The death of Saiyid Said, the Imam of Oman, in 1866 culminated a phase in the history of the country during which it had attained the zenith of its economic prosperity and political glory. Starting his career when Oman faced a serious Wahhabi threat to its integrity, Said was successful in consolidating his Arabian possessions. He also built up an East African Empire which constituted a vital link between Europe and the East. Among his countrymen Said had a reputation for statesmanship which equalled that of his contemporaries like Mohammed Ali Pasha or Dost Mohammed.

**THE SECESSION OF ZANZIBAR**

In the absence of any well defined laws relating to succession, the Imam’s death could be anticipated to give rise to internecine wars between rival claimants to power. Said was aware of this problem and had attempted to resolve it during his lifetime. Passing over his eldest son, Prince Hillal, who was too pro-English, the Imam appointed his second son, Prince Khalid, as governor of Zanzibar and its

1. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 16 March, 1857; F.D.F. B. No. 15, 1 May, 1857.

2. Biographical sketch of Saiyid Saeed bin Sultan by Col. C.B. Miles, Political Agent, Muscat; Persian Gulf Residency Report for 1883-84, Part II, Appendix A;
GOI Selection No. 1381; Also see J. Martineau, *The Life and Correspondence of Sir Bartle Frere*, (London 1895), 1, pp. 301-02.
African dependencies. A third son, Prince Thuwaini, was made governor of Masqat and Oman. Khalid died in 1853, and was succeeded by another son of Said, Prince Majid. In informing the Indian authorities of the Imam's death, Colonel A. Hamerton, the Political Agent at Zanzibar, pointed out that Said had desired his territories to be divided between Thuweini and Majid after his death according to the settlement effected during his lifetime. The late ruler was also believed to have left a will to this effect.

Immediately after the Imam's death Majid seized control of affairs in Zanzibar. The new ruler's first concern was to seek recognition of his accession from the Government of India. Majid based his claim on the fact that, in conformity with Omani tradition, the Arab chiefs of Zanzibar had elected him as their ruler after Said's passing away. His anxiety to secure British recognition arose of the need to consolidate his position in the face of anticipated opposition from Thuwaini at Masqat. Being the dominant power in the region, British acknowledgment of his fait accompli would have rendered him secure against attempts at subversion emanating from Oman.

So transparent was Majid's motive in addressing the British authorities that Lord Canning, the Governor-General

2. Political Agent, Zanzibar to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 8 November, 1856; F.D.F.B.No.16, 1 May, 1857.
3. Saiyid Majid to Governor-General of India dated 6 November, 1856; F.D.F.B.No.17, 1 May, 1857.
of India, refused to be drawn into an insipient war of succession. Canning interpreted the predominance which his Government exercised over the states of maritime Arabia as involving a minimum of interference in their internal affairs, least of all in questions relating to succession. Besides, Hemerton had not made it clear whether Said had wanted Majid to rule over Zanzibar in full sovereignty. In the face of such considerations, Canning sent a reply to Majid which was altogether silent on the question of recognition.

While Canning adopted a policy of circumspection, it soon became clear that Majid's apprehensions regarding Thuwaini were not devoid of substance. As soon as he had stabilised his position in Oman, the Masqat ruler commenced organising an expedition to coerce Majid into accepting his suzerainty. Thuwaini could hardly afford to acquiesce in the secession of Zanzibar. During the closing years of his reign the late Imam had devoted himself solely to the

1. Secretary, Foreign Department, GGI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 26 March, 1857; F.D.F.B. No. 18, 1 May, 1857. In 1806 Lord Wellesley too had assumed neutrality as between rival claimants on the death of Imam Sultan bin Ahmed. See J.A. Saldanha, Precedents of Correspondence Regarding Affairs of the Persian Gulf, (1841-53), (Calcutta 1908), p. 36.

2. Governor-General of India to Seiyid Majid dated 25 March, 1857; F.D.F.B. No. 18, 1 May, 1857.
development of Zanzibar, with the result that the African dependency became the base on which rested the economic viability of the conjoint state. For the Masqat ruler the acquisition of control over Zanzibar was a question of transcendental importance.

The prospect of a clash between Masqat and Zanzibar was viewed with concern by Lord Elphinstone’s Government of Bombay, which controlled relations with the Gulf under the supervision of the Supreme Government at Calcutta. A conflict between the two rulers would prove a set-back to the policy of maintaining the peace of the Gulf. It was consequently decided

1. Said's activities had found expression in two directions. He encouraged clove plantation in Zanzibar, with the result that the island was supplying over 90 percent of the world's requirement of that commodity towards the end of the 19th century. Besides, he negotiated commercial treaties with Britain, France and the United States, throwing open the African interior to exploitation by international enterprise. From humble beginnings the annual trade of Zanzibar had reached the figure of £2,000,000 at the time of Said's death. See R.H. Crofton, A Pageant of the Spice Islands, (London 1936), pp. 88-113; Hollingsworth, op. cit., p. 5; Zanzibar Report of Coghlan Commission, para 28.

2. Imam Said annually allocated a sum of 40,000 crowns to Masqat from the revenues of Zanzibar. That subsidy was used in pacifying the tribal Chiefs of Oman and in appeasing Riyadh. See Political Agent, Zanzibar to Secretary Bombay Government dated 17 February, 1859; F.D.F.B. No. 27, 3 June, 1859.

3. Secretary Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 28 February, 1859; F.D.F.B. No. 24, 3 June, 1859.
to send Colonel Russell, Military Secretary to the Bombay Government, on a mission to the Omani capital. Russell carried a communication to Thawaini requesting him not to initiate hostilities against Zanzibar. The Masqat ruler was assured that if he had any claims to advance in respect of the late Imam's African possessions, he could submit them to the arbitration of the Government of India.

Elphinstone defined the objectives of the Russell mission in a minute elucidating his Oman policy. He had, he asserted, no intention of committing the Indian Government to a course of involvement in the controversial succession of Majid. Russell had been sent to Arabia to prevent bloodshed between Masqat and Zanzibar. Peace in the Gulf was indivisible and a conflict involving Masqat would be difficult to localize. It could precipitate a return to those anarchical conditions which had been suppressed in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding Elphinstone's apologia the Russell mission involved a new departure for British policy in Oman.

Masqat had not submitted to the arbitral authority

1. Governor of Bombay to Saiyid Thawaini dated 11 February, 1859; F.D.F.B. No. 23, 3 June, 1859.
2. Minute by Governor of Bombay dated 10 February, 1859; F.D.F.B. No. 22, 3 June, 1859.
which the Government of India exercised over the chiefs of the Trucial Coast. The mission was, therefore, an attempt to extend to the Gulf of Oman the maritime protectorate which India exercised over the Persian Gulf. It led to closer British involvement in the affairs of Oman and reduced the state to the status of the Trucial Principalities.

Russell arrived at Masqat after Thuwaini had left for Zanzibar at the head of an expedition, but he was able to effect a junction with the Masqat ruler at Ras-al-Hadd. On learning the purpose of Russell's mission Thuwaini agreed to submit his differences with Majid to the arbitration of the British authorities. He wrote to Elphinstone that he had abandoned all ideas of coercing Majid, and that he hoped the Government would compel the Zanzibar ruler to submit to his demands. Thuwaini wanted Masqat and Zanzibar to be declared a conjoint state with the latter subordinate to the former; further, he held that Majid ought to pay him 40,000 crowns annually as tribute. The settlement proposed by Thuwaini aimed at securing the economic

1. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 28 February, 1859; F.D.F.B. No.24, 3 June 1859.
2. Seiyid Thuwaini to Governor of Bombay dated 18 February, 1859; F.D.F.B. No.25, 3 June, 1859.
viability of Oman.

The Masqat ruler's acceptance of British arbitration obliged the Indian authorities to define their attitude towards the problem of succession in Oman. In a tentative delineation of its views the Bombay Government stated that before any decision could be taken it was essential to ascertain what were Majid's claims to an independent status, and to what extent were they supported by the will of the late Imam. The problem was of great complexity. Even if Said had bequeathed Zanzibar in full sovereignty to Majid it was questionable whether he enjoyed such a prerogative, especially if the African dependencies belonged to Masqat (ab antiquo). Again, the issue could not be divorced from wider considerations. Zanzibar was destined to become the commercial emporium of East Africa. As such, the Government could not be indifferent to its future. On the other hand, the role Masqat had come to play in British policy in the Gulf made it equally an object of consideration. However, essentially the question revolved around the will of the late Imam.

1. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 28 February, 1859; F.O. F.B. No. 24, 3 June, 1859.
2. Ibid.
No sooner had the Bombay Government indicated its views that despatches from Colonel (later General C.P.) Rigby, who had succeeded Hemerton at the Zanzibar Agency, threw novel light on the problem. According to Rigby the late ruler had not left any will dividing his territories between his sons. But it was understood that he had appointed Thuwaini at Masqat and Majid at Zanzibar with the idea that after his death they would rule independently over the territories allocated to them. Rigby’s revelation was followed by intelligence of abortive intrigues at Zanzibar, for which the Political Agent held Thuwaini responsible, and which were directed towards Majid’s overthrow.

The Masqat ruler’s ill-conceived manoeuvres, executed after he had referred his differences with Majid to the Government of India, prejudiced his position in British eyes. Canning now became disposed towards a solution of the dispute which ran contrary to Thuwaini’s

1. Political Agent, Zanzibar to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 17 February, 1859; F.D.F.B. No. 29, 3 June, 1859.

2. Political Agent, Zanzibar to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 30 March, 1859; F.D.F.B. No. 2, 17 June, 1859; Also see Political Agent, Zanzibar to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 21 October, and 24 October, 1859; F.D.F.B. No. 14, 16 December, 1859.
pretensions. He argued that even if Said had left no will concerning the disposition of his territories, he had clearly indicated his intentions in respect of the question. Masqat had been bestowed on Thuwaini, and Zanzibar on Majid, on the understanding that they were to rule independently over the territories assigned to them. Thuwaini would, therefore, have to abandon his claims over Zanzibar. What he could claim from Majid was a subsidy that would ensure the economic stability of Oman.

In outlining his views Canning instructed the Bombay Government to inform Thuwaini of the lines on which he would pronounce his award, and to obtain from him a pledge that he would abide by the arbitration of the Government of India. Thuwaini's reaction to Canning's decision was very bitter. The Masqat ruler held that to submit to the Viceroy's views would be committing economic suicide, and that he would not afford to abandon the most prosperous part of his possessions.

1. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 30 May, 1859; F.D.F.S.No.28, 3 June 1859; Also see Note by Viceroy dated 19 May, 1859; F.D.F.S.No.28, 3 June, 1859.

2. Ibid.

3. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Govt, dated 27 July, 1859; F.D.F.S.No.32, 23 December, 1859.

4. Capt.Cruttenend, Senior Naval Officer of the Persian Gulf Squadron to Secretary, Bombay Govt, dated 21 September, 1859; F.D.F.S.No.3, 25 December, 1859.
was only with reluctance that he agreed to bind himself to whatever award the Government would pronounce.

Thuwaini's reaction aroused an apprehension in India that to straightaway enforce the award the Viceroy had in mind would result in a disgruntled ally in the Gulf. On the initiative of the Bombay Government, therefore, a Commission under Brigadier (later General W.M.) Coghlan, Resident at Aden, was appointed to investigate the differences between Thuwaini and Majid. Significantly, the Commission was instructed to devise a solution that would not only be equitable in respect of the conflicting claims of the two brothers, but would also "ensure our (British) just interests in Oman, and along the east coast of Africa dependent upon Zanzibar." On the other hand, in introducing Coghlan to Thuwaini, Elphinstone assured him that the Government would carry out the obligations it had incurred with fairness and justice. It is obvious that the Commission was primarily a sop for Thuwaini.

The appointment of the Commission evoked a favourable response at Masqat. Thuwaini was anxious to

1. Declaration by Saiyid Thuwaini dated 21 September, 1869; F.D.F.B. No.8, 23 December, 1859.
2. The other members of the Commission were: The Rev. G.P. Badger, an Arabic scholar and Hormuz Rassan, Native Agent at Masqat.
3. Secretary, Bombay Government to Brig. Coghlan dated 29 May, 1860; F.D.Pt. P.No.29, April, 1861.
4. Governor of Bombay to Saiyid Thuwaini dated 31 May, 1860; F.D.Pt.P. No.29, April, 1861.
vindicate his position and he presented a cogent exposition of his claim to suzerainty over the African territories before Coghlan. The Saiyid held that the law of primogeniture was alien to the traditions of his dynasty and Omani polity. However, he did not base his pretensions on the fact that he was the eldest son of the late Imam. His rights over Zanzibar emanated of his position as the de jure ruler of Oman, which made him the rightful sovereign of all the dependencies of the parent state.

The Masqat ruler challenged the contention that the late Imam had intended to divide his possessions between his sons. He further asked of Coghlan whether in any other "organised State, whatever the form of Government may be, the sovereign is endowed with any such prerogative?" The Saiyid asserted that the right of exercising supremacy over the conjoint state of Oman rested with the candidate who had succeeded to the parent state, and who had been elected ruler over it by the tribes of Oman. All considerations were subordinate to the expression of their sovereign will, in the form of an election, by the people of Oman.


The Commission next acquainted itself with the views of Majid. In the first instance, the Zanzibar ruler based his claim to an independent status on the wishes of the late Imam regarding the disposition of his territories. In July, 1844, the Imam had written to the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Earl of Aberdeen, informing him of the appointment of Prince Khalid to the Governorship of Zanzibar and Prince Thuwaini to that of Muscat. Whereas Said's communication was silent on the question, Colonel Hamerton had remarked in a forwarding despatch that the Saiyid's letter had been written to ascertain whether Her Majesty's Government would guarantee the succession of Khalid and Thuwaini to the territories allocated to them. However, the Foreign Office did not send any reply to Said. Khalid, as mentioned earlier, died in 1853. Whereupon Majid was appointed in his place on the understanding that he was to be regarded in the same light as Khalid.


While Majid laid due emphasis on the fact that Said had intended him to rule over Zanzibar in full sovereignty, he did not attach any exaggerated importance to this claim. Basically, the Zanzibar ruler postulated his sovereign status on the premise that, according to Arab practice, he had called together the chiefs of Zanzibar to elect him as their ruler after his father's death. "To this," he asserted, "they all agreed, and they accordingly elected me to rule over them, and entrusted me with the direction of their affairs."

Before analysing the conflicting claims advanced by Thuwaini and Majid, Coghlan acquainted himself with Arab constitutional practice through a memoir on the country's political history written by the Reverend G.P. Badger, his junior colleague in the Commission. In his memoir Badger drew two conclusions: firstly, that primogeniture was never regarded in Oman as conferring a claim to succession; and secondly, that election by an assembly of tribal chiefs was essential.


to the confirmation of a new ruler. Arising of the letter principle was the axiom that a ruler had no right to dispose of the succession as he desired. According to Badger not a single sovereign in Oman had "assumed or exercised the right of nominating a successor, or of disposing his territories by will or otherwise."

Badger's conclusions were unambiguous and Coghlan had no hesitation in stating that in so far as Majid's claim to sovereignty over Zanzibar rested on the wishes of the late Imam, it possessed no validity. Majid's election by the Zanzibar Arabs presented a different problem. Badger's investigations had made it clear that election by an assembly of chiefs played an important role in confirming any succession. To that extent Majid's claim on the basis of election was supreme over all other considerations. But the question was more complex. Zanzibar was a dependency of Oman. Could it, in spite of its inferior political status, elect its ruler?

1. Though Badger does not say so, the election of the Imam also had behind it a religious sanction, See Note on the Seat Of Ibelidhiyah of Oman by Col. E.C. Ross, Resident, Persian Gulf; Persian Gulf Residency Report for 1890-91, Appendix B, Part II, CCF Selection No. 181.

Coghlan was convinced that Arab constitutional practice excluded dependencies from sharing political power with the parent country. Nor had Zanzibar ever done so in the past. But there was no precedent of rigorous relevance to the problem under consideration. For if Zanzibar had originally been a dependency, its status had changed altogether during the closing years of Said's reign. The port had developed into a thriving commercial metropolis; and in recognition of its importance the late Imam had transferred the seat of his government to Africa in 1840. Coghlan, therefore, inferred that it was "consonant with reason and justice, (considering the form of government which prevailed in Oman), that the peoples of these countries should have a voice in the election of the sovereign." In electing Majid the Zanzibar chiefs had exercised this right. They had staged a "national revolution."

While constitutional factors led Coghlan to the view that Zanzibar possessed the right to determine its destiny, British interests, consideration for which had been stressed in the Commission's terms of reference, pointed to a similar resolution of the problem. The

2. Ibid., para 29. Brackets as in original text.
3. Ibid., para 29.
political implications of the issue were summed up for Coghlan's benefit by Colonel Rigby. The Agent held that the connection between Oman and Zanzibar was detrimental to their interests. Arab government was personal and the presence of the ruler was essential to the orderly administration of a state. Consequently, so long as Oman and Zanzibar remained linked together, neither of them would achieve political stability. Rigby reminded the Commission that even the statesman-like Said had found it difficult to control Oman from Zanzibar. The task of holding the two units together would be impossible for Thuwaini.

However, Zanzibar had a key role to play in East Africa. Was it irrelevant to conceive of its aggrandisement, under British aegis, into a major East African state lying athwart the Cape route to India? As Rigby put it:

From Port Natal to Cape Guardafui the only State from which any progress or stability can be hoped is Zanzibar.... The Portuguese possessions on the east coast are in a hopeless state of decay .... If Zanzibar should be an independent State, the dominion of its ruler would probably soon extend into the interior, and his power would be consolidated, and in time it might form a considerable African Kingdom.

2. Ibid.
The Political Agent thus outlined two reasons why it was essential to negate Thuwaini's pretensions. The stability of Muscat and Zanzibar would be ensured by such a step. Besides, a Zanzibar rid of Arabian encumbrances would play an important role in the future of British policy in East Africa. An examination of the Coghlan report reveals that Rigby's memorandum exercised a decisive influence in giving shape to the suggestions voiced by the Commission.

After concluding his review of the dispute between the rulers of Muscat and Zanzibar, Coghlan made the following recommendations to the Bombay Government:

1. That Majid should be confirmed in independent sovereignty over Zanzibar and the associated African territories.

2. That the succession to Zanzibar after Majid's death should be determined by the people of Zanzibar without outside interference.

3. That as compensation for abandoning his

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1. It is interesting to note that Rigby's idea was revived by Sir John Kirk, the Zanzibar Agent, in the 1830's. However, the Foreign Office, which had decided to humour Bismarck in East Africa, refused to support Kirk. In 1890 the extent of the Zanzibar Ruler's possessions on the mainland was demarcated by an international treaty. See Hollingsworth, op. cit., pp.16; Also see M.E. Townshend, The Rise And Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire, (1834-1939), (New York 1930); (New York 1930), pp. 108-09.

claim over the former African territories of Oman, Thuwaini should receive an annual subsidy of 40,000 crowns from Majid.

4. That the payment of 40,000 crowns annually to Masqat should be a permanent charge on the revenues of Zanzibar.

The award recommended by Coghlan commended itself to the Indian authorities, since the Commission had not departed in any essential respect from the viewpoint expressed by Canning earlier. The Viceroy instructed the Bombay Government to communicate Coghlan's findings to Thuwaini and Majid. Zanzibar and Masqat were to be henceforth regarded as fully independent. It was also to be impressed upon their rulers that the subsidy stipulated in the award did not imply the subordination of the African territories to Oman; nor was it something personal between Thuwaini and Majid. On the other hand, it denoted a permanent arrangement, compensating the Masqat ruler for the abandonment of his claims upon Zanzibar, and adjusting

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1. Resolution by Bombay Government dated 4 February, 1861; F.D.Pt. P.No.41, April 1861; Also see Note by Viceroy dated 28 March, 1861; F.D.Pt. P.No.26/46, April 1861.

2. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 3 March, 1861; F.D. Pt. P.No. 46, April, 1861.
The economic inequality between the two inheritances.

A final confirmation of the Canning award was effected by an understanding with France. The latter power had been manifesting an interest in the east coast of Africa in the period under review. The British Government, however, having established its hegemony over Zanzibar, was determined not to permit European intrusions there. Since France was primarily concerned with Madagascar, it was possible for the two powers to come to an agreement on the basis of mutual self-denial. By virtue of the Anglo-French Convention of 1862 the two Governments engaged to respect the sovereign status of Muscat and Zanzibar.  

An appraisal of the Coghlan Commission's findings reveals that its recommendations were based on political considerations rather than on Arab constitutional practice though ostensibly the question was approached from the latter standpoint. The main argument advanced in support of Majid's claim, namely,

1. Viceroy to Sayids Thuwaini and Majid dated 2 April, 1861; F.D. Pt. P. No. 44, April, 1861.

2. E. Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, (London 1899), II, No. 222, p. 718; Also see Hollingsworth, op. cit., p. 11.

that the Zanzibar Arabs exercised the right of self-determination in electing him to be their ruler, is of doubtful validity. It is difficult to express an opinion on the degree of political consciousness acquired by the Arabs of Oman and Zanzibar. But to credit the Zanzibar chiefs of having staged a "national revolution" is hardly convincing.

It is, indeed, only in political considerations that we must look for the rationale of Coghlan's recommendations. The Commission was led to believe that the joint existence of Masqat and Zanzibar as a viable state was impossible. The maintenance of the integrity of Imam Said's territories was a basic plank of British policy. Masqat was the base on which rested British influence in the Persian Gulf. Similarly, Zanzibar constituted an important position in respect of the Cape route to India. The award was, therefore, designed

1. The remarks of Bertram Thomas, a British official who served as Finance Minister to the Masqat Ruler during 1925-30, are illuminating in the above context. According to Thomas: "To a proper understanding of traditional rule in peninsular Arabia it will be as well ... to free our mind of western conceptions ... (The) spirit of rule in Oman is most nearly comparable with that of our medieval times, tribal-chiefs affording some analogy to powerful barons, and political power resting largely on allegiance of persons having strong followings." Vide B. Thomas, Arab Rule Under The Albusaid Dynasty Of Oman, (1741-1937), The Raleigh Lecture on History, Proceedings of The British Academy, Vol. 24, (London 1938), p. 5.
to meet the requirements of British policy in Arabia and East Africa. For this very reason it embodied certain arbitrary features. To hold one 'independent' state responsible to another for a subsidy is an extraordinary procedure. But there was no other way out for Coghlan. After the bifurcation Masqat would remain a viable state only if assisted financially through some means or the other.

In its larger repercussions the secession of Zanzibar resulted in two contradictory tendencies. The link between the two states was a factor which, to an extent, weakened Masqat in Gulf politics. Given the limitations of Arab political organisation, Said's empire embraced elements of weakness which the Imam more than once confronted in a near fatal form. Yet it would be wrong to over emphasize this factor. Zanzibar's secession dealt an irreparable blow to the prosperity and prestige of Oman. The rationale of the political edifice erected by Said lay in its commercial-maritime role in eastern waters. It was precisely this element which the Canning award destroyed. Thereafter, Oman ceased to be a maritime power and its destiny revolved more and more around the insular politics of mainland Arabia and the Gulf.

Soon after the bifurcation decreed by the
Government of India, Masqat was beset with serious difficulties. In 1861, the Yal Saad, an Omani tribe of the Batinah, rose in revolt against the Masqat ruler. The uprising placed Thuwaini in a predicament and it was only after a year that he succeeded in taming the tribesmen. The integrity of Oman was subsequently threatened from another quarter. By the 1860's the Wahhabis of Central Arabia had recovered from the invasions of the Egyptian Khedive, Mohammed Ali Pasha. Wahhabi pressure over maritime Arabia, particularly Oman, was an inevitable consequence of the revitalisation of Riyadh. Towards the close of 1864, when Thuwaini was engaged in reducing one of his refractory vassals, Azzan bin Qais, the governor of Rostaq, a Wahhabi host appeared in Oman on the pretext of mediating between him and Azzam. The appearance of the Wahhabi army forced Thuwaini to retire to his capital whereupon Azzan made his peace with Riyadh

1. Political Agent, Masqat to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 30 October, 1861; F.D.P.P. No. 72, January 1862.

2. Political Agent, Masqat to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 28 October, 1862; F.D.P.P. No. 359, December 1862.

and accepted the 'fahhabi Imam Faisal as his suzerain.¹

The Bombay Government, which looked upon the Wahhabis with suspicion, instructed the British Resident at Bushire, Colonel (later Sir Lewis) Felly, to offer his services as a mediator in the dispute between Masqat and Riyadh. The Resident, however, had already decided to establish contact with Imam Faisal. Speaking of his mission to Riyadh, Felly asserts that his primary concern was to establish friendly relations with the Wahhabi Imam, with whose territories the Government of India possessed so many points of contact in the Gulf. So probably it was. Yet we may also mention the interest which France was then exhibiting in peninsular Arabia, a region which was to acquire considerable importance with the construction of the Suez Canal.² French interest in Arabia was viewed with concern in British circles. In 1862-63, W.G. Palgrave, a pioneer among Arabian explorers, visited Riyadh.³ Palgrave was

1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 8 April, 1865; F.D.P.P.No.130, June 1865; Also see Political Agent, Masqat to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 5 April, 1865; F.D.P.P.No.88, September 1865.

2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 5 April, 1865; F.D.P.P.No.130, June 1865.


suspected to be a confidential agent of Emperor Napoleon III. We can, therefore, assume that Felly's trek into Central Arabia was partly a riposte to the Palgrave mission.

The Resident's visit to Riyadh was not devoid of success. Faisal gained a favourable impression of the British representative. He hinted at overtures made to him by France, and proposed an Anglo-Arab alliance against Constantinople! Felly tactfully turned down this suggestion. However, though he was aware of friction between Riyadh and Masqat, he did not broach the subject with Faisal. The Imam's attitude towards Oman was not reassuring. He spoke of Thuwaini as one would of a vassal. "The land of Arabia", Faisal had asserted in defining his territories, "from Kuwait, through Kaseef, Rasul Khymah, Oman, Rasul Had, and beyond, which God has given unto us."

On returning to Oman Felly turned his attention to the dispute between the Wahhabis and Thuwaini. As

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1. Palgrave actually confessed to Col. Merewether, British Resident at Aden, that he was on a political mission on behalf of the French Government. See Col. Merewether to Sir Bartle Frere (private) dated 22 May, 1866; quoted in Martineau, *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 510-11.


a preliminary measure he sent a communication to Imam Faisal, offering to mediate a settlement between the two states. But the Resident was sceptical of his offer evoking a positive response. As compared to Najd, Masqat was an effete state and Faisal could dictate terms to Thawaini. British mediation would naturally favour the weaker party. There was, consequently, little reason to presume that Faisal would accept it.

In view of the aforementioned considerations Pelly felt that a clash between Masqat and Riyadh was very likely. If such an occurrence came to pass two alternative courses would be open to adoption by the Government: to actively assist Masqat, or to remain neutral. The latter course would be in conformity with British policy in the past. The British had, as a rule, not interfered in disputes on the Arabian mainland. Their primary concern was the maintenance of peace on the seas. Yet in the problem under examination certain considerations suggested themselves which demolished the case for non-intervention. The treaty of 1798 with Masqat was, if rigorously interpreted, an offensive-

1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Imam Faisal dated 6 April, 1865; F.D.P.P. No.130, June 1865.

2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 8 April, 1865; F.D.P.P. No.130, June 1865.
defensive alliance, having weakened Oman through arbitrating the secession of Zanzibar, India was under an obligation to assist Masqat. Most important of all, Oman was the only organised state in maritime Arabia, and constituted an ideal base for the exercise of influence over the Persian Gulf. Summing up, Pelly stated that the Indian authorities should not acquiesce in the absorption of Masqat in the Wahhabi Empire.

While the Indian Government was debating question of policy, Riyadh assumed a more threatening tone. A Wahhabi emissary appeared in Masqat demanding as tribute a sum four times the normal amount paid by Oman. Simultaneously, Wahhabi agitators, actively engaged in sowing disaffection in South Oman, induced some of the tribes

1. Art. 3 of the Indo-Oman treaty of 1798 states that "the friend of that Sircar is the friend of this, and the friend of this Sircar is to be the friend of that; and, in like manner, the enemy of that Sircar is the enemy of this, and the enemy of this is to be enemy of that". See C.U. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, etc., Relating To India And Neighbouring Countries, (Delhi 1933), XI, p. 287.

2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 20 November, 1865; F.D.P.P. No.170, January 1866: Also see Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 8 April, 1865; F.D.P.P.No.130, June 1865.

3. Political agent, Masqat to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 4 August, 1865; F.D.P.P.No.82, September 1865, On the occasion of a Wahhabi incursion in Oman in 1852-53 Imam Said had bought peace by agreeing to pay an annual tribute of 12,000 crowns to Riyadh; See Sketch of The Wahhabee Kingdom Of Nedjed by J.W.S. Wyllie, Under-Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 21 February, 1866; F.D.P.P. No.74, March 1866.
to disown their allegiance to Thuwaini. Cur, the principal settlement in the South, was invaded by a 'ahhatt lieutenant and British subjects residing there subjected to loss of life and property. In the face of such occurrences Colonel H. Disbrowe, the Political Agent as Masqat, reiterated Pelly's plea for intervention in Masqat. Otherwise, he stated, Thuwaini would either accept Wahhabi supremacy or seek assistance from Persia or some European power other than England. If the Masqat ruler was permitted to pass under alien influence, Indian interests would suffer "serious detriment."

Wahhabi aggression on Oman coincided with a crucial debate on foreign policy in the councils of the Government of India. The debate revolved around the question of Russian expansion in Central Asia and the threat this advance posed to India. But it influenced contemporary foreign policy in all its facets. Two schools of thought crystallised in course of the discussions. Sir John Lawrence, the Viceroy, taking his stand on the task of reconstruction which confronted

1. Political Agent, Masqat to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 22 August, 1865; F.D.P.P. No. 35, November 1865.
2. Ibid.
British statesmanship in post-mutiny India, believed that the Government ought to concentrate on internal problems and reduce interference in the affairs of neighbouring states to a minimum. In opposition to the Viceroy stood a group which contended that the Russian threat to India could be averted only through the exercise of British influence in the countries lying contiguous to the Indian Empire. Among its prominent members were Sir Henry Rawlinson, Sir Bartle Frere and General John Jacob.

Frere, as governor of Bombay, was in a position to press home his ideas in respect of the Wahhabi threat to Oman, particularly because the analyses of Pelly and...
Disbrowe reflected his orientation. He analysed the implications of Wahhabi expansionism in a minute. Reviewing the history of the Arabian peninsula, he asserted that the Wahhabi Empire was well known to be "the chief instigator of the Arab piracy which scourged ... the commerce of the Persian Gulf". The Khedival military operations in Arabia, executed contemporaneously with the British expedition designed to clear the Arab littoral of pirates, were believed to have struck a fatal blow at the Wahhabis. However, under Faisal Riyadh had resurrected itself and was reviving its former pretensions. Aggression on Oman constituted one facet of a design which aimed at incorporating all the maritime Arab states in the Wahhabi imperial fabric. There agreed with his representatives in the Gulf that the authorities should not remain passive in the face of the Wahhabi threat to Oman. Thuwaini ought to be assisted in ridding his territory of Wahhabi encroachments. British countenance need not mean direct involvement on the part of the Government of India. But if there was a pressing necessity, Masqat could be assisted with the naval forces at the Government's disposal in the Gulf.

1. Minute by Governor of Bombay dated 9 October, 1865; F.D.F.P. No.35, November 1865.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
The Bombay governor's analysis convinced the Imperial Government of the need for intervention to preserve the integrity of Muscat. Telegraphic instructions were immediately issued to the Indian authorities, giving them a free hand in utilising the naval forces in the Gulf to defend the interests threatened on the Arab littoral. However, in an elaboration of his telegraphic directive, the Secretary of State for India made it clear that the Indian Government was not to assist the Imam in military operations on land. Such measures were to remain the concern of the Muscat ruler. Lawrence was in agreement with the views entertained at London. He was willing to assist Thawaini to a "moderate extent" provided the Imam realised that the British would not fight his battles for him.

The Resident next proceeded to Oman to concert measures in order to frustrate the Wahhabi threat to the country. Now the base of Wahhabi power in East Arabia was Barazim, a strong-hold located north-west of the Oman marches. Felly devised a scheme whereby Thawaini would proceed with his land forces against the latter outpost. The British Government was to

1. Tel. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy dated 8, November, 1866; quoted in Soldanhe, op. cit., p. 23.

2. Political Despatch No. 11 to Government of India dated 22 February 1866.

3. Political Despatch No. 165 to Secretary of State for India dated 22 November, 1866.
assist him through a naval blockade of the Wahhabi sea-board, which would prevent Riyadh from sending reinforcements to the fortress. The capture of Baraimi would cripple Wahhabi potentiality for mischief in Oman.

While Felly was planning an anti-Wahhabi campaign, Imam Faisal made an overture which indicated that he did not want a collision with the British. In reply to a protest addressed to him concerning the Sur incident, he stated that he had no intention of harming British interests in Oman. However, he claimed Sur as his own, and remained Calcutta of a treaty between its representatives and his predecessor, Imam Saud, according to which Wahhabi supremacy over the mainland had been conceded in return for an acknowledgement on the part of Saud of the preponderance of England on the seas.

1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 21 December, 1865; F.D.P.P. No.72, April 1866; Also see Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 20 November, 1865; F.D.P.P. No.170, January 1866.

2. Imam Faisal to the British Representative in the Persian Gulf dated 19 September, 1865; F.D.P.P. No.66, March 1866.

3. While the treaty to which Faisal refers does not exist, he may have had in mind the assurances which Capt. Seton, the Political Officer accompanying the expedition of 1809 to the Pirate Coast, was instructed to convey to the Wahhabi Ruler. The GOI's directive ran: "Capt. Seton was to be careful to make it in due time fully known to the Imam of the Wahhabees .... that it was our sincere wish to continue at all times on terms of friendship with him and with the other States of Arabia (which are all in sujection to the Wahhabes), and that we desired only to provide for the safety of the general commerce of the seas ...." See Sketch Of The Wahhabee Kingdom of Nadjed by J.F.S. Wyllie, dated 21 February, 1866; F.D.P.P. No.74, March 1866.
Faisal's communication was conciliatory in tone and it was so interpreted by Lawrence. Of course, the Foreign Department was unable to trace the treaty referred to by the Imam. The Viceroy instructed Frere to impress upon the Wahhabis that Thuwaini was an old ally of the Government, and that it would view with concern any encroachment on his territories. India looked forward to a peaceful resolution of the differences between Riyadh and Masqat. It is clear that Faisal's note had led Lawrence to hope that the dispute between Thuwaini and the Wahhabis could be settled without resort to war.

However, Felly had already committed the Government of India to a break with Riyadh. With Thuwaini mustering his forces at Soher, the Resident set in motion the second phase of his plan - a blockade of the Wahhabi sea-board. To this end he had to conjure a casus belli; which task provided no difficulty in view of the Sur incident. Felly sent an ultimatum to Riyadh demanding compensation for the losses suffered by British subjects at Sur within seventeen days. Simultaneously, he instructed H.M.S. "Highflyer" to initiate naval action against the Wahhabi sea-ports.

1. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 24 January, 1866; P.D.P.P. No.69, March 1866.

2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Imam Faisal dated 6 January, 1866; P.D.P.P. No. 176, March 1866.
if no satisfactory reply was received from Faisal within the stipulated period.

Knowledge of Felly's ultimatum caused consternation at Calcutta. For at a stroke the Resident had destroyed the diplomatic edifice with which Lawrence had hoped to bridge the Gulf between Masqat and Riyadh. "We were not prepared to hear," he wrote to the India Office, "that Lt.-Colonel Felly's mediation between the two belligerent powers should have extended to the presentation of an ultimatum to one of them". The Bombay Government was asked to apprise the Supreme Government of the instructions which had encouraged the Resident to embark upon so extreme a course.

Felly, in the meanwhile, was proceeding ahead with the plan he had chalked out earlier. The information that Faisal had died suddenly provided an additional inducement to action. While at Riyadh Felly had learnt


2. Political Despatch No.48 to Secretary of State for India dated 22 March, 1866.

3. Tel. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 23 February, 1866; quoted in Saldanha, op. cit., p. 24.

4. Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 20 January, 1866; P.D.F.P. No.177, March 1866.
of an antagonism between Abdullah, Faisal's eldest son
and heir presumptive, and Saud, his second son. He
urged Thuwaini to strike a blow at Baraimi while the
Tahhabis were engaged in resolving the question of
succession. Simultaneously, the "Highflyer" was
instructed to stage a naval demonstration along the Arab
coast, no reply having been received from Riyadh to the
ultimatum. The British man-of-war sank a few native
craft at Qatif, but suffered a reverse when it tried
to destroy the port of Dammam. Pelly, however, was
equal to the occasion. To impress upon the Arabs the
invincibility of British naval power he ordered the
shelling of Sur, the Omani port which had the temerity
to rebel against Thuwaini earlier.

At this juncture a tragic event upset Pelly's
design. The Resident's naval proceedings were ancillary
to the military movement Thuwaini was to execute against
Baraimi. However, the Saiyid was assassinated at Sober,
where he lay camped with his following, on 13 February.

2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay
Government dated 19 January, 1866: F.D.P.P. No.176,
March 1866.
3. Captain Pasley, H.M.S. "Highflyer" to Resident,
Persian Gulf dated 9 February, 1866: F.D.P.P. No.177,
March 1866.
4. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay
Government dated 12 February, 1966: F.D.P.P. No.181,
March 1866.
1866, by his eldest son, Prince Salm. It is difficult to speak of Wahhabí complicity in the crime. But the occurrence was opportune for Abdullah in that it enabled him to husband his strength for the coming war of succession with Saud.

While the death of Faisal and the assassination of Thawaini reduced the Arabian situation to a stalemate, Lawrence adopted a critical attitude towards Pelly's proceedings. His Government asserted that, so far as it was aware, the Resident had gone to Oman to report on relations between Riyadh and Masqat. But it had suddenly found itself committed to a rupture with the Wahhabis. Frere, as well as his representative in the Gulf, had misunderstood the instructions of the Supreme authorities and had embarked upon a course of action which they were not prepared to contemplate.

Lawrence's strictures elicited from Pelly a spirited defense of his proceedings. He referred to

1. Tel. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 2 March, 1866: F.O.P.P. No. 53, March 1866; Also see Wyllie, op. cit., p. 20.


3. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 16 March, 1866: F.O.P.P. No. 188, March 1866.

the directive of the Secretary of State for India, and asserted that his deputation to Oman had involved more than an appraisal of the situation in Arabia, since Her Majesty's Government had authorised action through naval means for the defence of British interests. Frere, who was in sympathy with Pelly's views, also defended his stand. In his opinion the measures carried out by the Resident were justified by the instructions issued to him. Pelly's design was unexceptionable, and would have ensured success but for the assassination of Thumaimá. Lawrence, however, stuck to his opinion that the situation had been mishandled by Pelly.

The Oman affair led to an acrimonious private correspondence between Sir John Lawrence and Sir Bartle Frere. It is in this exchange that their conflicting points of view emerge with revealing clarity. It is hardly pertinent to ask whether Lawrence was correct in censoring his subordinates; or whether they, in turn, were justified in their interpretation of the Imperial Government's directive. Yet Pelly's ultimatum to

1. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 23 May, 1866; F.D.P.P. No.203, May 1866; Also see Sir Bartle Frere to Sir John Lawrence (private) dated 23 March, 1866; quoted in Martineau, op. cit., I, pp. 307-08.

2. Note by Viceroy dated 15 May, 1866; F.D.P.P. No.201/203, May, 1866; Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 23 May, 1866; F.D.P.P. No.203, May 1866.
Riyadh, and the vengeance he wreaked upon Sur, are measures difficult to justify. The Resident’s strategy, while defensive in objective, was conceived in a spirit which is not easy to reconcile with the views which prevailed at Calcutta or London. The integrity of Oman could have been upheld through more subtle means.

However, the essential point remains that the Viceroy and Frere were inspired by conflicting conceptions of foreign policy. Sensitive to a heavy burden of internal responsibilities, Lawrence felt that the interests of the Indian Empire would best be served by leaving the neighbouring peoples, within limitations, to their own devices. As he told Frere:

If I have any influence on ... policy, I should advise that we interfere as little as may be possible in the affairs of the Arab tribes on the sea-board, and of course still less with those of the tribes in the interior .... Unless we act in this way, we shall make enemies and not friends of these Arab tribes, and our interference will be misrepresented, misunderstood, and, when opportunity offers, will be resented also.¹

Sir Bartle was opposed to the circumspection of the Viceroy. He wanted to pursue a vigorous foreign policy.

¹ Sir John Lawrence to Sir Bartle Frere (private) dated 21 April, 1866; quoted in Martineau, op. cit., I, p. 509.
and was convinced that Lawrence's orientation would fatally lower British prestige in Asia. His views find graphic expression in a letter to Lord John Hay:

The fact is I doubt whether the Government of India has at present any foreign policy beyond a sort of resolve to "keep within our shell" .... This is a tempting sort of policy and looks safe and cheap, but it is not easy to carry out where we have treaties, and other obligations and responsibilities as strong as treaties .... 1

In the meanwhile, affairs in the Gulf had righted themselves through a fortuitous combination of circumstances. Abdullah, being anxious in respect of his brother Saud, sent an envoy to Bushire to patch up a settlement with the British Government2. The Government of India, on its part, had always been willing to make up differences with Riyadh on a reasonable basis. A treaty was consequently signed between the Wahhabi Imam and the Calcutta Government whereby the former pledged to refrain from interfering in the maritime Arab principalities in alliance with the British beyond receiving from them the customary tribute.3


The accession of Salim bin Thuwaini to the Imamate of Masqat presented the Indian authorities with a difficult problem. Thuwaini's assassination had thrown the entire country into disorder, disrupting trade and normal life. Salim's hold over power was precarious. He knew that he would be displaced unless recognised by the British. The Saiyid consequently wrote to pelly of his father's death, and invited him to Masqat with the object of securing confirmation of his accession. When the Resident responded in the negative to his overture, he sent a mission to Bombay to plead his cause before Frere.

Salim's plea for recognition led to divided counsels in India. Sir Bartle was against granting him de jure recognition. He proposed that the Omani mission be told that the Government had learnt with regret of the murder of Thuwaini at the hands of his son. It

2. Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 21 February, 1866: F.D.F.P. No.170, March 1866.
3. Saiyid Salim to Governor of Bombay dated 4 April, 1866: F.D.F.P. No.37, April 1866.
4. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 4 April, 1866: F.D.F.P. No. 37, April 1866.
could not, therefore, renew its former relations of amity with Masqat, though it was reconciled to the retention of a connection with the de facto authority in the country in so far as its commercial interests were not harmed. Frere's suggestion did not commend itself to Lawrence.¹ As the Viceroy viewed the problem Salim could conceivably consolidate his position. Such a consummation would oblige the Government to recognise him, consistently with a policy of non-intervention.² Lawrence's arguments were reinforced through the despatch by Salim of a "muzurnamah" in which the Omani chiefs stated that they had "elected" him as ruler over the country.³ Finally, the India Office too gave its verdict in favour of the Supreme Government. Frere's suggestion, it was felt in London, would tie British hands to a policy which could complicate future relations with Oman.⁴

Salim's recognition marked a step towards the normalisation of relations between India and Oman. However,

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1. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 11 April, 1866; F.D.P.P. No. 35, April 1866; Note by Viceroy dated 11 April, 1866; F.D.P.P. No.34/35, April 1866.
2. Political Despatch No.71 to Secretary of State for India dated 21 April 1866.
3. "Muzurnamah" from Chiefs of Oman to Governor of Bombay dated nil; F.D.P.P. No.176, April 1866.
4. Political Despatch No.61 to Government of India dated 28 August, 1866.
the Saiyid's position was not secure even after British acquiescence in his seizure of power. Parricide was a crime repugnant to the Arab code of ethics and made the new ruler a marked man in Omani politics. More significantly, Thuwaini's younger brother, Saiyid Turki, was suspected to be harbouring ideas of revenge against his nephew. Turki believed that he had a superior claim than Salim to the Imamate.

Towards the close of 1866 Turki slipped away from Bushire, where he was residing in exile, and landed with a small following at Masqat. He based his hopes on a popular upsurge against the parricide once his presence became known to the Omani masses. Turki's gamble met with a measure of success and he seized the two harbour fortresses, Kemali and Jemali, dominating the Omani capital. But he was unable to turn his initial good fortune to any account. The citizens of Masqat maintained a neutral attitude. Failing a popular uprising in his favour, Turki's position was

1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 1 September, and 15 September, 1866: F.D.P.P. No. 87; September 1866 and No. 147, October 1866.

2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 23 September, and 3 October, 1866: F.D.P.P. No.9 and 90; November 1866.

3. These fortresses had been constructed by the Portuguese during the period of their supremacy over Oman. See G.N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, (London 1892), II, p. 440.
hopeless. He, therefore, came to terms with Salim, abandoning the captured fortresses in return for permission to depart from the Capital unmolested.

While Turki's bid for power proved a futile gesture, even his partial success disturbed Salim, since it exposed the shallow foundations on which his authority rested. Nor had the pretender entirely given up hope. From Masqat Turki sailed to the Trucial Coast, seeking to win over the Trucial Chiefs to his cause, or failing them, the Wahhabis. Salim, who was keeping note of his activities, turned to the British for assistance and requested them to punish the Sayyid for having violated the peace of the seas. Salim's application for assistance did not lead the Foreign Department to interfere directly in Oman. However, the Trucial Chiefs were warned not to assist the pretender in any way. Turki was simultaneously informed that naval operations in the Gulf of Oman would not be tolerated.


2. Native Agent, Shargah to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 16 October, and 20 October, 1866: F.D.P.P. No. 93, December 1866.

3. Sayyid Salim to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 26 November, 1866: F.D.P.P. No. 120, January 1867.

4. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 15 January, 1867: F.D.P.P. No. 121, January, 1867; Also see Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 3 January, 1867: F.D.P.P. No. 121, January, 1867.
Deprived of support in Trucial Oman, Turkī next made overtures to the Wahhabis. Intelligence of his intrigues reached Masqat. Captain G.A. Atkinson, the Political Agent, told Felly that the pretender had struck an alliance with Riyadh with the object of invading Oman. Salim, the Agent felt, would be unable to resist so formidable a combination and would succumb to the forces which were raising their head against him. The Resident refused to yield to the note of pessimism struck by Atkinson and doubted the authenticity of the rumoured compact between Turkī and the Wahhabis. Abdullah, he pointed out, would avoid involvement in Oman with a war of succession on his hands, and after having come to terms with the British concerning the status of the maritime states, Felly's assertion was vindicated slightly later when Turkī suddenly fell upon Sohar with a small Bedouin following, in which the Wahhabis were conspicuous by their absence, and was sent fleeing towards the border after an engagement with the Masqati garrison.

1. Political Agent, Masqat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 22 April and 6 May, 1867; F.O.P.P. No.70 and 71, June 1867.

2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 30 April, and 9 May, 1867; F.O.P.P. No.70, June 1867.

Even after his second discomfiture Turki did not abandon hope and journeyed to Jaalan in order to gain fresh recruits for his cause. In south Oman his efforts to arouse enthusiasm on his behalf met with success and the local tribes flocked in great numbers to his standard. The news from Jalaan caused concern in Masqat and Atkinson again presented a gloomy forecast to the Indian authorities. If the Government of India persisted in its attitude of "neutrality" in respect of the conflict in Oman, its influence in the region would become a thing of the past. Turki's efforts would either result in the dismemberment of Oman, or he would force Salim into purchasing Wahhabi support at a price that would convert him into a vassal of Riyadh.

Atkinson pressed the Government to support Salim with its naval forces in the Gulf. Turki ought to be served a warning that the British authorities would not acquiesce in any attempt on his part to establish himself on the Omani littoral.

Pelly questioned the premises as well as the recommendations of Atkinson. He rejected the analysis

2. Political Agent, Masqat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 7 August, 1867: F.D.P.F. No.15, September 1867.
3. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 5 September, 1867: F.D.P.F. No.2, November 1867.
that Turki's bid for power would lead either to the
dismemberment of Oman, or its subjection to Riyadh. The conflict between Salim and Turki was a civil war
innocent of external complications. If in spite of
being in authority Salim was unable to hold his own
against the exile, then it was clear that the people
of Oman were against him. Would the Government side
with the parricide even when it had been demonstrated
that he did not enjoy any internal support? Atkinson's
suggestion, if accepted, could lead to such a state of
affairs. The Resident's arguments went a long way
towards demolishing the pessimistic picture conjured
by Atkinson, and Lawrence refused to accept the recommendation voiced by the agent. He denied the charge that
his Government had remained neutral as between Salim and Turki. On the other hand, it had given "considerable
moral" and "some material" support to the established
authority. If Salim failed to maintain his position,
the responsibility for propping up his regime did not
rest with the Government of India.

Lawrence's refusal to support Salim was in
keeping with the premises of his foreign policy. But

1. Ibid.
2. Note by Viceroy dated 31 August 1867;
P.O.F.E. No. 10/15, September 1867.
when Turki commenced his march on Masqat shortly afterwards, he was manoeuvred into reversing his stand. On Atkinson telegraphing\(^1\) that the pretender was on the point of investing Masqat and suggesting that he be authorised to issue the warning he had delineated earlier, the Viceroy replied in the affirmative.\(^2\)

The decision to oppose Turki sealed his fate. Atkinson communicated the warning authorised by the Government to the Saiyid when his forces were on the point of attacking Matrah, a commercial settlement in the neighbourhood of the capital. Knowledge of the Government’s attitude so far influenced Turki that he opened negotiations with Salim and attacked Matrah only when the parricide’s pusillanimity encouraged him to disregard the British interdict. However, the Resident soon arrived on the scene of operations abroad H.M.S. “Octavia” to compel obedience, on the part of the pretender, to the warning served by Atkinson.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Tel. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 14 August, 1867; F.D.P.F. No. 72, August 1867.

\(^2\) Tel. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 16 August, 1867; F.D.P.F. No. 73, August 1867.

\(^3\) Political Agent, Masqat to Saiyid Turki dated 27 August, 1867; F.D.P.F. No. 2, November 1867.

\(^4\) Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 10 September, 1867; F.D.P.F. No. 4, November 1867.
thereupon abandoned his claim and agreed to reside in India as an exile. ¹

Lawrence's intervention in the conflict between Salim and Turki constituted a reversal of the policy he had outlined earlier in respect of Arabia. ² He supported the parricide only because of Atkinson's thesis that Turki's success would prove fatal to the integrity of Oman and British influence in the region. Why the Resident's arguments to the contrary failed to convince the Viceroy is not easy to explain. It is difficult to refute Felly's contention that the conflict was in the nature of a civil war; and that intervention in favour of Salim would lead to the imposition of a ruler on Oman who did not enjoy internal support. The fallacy of the intervention became apparent shortly afterwards when Salim was found incapable of maintaining his hold over the country and was abandoned by the Government of India.

THE LEADEN REVIVAL AND BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

Soon after Turki's abortive revolt Salim's

¹ Text of Agreement Between Saiyid Turki and Saiyid Salim dated 10 September, 1867: F.D.P.F. No. 4, November 1867.

² See Supra p. 65
authority was challenged by a religious-political movement in Oman. To comprehend this movement a disgression into the origin of the Omani state is essential, like other political entities in peninsular Arabia, the Imamate of Masqat is a theocratic conception. Its rationale lies in Ibadhism, the national religion, which is a denomination of Islam. Oman was ruled in former days from Rastaq, an inland city towards the north-west of the country. In 1798 the capital was transferred by the then Imam, Sultan bin Ahmed, to Masqat. This transference denoted a significant change in the orientation of the ruling dynasty. It marked the first step towards the conversion of Oman from an insular Arab state to a political entity in contact with the liberalising influences of the outside world.

Ibadhism was founded near about A.D. 750 (sometimes the earlier date of 686 A.D., is also given) by one Abdullah bin Abadh. It was introduced in Oman by individual Hamids who survived the destruction of their sect. Its distinguishing feature lies in its attitude toward the succession to the Khilafate. While the Sunnis recognise the legitimacy of the four successors of Mohammed, namely, Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali; and the Shi'ah reject all but Ali; the Ibadhi accept Abu Bakr and Omar and reject the others as heretics. They further hold that the Khilafate is an office dependent upon the will and election of the faithful, and that it cannot be held in hereditary succession. See Encyclopaedia of Islam, 3d. by H.Th. Houtsma, A.J. Wensineck and others, (London 1924), III, pp. 380-51. Also see R. Hey, The Persian Gulf States, (Washington 1939), pp. 130-31.
During the reign of Imam Said the latter tendency attained its loftiest expression.

Through shifting the base of its power from the interior to the littoral areas, the ruling house of Oman introduced a peculiar cleavage in the country. The rulers, and the urban population of the coastal region which came in contact with the external world, became progressively enlightened and secular minded. The masses of the interior, on the other hand, who preponderated numerically, retained their faith in orthodox patterns of thought. The result was the bifurcation of political-religious life in the country into two mutually exclusive spheres. More important still, the ruling Saiyids were gradually alienated from important sections of the people of Oman.

The schism introduced in Oman by the Saiyids was further accentuated by a revivalist movement which came into existence during the first half of the nineteenth century. It is conceivable that this movement manifested an Ibadhi response to Wahhabism. For Oman had seen the

1. To an extent, but only to an extent, the above cleavage is a phenomenon observable all over peninsular Arabia between the tribesmen of the interior and the maritime peoples. See F. Hitti, History Of The Arabs, (London 1956), p. 23.
rise of the Wahhabis in Central Arabia and had probably pondered over the reasons behind their political achievements. The "mutawiah," as the Ibadhi revivalists styled themselves, should not, however, be confused with the Wahhabis, since they sought to restore Ibadhis to a condition of pristine purity. The origin of the "mutawiah" movement is shrouded in obscurity. But in the 1840's it projected itself onto the political plane through an identification of its destiny with the Qais family of Oman, which was related to the ruling Sayyids, and which exercised considerable influence over the country from its seat at Rastaq, the former capital.

With the secession of Zanzibar, and the consequent weakening of Oman, Azzan bin Qais, the chief of Rastaq, began to show signs of restlessness. The

1. That the Ibadhi revivalists were influenced by the Wahhabis is clear from the fact that, like the activists of the latter sect, they styled themselves as "mutawiah" or "those pledged to obedience".

2. The preceding three paragraphs are based on the following sources. (1) J.C. Lorimer's note on "The Ibadhi Denomination of Islam in the Persian Gulf Region" in Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, I, Part II, Appendix A; (2) Thomas, op. cit. passim; (3) Political Agent, Muscat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 25 August, 1871; F.O.P.P. No.388, January 1872; (4) Resident Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 9 June 1869; F.O.P.P. No.155, August 1869; (5) Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 3 November 1869; F.O.S.I. No.31, 1870.
Wahhabi troubles of 1866 were a result of his designs for an independent status. Thuwaini's assassination, and the coming into power of Salim, aroused a deeper ambition in the mind of the Qais Chief. Exploiting his connection with the conservative movement, Azzan struck an alliance with its most influential leader, Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili, and Saleh bin Ali, a chief of the Sharqiyyah districts where the revivalists had their base. Intrigues instigated by the orthodox triumvirate had been noticed by Atkinson at the time of Turki's revolt, but not much headway was made by Qais in 1867. However, in the summer of 1868 Azzan and Saleh marched onto the littoral and captured the towns of Burkaah and Matrah in two lightning strokes.

The conservative onslaught against Salim led Atkinson to abandon the Saiyid. The Political Agent now adjudged the parricide's cause to be beyond redemption, since he had antagonised all sections of opinion in the country. Needless to say, Azzan too would be

1. Political Agent, Masqat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 21 September, 1868: F.D.P.P. No.373, October 1868.
2. Political Agent, Masqat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 7 August, 1867: F.D.P.P. No.15, September, 1867.
3. Political Agent, Masqat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 18 September, 1868: F.D.P.P.No.375, October, 1868.
4. Political Agent, Masqat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 22 September, 1868: F.D.P.P.No.373, October 1868.
opposed by the 'liberal-urban' classes. The most popular candidate would be Turki, who alone could ensure stability in the country. Atkinson pressed the Government to compel Salim to abdicate in favour of his uncle. Considering the ill-conceived zeal with which Atkinson had espoused Salim's cause earlier, his suggestion failed to move the Foreign Department, even though it asserted that if Salim was deposed no obstacle would be placed in the way of Turki's election if Oman wanted him as her ruler. However, an attitude of benevolent neutrality proved of little utility to the exile.

Early in October Azzan captured the capital after a brief engagement and forced Salim to retire to the harbour fortresses. The parricide had now ceased to be a factor in Omani politics and the real struggle for power lay between Qais and the Ssiyid at Bombay. According to Atkinson, if Turki was permitted to return, he stood a fair chance of being elected to power. The Bombay Government was inclined to release the exile, since it felt that his election would serve British interests better than if the conservative leadership...

1. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 9 October, 1868: F.D.P.P. No. 368, October 1868.

2. Political Agent, Muscat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 1 October, 1868: F.D.P.P. No. 375, October 1868.
However, the Government of India did not agree to the proposal in view of Turki's role in the events of 1867. The attitude of the Calcutta authorities vetoed whatever chances Turki had of coming into power. Salim, after dallying in the harbour fortresses until it was made clear to him that the British would not again come to his rescue, fled across the seas to the Trucial Coast. Immediately afterwards Azzan announced his election as Imam to the Resident.

The conservative milieu ushered in through Azzan's accession to power embodied several features of interest. The Exit chief was the senior member of a triumvirate rather than absolute ruler over Oman. He shared authority with Al Shalili and Salih bin Ali. Nelly was, in the beginning, sceptical whether the confederacy would ever consolidate itself. He pointed out that Azzan's election had been manoeuvred at a

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1. Tel. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, G1 dated 1 November, 1868; F.D.F.F. No.81, December 1868.

2. Tel. Secretary, Foreign Department, G1 to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 2 November, 1868; F.D.F.F. No.82, December 1868.

3. Tel. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, G1 dated 5 October, 1868; F.D.F.F. No.362, October 1868.

moment when military success had artificially enhanced his prestige. The degree of support he actually enjoyed was debatable. Besides, being an alliance of three leaders, the new regime sheltered in its matrix the seeds of decay.

Azzan’s accession to power was trenchantly opposed by one class in Oman. As explained earlier, the Qais chief had climbed to power on the crest of a conservative reaction. His administration’s orthodox outlook proved unendurable for the Masqat trading community with its 'liberal' leanings. To consequently find in the Bombay newspapers, to which the Masqat trader had access, a tendency to prejudice the authorities against the Azzan regime.\(^2\) It was stated that under the triumvirate commercial activity had come to a standstill. It was further asserted that to tolerate Azzan would result in the subjection of Oman to Wahhabi influence. However, the Government refused to commit itself in any direction, taking the stand that events would of themselves indicate the policy which could be fruitfully pursued.\(^3\)

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1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 12 October, 1868; F.O.P.P. No.94, December 1868.

2. See leader in Jam-e-Jamshed (Bombay) dated 11 November, 1868; Digest of Native Newspapers for Bombay, 1868.

3. Tel. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 24 November, 1868; F.O.P.P. No.97, December 1868.
While Pelly was initially sceptical of the stability of the Azzan confederacy, events were soon to prove him incorrect. For if Al Khalili's bigoted measures aroused opposition in the capital, his influence over the tribes of the interior over-shadowed the urban voice of protest. Azzan, in addition, displayed military leadership of a quality to which Oman had been unaccustomed in her rulers. In a winter campaign extending over 1868-69 he subjugated all the tribes showing symptoms of recalcitrance and forced urban centres like Sohar, Semail, Masnab and Sur to submit to his authority.

It is, however, in its dealings with Riyadh that the true stature of the Azzan regime comes to light. After being deposed Salim tried to win over to his cause the Trucial Chiefs and Turki Al Sadairi, the Wahhabi governor of Bereimi. As he contemplated an attack by sea on Masqat, the Foreign Department warned him against disturbing the peace of the Gulf. Salim's

1. This is admitted even by the British representative in the Gulf, who was not a very sympathetic witness. See Political Agent, Masqat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 25 August, 1871; F.D.P.P. No. 358, January 1872.

2. Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, I, Part I, pp. 482-83; Also see Saldanha, {op. cit.}, p. 38.

3. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 11 December, 1868; F.D.P.P. No.217, December 1868.
intrigues were not designed to improve relations between Riyadh and the new administration in Masqat. The Wahhabis added insult to injury by presenting a demand for tribute which was contemptuously turned down by the confederates. Azzan riposted to the Wahhabi pinpricks with a bold move. In July, 1869, he attacked and captured Baraimi, the stronghold from which Riyadh's lieutenants had terrorised Oman for so long. The move against Baraimi, involving as it did a direct conflict with the strongest Arab power, indicated how confident the confedecy had become of its position. Abdullah, of course, could not ignore so defiant a challenge and warned Azzan that he would invade Oman in the near future.

Intelligence of the projected Wahhabi movement aroused the apprehensions of the Bombay Government which reminded the Calcutta authorities that it would be wrong to acquiesce in the extension of Wahhabi influence over Masqat. The Government of India's attitude towards the

1. Political Agent, Masqat to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 9 July, 1869; F.D.P.P. No.160, August 1869.
2. Azzan bin Qais to Political Agent, Masqat dated 4 July, 1869; F.D.P.P. No.170, August 1869;
Political Agent, Masqat to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 9 July, 1869; F.D.P.P. No. 170, August 1869.
3. Tel. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 29 January 1870; F.D.S.I. No. 139, 1870.
4. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 10 February, 1870;
F.D.S.I. No. 150, 1870.
question was expressed by Mr. (later Sir C.J.) Aitchison, Secretary to the Foreign Department. India had no vested interest in the stability of the Azzan regime; but no violation of the maritime regulations could be tolerated. Basing his policy on these premises, Aitchison argued that Abdullah would not infringe the treaty of 1866 if he attacked Baraimi, since Azzan had initially committed an act of aggression. However, if the Wahhabis resorted to a sea-borne invasion, then the Government would be forced to intervene. For even if Riyadh was not a signatory to the maritime regulations, it was British policy to prevent violations of the peace of the seas. The Bombay Government was consequently instructed to send a naval squadron to the Persian Gulf. Strict neutrality was to be observed as between the contesting parties, but any infringement of the peace of the seas was to be forcibly resisted.

Fortunately for Masqat, Abdullah was unable to carry out the threat he had addressed to Azzan. For before he could move towards Oman his forces had been worsted in EI Hasa in an encounter with Saud. A series

1. Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, OCI dated 16 February, 1870: F.D.S.I. No.133/154, 1870.
2. Ibid.
3. Tel. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, OCI dated 4 February, 1870: F.D.S.I. No.135A, 1870.
4. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 30 April, 1870: F.D.S.I. No.248, 1870.
of crises were soon to confront Abdullah, forcing him to leave the confederacy to its own devices. Differences between the Saudi princes so weakened Riyadh that the Wahhabis were rendered incapable of playing an active role in Arab politics.

The consolidation of the confederate administration obliged Calcutta to define its attitude towards the conservative regime. It was the Secretary of State for India who raised the question by asking the Indian authorities whether the time had not come to confer recognition on Azzan. Since the Imperial Government's despatch reached Calcutta when the Wahhabi threat to Masqat was not over, the Government of India hesitated to commit itself in any way. But to facilitate an appraisal of the situation in Oman, the Resident was requested to send any analysis of the condition of affairs in the country.

Conflicting counsels reached the Foreign Department from the Gulf. Colonel Dlsbrowe, who had replaced Atkinson at the Masqat Agency, was opposed to

2. Secret Despatch No. 7 to Government of India dated 30 July, 1869.
the recognition of the Qais regime. Articulating the sentiments of the commercial classes of Masqat, the Political Agent cited numerous instances where the regime’s sectarian policies had spread disaffection among the urban people. Disbrowe was convinced that the confederacy would become increasingly unpopular. It would ultimately be thrown out of power.

Pelly’s appraisal differed from that of Disbrowe. Al Khalili, he pointed out, was the key figure in the conservative regime. He was trying to mould the country into a pattern owing its inspiration to orthodox Isadism. The confederacy wanted to exploit religious sentiment for the purpose of incluociating cohesion among the Omani tribes and of centralising authority just as the Wahhabis had, a century earlier, knit together the peoples of Central Arabia. Whether the experiment would be successful in the long run was difficult to say. For unlike Central Arabia, Oman was susceptible to external influences because of its location. However, the question before

1. Political Agent, Masqat to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 9 June, 1869; F.D.P.P. No.159, August 1869.
2. Political Agent, Masqat to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 25 October, and 29 October, 1869; F.D.S.I. No.34 and 35, 1870.
3. Disbrowe's attitude towards Qais was so hostile that he was recalled from the Masqat Agency. See Saldanha, op. cit., p. 62.
4. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 9 June, 1869; F.D.P.P. No.155, August 1869; Also see Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 3 November, 1869; F.D.S.I. No.31, 1870.
the authorities was more simple: whether, or not, was Azzan to be recognised. British interests in Oman would have been secured best of all by supporting Saïyid Turki. But the opportunity for doing so had been lost in 1868. The Government had, therefore, no alternative other than to recognise Azzan.

While it was the Resident’s analysis which gained acceptance in the Foreign Department, Aitchison was not prepared to go all the way suggested by Kelly. The Government, he pointed out, had already acknowledged the de facto status of the Azzan regime in that it was conducting relations with it through the Masqat Agency. It was difficult to understand why a categorical affirmation of the conservative revolution in terms of the de jure recognition of Azzan was necessary. There was no compelling reason for the authorities to exhibit any exaggerated interest in Oman. Indian interests in the Gulf were limited, and concerned mainly the seas, so there was little reason to bother about what happened on the mainland. According to the Foreign Secretary:

Our true policy ... is to make ourselves so strong at sea that we shall be respected,

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1. Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 12 November, 1869: F.D.S.I. No. 23/59, 1870; Also see Note by C. Girdlestone, Under-Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 11 November, 1869: F.D.S.I. No. 23/59, 1870.
and if necessary, feared, and no pirate shall dare to lift his head, but to have as little connection with the quarrels and disturbances on shore as possible.¹

Aitchison's exposition of British policy which owed its inspiration to an anti-Qais bias, was overruled by Lord Mayo.² The Viceroy asserted that it would be illogical and impracticable to permanently withhold recognition from the Qais chief. Once it became clear that Azzan's administration enjoyed internal support and that it was capable of giving the country stable government, recognition would have to follow as a matter of course.

The issue was delineated before Her Majesty's Government in a despatch.³ It was pointed out that with the disappearance of the Wahhaj threat the position of the Qais regime had become stabilised. The Resident believed that the confederacy was in control of the situation. "The general opinion", the despatch ran, "is that Azzan bin Qais is more firmly established than any of his immediate predecessors, and that his rule is acceptable to his subjects."⁴ The time had,

1. Ibid.
3. Secret Despatch No.36 to Secretary of State for India dated 27 May, 1870: P.D.S.I. No.256, 1870.
4. Ibid.
therefore, come to confer recognition on him. Besides internal factors, the international situation also rendered such a step imperative. With the opening of the Suez Canal the Gulf had become easy of access to the European Powers. If the British Government delayed recognition beyond a point, the confederacy would be tempted to seek the intervention of some other European country in order to secure its position.

Before the aforementioned despatch could be considered by the India Office, another revolution had drastically altered the political situation in Oman. Early in 1870, when the Indian authorities had not been reconciled to Azzan's usurpation of power, Turki was permitted to proceed to the Gulf. The Sayyid landed on the Trucial Coast, seeking to co-ordinate his movements with the Wahhabi investment of Baraimi. Imam Abdullah's pre-occupation with internal issues made Turki's position untenable and he retired to the Persian Coast.

Undaunted by his initial failure, the pretender next landed in North Oman. Fortune now favoured him.
and after rallying the border tribes to his standard he inflicted a surprise defeat on Azzan at Dhank. Subsequent to the reverse Qais retired to Masqat while the Saiyid journeyed to Sur where the tribes were especially attached to him. At Sur Turki assembled a large force and marched northwards towards the capital early in 1871. In the fighting which followed Azzan was defeated and killed. His death was the signal for the collapse of the confederacy and left Turki without any rival in the country.

The revivalist movement which acquired the dignity of a state ideology under the Azzan confederacy presents several features of interest for their bearing on British policy and the configuration of Omani society. The Qais revolution was an attempt to erect a viable Ibadhi state on the mould of the Wahhabi theocracy of Central Arabia. The conservative experiment does not appear a futile one if one takes into consideration the level of Arab political consciousness. In a community based on tribal organisation only religion could act as a cohesive force. It is significant that Qais consolidated his position to a greater extent.

2. Tel. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 10 January, 1871: F.S.F.F. No.315, January 1871.
than was possible for the 'liberal' Saiyids who succeeded him. Even the official British historian admits:

Azzan may perhaps be justly regarded as the most meritorious and the most unfortunate among recent sovereigns of Oman. But for the refusal of British recognition, and the release by the Indian Government of his most dangerous rival, Turki, it is possible that Azzan might nevertheless have surmounted all his difficulties and reduced Oman to the semblance of a well-ordered monarchy.

Why then did the conservative revolution fail?

The answer to this question lies in the covert hostility with which the orthodox regime was viewed in British circles. A theocratic Oman would have been harmful for British commercial interests. Hence the antipathy for Azzan, which finds its clearest expression in Atchison's rationalisations. The Foreign Secretary's attitude was to let the confederacy die what he believed to be its natural death. Yet the force which the Government of India wanted to substitute in the place of the conservative movement lacked internal support to an alarming extent, as the Foreign Department soon found out. On the other hand, with judicious support Ibadi orthodoxy might well have laid the foundation of a stable order in Oman.
