands for money and continuation of his and Ibrahim bin Qays’s allowances. The rebel force then broke up and Salih bin Ali and Ibrahim bin Qays returned to Samad and Rustaq respectively.

58 Lorimer, n. 1, pp. 505-06.
60 R/15/6/36, Section 567, “Break-up of the Rebel Forces under Shaikh Salih bin Ali and Sayyid Ibrahim bin Kais: Proceedings of Shaikh Hamood El Jahafi and the Al Al-Wahibah: Advance of Dollars 2,000 to Sayyid Turki on Account of the Zanzibar Subsidyr”, “Continuation of Narrative of Muscat Affairs, August 1875 to December 1880”, “Chapter 8: Precis of Muscat Affairs (1872-1892), in R.W. Bailey
While all the leaders of the rebellion had gone back to their respective abodes on 21st June 1877, Sheikh Hamud al-Jahafi of the al-Wahiba occupied Bawsher and threatened Turki that unless two thousand dollars were paid to him by the sunset of the 25th he would raze houses and cut down date trees from Muscat to Barka. Hamud also threatened the Khojas at Muttrah, who owned houses and date groves at Bawsher with destruction of their property if they did not pay him $1,500 which he had deposited with one of them in 1875. When Hamud had been seized and imprisoned in 1876 by Turki, the latter had claimed and obtained the amount from the Khoja. Robertson, the British Political Agent advised the Khojas to refer the matter to Turki. Turki in turn inquired of Robertson on the course to be adopted and the latter advised that the amount be paid rather than risk massive destruction which the bedouin al-Wahiba was capable of causing. An advance on the Zanzibar subsidy was provided by the British to Turki. Turki paid the $2,500 to the al-Wahiba who left Bawsher and went back to their country.

After 1877, a few attempts were conducted by Turki’s opponents to unseat him but none of them could even seriously threaten Muscat until the revolt of 1883. An attempt by Abdul Aziz against Muscat failed in 1878 when the passes of the Samayil valley were closed before him. Reports on the formation of a formidable coalition against Turki composed of Abdul Aziz, Salih bin Ali, Ibrahim bin Qays and Hamud al-Jahafi began to arrive in Muscat in January 1882. When the coalition informed the Resident of the Persian Gulf of their intention, the Resident replied that they were about to act against the

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61 The al-Wahiba were fully badw or bedouin tribes who were war-like pastoral nomads unlike the settled tribes or hadr. While some tribes like the Duru and al-Wahiba were completely badw some others like the Jenaba had both bedouin and settled sections. The badw were renowned in battle and owned the swiftest camels in the country which greatly increased their prowess as they could retire before a strong force, or cut off a weak one with equal ease if sent against them. They had neither villages nor date groves on which people who were affected by their raids could retaliate. In normal circumstances, even a superior hadr force hesitated to go to battle against a numerically inferior badw force.


63 Lorimer, n. 1, p. 507
interests of the British government. This reply led to the collapse of the coalition.\textsuperscript{64} In June 1882, Abdul Aziz and Hamud al-Jahafi got through the Akk Pass of the Samayil valley and reached Wuttayah located three miles away from Muttrah. From there they negotiated with Turki and received allowances and presents for themselves as well as Salih bin Ali. They then withdrew from Wuttayah.\textsuperscript{65}

Salih bin Ali continued in his efforts to unseat Turki at Muscat. Salih mortgaged his property for MT$ 9,000 to raise funds for an attack against Muscat in 1883.\textsuperscript{66} As Abdul Aziz had warned Samuel Miles of the impending attack, the \textit{banians} of Muscat were made to ship their goods to vessels in the harbour and were warned to be prepared to go on board themselves at a moments notice. The \textit{banians} of Muttrah were brought round to Muscat. While a few Khojas went to Muscat, most of them decided to remain in their fort like enclosure.\textsuperscript{67} While the rebels were believed to have halted at Ruwi a village about two miles away from Muttrah, Abdul Aziz conducted an unexpected attack against Muscat through the Wadi Kabir instead of the usual practice which first entailed the capture of Muttrah. The attackers struck the walls of Muscat late at night and were dressed in black in order to prevent their being detected and were equipped with ladders to scale the wall. But the garrison successfully defended the capital and the rebels had to withdraw. Abdu Aziz withdrew to Ruwi to rejoin Salih bin Ali who had not participated in the attack. Turki appealed to the British for help and Miles evacuated all the Indians from Muscat before beginning operations.

Meanwhile reinforcements from the Jenaba tribe of Sur arrived at Muscat in support of Turki. The British warship \textit{Philomel} arrived at Muttrah and fired shells at the position of the rebels. At Muscat, the \textit{Philomel} continued to fire shells at the rebels during night at


\textsuperscript{66} Landen, n. 50, 282.

\textsuperscript{67} Lorimer, n. 1, p. 509.
intervals which prevented an attack by them. As further reinforcements arrived including sections of the Hirth tribe who were inimical to Salih bin Ali, the rebels found their situation hopeless and withdrew from Ruwi.68 This was the last major rebellion against Turki during his lifetime. In 1886, the British issued a proclamation declaring that they would help Turki in repelling aggression during his lifetime. Before this declaration there had been no clear line of policy with regard to British response during tribal attacks against Muscat and Muttrah. The Political Agent during each crisis took action on the basis of broad guidelines that had been set by the British Indian government. This support was not meant to cover Turki’s children, heirs or successors. It was also promised on the condition that Turki conducted his administration and adopted policies in a manner that was satisfactory to the British Indian government.69 An important factor that prompted the British Indian government to make this decision was the opinion of the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Colonel E. C. Ross. Ross informed his superiors that there was a chance that the tribal opponents might sooner than later realise that a ship’s guns could not cause much harm if proper precautions were taken. It was to prevent such a discovery and the resulting embarrassment that the British brought out such a declaration. The declaration could deter tribal revolts and thereby prevent armed intervention in support of the Sultan by the British in the future.70 Ironically, this declaration was issued towards the end of Turki’s life when he had already faced his biggest challenges.

When Turki came back to power in 1875, he appointed Said bin Muhammad as wazir. Said was the brother of Thuwaini, the former wazir who had been dismissed from service and had been assassinated. This arrangement continued until the near end of Turki’s life


when the latter fell sick and dismissed Said from his service accusing him of practising sorcery. Other supporters of Turki were Badr bin Sayf who served Turki as wali of Sohar and Muttrah. Sulayman bin Suwaylim served Turki as wali in troublesome areas like Sur and Dhofar. Most of the members of the royal family served in various capacities in the administration. Most of the chief towns of Oman were governed by a wali. The administration setup of Sohar governorate was the most complex as a large area came under it. The wali of Sohar was assisted by a deputy wali at Sahm, Liwa and Shinas and by military officers commanding military posts guarding passes leading out of the mountains towards the coast.\(^{71}\) In the interior, a dual system of government was practiced. This consisted of both the wali and the tribal sheikh. The wali was generally responsible for a geographical area generally a major town or a village. As the wali was rarely appointed to the area which he lived, he was theoretically considered impartial in his dealings between the various tribes. In contrast to the wali, the authority of the tribal sheikh depended on the support of his people and not on recognition by the Sultan. The sheikh’s jurisdiction consisted of the tribe or a group of people without regard to their location and therefore not a physical area. Although hadr or settled tribes occupied well-defined areas, a badw dira (bedouin territory) were often modified over time, expanding or contracting as tribal influence grew or declined.\(^{72}\) Nevertheless, it was not unusual for the Sultan to legalise a tribe’s actual control of an area by recognising its sheikh as wali of the main town of the district.\(^{73}\)

Turki had learnt his lessons well following his experiences in the pre-1875 period. After 1875, Turki maintained his government by a more liberal rule in the interior. He demanded only token submission from the tribes. Though he was militarily weak, he preserved his authority by providing subsidies to the tribes, forming alliances, arbitrating in disputes, introducing taxes and trade controls, and thus maintained a semblance of strength. As the Wadi Samayil was the most strategic area as it contained the vital passes that provided access to Muscat and the Batina coast from the interior, Turki’s main effort was to keep the tribes of that region loyal to him as compared to the other parts of

\(^{71}\) Landen, n. 50, pp. 286-87.
\(^{72}\) Peterson, n. 11, pp. 100-101.
\(^{73}\) Landen, n. 50, p. 287.
Oman. But often the Sultan's objectives and policies worked at cross-purposes. While providing subsidies to the tribes was done with the purpose of maintaining peace and stability, it also led to draining of the treasury. In response to such an economic crisis, Turki would try to increase the taxes on produce from the interior which would lead to a reaction from the tribes. In July 1881, Turki established a increased tax or octroi of five per cent on all produce entering Muscat and Muttrah from the interior, whether for local consumption or for shipment. There was resentment among the tribes due to this tax which finally led to the attack on Muscat in 1883.

Turki faced frequent financial problems as he had very few sources of revenue while he had to pay subsidies to a large number of tribes. He received proper revenues only from Muscat and Muttrah. He was able to manage affairs to a certain extent as commerce had recovered from the depression of the 1860s supported by heavy date exports to India and the United States. During the financial year 1879-80, exports from Muscat were double that of the previous year. This was due to the date-harvest and the date exports alone of that year were double that of the previous. Turki was also helped by the fact that the British changed the payment of the Zanzibar subsidy from a half yearly basis to a quarterly basis in 1876 and then finally made into a monthly payment in 1879 preventing the recurrence of situations were Turki had to frequently ask for advances on the Zanzibar subsidy from the Political Agent during the threat of tribal raid to pay off the rebels. While the subsidy was earlier shared between the British Home government in London and the British Indian government, from September 1883 onwards the British

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74 Ibid, pp. 293-94.
77 Landen, n. 50, pp. 297.
government decided to disengage itself from Zanzibar’s affairs including the financial aspects. From then on, the subsidy was paid by the British Indian government alone. 79

Relations with Zanzibar had not been cordial in the early years after Turki first came to power in 1871. This was on account of the Sultan of Zanzibar Barghash’s refusal to pay the Zanzibar subsidy. After the British agreed to pay the subsidy, relations between Oman and Zanzibar improved and in fact became very warm. Barghash provided Turki with financial help and even presented a steamship, Sultanee to Turki. 80 Improved relations could have happened also because of the realisation by Turki that he could never win back Zanzibar for Oman without British approval. Matters reached such a stage that Turki was even wiling to abdicate in favour of Barghash when the former was faced with problems in 1880. 81 Barghash visited Oman in March 1888 and stayed in Bawsher’s hot springs in an attempt to cure a disease with which he was afflicted. Turki accorded him every respect during the visit. Barghash died shortly after he returned to Zanzibar a few months before Turki’s death in the same year. 82

Turki’s main enemies after the death of Salim bin Thuwaini the former Sultan were Salih bin Ali, Ibrahim bin Qays and Abdul Aziz. All three faced political and financial hurdles in their attempts to unseat Turki and very often they were not able to cooperate among themselves. From his fort at Rustq in the inland, Ibrahim bin Qays persisted in his attempt to gain an access to the sea through a port on the Batina coast even after 1875, with attempts to capture Mussnah in 1882 and Suwaiq in 1887. But these feeble attempts failed as he was either bombarded or warned by the British and did not gain the active support of the Yal Sad tribe. 83 After Turki came back from Gwadur and assumed power

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80 Lorimer, n. 1, p. 511.
82 Oman in History, n. 79, p. 486.
in 1875, Abdul Aziz had vacated Samayil and had been staying in Samad in the Sharqiya with financial difficulties. Several attempts at negotiation between Turki and Abdul Aziz failed as both stuck to their respective positions. Abdul Aziz wanted to live in Oman with a pension while Turki wanted him to retire to India. Salih bin Ali had become weakened after the 1883 revolt as he had mortgaged his property for that expedition. The 1886 declaration by the British promising life long support to Turki was the ultimate deterrent to these rivals of Turki. In June 1888 Turki bin Said Al Bu Saidi passed away and was peacefully succeeded by his second son Faisal bin Turki. 84

Oman under Faisal bin Turki
Faisal was young and inexperienced when he came to power but was also more independent minded then his father Turki. The first challenge that Faisal faced when he came to power was the capture of Awabi by Ibrahim bin Qays in September 1888. Awabi like Rustaq and Hazm were forts Ibrahim had retained as possessions of the Qays bin Ahmad or Rustaq branch of the Al Bu Saidi dynasty. Awabi had been held by the Ibriyeen tribe on Ibrahim’s behalf when they switched sides and handed the fort over to the Sultan. In retaliation to Ibrahim’s capture of Awabi Faisal conducted an expedition to capture Ibrahim’s capital Rustaq itself. The expedition was collected at Barka but it proved a failure as there was shortage of funds to pay the troops and also due to the attack on Faisal’s line of communication with the sea by the Yal Sad tribe. 85 Faisal abandoned his expedition had to slip away at night to return to his capital in order to avoid paying money to the troops as he had none. 86 At the same time, Abdul Aziz’s attempts against

84 Landen, n. 50, p. 300.
Muscat also met with failure. In his final venture, he tried to gain the support of Ibrahim bin Qays and tried to join Hamud al Jahafi and the two sons of the former Imam Azzan bin Qays, Hamud and Saud, who were waiting for Abdul Aziz at Gobra, a village not far from Muttrah. But Abdul Aziz could not cross any of the well guarded passes in the Samayil Valley in July 1889. 87

When he eventually managed to cross one of the passes in January 1890, Abdul Aziz did not gain any significant following from Sharqiya and was joined only by the sons of Azzan bin Qays and Hamud al Jahafi. Because of the lack of support he was forced to seek the hospitality of Ibrahim bin Qays at Rustaq whom Abdul Aziz was meeting for the first time. 88 Abdul Aziz's failure was attributed to the lack of support from Salih bin Ali who supported Faisal during his early years. Faisal attained further consolation when he gained British recognition in April 1890. In the same month, Abdul Aziz left Oman never to return. He left for Abu Dhabi and from there went to India through Bushire. 89 Faisal also faced some problems during this period due to the practice of raids and counter-raids by tribes in the country. In November 1890 an al-Harthi caravan or kafilah of eighty camels from Muscat was completely plundered by the Bani Jabir and Yaariba tribes in the Wadi Samayil. The retaliatory raids by the Hirth and their allies completely closed all the trade routes. Trade came to a standstill at Muscat and Muttrah and there was diversion of trade to Sur. While initially Faisal showed lack of interest in settling the problem, he


was finally persuaded to intervene and settle the matter which led to the opening of the routes and revival of trade.\textsuperscript{90}

Along with the throne, Faisal inherited several economic difficulties from Turki. Faisal received seventy five per cent of his revenue from customs dues of the seaports while the remaining was received from the British government in the form of the Zanzibar subsidy.\textsuperscript{91} In 1891 Faisal signed a treaty with the British promising not to sell, mortgage, cede or give for occupation any part of his territory except to the British. This treaty pushed Oman into the greater control of the British and prevented the possibility of any other power establishing its influence on the country.\textsuperscript{92} There was a need for tact and diplomacy on the part of Faisal while dealing with domestic policy during this time. But the manner in which he acted resulted in the revolt of 1895 which almost cost him his throne. Faisal in 1894 began to support a rival Hirth sheikh in an attempt to unseat Salih bin Ali from his position of the tamimah of the tribe. This won Faisal the enmity of Salih.\textsuperscript{93}

Salih bin Ali began plotting an expedition against Muscat. Circumstances were favourable as the Sultan of Zanzibar, Hamad bin Thuwaini who was son of the former Sultan of Muscat Thuwaini bin Said, began to present Omani tribal sheikhs who visited Zanzibar with cash and other gifts. In May 1884 Abdullah, the son of Salih bin Ali, Shiekh Mohsin bin Omar al Harthi and Sheikh Amir bin Salim, one of the sheikhs of the Bani Bu Ali visited Zanzibar. They were received with great honour and presented with gifts which included three field-pieces and a considerable supply of gunpowder.\textsuperscript{94} That

\textsuperscript{90} Lorimer, n. 1, p. 529.
Sultan Hamud had grown up in Oman and still maintained contacts with people in the country was another important factor. Within Oman, Muscat became an entrepot for arms imports into South Asia which resulted in Omani tribes acquiring modern rifles and ammunition. An opportunity arose for Salih bin Ali when a clash occurred at Nizwa. Salih sent his son Sheikh Abdullah to mediate in the dispute and a settlement was affected. On the pretext of discussing the settlement with Faisal, Sheikh Abdullah, Sheikh Mohsin bin Omar and a small following travelled to Muscat in February 1895. They were soon joined at Muscat by Hamud al Jahafi on 12th February. Faisal warmly welcomed them into the capital.

While the leaders were allowed into Muscat most of the force was detained at Ruwi. On the afternoon of the same day Faisal provided gifts to them and they promised to depart that evening or the next day morning. But at night when bedouins began to slip into the town in twos and threes, the Wahhabi and Hadrami mercenary guards became suspicious and warned the Sultan but he refused to believe them. On the dawn of the 13th, Sheikh Abdullah's men seized the gates and allowed their compatriots who had come from Ruwi to enter the town. Very quickly they surrounded the house of Badr bin Sayf, Faisal's commander in chief and prevented any initiative on his part. They also took over the new palace and attacked the old one hoping to murder Faisal. But Faisal and a few followers defended the palace shooting down the rebels who tried to enter. At this time, Muhammad bin Turki, Faisal's brother escaped to Mirani. In Muscat as in Zanzibar, the palaces of the Al Bu Saidi dynasty were surrounded by the quarters of the Hindu banian merchants and other communities including the interior tribes were kept away from these palaces. This proved favourable to Faisal as he and his family at first escaped to the

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95 Landen, n. 50, p. 306.
98 Bannerman, n. 96, p. 45.
British Agency over the roofs of the houses of the Indian merchants. They then moved on to Fort Jalali. By the evening of the 13th, Faisal and his brother occupied the two forts of Muscat and all the towers while the rebels occupied the town.

A white banner flew over the palace of Faisal indicating that the rebels were acting on behalf of the Qays bin Ahmad or Rustaq branch of the Al Bu Saidi dynasty. On the evening of the 17th, Saud bin Azzan, the son of Azzan bin Qays arrived from Rustaq and took over formal leadership of the rebellion. Tribal contingents began to join both sides but most of the Ghafiri tribes from all over Oman came to the aid of Faisal. It is notable that Faisal got most of his support from Sur including the powerful Bani Bu Ali and the Jenaba. While a contingent of the bedouin al-Wahiba tribe joined Salih at Ruwi, the fact that the support for the rebels was limited to the Sharqiya province began to affect the ability of the rebel coalition. Though Salih wanted to capture Muttrah because of its strategic advantage he failed to do so as he did not have enough forces at his disposal. Very soon the reinforcements in support of the Sultan outnumbered the rebels. The old Salih bin Ali was now fighting under the command of his son Abdullah. The problem that Faisal faced was dislodging the rebels from the narrow lanes and strongly fortified houses of Muscat. An attempt was made to retake the town on the 18th but after heavy fighting and many casualties Faisal was forced to withdraw.

The British began evacuating their subjects after arranging a short truce. The rebel’s representatives communicated to the British Resident Colonel Wilson that they wished to offer the Sultanate to the Sultan of Zanzibar and if that did not work, to one of the sons of Azzan bin Qays. The British informed Salih that reunification of Oman and Zanzibar was not acceptable. Negotiations continued and after three and a half weeks of fighting the

100 Bailey, n. 97, p. 666.
102 Lorimer, n. 1, p. 540.
103 Bannerman, n. 96, pp. 46-47.
104 Ibid, p. 49.
105 Townsend, n. 19, p. 46.
tribes became weary and an agreement was reached on the 9th of March 1895.\textsuperscript{106} Faisal paid over MT$ 12,000 and agreed to continue paying an annual subsidy to the Rustaq branch of the Al Bu Saidi dynasty.\textsuperscript{107} Faisal had to borrow money from the Indian merchants to pay the rebels.\textsuperscript{108} Faisal’s force reoccupied Muscat on 10th March 1895. Muscat had suffered much destruction during the revolt and several fires had been started by the rebels when they withdrew. While rebels had committed plunder when they left, the Sultan’s Arab tribal supporters and Baluchi mercenaries also indulged in large scale looting.\textsuperscript{109}

The revolt of 1895 had several results which affected Omani politics till 1899. Salih bin Ali lost some of the prestige that he had because of the manner in which he tried to capture Muscat which was basically a violation of the Arab code of hospitality.\textsuperscript{110} Relations between Faisal and the British took a bad turn as Faisal believed that the British did not effectively support him. The British officials on the spot preferred to remain neutral as they thought that British Indian subjects would be targeted by the rebels who had already occupied the whole town if a decision in support of the Sultan was taken. Faisal saw this decision as a change in British policy towards him\textsuperscript{111} The British began to be concerned about tribal raids against Muscat and Muttrah as it was British Indian subjects who suffered the most while the Sultan was able to protect himself. They began to consider a series of options which included annexation of Muscat and Muttrah, declaring a protectorate over Oman, or warning the sheikhs that whatever differences they had with the Sultan no attacks on Muscat or Muttrah would be permitted. It is interesting to note that though British correspondence mentioned the plight of British Indian subjects as a worthwhile justification for taking such decisions, the wider objective was strategic. This was to ensure British access to the Muscat harbour and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{106} Baiely, n. 97, pp. 668-69.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Bannerman, n. 96, p. 52.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Townsend, n. 19, p. 46.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Bannerman, n. 96, p. 53.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Bannerman, n. 96, p. 59.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
coaling station by creating a ‘Persian Gulf Aden’, prevent other powers like Russia and Ottoman Turkey from gaining influence in the region and most importantly lessen the increasing French influence at Sur.\textsuperscript{112}

The British finally opted for the choice of warning the sheikhs of Oman against attacking Muscat and Muttrah. But this declaration was accepted with coldness by Faisal who resented the lack of British support during the revolt and had begun moving closer to another external power which was asserting itself in the affairs of Oman. That power was France. Faisal began to lean towards the French possibly due to the influence of his advisor Abdul Aziz of the Bani Ruwaha who also served the French Consul, Ottavi.\textsuperscript{113} Both Russia and France decided to cooperate with each other in undermining British influence in the Gulf. The duty of implementing this policy in Oman belonged to France. The French adopted an aggressive posture in Oman and began to oppose British policy. Ottavi was the person on the spot who tried to implement this policy in Oman and made attempts to distance Faisal from the British. The French began involving in activities which were in opposition to British interests. The French allowed the slave traders in Sur to acquire French papers and flags for their sailing vessels. They also allowed vessels under their protection to transport arms to Oman. Muscat was becoming an entrepôt for arms flowing from Europe on its way to the North-West tribesmen of British India who were conducting a series of campaigns against the British.\textsuperscript{114}

Because of his relations with the French, Faisal allowed them a concession to establish a coaling station at the island of Bandar Jissah, a small but excellent harbour eight kilometres from Muscat.\textsuperscript{115} The British vehemently opposed Faisal’s granting of the concession to the French. They stopped paying the Zanzibar subsidy and reminded Faisal that the concession was a violation of the treaty signed by him in 1891 promising not to cede any part of his territory to a foreign power except to the British government. In

\textsuperscript{113} Landen, n. 50, p. 302.
\textsuperscript{114} Townsend, n. 19, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p. 47.
February 1899, the British threatened to bomb Muscat if Faisal did not come aboard their warship and publicly declare the cancellation of the concession to the French. Faisal had to succumb to this threat and did as ordered by the British bringing an end to his attempt to adopt a stand independent of the British and terminating active French intervention in Omani affairs. This crisis proved that British supremacy with regard to Oman was paramount.

When Faisal was involved in a tug of war with the British, big changes were taking place in the interior politics of Oman. Sheikh Salih bin Ali al Harthi was killed in a tribal skirmish in September 1896 after a long career of leading tribal rebellions against the Sultans of Muscat. Salih’s son Sheikh Abdullah who had led the revolt of 1895 had died before him. Salih was thus succeeded by another son Isa bin Salih as the tamimah of the Bani Hirth. The bedouin al-Wahiba leader Sheikh Hamud al Jahafi also passed away during this period. Ibrahim bin Qays died in 1898 following which the dissensions within the Qays bin Ahmad branch of the Al Bu Saidi dynasty started coming to the fore. While a son of Ibrahim bin Qays, Said bin Ibrahim succeeded his father at Rustaq he was soon deprived of the fort by his cousin Saud bin Azzan, a son of Azzan bin Qays through treacherous means. Said had to take refuge at Hazm but was besieged there by Saud bin Azzan. Faisal at this time intervened in the quarrel and provided money and supplies to Said at Hazm. Faisal sent his representatives to the Batina coast to persuade the Yal Sad and other Hinawi tribes not to become involved in the family feud. This prevented the arrival of any support to Saud bin Azzan. Faisal saw this as an opportunity and thought of capturing Rustaq itself and collected certain Ghafiri tribes. The Hinawis from all over Oman then gathered in support of Saud bin Azzan thwarting Faisal’s plans.

Saud then tried to get himself elected as Imam by convening an assembly at Rustaq in the same year under the guidance of Isa bin Salih, Faisal bin Hamud the old member of

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116 Lorimer, n. I, pp. 559-60.
117 Bannerman, n. 96, p. 195.
118 Townsend, n. 19, p. 48.
119 Lorimer, n. 1, p. 544.
120 Bannerman, n. 96, pp. 198-99.
the Rustaq branch of the Al Bu Saidi dynasty and the religious cleric Majid bin Khamis. But the meeting failed to reach any decision upon his candidature and a year later in 1899 Saud was murdered while praying by his brother, Hamud bin Azzan with the help of the sheikhs of the Bani Ruwaha tribe who garrisoned Rustaq. But Hamud’s rival cousin, Said bin Ibrahim took peaceful control of the fort of Awabi which was under Hamud’s control by paying money to the Bani Ruwaha garrison of the fort. In this manner, power was divided between Hamud bin Azzan who controlled Rustaq and Said bin Ibrahim who ruled Hazm and Awabi. Hamud’s supporters were the Bani Ruwaha while Said was supported by the Yal Sad. Said was an ally and brother-in-law of Faisal. In the early twentieth century, infighting further weakened this branch of the dynasty and far from the possibility of playing an important role in the Imamate politics of Oman the Rustaq branch ceased to be a threat to the Sultans at Muscat. By 1899 all the personalities who had played important roles in opposing the Sultans at Muscat during the nineteenth century were dead. But a new generation of leaders were coming up from within the tribes who in the twentieth century would have more success than the rebel leaders of the nineteenth century.

Omani Non-State Tribal Networks Towards the End of the Nineteenth Century: Their Continuing Interest in Zanzibar and Attempts to Gain External Support

The non-state tribal networks in Oman were not limited to any of the tribal confederations in Oman but included elements from both the Hinawis and the Ghafiris. At the same time non-state tribal networks who co-operated in matters of conducting trade with Zanzibar also found themselves on opposite sides when it came to matters of

Omani domestic politics. From such a perspective, the Imamate of Azzan bin Qays was favourable to Hinawi elements of these networks lead by Salih bin Ali. Salih could have had common cause with the Yal Sad tribe who formed the majority of the muttawa of the Imamate as the Yal Sad were also heavily involved in the importation of slaves from East Africa to the Batina coast. Towards the beginning of 1869 there was a strong possibility of Azzan organising an expedition to take back Zanzibar. The British also believed that the expedition would be so popular that fifty thousand men could join it. While there are not enough details of Salih bin Ali’s role in trying to prepare such an expedition. Disbrowe, the then Political Agent at Muscat wrote to his superiors that

If an attack be made on Zanzibar, Sheikh Saleh will be the head and the soul of it...

But an opportunity for an expedition against Zanzibar did not arise as the Imamate soon found itself fighting for its survival against Turki who was supported by the Ghafiri tribes. It is noticeable here that the transit of inland trade from Sur had been more safe under Azzan as compared to the rule by the Sultans. This could be because of the value that powerful individuals in the Imamate government like Salih had in the trade of Sur.

The demise of the Imamate in 1871 did not end Salih’s attempts in the direction of Zanzibar as Oman continued to suffer the economic consequences of the partitioning of the empire in 1861. This would have been all the more obvious to Salih bin Ali who belonged to a region which had long-existing economic and cultural ties with East Africa.

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More and more people were making the one-way migratory trip to Zanzibar and entire villages became depopulated. The subsistence agricultural economy sustained a barely adequate life and the surplus population immigrated to Zanzibar.\textsuperscript{128} There were a few personalities who active in the politics of these non-state networks in Oman from the period 1871 to 1890. The major figure was of course Sheikh Salih bin Ali. Though being the \textit{tamimah} of the Bani Hirth tribe, Salih’s position was often threatened by rival Hirth sheikhs within the tribe who were often provided with support by the Sultans at Muscat. This was one of the reasons for the revolt of 1895. Another important personality was Sayyid Abdul Aziz bin Said. Abdul Aziz’s role in Omani domestic politics has already been looked at in the context of Al Bu Saidi dynasty politics. But as far as Salih was concerned, Abdul Aziz was important for the non-state networks as he could be put forward as a worthwhile candidate to unite East Africa and Oman. This was because of Abdul Aziz’s background in Zanzibar. A son of Said bin Sultan, Abdul Aziz formerly lived in Zanzibar but was expelled from there by his brother Majid, the Sultan of Zanzibar when he rebelled against the authority of his brother.

That Salih bin Ali considered Abdul Aziz as important was evident when Salih visited the latter at Samad immediately after the revolt of 1877. This was despite the fact that Abdul Aziz had refused to join Salih during this revolt. Salih had instead received support from Ibrahim bin Qays. This could be the reason why the Political Agent at Muscat described the meeting between Salih and Abdul Aziz immediately after the revolt in the following words

\begin{quote}
His conjunction with Syud Abdool Azeez occasions curiosity rather than anxiety at present\textsuperscript{129}
\end{quote}

The Hinawi tribes of Sharqiya and Ja’alan provinces often tried to strengthen Abdul Aziz’s position against Turki during Abdul Aziz’s regency at Muscat. Abdul Aziz likewise tried to increase his influence among the \textit{muttawa} elements among the Hinawi

\textsuperscript{128} Townsend, n. 19, pp. 43-45.
\textsuperscript{129} Robertson to Prideaux, n. 62, p. 468.
tribes especially the Bani Ruwaha by trying to get married to Khalili's daughter who was
the widow of Azzan bin Qays but he failed in the effort.  

Most works on Oman have described a cooling of relations between Salih and Abdul
Aziz once Faisal became Sultan. Salih enjoyed good relations with Faisal at least during
the early years of the latter's rule. Abdul Aziz's abandoning of Oman in 1890 can in this
context be described as having occurred due to the lack of support from Salih. But it was
during this very period in 1889 that Salih and Sheikh Jumah bin Said wrote to Faisal
recommending him to reconcile with his uncle Abdul Aziz. They then advised Faisal to
send Abdul Aziz against the Germans in East Africa. Faisal rejected these
suggestions. In January 1889 during the height of the revolt in German East Africa,
rumours began to spread in Zanzibar that Abdul Aziz was planning to seize Pemba island
and that he had been invited by the Masakirah Arabs of that island for the same purpose.
On the request of the Sultan of Zanzibar the British made enquiries and found the
rumours to be untrue. At the same time, the Political Agent in Zanzibar reported that the
Prime Minister of Oman had visited him and told him that the rumours were true, that the
Masakirah Arabs had sent an invitation to Abdul Aziz and that the latter had promised to
remit the whole of the clove tax should the enterprise be successful. The Prime Minister
was on a visit to Zanzibar on a mission sent by the Sultan of Muscat and was on the point

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130 R/15/6/36, Section 488, "Negotiation for an Arrangement between Sayyid Turki and Sayid Abdul
Aziz", "Continuation of Narrative of Maskat Affairs, August 1875 to December 1880", "Chapter 8:

131 In 1888 the Sultan of Zanzibar leased the southern portion of the Swahili coastal strip under his control
to the Germans. This area consisted of the mainland opposite Zanzibar island and extended south till
Cape Delgado and is part of present day Tanzania. When the German East India Company took over
the administration of the territory in August 1888, there was a revolt led by the Arab segment of the
population. The revolt was led by a wealthy merchant of Arab-African origin named Abushiri bin
Salim al-Harthi and the revolt was named the Abushiri Revolt. The main rebel force was defeated only
in June 1889 but native resistance in the interior and disruption of trade continued. It is understandable
that there would have been cooperation between the Arab tribes of Sharqiya province in Oman and the
Arab rebel leaders in East Africa who originated from the same region in Oman. This would have even
led to the shipment of arms from Muscat (which was becoming a major entrepôt of the arms trade) to
the rebels. Germany and Britain jointly conducted a blockade of the coast and islands to prevent the
flow of arms to the rebels.

132 R/15/6/36, Section 884, "Rumoured Movement of Sayyid Abdul Aziz Against the Germans in East
Africa and Suggested Reconciliation with the Sultan of Maskat", "Continuation of Narrative of Maskat
of returning to Oman when he met the Agent. E. C. Ross, the Resident in the Persian Gulf reported that Faisal did not have a Prime Minister and that the person who visited the Agent at Zanzibar was probably Ali bin Jumah who had been sent by Faisal in November 1888 with presents for the Sultan of Zanzibar. British records state that these rumours were spread by vested interests. 133 It is highly probable that Salih spread these rumours keeping in mind his efforts to promote Abdul Aziz in East Africa. Such incidents prove that Salih bin Ali had not lost interest in either Zanzibar or Abdul Aziz. When Abdul Aziz realised that his efforts in Oman were not reaching anywhere he went to India to convince the British with little success that he was a legitimate candidate for the position of Sultan of Zanzibar. Abdul Aziz also had economic interests in Zanzibar as he owned certain plantations on the island. 134

Events in Zanzibar continued to influence the non-state networks in Oman. In December 1888 Khalifa, the Sultan of Zanzibar made a change in his policy and stopped consulting Arab leaders. In the resulting discord, the Arab dissidents on the island sought the intervention of Faisal. 135 Sultan Hamad bin Thuwaini of Zanzibar had provided material aid to the rebels who captured Muscat in 1895. The non-state tribal networks were flexible enough to try and draw support from the Sultans either at Muscat or Zanzibar according to the existing conditions. In 1890 Britain and Germany made the Heligoland-Zanzibar Agreement regarding the control of East Africa. Germany was allowed to permanently retain the coastal territory that it had taken on lease from Zanzibar. 136 Britain offered to Germany the island of Heligoland in the North Sea twenty eight miles from the German coast and in return Britain was allowed to declare a protectorate over Zanzibar and Pemba. Britain was also allowed to declare a protectorate

over the northern portion of the Swahili coast which is today a part of Kenya. Britain had taken this territory on lease from Zanzibar before 1890. While the Sultan of Zanzibar was the titular head of state, the administration was in the hands of the British. After the death of Hamad bin Thuwaini, Khalid bin Barghash attained power by conducting an anti-British coup in 1896. But the British bombed the opposition out of the palace in a show of military strength that is often described as the shortest war in history. The exiles who returned to Oman from that conflict further fuelled the movement against the Al Bu Saidi dynasty and their British and Indian merchant allies.

Within Oman, the territories of the Hinawi tribes in Sharqiya led by the Bani Hirth were quite secure in comparison to other centres of opposition. After the collapse of the Imamate in 1871, the two major centres of opposition to Turki was Sharqiya led by Salih bin Ali and the Batina coast which became a major support base of Ibrahim bin Qays who was seated in his fort at Rustaq. But the problem with the Yal Sad tribe in the Batina who supported Ibrahim was that their date groves and other property along the Batina coast were easily accessible to British warships from the sea. As the British Indian subjects were spread out in the coastal towns of the Batina, the British had commercial interests in protecting the region. The British threat ceased effective support by the Yal Sad to Ibrahim bin Qays in his attempts to get an outlet to the sea. In marked contrast the British had very few avenues to coerce the tribes in the Sharqiya which became evident when they tried to gain compensation for the attack on British Indian merchants in 1877. The British Political Agent wanted to initially seize the produce of the Bani Hirth, Habus and Hijariyin tribes either at Muscat or Sur and force them to pay compensation. The Hijariyin and Hirth tribes had to depend on Sur the only harbour to the south of Muscat as they were located in the southern part of the Sharqiya while the Habus who were in the north of Sharqiya depended on Muttrah port.


139 Yate to Ross, n. 88, p. 552.

140 R/15/6/36, Section 571, "Compensation to Indian Traders Plundered at Mattrah by the Rebels under Shaikh Salih bin Ali and Sayyid Ibrahim bin Kais", "Continuation of Narrative of Maskat Affairs, August 1875 to December 1880", "Chapter 8: Precis of Muscat Affairs (1872-1892), in R.W. Bailey
Only the Habus were willing to pay compensation while the Hijariyin and Salih bin Ali cited several reasons for their unwillingness to pay. The British had no way of forcing Salih as he neither exported any produce from the ports of Oman nor had any property near the coast. Salih’s networks would have been mostly involved in the clandestine trade of slaves from East Africa. The Habus would have been compelled to pay as they were trading through Muttrah. The British and Turki found it difficult to recover the damages from Salih bin Ali and the Hijariyin directly. Finally, a tax was levied on all date exports from Sharqiya not just being limited to the produce of the Hirth or the Hijariyin until the entire compensation was recovered. The inability of the British or the Sultan to gain access to Sharqiya allowed it to continue as a major centre of opposition to Muscat until the end of the nineteenth century. After 1874 Ibrahim bin Qays could move against Muscat only in concert with Salih bin Ali when the latter led a rebellion of the Hinawi tribes of Sharqiya against.

Unlike the Hinawis of Sharqiya, the Ghafiri tribes of Ja’alan province and Sur had to often come to terms with British supremacy in the region. The British were successful in recovering compensation from the Jafirra, a sub-tribe of the Bani Bu Ali tribe for robbing British Indians on one of the Kuria Muria islands. The British also recovered compensation from the Jenaba tribe for the plunder of goods from a Hindu trader at Sur and resolved a dispute regarding the use of the inlet named Khor Jeramah between the people of Ras al Hadd and the people of Sur. The Ghafiri tribes of Sur like the Bani Bu Ali and Jenaba also came to the aid of Turki and Faisal when Muscat was faced with an onslaught by Hinawi tribes. Sur was a major source of support to Turki during his campaign against the Imamate and the early years of his rule. But these actions by the Ghafiri tribes can be seen as attempts to prevent any advantage to the Hinawis. At the

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142 Lorimer, n. 1, p. 515.
same time the Bani Bu Ali and Jenaba were not willing to tolerate any interference in matters of trade or attempts by Muscat to impose its authority on them. This resulted in a fairly autonomous status for Sur despite the fact that Turki was able to appoint a governor there.

Sur was fast becoming a major trade entrepôt in 1880 as the traders there were able to evade the import duty which Turki was not strong enough to enforce. Attempts by Muscat to partake of the revenue generated from the trade at Sur often ended in failure. Besides sending his wazir Said to Sur in August 1884 to collect revenue, Turki despatched his sons Faisal and Fahd to the town in the following year to obtain the customs duty from the Jenaba. None of these attempts succeeded. Despite Sur becoming a major trade entrepôt, Muscat received from that port in 1890 a revenue of MT$ 3,200 only while the revenue from Sohar and Gwadur was MT$ 15,000 and MT$ 14,000 respectively showing the lack of effective control of Muscat over Sur. When the trade routes from Sharqiya to Muttrah and Muscat were disrupted due to tribal conflicts as in 1891 trade was immediately diverted to Sur. The Ghafiri tribes often co-operated with their Hinawi counterparts in matters of trade. In the same way as the Bani Hirth borrowed the boats of the Jenaba of Sur to export their produce, there were traditional practices followed by the tribes which facilitated co-operation between competing tribes while conducting overland trade. According to the custom called khafir, members of a tribe offered members of another tribe safe passage through their territory and this system prevailed even if there was a blood feud between the two tribes.

Salih bin Ali’s khafila or caravan of eighty camels that was attacked and plundered by the Yaariba and Bani Jabir Ghafiri tribes near Samayil valley in 1891 was led by a Ghafiri of the Masakirah tribe by the name of Hamad bin Salim (nicknamed Kurta) in accordance with the khafir system. Hamad bin Salim was personally a marauder of infamous repute. After the revolt of 1895, a special export duty was at first imposed

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143 Ross, Administration Report 1879-80, n. 78, p. 134.
144 Political Agent to Resident in the Persian Gulf, n. 91, p. 632.
145 Bannerman, n. 96, p. 195 (note 13).
146 Administration Report 1890-91, n. 89, p. 16.
only on the produce of the Hinawi tribes involved in the revolt. But the Ghafiri tribes of Sur and Ja’alan tried to shield the Hinawis from this tax by the use of the *khafir* system. Because of this reason and the fact that the Ghafiri tribal levies who came in support of Faisal in 1895 had looted the populace of Muscat, the export tax was extended to the Ghafiris as well. When Salih bin Ali tried to rally the Ghafiris against this step raising the risk of a Ghafiri-Hinawi alliance Faisal had to withdraw the tax imposed on the Ghafiris.\(^{147}\) The British realised that the Sultans did not have much authority at Sur. Even in matters of law and order the writ of the powerful Bani Bu Ali sheikh of Ja’alan, Sheikh Abdullah bin Salim ran at large in Sur and the Sultans could not match up to his influence. In an incident in July 1887 in which the Awlad Kassib clan of the Jenaba had kidnapped an Indian merchant and beaten another one, the Bani Bu Ali themselves set free the *banian* and imprisoned five of the Awlad Kassib even before the *wali* of the Sultan at Sur could look into the matter.\(^{148}\)

The British officials in the Gulf realised that it were the Ghafiri tribes who were in control at Sur rather than the Sultan and acted accordingly. A rupture of serious proportions took place between the tribes of Sur and Faisal in 1898 when the *wali* of Sur Sulaiman bin Suwailim told the sheikhs of the Jenaba that he would no more respect the *khafir* system because of the manner in which it was abused to protect themselves and the Hinawi tribes responsible for the 1895 revolt from paying compensation. Sulaiman also ordered his twelve year old son who was governing Sur on his behalf to build a fort at a place which would at once command both the water supply and the caravan route to the interior.\(^{149}\) When Faisal did not respond to the pleas of the Jenaba to stop these activities, the latter revolted and attacked the garrison. The Jenaba were provided with moral support by Sheikh Abdullah bin Salim who wrote to Faisal stating that he would not provide him any support in a confrontation with the Jenaba. When Faisal prepared to

\(^{147}\) Lorimer, n. 1, p. 554.


reassert his authority at Sur and requested the Political Agent Major Fagan to evacuate British Indian subjects, Fagan replied that he would not do so and warned the Sultan that he would be held responsible if any harm came to British subjects. Faisal was forced to come to a compromise with the Suris in which Sulaiman was replaced by a different governor. The British attitude in Sur is in marked contrast to the policy adopted in the Batina where they immediately evacuated British Indian subjects in reaction to any threat of disturbance. This was because of Muscat’s ability to assert its authority on that coast more effectively than at Sur.

The Suris and their Hinawi counterparts by the end of the nineteenth century got an opportunity to balance the power of the British that supported the Sultan by gaining the support of France. Most of the studies on British-French competition for gaining influence in Oman regard the Suris and the Bani Hirth as mere pawns who were used by the French for gaining an upper hand. These studies focus more on how Faisal tried to balance British hegemony with French aid. They do not take into account the Suris motives in seeking French support. The seeking of French protection by the tribal networks involved in maritime trade must be seen in relation to the trade of these networks in slaves and later on in arms and ammunition. While the Suris began importing slaves in native vessels with French papers and flags from the mid-1870s onwards, it was not until the 1890s that the French actually began implementing a concrete policy of intervention in Omani affairs. The French at that time realised that Sur was a centre of opposition to the Al Bu Saidi state supported by the British and took measures to cultivate this base. The French interest in Sur was evident when the British obtained a map of Sur published by the French government in 1901 with evidence that showed their interest in that location even before the date of the publication. The economic activities of the non-state tribal networks will be looked at in detail in the last chapter on Oman’s trade and commerce.

150 Bannerman, n. 96, pp. 196-97.
151 Lorimer, n. 1, p. 547.
There was also an ideological context in which these maritime networks were operating. The Harithis of Sharqiya who were part of the trade connections with Africa were also associated with the Ibadi conservative movement in Oman. Because of his prominent role in the Ibadi conservative movement in Oman, Salih bin Ali was described by Abdullah bin Humayd al-Salimi as Imam al-Muhtasib who according to the Ibadi concept was someone who had the ability to lead the Muslim community until a proper Imam is elected. Salimi made this description in an introduction to a work authored by Salih bin Ali titled Ayn al-Masalih fi jawabat al-Shaykh al-Salih. An Ibadi revivalist movement emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century linking Oman, East Africa and the Mzab region in Algeria, the latter location being the sole Ibadi base in Africa. These revivalist circles received a boost when Barghash was the Sultan of Zanzibar. Barghash was in close contact with the Ibadi ulema of Zanzibar. He strengthened the Ibadi legal system by promoting the status and salaries of the qadis in a multi-sectarian Islamic environment and started the first Ibadi press of the Islamic world in Zanzibar. It is not surprising that like most individuals who maintained links with the Ibadi circles Barghash supported slavery.

According to John C. Wilkinson one characteristic of the Ibadi revivalist movement of the nineteenth century was that it was pan-Ibadi in nature in the sense that intellectuals in different parts of the Islamic world like Mzab and Oman started interacting and moving closer to each other. Most of these intellectuals were also travelling between the regions which had a strong Ibadi presence. Majid bin Khamis, the scholar who attended the assembly in Rustaq convened by Saud bin Azzan in 1899 for the purpose of electing Saud as an Imam had pan-Ibadi connections. Barghash’s press printed both Maghribi and Mashiriqi works which were read by Ibadi ulema from different places. The pan-Ibadi movement was active in a situation in which large parts of West Asia and North Africa were coming under the control of colonial powers. The debates within the Ibadi circles on the response to colonial domination surely affected the leaders and intellectuals of non-state tribal networks in Oman who were exposed to the Ibadi literature that was

152 Wilkinson, n. 121, p. 162.
153 Ibid, p. 239.
circulating during that period. This literature which was mostly published in Barghash's press in Zanzibar included Omani religious books and Omani newspapers like *Falaq*, *Nahda* and *Islah*. Notables like Sheikh Ahmed bin Hamoud al Harthi and Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamoud al Harthi were often the editors-in-chief of these papers. Omani literary figures whether in Zanzibar or in Oman wrote for these newspapers.\(^{155}\)

There was also a pan-Islamic element to the ideology to which these networks were exposed. Many of the Bani Hirth and other tribesmen in Zanzibar who provided support to the networks that opposed Faisal in Oman had become Sunni after going to East Africa.\(^{156}\) Another important current of thought during this period was a pan-Arab sentiment that was gradually developing in response to the spread of colonialism. Graeme Bannerman has detailed how Arab publications influenced the thinking of Omanis in the late nineteenth century. Among the large number of Arab and Muslim pamphlets and journals being published in Cairo and Beirut, few were concerned with events in Oman. The *Eye Opener*, an anonymous leaflet from Beirut, was the most effective with the Omani audience as it specifically addressed Omani problems. The leaflet was mailed in Beirut fortnightly and shipped to leading Omani personalities. British officials believed that the pamphlet was anti-British in nature.\(^{157}\) The beginnings of a pan-Arab sentiment in the late nineteenth century would later on result in a powerful pan-Arab movement during the 1940s and 1950s.

From 1890 onwards a new set of personalities became active in close relation to the non-state maritime networks. The first of these is Sultan Hamad bin Thuwaini of Zanzibar. Though Hamad was the head of the state apparatus in Zanzibar, his support was drawn by these networks for their own needs most notably during the rebellion of 1895. Hamad the son of Sultan Thuwaini bin Said had spend his childhood in Muscat before he and his brothers were deported from Muscat to Qishm island in 1876 by Turki who

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\(^{155}\) *Oman in History*, n. 79, p. 508.

\(^{156}\) Bannerman, n. 96, p. 39, (see note 17).

\(^{157}\) Ibid, p. 203.
suspected them of treason.\textsuperscript{158} Even after he became Sultan of Zanzibar, Hamad continued to have friends and dependents of his father at Muscat and personally wished to unite Oman and Zanzibar.\textsuperscript{159} Salih bin Ali and his allies used the Sultan’s sentiment to derive support from him. As mentioned previously Hamad gifted the Harithi leaders and a Bani Bu Ali sheikh who visited Zanzibar with field pieces and gunpowder which helped the Harithis to launch the revolt of 1895. The British protested against Hamad for his support and when Hamad faced financial problems the British attributed it to lavish treatment of the tribal sheikhs of Oman.\textsuperscript{160} One of the candidates that the rebels of 1895 hoped to put forward as Sultan of Muscat instead of Faisal was Hamad bin Thuwaini.

There were also individuals who operated in Zanzibar and Muscat as advisors or counsellors to the Sultans in both places. These individuals presumably supported their respective Sultans but in reality were trying to influence policy to benefit the non-state trade networks to which they were in some way they were connected or related. Such individuals were generally favoured by the French as they and the maritime networks based in Sharqiya and Sur had common interests. In Muscat such individuals found special favour by Faisal who was pro-French during a particular period. Muhammad bin Azzan Al Bu Saidi the wazir of Faisal during the revolt of 1895 was dismissed from service as he was in contact with the rebels.\textsuperscript{161} Faisal under the influence of the French dismissed his then wazir Muhammad bin Said in 1898 and reinstated Muhammad bin Azzan.\textsuperscript{162} Another individual was Abdul Aziz who was employed as a secretary by Faisal. Abdul Aziz was an important medium of communication between Faisal and the French as he was also the dragoman of the French Consul Paul Ottavi. Abdul Aziz belonged to the Hinawi Bani Ruwaha tribe and was closely allied to Hilal bin Omar who


\textsuperscript{160} Lorimer, n. 1, p. 537.

\textsuperscript{161} Peterson, n. 11, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{162} Lorimer, n. 1, p. 556.
will be looked at in detail shortly. Abdul Aziz is believed to be the individual who most influenced Faisal to adopt a pro-French stance. The British believed that Abdul Aziz was involved in passing vital information to his French employer.163

The last but not the least individual who has to be dealt with in this section is Hilal bin Omar, the advisor of Sultan Hamad bin Thuwaini of Zanzibar. Hilal belonged to the Bani Hirth tribe and was a native of Sur making him an ideal model of the kind of influential individuals associated with the non-state maritime networks. Hilal was also the brother of Mohsin bin Omar, one of the tribal leaders of the 1895 revolt at Muscat. It was Hilal who convinced Hamad bin Thuwaini to lavishly treat the Bani Hirth sheikhs including his own brother Mohsin who visited Zanzibar in 1894.164 The favour that the Bani Hirth gained in Zanzibar through the influence of Hilal was viewed with jealousy by tribes in Oman like the Hijariyin whose grievance was that their sheikhs who visited Zanzibar during the same period was not given similar treatment.165 During the revolt of 1895, Hilal persuaded Hamad not to give any support to Faisal and also tried to undermine British influence in Zanzibar. Once Hamad died, the new Sultan Hamud arrested and deported Hilal to Aden in June 1896. In September 1896 Hamud requested the British to allow Hilal to leave Aden because of his health.166 The French subsequently informed the British that he was a French protected person since 1895.167

In May 1900 Hilal bin Omar unexpectedly arrived at Sur. Hilal had arrived in a context in which Faisal’s standing with the tribes had become low in the aftermath of the Bandar Jissah crisis. During the crisis Faisal took an independent stand against the British over

163 Ibid, p. 556.
164 Bannerman, n. 96, pp. 37-38.
165 Sadler to Wilson, n. 112, p. 676.
the granting of a coaling station concession to the French which won Faisal the admiration and support of the tribes. Sheikh Abdullah bin Salim, the tamimah of the Bani Bu Ali offered to bring his tribe to Muscat to aid the Sultan.168 His submission to the British and subsequent close relations with them lost Faisal the support of the tribes who then started resenting him. Relations had also worsened between the Sultan and the Jenaba tribe over the latter’s rebellion against the actions of the wali Sulaiman bin Suwailim in 1898. After arriving at Sur, Hilal first met the French Consul, Ottavi who was there on a visit. He then went to the house of the principal Jenaba sheikh Muhammad bin Mubarak, one of the French flag holders and asked him to assemble all the Jenaba elders. He then preached to them that Faisal and the British were their enemies and that they could expect help only from France. He then advised the Jenaba leaders who had not taken French papers and flags to take them when the next season opened in order prevent being harassed by the British. When the Jenaba replied that they feared a Hinawi attack led by the Hijariyin on the orders of Faisal, Hilal replied that he could manage the Hinawi tribes and promised Hinawi support to the Jenaba if they were attacked by Faisal.169

Hilal’s activities at Sur forced Faisal to visit the port in the very next month to undo any possible damage. Faisal had not visited the port since he became Sultan in 1888. Though the Suri tribes pledged their loyalty to him, they continued their clandestine trading activities and political opposition to Muscat and the British.170 Hilal bin Omar’s objective in distancing the Jenaba from Faisal was thus achieved. But he could not instigate any major rebellion as his brother Mohsin bin Omar was not in good health and was financially ruined.171 But Hilal’s failure was mainly due to the absence of the great rebel leader Salih bin Ali in the political arena. It is hard to predict what could have been

168 Bannerman, n. 96, p. 200.
achieved through a combination of Hilal bin Omar and Salih bin Ali. But Hilal was the last of the influential personalities of the maritime non-state networks of the late nineteenth century.

Conclusion
Turki bin Said’s rule was less from stable in the early years. The lack of co-ordination between Turki and the British led to the opposition Hinawi alliance gaining a foothold in Muscat after the revolt of 1874 and they tried to gain maximum advantage out of it. Even with the assistance of Abdul Aziz, Turki could not surmount his difficulties in a situation where Muscat came under the control of bedouin tribes. Turki enjoyed more stability after 1875 when the British provided timely military aid during tribal attacks against Muscat in 1877 and 1883. Faisal who succeeded Turki was more independent minded than his father and tried to assert his autonomy from the British by moving closer to the French. Before he tried to assert himself, Faisal had signed the agreement of 1891 in which Faisal promised not to sell, mortgage cede or give for occupation any portion of his territory to a foreign power other than Britain. Faisal came out the worse from the bargain as he did not get effective British support during the rebellion of 1895 when rebels occupied Muscat, a situation which his father or any of his predecessors never faced. This was when he tried to move away from Britain but his attempts ended in failure and Oman came under greater control of the British. Faisal did not have much to look up to even after the death or exit of his all his rivals by 1899.

The non-state maritime trade networks in Oman continued to be influenced by events that were taking place in Zanzibar including the partitioning of Zanzibar’s territories by colonial powers and the agitations and rebellions that were conducted by the natives including Arabs against European expansionism. These maritime networks in Oman started moving close to France in order to counter the influence of Britain and protect their economic activities which included slavery and the arms trade. There was also an ideological context to the activities of the Bani Hirth and the Suris as they began to be influenced by the pan-Ibadi, pan-Islamic and pan-Arab currents of thought that were spreading in North Africa and West Asia. The major personalities of these networks
including tribal sheikhs, advisors of Sultans and religious scholars were active in both Oman and East Africa and their passing away including that of Salih bin Ali was the end of a phase of the long history of Omani maritime networks in the Indian Ocean.