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**The Separation of Oman and Zanzibar after 1856:
British Imperial Policy, Two Arab States and Their Elites**

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A Note on Transliteration

This work conforms to Brill's *Encyclopedia of Islam Edition 3* transliteration system for Arabic.¹ However, I write the complete forms 'bin' and 'bint' in the transliteration of people's names. I do not transliterate titles or placenames with standard English equivalents (for example, sheikh instead of 'shaykh' or Al-Batina instead of 'Al-Bāṭina'). For plural words, I use the English form, meaning 'waqfs' not 'awqāf'. Words used in quoted sources have been rendered in their original form. For Swahili words, I follow the conventions adopted by John Middleton in *The World of the Swahili. An African Mercantile Civilization*.²

¹ <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/pages/help/transliteration-islam> [accessed 1 April 2023]

² John Middleton, *The World of the Swahili. An African Mercantile Civilization*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), xii.

Introduction

In April 1956, the secretariat of the Zanzibar Protectorate asked the British consulate in Muscat to help identify links, alliances, and conflicts between leading Arab families from Oman and Zanzibar. Officials in Zanzibar wanted to prepare a study on the political connections of Zanzibar's Arab elite. The secretariat approached Muscat because 'a very important feature of these relationships [was] the relations which exist now and have existed traditionally between those families in Muscat and Oman'.³ The request from Zanzibar, which was then a British protectorate, surprised officials at the consulate in Muscat. British diplomats in Oman did not know what links their colleagues in Zanzibar had in mind.⁴ Therefore, Muscat's reply to Zanzibar on 26 May contained general information about significant conflicts within Oman's tribal society. The response also indicated that, apart from the Āl Būsa'īdī ruling family, who ruled in both Oman and Zanzibar at the time, the British consulate was not aware of 'other families of importance exist[ing] in Zanzibar with branches or origins' in Oman.⁵

According to the consulate in Muscat, many of the ties that once connected Oman and Zanzibar's Arab families had faded, and the only remaining bond was the Āl Būsa'īdī dynasty ruling both countries. This view of the British diplomats in Oman seems correct. By 1956, almost a century had passed since the death of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān (r. 1806-1856), the last monarch to rule the united territories of Oman and Zanzibar. A century of separation, the considerable distance between the two countries and British policy that guaranteed their legal division meant that many ties that had once united the Omani community of East Africa and Oman had waned or been severed. At the same time, an employee of the secretariat of the Zanzibar Protectorate claimed that many Arab families in Zanzibar still had links to Oman. Upon further analysis, his statement also rings true. The then-reigning Sultan of Zanzibar, Khālifa bin Ḥarūb (r. 1911-1960) and some members of the Zanzibari elite were born in Oman. Moreover, many Zanzibari Arabs regularly travelled to Oman.⁶ It, therefore, appears that some links between Oman and

³ Secretariat, Zanzibar, to Consulate General in Muscat, 5 April 1956, FO 1016/496.

⁴ Richards to Chauncy, 16 May 1956, FO 1016/496.

⁵ British Consulate in Muscat to Secretariat, Zanzibar, 26 May 1956, FO 1016/496.

⁶ Michael Lofchie, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 133.

Zanzibar faded while others persisted. This thesis explores these historic bonds, analysing reasons for this state of relations between the two countries.⁷

The division of Oman and Zanzibar began formally as a secession.⁸ After the death of Saʿīd bin Sulṭān in 1856, his younger son Mājīd did not recognise his elder brother's authority over Zanzibar and proclaimed himself the ruler. The British later transformed this dynastic conflict, like those in other patrimonial or feudal regimes, into a modern political partition, forcing the Omani princes to submit their claims to imperial arbitration. As a result, the Omani state was split into two separate sultanates.

Political scientists define partition as 'a fresh border cut through at least one community's national homeland, creating at least two separate political units under different sovereigns or authorities.'⁹ The use of this mechanism is justified by the desire to mitigate or resolve conflicts within a state. However, major powers have frequently abused partition to serve their strategic interests and establish spheres of influence.¹⁰ Despite their aims, partitions have rarely resulted in the complete severance of ties between the cleaved parts of a political organism. Instead, cultural and familial connections persist among the newly formed communities, as do deep-seated conflicts and tensions.¹¹

Following the partition, hostilities also erupted between Oman and Zanzibar. Nonetheless, the idea of reuniting the two countries emerged, and the divided communities maintained many of the ties that had existed before 1856. Notably, in contrast to other nations that experienced division, Oman and Zanzibar were not afforded the opportunity to shape their relationship independently. The British played a crucial role not only in the partition of Oman but also in ensuring that it was upheld. Consequently, any attempts to breach the division were met with a stern response from the British. Moreover, in 1890, Britain declared Zanzibar

⁷ Research for the dissertation was funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education's Diamantowy Grant (Diamond Grant) programme. In addition, the University of Warsaw's Integrated Development Programme (ZIP) supported additional research in Zanzibar and India. An internship at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner in Berlin, which was funded by the programme 'Excellence Initiative - Research University (2020-2026)', also made a significant contribution to the preparation of the thesis.

⁸ Secession, although linked to partition, is considered a separate political mechanism which, unlike partition, is initiated by grassroots forces only later accepted by the political centre. Brendan O'Leary, 'Partition', in *Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson, Hastings Donnan (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 31.

⁹ O'Leary, 'Partition', 29.

¹⁰ O'Leary, 'Partition', 35; Stanley Waterman, 'Partitioned States', *Political Geography Quarterly*, vol. 6 No. 2, April 1987, 160.

¹¹ Examples include the contemporary conflicts between India and Pakistan or Palestine and Israel, which have continued since partition to the present day, see T. G. Fraser, *Partition in Ireland, India and Palestine: Theory and Practice* (London: MacMillan, 1984); Haimanti Roy, *Partitioned Lives: Migrants, Refugees, Citizens in India and Pakistan, 1947-1965* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013); Vazira Fazila-Yacooboli Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia. Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

a British protectorate, and colonial officials exercised effective rule there until 1963. Although Oman remained independent, it was also under considerable British influence during this period. The state of relations between Oman and Zanzibar, therefore, reflected the influence and scope of British imperial policy in the two countries. It follows that Britain did not want or could not break certain relations between Oman and Zanzibar.

This dissertation analyses the separation process between Oman and Zanzibar under the British domination of both countries between 1856 and 1964. It studies the weakening or severance of relations between Oman and Zanzibar at the level of states, rulers, and Omani elites. The work examines how the operation of two separate centres of Omani power and British imperial policy affected the hitherto united Omani community. It also investigates the agenda and implementation of British policy towards Oman and Zanzibar and highlights the Omani reactions to British participation in the separation process. The analysis covers the entire period of the two states, from Sa'īd's death and the *de facto* division of the country between his sons to the fall of the Sultanate of Zanzibar.

This project explores several aspects of Oman and Zanzibar's separation process. First, it assumes a close relationship between Omanis living before 1856 in Oman and East Africa in a single political entity. The thesis examines the changes in these relationships between 1856 and 1964, considering the cultural, economic, and political differences between the two states. I study Britain's policies towards Oman and Zanzibar and their division through the actions of lower-level colonial officials, emphasizing that these policies were developed and implemented haphazardly. In addition, the project goes beyond the binary construction of unity or lack of unity in the Indian Ocean area by analysing Omani elites and British imperial policies both as enablers and counteractors in the separation process. The analysis delves into the actions taken by colonial officials in Oman and Zanzibar, encompassing both instances where the officials exacerbated the division between the two states and instances where they curtailed this process. Moreover, it scrutinizes the impact of different living environments and modes of subsistence on the interactions of the Arab elites.

The Process of Separation and British Imperial Policy

Previous research on the Indian Ocean area has focused on the region's unity and interconnectedness. For example, Kiriti Chaudhuri cites the vital role of the monsoon winds in maintaining the unity of the Indian Ocean, as the monsoon facilitated the movement of people,

ideas, and goods within the region.¹² The diasporas are another major factor that has historically made the Indian Ocean a connected zone. Here again, Chaudhuri's work is ground-breaking in identifying these groups as a significant source of linkages in the Indian Ocean.¹³ Other researchers share his assessment, describing examples of Arab or Indian communities scattered on different shores of the Indian Ocean.¹⁴

According to many scholars, the arrival of colonial empires and European capital in the Indian Ocean area transformed but did not dissolve previous networks.¹⁵ Colonial powers integrated vast regions of the Indian Ocean under its rule and incorporated them into an increasingly globalized economy.¹⁶ Naturally, not all researchers agree with the concept of Indian Ocean unity. Some argue against the ecological unity of the region, while others point to the structuring role of states and empires.¹⁷

This dissertation does not take a side in this debate. Instead, it moves beyond the discussion of Indian Ocean (dis)unity, elaborating on factors that drove the persistence or dissolution of historical ties and fostered new connections and divisions. On the one hand, it agrees that the Omani diaspora in East Africa was a unifying factor between the region and Oman, and the two Omani communities shared many ties before 1856. However, it does not ignore the emergence of two separate states and Britain's growing position in the region, which translated into the severance or curtailment of many of these relationships. In this thesis, I do not assign explicit roles according to which Omani Arabs were the sole source of unity, while colonial power was an agent of division. Although this was the case in many situations, this work also shows that Omani elites, through tribal divisions, internal feuds, or differences, were

¹² Kirti N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Later works on the Indian Ocean include Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Michael N. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹³ Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization*, 3-4.

¹⁴ Anne Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1920* (London: Routledge, 2003), Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), Chhaya Goswami, *The Call of the Sea: Kachchhi Traders in Muscat and Zanzibar, c. 1800-1880* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2011); Abdul Sheriff, *Dhow Cultures and the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce, and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

¹⁵ Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons. The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global History* (Harvard, University Press, 2009), 14.

¹⁶ Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections. India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley, Los Angeles London: University of California Press, 2007), Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World, African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles London: University of California Press, 2008), Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁷ Samson A. Bezabeh, *Subjects of Empires, Citizens of States. Yemenis in Djibouti and Ethiopia* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2016), 3-4.

driving forces in the separation process. In turn, colonial actors and policies sometimes strengthened the bonds that linked Oman and Zanzibar, intentionally or otherwise.

The assumption of the unity of Omanis in East Africa and Oman before 1856 stems from the fact that they lived within a single political entity. The islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, Mafia, and the East African coast had been ruled by Omanis, the imams, since 1698 when Imam Sayf bin Sulṭān conquered them.¹⁸ Admittedly, between 1744 and 1837, much of the coast with Mombasa rejected the sovereignty of the Omani rulers of the Āl Būsa'īdī dynasty and was ruled independently by the Al-Mazrū'ī tribe. The remaining territories, including the island of Zanzibar, continued to be part of Oman. Finally, Mombasa was recaptured by Sa'īd bin Sulṭān in 1837, and the Omani presence in the area was strengthened when the ruler's court relocated to Zanzibar in 1840 and a period of intensive migration of Omani Arabs into East Africa began.¹⁹

The Omani community lived as a single political entity despite the Omani rulers' problems maintaining their authority over the country and debates among contemporary scholars about the nature of the Omani state. Arabic and Omani historiographies often refer to Oman under Sa'īd bin Sulṭān as an empire (*imbrāṭūriyya*), emphasising its vastness and political efficiency.²⁰ Muhammad Reda Bhacker disagrees with this terminology and argues that the Omani rulers were mainly interested in protecting trade and collecting tributes from subjugated territories rather than creating lasting institutions to ensure effective control over lands distant from the metropolis.²¹ Many scholars agree with Bhacker's arguments but continue to use 'empire' to describe the Omani state, sometimes adding the terms 'maritime' or 'trading' to reflect the limitations of Omani sovereignty.²² Notably, European colonial

¹⁸ *History of the Imāms and Seyyids of 'Omān by Salīl ibn Razīk: from A.D. 661-1856*, trans., and ed. George Percy Badger (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1871), 92. Some accounts claim that the Omani conquest of East Africa happened earlier. The *Mombasa Chronicle* stated that for the first time, Omanis took Mombasa in 1675, see Khamis bin Said Al-Mambasi, 'The Mombasa Chronicle', trans. and edited Yahya Ali Omar, P.J.L. Frankl, *Afrika und Uebersee*, Band 73, 1990, 111. Samuel Miles placed the Omani attack on Mombasa even earlier and wrote that it occurred in 1655, see Samuel B. Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf*, vol. I (London: Harrison and Sons, 1919), 212. Another year is given by Malyn Newitt, who claims that Omanis took Mombasa in 1661. Malyn Newitt, 'The Portuguese in East Africa and the Omani Reconquest of East Africa', *Oman and Overseas (Studies on Ibadism and Oman)*, ed. Abdulrahman Al Salimi, Michaela Hoffmann-Ruf (Zurich-New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2013), 132.

¹⁹ Sa'īd bin 'Alī Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat al-akhbār fī tārikh Zanjibār*, (Muscat: Wizārat al-turāth, 2017).

²⁰ Sulṭān bin Muḥammad Al-Qasimī, *Taqīm al-imbrāṭūriyya al-'umāniyya* (Dubai: Mu'assasat Al-Bayān, 2015); Hussein Ghubash, *Oman. The Islamic Democratic Tradition*, trans. Mary Turton (London, New York: Routledge, 2006).

²¹ Muhammad R. Bhacker, *Trade and Empire in Muscat and Zanzibar: The Roots of British Domination*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2014), 4.

²² Abdul Aziz El-Ashban, 'The Formation of the Omani Trading Empire under the Ya'aribah Dynasty (1624-1719)', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Fall 1979, 354-371; *Oman and Overseas (Studies on Ibadism and Oman)*, ed. Abdulrahman Al Salimi, Michaela Hoffmann-Ruf, (Zurich-New York 2013).

empires were also initially decentralised, and scholars do not question their imperial character.²³ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout propose using the term ‘thalassocracy’ rather than empire. Thalassocracy indicates the possession and control of extensive trade networks and maritime domination without implying imperial power or colonialism.²⁴

Whether an empire, a maritime empire or a thalassocracy, in pre-1856 Oman, the Omani ruler, members of the ruling family and the elite were free to live, move and pursue their businesses in both the Asian and African parts of the realm.²⁵ They were united by tribal and family relations and religious ties as most Omani Arabs adhered to Ibādī Islam. All of them belonged to a particular clan and one of the two tribal confederations of Hināwī and Ghāfirī (more on this below). In 1856, this situation changed. Following a conflict between the sons of Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān, the Omani state split into two parts: Oman under Thuwaynī and Zanzibar under Mājīd. This situation was concretized through British arbitration in 1861. It lasted until 1964, when the Sultanate of Zanzibar collapsed due to a revolution. A few months later, Zanzibar entered a union with Tanganyika, forming Tanzania.²⁶

Neither 1856 nor 1861 saw the establishment of border control between Oman and Zanzibar, passports, or distinct nationalities as these measures began to be introduced in the early 20th century.²⁷ Nevertheless, two distinct centres of power began to function, and the hitherto united dynasty and Omani elite began to separate. This process continued until the fall of the Sultanate of Zanzibar when most non-Africans emigrated or were forced to leave the country, which ultimately severed ties between this part of East Africa and Oman.²⁸

This work does not describe the entire separation process between Oman and Zanzibar from 1856 to 1964. Instead, it focuses on factors stemming from the two separate centres of power and British imperial policies that undermined ties between the countries and their elites. Thus, the subject of the study is the private and official relations of the rulers and the ruling

²³ Nathaniel Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora, 1698-2014: Citizenship, Migration and Revolution in Zanzibar, Oman and Post War Indian Ocea’ (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2016), 27.

²⁴ Jeremy Jones, Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 35.

²⁵ Thomas F. McDow, *Buying Time. Debt and Mobility in the Western Indian Ocean* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2018), 255.

²⁶ Some Omani historiography and Omanis of Zanzibar origin reject the term revolution and point out that the events of January 1964 were a Tanganyika-inspired invasion or coup d’état, see Nāṣir bin ‘Abdallāh Al-Riyāmī, *Zinjibār: shakhṣiyāt wa aḥdāt (1828-1972)* (Muscat: Bayt Al-Ghishām, 2016).

²⁷ Passports in mass use first appeared in Europe during the First World War and were gradually introduced in subsequent dependent territories and countries, see John C. Torpey, *Invention of the Passports. Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 24

²⁸ Today, Oman and Zanzibar are developing their relationship on an economic and cultural level, and many members of the former Arab elite have returned temporarily or permanently to Zanzibar, where they are purchasing the property back, see Mandana Limbert, *In the Time of Oil: Piety, Memory, and Social Life in an Omani Town* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

family of Oman and Zanzibar and the contacts of officials, tribal leaders, and other members of the Omani elites of both countries. The thesis also explores the two countries' political, religious, and cultural links. In this respect, it does not address the complete spectrum of cultural and religious ties between the two states but focuses mainly on the issue of the revival of the Ibādī imamate and contacts during the *Al-Nahḍa* period.²⁹ Finally, the work examines the role of the British Empire in weakening ties between the two countries by exploring the aims, methods and outcomes of policies pursued by colonial officials.

Britain's role in the history of Oman and Zanzibar has been the subject of many publications. The succession conflict, the partition of the country into Oman and Zanzibar and the growing political influence of Britain in the western Indian Ocean in the latter half of the 19th century have been described in several works.³⁰ Researchers have also investigated the history of British involvement in anti-slavery efforts in East Africa and the Gulf, the economy of colonial Zanzibar and British plans to modernise it.³¹ The situation of Oman after 1856, its dependence on Britain and attempts to develop the country in the first half of the 20th century have also been the subject of studies.³²

Apart from studies on the division of Oman into two separate states between 1856 and 1861, most scholarly works describe the two countries' histories separately, with little or no consideration given to their relationship after 1856. Exceptions include the works of Amal Ghazal, Nathaniel Mathews, Thomas McDow, Jeremy Jones, and Nicholas Ridout. Among the topics raised by these researchers are the issues of religious ties between Oman and Zanzibar, the problem of the identity of the Omani elite of Zanzibar, changes in mobility and the shared

²⁹ The examination of religious and cultural connections between Oman and Zanzibar is a vast and significant subject matter that necessitates expertise and access to sources that are arduous to acquire, such as Arabic manuscripts housed in the Zanzibar National Archives. Therefore, this area of study should be pursued by other adept and specialized researchers.

³⁰ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*; Al-Qasimī, Taqīm; Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (London: James Currey Ltd, 1987); John C. Wilkinson, *The Arabs and The Scramble for Africa* (Bristol: Equinox, 2015).

³¹ William C. Bissel, *Urban Design, Chaos, and Colonial Power in Zanzibar* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann 1997); Eric Gilbert, *Dhows and the Colonial Economy of Zanzibar: 1860-1970* (Ohio, Ohio University Press, 2005); *Beyond the State. The Colonial Medical Service in British Africa*, ed. Anna Greenwood (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Lawrence W. Hollingsworth, *Zanzibar under the Foreign Office* (London: Macmillan 1953); Sarah Longair, *Cracks in the Dome: Fractured Histories of Empire in the Zanzibar Museum, 1897-1964* (London: Routledge 2015); Elke E. Stockreiter, *Islamic Law, Gender and Social Change in Post-Abolition Zanzibar*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

³² Robert G. Landen, *Oman since 1856. Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*; Robert Alston, Stuart Laing, *Unshook Till the End of Time: A History of Relations between Britain and Oman, 1650-1970* (London: Gilgamesh Publishing, 2012).

credit network in the second half of the 19th century or the Zanzibari diaspora.³³ Modern Omani historiography also pays much attention to Oman's links with East Africa, particularly in the spheres of religious and intellectual contacts.³⁴ This dissertation follows the path of these works to study the relationship between Oman and Zanzibar 'in terms of historical continuity and even interdependency'.³⁵ At the same time, it takes a comparative approach to describe the two countries and British policy towards them.

I analyse the separation process through the prism of both states and British imperial policy because of the decisive role of the British Empire in creating and developing Omani and Zanzibari states. Although the British did not cause the succession conflict of 1856, which arose from the ambitions of Sa'īd's sons and tribal divisions in the Omani society, British support for Mājīd, the containment of Thuwaynī's attack on Zanzibar, and the submission of the dispute to arbitration by the British viceroy of India contributed to the consolidation and later confirmation of the country's partition. The British were guarantors of the 1861 arbitration agreement's implementation, so British officials intervened in subsequent attempts by Omani rulers and elites to violate it. The next stage of British involvement in relations between the two countries came in 1890 when Zanzibar was declared a British protectorate, necessitating direct British participation in the governance of Zanzibar and its dealings with Oman.³⁶ This situation lasted until 10 December 1963, when Zanzibar became independent. Oman formally remained an independent country throughout the period, but the rulers of Oman were politically and economically dependent on Britain until 1970, so many of their decisions were made under British influence.³⁷

³³ Amal N. Ghazal, *Islamic Reform and Arab Nationalism: Expanding the Crescent from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, 1880s-1930s*, (London: Routledge, 2010); 'Omani Fatwas and Zanzibari Cosmopolitanism: Modernity and Religious Authority in the Indian Ocean', *The Muslim World*, Vol. 105.2 (2015), 236-250; 'The Other 'Andalus': The Omani Elite in Zanzibar and the Making of an Identity, 1880s-1930s', *MIT-Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5 (Fall 2005): 43-58; Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora'; McDow, *Buying Time*; Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*.

³⁴ Muḥsin bin Ḥamūd Al-Kindī, *Al-Ṣaḥāfa al-'umāniyya al-muhājira wa-shakhṣiyātuhā. Al-Shaykh Hāshil bin Rāshid Al-Maskarī namūdhajan* (Beirut: Riyad el-Rayyes Books, 2009); Sulymān bin Sa'īd Al-Kiyūmī, *Al-Ḥaraka al-'ilmīya fī Zinjibār wa-Sāhil Sharq Afrīqiya: ḥilāl an-niṣf at-tānī min al-qarn at-tāsi 'aṣar al-milādī*, (Muscat: al-Jāmi'a al-'Umāniya li-l-Kuttāb wa-l-Udabā', 2020); *Aṣr al-naḥḍa al-'umāniyya fī Zinjibār, 1832-1964*, ed. 'Īsā Al-Ḥāj Al-Ziddī (Muscat: NRAA, 2018); *Ad-dawr al-'umāniyyi fī nashr al-Islām fī Sharq Afrīqiya*, ed. Ḥamad bin Muḥammad Al-Dhawyanī, Wafīq Kīlīnī (Muscat: NRAA, 2018).

³⁵ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 24.

³⁶ The British Political Agent was not an advisor to the ruler but the actual administrator of the sultanate. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, 42.

³⁷ The date of the end of Omani dependence on the British is disputed. It is mostly assumed that this occurred with the coup of Qābūs bin Sa'īd in 1970, which marked the beginning of construction of the modern Omani state. Nevertheless, already during the reign of Sa'īd bin Taymūr (1932-1970), British control of Oman was significantly reduced, and the ruler pursued policies independently of the British and sometimes even against their suggestions. See Uzi Rabi, *Emergence of States in a Tribal Society. Oman Under Said bin Taymur, 1932-1970* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011).

In this thesis, I also demonstrate that Oman and Zanzibar had significant environmental, economic, and political differences which influenced the separation process between them and British policy towards them. Oman was a desert country, and Zanzibar was a monsoon one. These conditions translated into different economic situations in the two Omani sultanates. Oman's economy was based on date palm cultivation, fishing, and trade, and it consistently deteriorated after 1856. By the time oil was discovered in Oman in the late 1960s, the country was poor and underdeveloped.³⁸ During the same period, Zanzibar enjoyed regular income from clove plantations and caravan trade and maintained its economic position, which was only partially altered by the British protectorate.³⁹ On a cultural level as well, these countries differed significantly. Despite the presence of Indian, Baluch and Persian communities, Oman was an Arab-dominated country. By contrast, Omanis were a minority among a Swahili majority in Zanzibar.⁴⁰ Finally, the two countries differed on political issues. Oman was formally independent, while Zanzibar was a British protectorate from 1890 to 1963.

Significant cultural, economic, or political differences between Oman and Zanzibar meant that British policy towards these countries could not be uniform. Like the authors of recent works on the decolonisation of the Gulf or British policy towards sovereignty and land rights in Australia and New Zealand, this thesis emphasizes that the British acted towards Oman and Zanzibar without a central agenda. Most British actions were taken at the level of lower officials in an improvised or haphazard manner.⁴¹ Government centres in India and Britain mostly accepted the decisions of political agents and residents operating in the field. Thus, British imperial policy largely depended on the personal preferences and attitudes of lower-level imperial officials. Moreover, as William Bissell has pointed out using the example of the construction of the colonial state in Zanzibar and the implementation of its modernisation plans, in many respects, the rationality, regularity and efficiency of British officials were exaggerated, and their declarations did not always evolve into reality.⁴² This thesis also rejects the complete

³⁸ John E. Peterson, *Oman in the Twentieth Century. Political Foundations of an Emerging State* (London: Routledge, 2016).

³⁹ Sarah K. Croucher, *Cloves and Capitalism. An Archaeology of Plantation Life on Nineteenth-century Zanzibar* (New York: Springer, 2015).

⁴⁰ Anne Bang, 'Cosmopolitanism Colonized? Three Cases from Zanzibar, 1890-1920' in *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean*, ed. Edward Simpson and Kai Kresse (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-abolition Urban Zanzibar 1890-1945* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001); John Middleton, *The World of the Swahili. An African Mercantile Civilization* (Michigan: Yale University Press, 1992); Christine S. Nicholls, *The Swahili Coast: Politics, Diplomacy and Trade on the East African Littoral* (London: Holmes&Meier, 1971).

⁴¹ Bain Attwood, *Empire and the Making of Native Title: Sovereignty, Property and Indigenous People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Shohei Sato, *Britain and the Formation of the Gulf States. Embers of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

⁴² Bissell, *Urban Design*, 71.

rationality and omnipotence of the British Empire in the implementation of its policies towards Oman and Zanzibar.

Examples of the way the British policy towards Oman and Zanzibar worked can be seen from the very beginning of the separation process. The British arbitration decision to keep the two countries divided resulted from effective lobbying the Indian authorities by Christopher Rigby, a political agent in Zanzibar from 1858-1861. In pushing for Zanzibar's independence, he wanted to pursue his own vision of policy of combating the slave trade.⁴³ Although his mission aligned with the centralising policy of the British Empire after the Indian mutiny, it was not the central authorities' plan, and some imperial officials initially favoured the maintenance of a unified Omani state.⁴⁴ Similar shifts of opinion and internal disputes were evident in the Zanzibar subsidy dispute after 1866 and the 1895 rebellion in Oman. Britain's priority since 1861 was to maintain the arbitration agreement, i.e., the division of the two countries. However, officials often encountered problems implementing this policy, and their actions were reactive. Their measures did not aim to sever relations between Oman and Zanzibar (this is not to say that they did not have that effect) and sometimes even contributed to maintaining these ties.

The analysis of the impact of British policies on the separation process between Oman and Zanzibar does not focus solely on the political dimension. The thesis also examines how colonial state-building in Zanzibar weakened or severed ties between the two countries. I also explore the indirect impact of British colonialism on Oman and Zanzibar in the form of support for Omani modernisation and cultural developments in Zanzibar. The latter includes changes stemming from British colonial policy and its contestation, including nationalism and the Arab cultural revival.

Using an imperial history framework to describe the history of the Indian Ocean has attracted increasing criticism in recent decades.⁴⁵ This is understandable given that many studies of colonised communities have been solely based on imperial archives, replicating the colonisers' viewpoint on local peoples and their history even against the intentions of some of these works' authors.⁴⁶ This dissertation does not seek to describe Arab communities through an imperial lens. However, simultaneously, it cannot and does not intend to escape imperial

⁴³ Wilkinson, *The Arabs*, 123.

⁴⁴ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 185.

⁴⁵ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction: The Indian Ocean Between Empire and Nation' in *Maritime India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), XII; Markus P.M. Vink, 'Indian Ocean Studies and the "New Thalassology"', *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 2 (March 2007): 41-62.

⁴⁶ Fahad A. Bishara, *A Sea of Debt: Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean, 1780-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 17.

history. One must acknowledge that Zanzibar was established with British assistance, and colonial officials ruled the country for over 70 years. As a result, the actions and visions of British colonial officials figure heavily in this work, and many of the sources on which this study is based are documents they created. Nonetheless, colonial officials are not the only protagonists of this work.

I also centre Omani rulers and elites. Their visions of Omani-Zanzibari relations, views on the (dis)unity of the two countries and actions to maintain or sever ties between them are described and contrasted with British imperial policy. Where sources allow, these ideas and efforts are presented directly from their letters, chronicles, and memoirs. In the case of British materials, on the other hand, I rely mainly on ‘traces’ rather than ‘sources’. Historian Allan Megill defines the former as internal documents not created to be made public, as opposed to ‘sources’ produced with the public in mind.⁴⁷ Of course, the use of ‘traces’ does not guarantee greater impartiality or credibility.⁴⁸ But traces are less propagandistic and reveal the internal discussion within the imperial administration, which is crucial for analysing the aims and agenda of British policy. Rather than using a single lens, this work engages a polyphony of sources from British officials, Omani rulers, and Arab elites.

Omani States and Elites

This thesis analyses both Omani and Zanzibari states and their Omani Arab elites. Until 1890 in Zanzibar and 1970 in Oman, some elite representatives wielded sovereign power and often pursued external and internal policies independently of central institutions.⁴⁹ As a result, members of the elite shaped the countries’ separation process alongside the rulers, frequently against the rulers’ agendas. Secondly, elites are included in this research because, after rulers, they were the group most heavily influenced by the formation of two centres of power and British dominance in the region. The rivalry between Omani and Zanzibari rulers and increasing British control affected the freedom of travel, political influence, trade, and settlement of elite representatives.

The study does not use a single definition of the elite. Instead, this group is determined separately in each country because of differences in Oman and Zanzibar’s political and social structures. Between 1856 and 1963, the latter underwent a significant transformation and became a colonial state. As a result, the Omani tribes residing there evolved into the

⁴⁷ Allan Megill, *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error. A Contemporary Guide to Practice* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 25.

⁴⁸ Megill, *Historical Knowledge*, 26.

⁴⁹ Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 117.

intelligentsia and modern elite. Meanwhile, Oman maintained its traditional state organisation and tribal structure. Although British arbitration in 1861 referred to the newly created states as sultanates, apart from the new name, it did not introduce any institutional changes in Oman. In the first decades after the partition, the Omani state functioned according to the political principles of Saʿīd bin Sulṭān and his predecessors.

Oman was headed by a ruler bearing the title *sayyid*, meaning ‘lord’ in English.⁵⁰ Following British arbitration, this ruler was called the sultan.⁵¹ The basis of his rule was control over Muscat, the wealthiest region in the country, which provided revenue from trade and overseas possessions. Through his rule in Muscat, the sultan influenced the situation in Oman and secured the recognition and support of the tribes. Nevertheless, his control was not complete. The country remained politically fragmented, and influential members of the ruling dynasty and tribal sheikhs held separate domains.⁵² Their recognition of the ruler of Muscat in Oman was based on short-term political alliances and the subsidies the tribes received from him. The sultan’s direct authority was limited to Muscat, other coastal cities and overseas territories, where he appointed governors and maintained military garrisons.⁵³

The government’s primary role was to collect revenues and maintain order. The central administration comprised the ruler and his associates, drawn largely from his family. The chief official bore the title of *wazīr* (minister) and assisted the ruler in managing the affairs of the state. Revenue collection was limited to *zakat* (almsgiving) and customs duties. Banyan (Indian) merchants leased the latter in exchange for a fixed fee paid in advance.⁵⁴ The army was irregular and comprised members of tribes loyal to the ruler and mercenaries from outside Oman, most often the Baluchis.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *History of the Imāms and Seyyids*, 201. Saʿīd bin Sulṭān was to see himself as a trader, and Omani sources used the term *dawla* or *sulta* to describe his state. Today, these terms mean ‘state’ and ‘power’, respectively. In the pre-modern period, however, the terms primarily referred to the ruling family. See Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 27.

⁵¹ The country was referred to as the Sultanate of Oman and Muscat. Sultan Qābūs bin Saʿīd changed the name to Sultanate of Oman in 1970. This remains is the official name of the country today.

⁵² Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 26-27.

⁵³ Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 64.

⁵⁴ Indian merchants had been settling in Oman since Portuguese times, and their influence grew during the Portuguese-Omani struggle when they were supposed to favour the Omanis. They were mainly Sindhis from the Bhattiya clan. After the capture of Muscat by Omani forces, they were granted tax exemptions and the opportunity to build their own temple. Since the 19th century, the role and numbers of the Sindhs in Oman has declined, and their place was taken by merchants from Gujarat who managed Omani customs since at least 1829, see Calvin H. Allen, ‘The Indian Merchant Community in Masqat’, *Bulletin of SOAS*, vol. 44, no 1 (1981).

⁵⁵ Baluchis are the people of the Baluchistan region covering the lands of present-day Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. In Oman, they served as mercenaries in the army. Peterson, *Oman*, 73-74.

The exact boundaries of Oman before the late 1950s cannot be determined as many tribes did not recognise the authority of the Sultan of Oman.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it is assumed that the sultanate formally included the territories of historical Oman without Julfar (today's Ras Al-Khayma).⁵⁷ These lands consisted of the coast (Al-Batina), where the sultan's authority was strongest, and the interior regions of Al-Sharqiyya and Ja'lan in the east and Al-Dhahira in the west, where tribes enjoyed considerable or complete freedom from the authorities in Muscat. In addition, Dhufar was under the formal control of Omani rulers beginning in 1829.⁵⁸ The Sultan of Oman also leased Bandar Abbas from the Persian ruler until 1868 and owned the Makran coast in present-day Pakistan, including the ports of Gwadar and Chabahar. These were part of Oman until 1958, when they were sold to the Pakistani authorities.⁵⁹

Among the most significant political developments in Oman between 1856 and 1964 were attempts to re-establish the Ibādī imamate. According to the Ibādīs, the state should be governed by an elected imam whose authority was limited by Muslim law and who could be removed from power if he transgressed or failed to comply with Ibādī doctrine.⁶⁰ The first successful restoration of the imamate was made in 1868 when Sultan Sālim bin Thuwaynī was deposed. 'Azzān bin Qays, who came from a lateral line of the Āl Būsa'īdī dynasty, was elected as a new imam. Despite some political successes, the imamate's forces were defeated by Turkī bin Sa'īd, and the sultanate was restored in 1871.⁶¹ However, Sultan Turkī and his successor faced dire financial problems, opposition from the Ibādī tribes and dependence on Britain. As a result, in 1913, some Omani tribesmen again rallied for the restoration of the imamate, but the forces of the new regime failed to conquer British-defended Muscat.⁶²

In 1920, Sultan Taymūr bin Fayṣal reached an agreement with pro-imamate representatives of the Omani tribes, granting far-reaching autonomy to the country's interior under the imam's administration. The sultan retained control over Oman's foreign policy, but his internal authority was limited to Muscat and the country's coast.⁶³ This situation lasted until 1955, when Sultan Sa'īd bin Taymur occupied the interior and removed Imam Ghālib bin 'Alī

⁵⁶ Peterson, *Oman*, 71.

⁵⁷ The Omanis seized Julfar while they were still fighting the Portuguese in the 17th century. The region remained under Omani influence until 1820 when the British signed a treaty with local sheikhs, which gave rise to Trucial Oman. See Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 91.

⁵⁸ Wilkinson, *The Arabs*, 59.

⁵⁹ Peterson, *Oman*, 55.

⁶⁰ The institution was first established in Oman in the eighth century, see more John C. Wilkinson, 'The Ibādī "Imāma"', *Bulletin of SOAS*, 39, no. 3 (1976); Isam Al-Rawas, *Early Islamic Oman (ca - 622/280-893): A Political History*, Doctoral thesis, Durham University 1990.

⁶¹ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 72.

⁶² Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 90.

⁶³ John C. Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 251.

Al-Hinā'ī from power. The country's reunification did not last long, as fighting with imamate supporters erupted again in 1957 and continued until 1959, when, with British support, the sultanate's forces defeated the imam's supporters in the Jebel Akhdar War.⁶⁴

Another significant source of change in Omani politics between 1856 and 1964 was political reforms and the modernisation of the country. The impetus for change was the successes of the imamate forces, which exposed the weakness of the sultanate and its inability to maintain power in many regions. One of the first changes was the termination of the lease of customs by Indian merchants and the establishment of the Customs Department in 1913. In 1920, the Council of Ministers, consisting of four officials, was inaugurated. It operated until 1932 when it was replaced with three offices reporting directly to the sultan.⁶⁵ The customs system and tax collection were also expanded under British supervision. In 1921, the nucleus of a modern army was also created in the form of the Muscat Levy Corps under British command. Later renamed the Muscat Infantry, it was combined with other military formations in 1958 to create the Sultan's Armed Forces.⁶⁶

Despite the expansion of the sultanate's administration and army, the nature of the state remained tribal. Until 1955, there was the imamate in the Omani interiors where the role of the *tamīmas* (paramount sheikhs), especially from Banū Riyām and Al-Ḥārithī, was crucial both in the election of the ruler and everyday politics. When Oman was unified under the sultan in 1955, the tribal system was retained. Uzi Rabi describes Oman in the post-1955 period as a 'unified tribal state'.⁶⁷ Mathews, too, draws attention to the sovereign power of the Omani sheikhs and their political importance.⁶⁸ They were prominent political actors who shaped Oman and Zanzibar's separation process alongside the central government.

The basis of Oman's social hierarchy was the division into tribes (*aṣl*) and servant populations. The latter group consisted of clients of a tribe, slaves and *bayāsir*.⁶⁹ A separate category was *bayādir*. They were of Arab descent and were recognised as members of the tribes, but unlike the full members, they only cultivated the land. They did not engage in military activities or participate in the country's political life. Some of them owned land, but most of

⁶⁴ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 322.

⁶⁵ These included the offices of finance, internal affairs, and justice, see Peterson, *Oman*, 78.

⁶⁶ Peterson, *Oman*, 94.

⁶⁷ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 71.

⁶⁸ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 117.

⁶⁹ The second category, the *bayāsir*, was regarded as a dependent population close to *khuddām* (servants). They were engaged in farm work and handicrafts and had the status of clients of the tribe (*mawālī*). Their ethnic origin was not clear. Indeed, they may have included non-Arabs (e.g., descendants of the Persian population). Their autonomy was considerable — they could change their patrons and emigrate — but usually, their position was tied to a particular place and the profession they practiced, see Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 96-97.

them worked in irrigation.⁷⁰ John Wilkinson calculates that this group accounted for half of the tribal members in the interior and three-quarters in Al-Batina, meaning that fully-fledged tribespeople were a minority of Omani tribal society.⁷¹

Omani tribal society adopted a sedentary way of life, but certain tribes on Oman's periphery retained many features of nomadic communities.⁷² The core of the tribal organisation was the clan (*'amāra*), a group with a common ancestor, usually the protoplast of a particular lineage.⁷³ Members of a clan were distinguished by a specific *nisba*, which commonly referred to the eponym of the clan (e.g., Al-Yaḥmadī) or the clan's place of origin (e.g., Al-Izkī). Each clan consisted of families (*faṣīla*), and several clans formed a tribe (*qabīla*). Tribes were further grouped into alliances or confederations (*shaff*).⁷⁴ Each clan had a leader (sheikh), whereas a tribe or confederation was headed by a *tamīma* or *amīr*. Leadership functions were usually hereditary within the family, with power after the sheikh's death being passed to his son, brother or uncle after consultation with the rest of the clan or tribe. Families of sheikhs were able to monopolise the leadership of a particular tribe or confederation for several hundred years.⁷⁵

Within Omani tribal society, wealth and access to resources did not play a key role in elite membership. Tribal members were formally equal, and Oman's productivity, especially in the interior, did not provide opportunities for rapid and substantial enrichment.⁷⁶ Instead, prestige was the primary indicator of elite status, along with the ability to attract allies and clients, which translated into political influence, including on the sultan's or imam's actions.⁷⁷ These opportunities were available to tribal leaders, sheikhly families, and officials and scholars from those families. In addition, the Omani elite included wealthy merchants, senior officials, and representatives of the lateral branches of the ruling dynasty. This thesis also mentions Omanis outside the elite if their actions influenced the decisions of Omani authorities or British officials regarding Oman and Zanzibar's relationship.

The Omani tribes were organised into two confederations according to the principles of a segmentary society: Hināwī and Ghāfirī. These groups emerged during the civil war between

⁷⁰ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 97.

⁷¹ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 97.

⁷² They were distinguished by the absence of a strict internal hierarchy, independence from central authority, and the lack of tribal elites and permanent headquarters. Fully settled tribes occupied a defined area (*dār*) in which they grazed their herds, cultivated agriculture, and moved around. Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 94-95.

⁷³ Clan is also referred to by the Arabic terms *fahdh* (literally thigh/leg) or *baṭn* (stomach/interiors). Arab genealogy distinguished and categorised these tribal groups, placing *'amara* highest and *baṭn* lowest, corresponding to a smaller group than a clan but larger than the lineage.

⁷⁴ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 93.

⁷⁵ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 120.

⁷⁶ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 111.

⁷⁷ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 98.

different claimants to the imamate during the Āl Ya‘rūbī dynasty between 1719 and 1749. However, tribal segmentation in Oman had an even longer history.⁷⁸ As John Wilkinson notes, the conflict between the principal tribes of the two confederations had its origins in numerous inter-tribal feuds stemming from a struggle over access to water sources and grazing land. Civil war and the policy of antagonising the tribes practised by the imamate pretenders cemented these feuds and led to the emergence of the two groups. Other theories suggest that the Hināwī-Ghāfirī dichotomy was rooted in the traditional division of Arab tribes hailing from the north of the Arabian Peninsula and those from the south. On Omani soil, the Ghāfirīs were supposed to represent the northern tribes, and the Hināwīs represented the southern tribes.⁷⁹ Religious differences also shaped these divisions. In Oman, Ibādī Islam was dominant from the 8th century onwards, but some tribes remained with the Sunni branch of Islam.⁸⁰

The origins of the Arab tribes and the denomination of Islam certainly reinforced divisions in Omani tribal society but did not have a decisive impact on the functioning of the two confederations. There were South Arab and North Arab tribes in both groups, just as there were Ibādī and Sunni tribes in each. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the Hināwī-Ghāfirī dichotomy was not absolute. Tribes could change their affiliation depending on local feuds and tribal arrangements. Nevertheless, the division played a pivotal role in Oman and Zanzibar’s separation process. It also had a significant bearing on the 1856 succession conflict, which led to the division of the two countries and British arbitration. Additionally, the dichotomy influenced the activities of the imamate party and its relationship with the Omani tribes in Zanzibar.

At the time of the partition, the state organisation and social structure described above also existed in Zanzibar, but these systems underwent significant transformations between 1856 and 1964. The territory of the Sultanate of Zanzibar evolved much more than Oman during this period. In 1861, when the British confirmed Mājid’s authority as Sultan of Zanzibar, his domains included the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia and a strip of coast between Cabo Delgado in present-day Mozambique and Warsheikh north of Mogadishu.⁸¹ Zanzibar’s rulers also maintained garrisons and governors in some towns in the East African interior, but their authority there was very limited. As Marek Pawełczak highlights, the level of control of

⁷⁸ For more about segmentary tribal societies, see Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁷⁹ John B. Peterson, ‘Oman’s Diverse Society: Northern Oman’, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 58, no 1, Winter 2004, 32.

⁸⁰ John R. L. Carter, *Tribes in Oman*, (London: Peninsular Publishing, 1982), 12.

⁸¹ Marek Pawełczak, *The State and The Stateless. The Sultanate of Zanzibar and the East African Mainland: Politics, Economy and Society, 1837-1888* (Warszawa: IH UW, 2010), 17.

Zanzibar over the East African interior cannot be reduced to a simple division between the coast and the interior, where the former was part of the sultanate, and the latter was outside. The interior's degree of dependence on the Zanzibari authorities shifted according to its economic and social links with the coast. As a result, the regions in which the caravan routes ran and supplied products to the coast were under the political influence of Zanzibar.⁸²

For this work, it has been assumed that, before 1890, the term Sultanate of Zanzibar referred only to the islands and coast of East Africa from Cabo Delgado to Warsheikh, as Omani migration was concentrated in these regions. After 1890, the term applied only to the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba because Britain and Germany forced the Sultan of Zanzibar to cede the East African coast and interior in present-day Tanzania to Germany. The other part of the coastline comprising the territory of present-day Kenya remained formally part of the Sultanate of Zanzibar until 1963 and was leased to the British as the Protectorate of Kenya. However, due to the lack of any effective authority of the sultan over these areas, they are deemed outside the scope of this work.⁸³ Despite the fact that the Sultanate of Zanzibar encompassed the East African coast until 1890, the narrative of the dissertation focuses mainly on the islands, as the source material available to the author provides a limited description of the Arab elites outside the area of Zanzibar and Pemba.

The Sultanate of Zanzibar also underwent significant political and social changes between 1856 and 1964. The first occurred during Sultan Barghash's reign (1870-1888). 'The new sultanate', as Reginald Coupland calls it, meant increased state activity on the continent and modernisation of the state apparatus.⁸⁴ This modernisation increased the number of officials, primarily governors (in Swahili *liwali*) and *akidas* in smaller towns.⁸⁵ Another element strengthening the authority of government was the creation of a regular armed force under the command of British naval officer Lloyd Mathews.⁸⁶ Barghash also established a modern printing press, increased the use of Muslim law, introduced electricity, and constructed roads and public buildings.⁸⁷

⁸² Pawełczak indicates that this range maxed out at 300 km into the interior, while the area of direct control of the sultanate typically ranged from 15 to 60 km and up to 150 km in the central part of the continent. See Pawełczak, *The State and The Stateless*, 18-19.

⁸³ James. R. Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's Flag: Sovereignty and Decolonization in Coastal Kenya', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 50, no. 4 (October 2008).

⁸⁴ Reginald Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa 1856-1890: the Slave Trade and the Scramble* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1967), 238.

⁸⁵ Pawełczak, *The State and The Stateless*, 228.

⁸⁶ Norman Bennett, *The Arab State of Zanzibar* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 100-101; Pawełczak, *The State and The Stateless*, 250.

⁸⁷ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 116.

Far more significant changes that profoundly reshaped the Zanzibari state and society occurred after 1890 when the sultanate became a British protectorate. Once Zanzibar was a protectorate, British officials seized power in the islands and developed an administration modelled on the European legal and political systems. The establishment of modern government offices and regulations, the development of an education system and the expansion of the capitalist economy transformed the Omani tribal community into a landed class and intelligentsia.⁸⁸

Zanzibar's elite did not consist solely of Arabs. Although the Sultanate of Zanzibar was described as an Arab country and the British emphasised its Arab character until the end of the colonial period, members of its elite included people from other ethnic groups.⁸⁹ Before 1890, Zanzibari sultans had appointed not only Omani Arabs to positions. In some cases, Swahili and Baluchis also received appointments to senior positions in the administration.⁹⁰ It is also worth mentioning the Yemeni Arabs, whose representatives were prominent religious scholars in Zanzibar.⁹¹ After the abolition of slavery in 1896, the importance of the African population slowly grew, culminating in the development of African nationalism and the founding of the Afro-Shirazi Party in 1957.⁹² Furthermore, as in Muscat, the Indian merchants' community was vital in Zanzibari society. They farmed out the collection of customs duties, participated in trade and were lenders to the Arab community. During the colonial period, their role increased further as they were nominated alongside Europeans for higher administrative positions.⁹³

Only the Arab elites of Omani origin are the subject of analysis in this thesis. They are hereafter referred to as the Omani elite or the Arab elite.⁹⁴ From 1856 to 1964, they were mainly landowners and, to a lesser extent, merchants or senior officials. After 1890, the group grew increasingly impoverished, and their political influence declined. Their impoverishment was caused by fluctuations in clove prices, the abolition of slavery, their indebtedness to Indian merchants, and the division of plantations through inheritance.⁹⁵ Their declining political influence was a consequence of British colonialism. From 1890, the Omani elite fulfilled a dual role: colonial subjects and a mediating elite between the British colonisers and Zanzibar's

⁸⁸ Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones. Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 75-76.

⁸⁹ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 196.

⁹⁰ Pawełczak, *State and Stateless*, 234-235.

⁹¹ Bang, *Sufis and Scholars*, 93-94.

⁹² Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 180.

⁹³ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 168.

⁹⁴ When I use the term 'Arab elite' or 'Arab community' in this work, I am referring to the Omanis. To refer to other groups of Arabs, I define them precisely, e.g., Yemeni Arabs.

⁹⁵ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 199-203.

African majority.⁹⁶ Thus, wealth and political position were not the only determinants of belonging to Zanzibar's Omani elite. The family's prestige and social background were also significant factors.

While this work focuses on the elite's role in the separation process, it does not entirely ignore the importance of other Omani Arabs to this phenomenon. This is firstly due to the fluid nature of the elite in Zanzibar. As Mathews points out, an Arab from the bottom of the Omani social hierarchy could acquire substantial wealth in Zanzibar and achieve a high social position.⁹⁷ In addition, the migration of non-elite Arabs, known as Northern and Manga Arabs, was an essential political issue in the separation process involving the sultans, elite representatives, and British colonial authorities. The thesis is mainly concerned with the political separation of the two countries but also recognises the role of Swahili culture in the construction of a distinct Zanzibari identity among members of the Omani elite.

It is impossible to determine the exact numbers of the two Omani elites between 1856 and 1964. Most data on the size of the Arab upper classes comes from Zanzibar. In the first half of the 20th century, several censuses were carried out on ethnic groups in Zanzibar. A 1924 census showed that the number of Arab people in Zanzibar was over 18,000 (8.7 per cent of the total population). Seven years later, it had grown to around 33,000 (14.2 per cent of the population). In 1948, there were almost 45,000 Arabs in Zanzibar, representing 16.9 per cent of the total population.⁹⁸ The above figures represent the entire Arab community, not just the elite. They also include Arabs from countries other than Oman and Swahilis, who declared themselves Arabs in the census. The latter group was of considerable importance as the significant increase in the number of Arabs after 1924 was primarily due to the Swahili population adopting Arab identity. There were many reasons for this decision, mostly stemming from their desire to raise their social status. In the eyes of many Swahilis, being Arab was associated with having 'the highest qualities of Zanzibar civilisation'.⁹⁹

Another source of information on the size of the Zanzibari elite is data on clove plantations, the principal source of livelihood for Arabs from the upper classes of Zanzibar society from Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's time.¹⁰⁰ The Government Survey of Land of 1931 indicated 177 Arab owners had plantations with a thousand or more clove trees.¹⁰¹ In 1948, another much

⁹⁶ Ghazal, "The Other 'Andalus'", 44.

⁹⁷ Mathews, *The Zinjibari Diaspora*, 133.

⁹⁸ Zanzibar Census, 1948, cited in Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 74.

⁹⁹ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 76. In Swahili, the word 'civilized' *waarabu* means also 'being like an Arab'.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Mughayrī, *Juhaynat*, 143.

¹⁰¹ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 84.

more extensive survey of social structure was carried out for the Government of Zanzibar by Professor Edward Batson of the University of Capetown. His survey showed that 485 Arabs owned plantations with 1,000 or more clove trees. Batson counted a total of almost 6,000 Arab landowners.¹⁰² To these numbers must be added members of the elite whose most substantial source of income was not agriculture. Among those Arabs, Batson identified five who held leading administrative positions and owned large companies and 185 who were clerks, teachers or ran smaller businesses.¹⁰³

By combining the data from both sources, it is possible to indicate approximately the number of Arabs, including non-Omani Arabs and the Arabised Swahilis, at the top of Zanzibar's economic hierarchy. According to Batson's analysis, this was 680 out of 16,405 Arabs surveyed or just over 4 per cent of Arab participants in the survey.¹⁰⁴ The survey did not include all Arabs in Zanzibar and ignored the non-economic aspects of being a member of the elite, meaning the number of the elite was heavily underestimated. However, the survey does support the claim that the Arab elite in Zanzibar was not just a minority of the general population but also of the Arab community, which was dominated by the middle class. Based on the available data, it is impossible to indicate what percentage of the elite comprised Arabs of Omani origin. The existing literature assumes that Omani Arabs decisively dominated this group.¹⁰⁵

There is no similar data from Oman because there were no population censuses collected in Oman until 1993.¹⁰⁶ The only data available from 1856 to 1964 are British colonial officials' estimates. One was compiled by Edward Ross, a political agent in Muscat, in 1872 and included the distribution and estimated size of Omani tribes. According to Ross's map, the total number of Omani tribespeople was over 125,000.¹⁰⁷ In 1938, a memorandum on the Sultanate of Oman indicated that the Omani population was 500,000, of which around 80 per cent were Arab tribespeople. The remaining 20% included British Indians, Persians, Baluchis and enslaved people whose origins were not recorded.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² 165 Arabs owned plantations with 3,000 trees and more, while 320 Arabs had plantations with 1,000 to 2,999 trees. Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 87.

¹⁰³ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 89. Some of them may also have been planters, but their primary occupation and income lay outside agriculture.

¹⁰⁴ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 89.

¹⁰⁵ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 77.

¹⁰⁶ Oman's first census was conducted in 1993 under Sultan Qābūs Decree no. 50/91.

¹⁰⁷ Map of Oman showing distribution of the principal tribes. Compiled for official use by Edward Charles Ross, Political Agent, Muscat, ST 393, vol 19, 186a.

¹⁰⁸ Memorandum (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur, IOR/L/PS/18/B461,

British analyses of Oman's tribal structure prepared in the 1940s and 1950s to determine the allegiance of tribes to the Imam or Sultan of Oman put the number at over 80 tribes, including Bedouins.¹⁰⁹ However, colonial documents do not distinguish between tribes and clans, taking into account smaller tribes and large tribal groups like Al-Ḥārithī and failing to distinguish prominent clans like Al-Barwānī. For comparison, a study issued by the National Records and Archives of Oman (NRAA) identifies more than one hundred tribes involved in the migration to East Africa up to 1964.¹¹⁰ Recent estimates put the number of Omani tribes at around 230.¹¹¹ Considering the historical developments and changes in Oman's tribal society before 1970, along with the interchangeable use of the terms 'clan' and 'tribe' in various sources, it is reasonable to estimate that there were about 200 clans or tribes in Oman.

The clans in Oman's tribal society before 1970 were generally headed by extended sheikhly families. For instance, 'Īsā bin Ṣāliḥ Al-Ḥārithī (1875-1946), who was the *tamīma* of the Al-Ḥārithī tribe and leader of the entire Hināwī confederation, had ten children.¹¹² He also had several siblings with their own children. Like this one, other sheikhly families also numbered between a dozen and a few dozen, totalling several thousand people. These estimates do not include wealthy merchants and influential people outside these families. Consequently, the Omani elite was much more numerous than those in Zanzibar. However, it was more internally diverse due to limited access to wealth and varying sizes of tribes and clans.

According to British colonial studies, the size of Omani tribes at the beginning of the 1950s ranged from tribes of a few hundred people like Al-Mandhirī (about 400 people) to huge tribes of several thousand people like Banū Riyām (roughly 15,000 people). Most tribes had a membership ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 people, although it is important to note that only a fraction of these members was considered fully-fledged tribespeople.¹¹³ As a result, the power and influence of many sheikhly families were limited when it came to armed strength and the ability to mobilise clients and allies. Only the *tamīmas* of large tribal groups and leaders of confederations had the necessary prestige and resources to effectively influence the tribal society and politics of Oman. Of hundreds of families belonging to the Omani elite, only a handful were a politically influential component of it.

¹⁰⁹ File 8/62 IV Principal Shaikhs & Tribes of Oman, IOR/R/15/6/245.

¹¹⁰ Issa Al-Haj Ziddy, *The Omani Renaissance in Zanzibar, 1832-1963. Research and Surveys in National and International Archives*, ed. Hamad M. Al-Dhawani, Wafik Kelliny (Muscat: NRAA, 2017), 46.

¹¹¹ Aḥmad Al-Sharqāwī, Aḥmad 'Abd Al-Wahāb, *Umān al-mu'āshira: buldānuha wa-qabā'iluha* (Muscat: Markaz Al-Raya, 2013), 123.

¹¹² Zahir bin Sa'īd bin Sayf Al-Sa'īdī, Al-Shaykh 'Īsā bin Ṣāliḥ Al-Ḥārithī (1290-1365/1874-1946). *Sīratuhu wa-dawruhu al-siyāsī fī 'Umān* (Beirut: Al-Intishār Al-'Arabī, 2018), 385.

¹¹³ File 8/62 IV Principal Shaikhs & Tribes of Oman, IOR/R/15/6/245.

Sources and the Scope of the Thesis

This thesis draws on two main categories of sources. The first is British documents produced by colonial officials. The second is Arabic sources, including letters of the sultans, private correspondence of the elites, wills, and historical compilations or memoirs of members of the Arab elite. In addition, the work uses French archival material collected at the Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve.

Among the most numerous British colonial documents are letters, minutes, diaries, reports, and memoranda produced by British officials working in Zanzibar and Muscat. The British representative resided in Zanzibar as early as 1841. He fulfilled a dual role as both the political agent of the Bombay presidency (from the 1870s, the Government of India) and the British consul on behalf of the Foreign Office.¹¹⁴ In 1913, this office was transformed into the position of resident and subordinated to the Colonial Office.¹¹⁵ With the introduction of the British protectorate in 1890, the British representative in the Sultanate of Zanzibar was given a new area of responsibility — Zanzibari politics. From 1914, the resident served on the Protectorate Council as its vice-chairman. By 1926, he was chairman of the Legislative Council and a member of the Executive Council.¹¹⁶ In addition, from 1891 to 1905, the first minister's office was responsible for the administration of Zanzibar. This post was held by Lloyd Mathews until 1901 and then by Alexander S. Roger. Similarly, the departments were headed by Britons or British Indians.¹¹⁷

In Oman, the British representative began to officiate as early as the early 19th century, but with the transfer of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's court to Zanzibar, the British diplomat ceased to reside in Muscat.¹¹⁸ After the arbitration was announced and the functioning of the two separate states was recognised, a British representative was installed in Oman in 1861 to serve as political agent and consul. In Muscat, the British agent represented the political resident who initially resided in Bushire (Persia) and, from 1946, in Bahrain. The resident was subordinate to the Bombay presidency until 1873 and later to the Government of India. When India gained independence in 1947, the Foreign Office became responsible for the residency in the Gulf.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ In his first role, he dealt with British Indian affairs, and as a Consul, he represented the British, see Marek Pawełczak, 'British Jurisdiction and Legal Protection of Non-Europeans in the Sultanate of Zanzibar, 1841–1888', *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies*, 4, 2020, 54.

¹¹⁵ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 179.

¹¹⁶ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 194.

¹¹⁷ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 168.

¹¹⁸ Previously, the interests of the British East India Company were represented in Muscat by native agents, their appointment dated back to 1758. See James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj. Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth Century Gulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 34.

¹¹⁹ Onley, *The Arabian Frontier*, 46.

Unlike in Zanzibar, the British agents and residents in Oman were not part of the Omani administration; they only performed diplomatic functions. However, they also advised the sultans of Oman and significantly influenced their policies. In the first half of the 20th century, the British also took up some positions in the Omani administration.¹²⁰

This dissertation employs mainly letters and other internal documents produced by political agents, residents, and consuls in their dealings with each other, their superiors in India and London, and Omani and Zanzibari rulers and elites. It also uses materials from other British officials employed in the Zanzibar administration. Although the work relies predominantly on ‘traces’, it also analyses documents intended for publication by imperial officials. Most of these are official treaties and resolutions. This group of materials also includes sultan’s decrees in Zanzibar after 1890, which, although formally issued by the Sultans of Zanzibar, were prepared by British colonial officials and promulgated with the approval of the British representative.¹²¹

The documents described above can be found in several archives. The Zanzibar National Archives (ZNA) holds materials from the British political agency and consulate (from 1913, Residency). In addition, their resources include internal and official documents of the Zanzibar Protectorate. The files of the Muscat consulate are held in the India Office Records at the British Library and the National Archives in London. Maharashtra State Archives (MSA) also holds materials relating to Muscat and Zanzibar agencies up to the 1880s.

A special category of a colonial source is *The Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf* by John Gordon Lorimer.¹²² This comprehensive account of the history and geography of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula was compiled between 1908 and 1915. It consists of two volumes. The first volume treats the region’s history, and the second its geography. The study was produced as a classified handbook for colonial officials representing imperial interests in the area and was only made public in the 1950s. It exemplifies the use of knowledge in the service of colonialism and the strengthening of the British Empire’s position in the region.¹²³ Nevertheless, it contains many documents and accounts of British officials useful for studying the internal mechanisms of British policy towards Oman.

¹²⁰ For example, Bertram S. Thomas held the position of Financial Advisor from 1925 to 1932. Later, he became a member of the Council of Ministers. See Peterson, *Oman*, 77.

¹²¹ *The Dominions Office and Colonial Office List: Comprising Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the Overseas Dominions and Colonial Dependencies of Great Britain* (London: Walerlow&Son, 1932), 502.

¹²² John G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf: Historical. Part IA&IB* (Calcutta: Government of India, 1915).

¹²³ Nelida Fuccaro, ‘Knowledge at the Service of the British Empire: The Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia’ in *Borders and the Changing Boundaries of Knowledge*, ed. Inga Brandell, Marie Carlson, and Önver A. Cetrez (Mölnlycke: Elanders Sverige AB, 2015), 17-34.

The Arabic documents consulted for this project are much more diverse. Firstly, I have used letters of rulers, members of the Āl Būsa‘īdī dynasty and elite representatives both in originals and British translations. Some of the sultans’ letters were published by the ruler of Sharjah, Sheikh Sulṭān bin Muḥammad Al-Qāsimī.¹²⁴ The rest are in the holdings of the British Library, the ZNA or the NRAA. The other significant Arabic source is the work of Sa‘īd bin ‘Alī Al-Mughayrī. His work, *Juhaynat al-akhbār fī tārikh Zinjibār* (Certainty of the News in the History of Zanzibar), written between 1938 and 1964, recounts the history of the Āl Būsa‘īdī dynasty in Zanzibar. The author was the private secretary to Sultan Khālifa bin Ḥārūb and used many documents and information no longer available today.¹²⁵ Other sources include articles from the Arabic press in Zanzibar from 1911 to 1964, held by the ZNA and the NRAA.¹²⁶ Moreover, the thesis draws on wills, *waqf* documents, and probate documents from the ZNA.¹²⁷ The NRAA has published some of these wills and deeds.¹²⁸

Another relevant group of sources are the published memoirs of representatives of the Arab elite.¹²⁹ This study also uses interviews with 10 Omanis who lived in Zanzibar or their direct descendants to supplement the written sources. These interviews were semi-structured and consisted of a pool of closed questions, including family, place of residence in Zanzibar, period of stay, frequency of contact, and open questions regarding the nature of family relations between Oman and Zanzibar and opinions about Oman from the period of stay in Zanzibar. Both categories of questions focused on family relations, interactions and travel, and perceptions of Oman by the Omani elite in Zanzibar.¹³⁰

In Chapters 1 to 3, I focus on Britain’s political involvement in the partition of Oman and Zanzibar and its interventions in the face of reunification trends in both countries. Chapter 1 describes how the ambitions of Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān’s sons and divisions within Omani tribal society led to the succession crisis and British involvement in the crisis. The chapter then points

¹²⁴ Sulṭān bin Muḥammad Al-Qāsimī, *Murāsālāt salāfīn Zinjibār* (Sharjah: Manshūrāt Al-Qāsimī, 2012); *Sajal mukātabāt al-sulṭān Barghash sulṭān Zinjibār (wa-minhā mā huwa bi-khaṭṭihi)* (1296 AH/1878 AD) (Sharjah: Jazeerat Yas Printing Press, 2020).

¹²⁵ Bang, *Sufi and Scholars*, 10.

¹²⁶ Key titles included *Al-Najāh* [the Success], *Al-Falaq* [the Dawn] and *Al-Nahḍa* [the Revival].

¹²⁷ *Waqf* - it is a type of donation that has two elements: the source and the beneficiary of the income. The former, referred to as *mawqūf*, could be land, rents and benefits from housing and businesses. The beneficiary of the *waqf*, on the other hand, could be a mosque, a hospital, the poor, relatives or even slaves. The creation of such a donation was perpetual, that is, the legally created *waqf* was irrevocable.

¹²⁸ Al-‘Alāqāt al-tārikhīya bayna saltanat ‘Umān wa-sharq Afriqiya fī al-‘ahd al-Būsa‘īdī 1939-1956 M: nizām al-waqf wa-al-waṣāyā bi-Zanjibār anmūdajan, ed. Wafiq Kelīnī, Mīzūrī Al-‘Arūsī (Muscat: NRAA, 2014), vol. 1-2.

¹²⁹ Ali Muhsin Barwani, *Conflicts and Harmony in Zanzibar: Memoirs* (Dubai: 1997); Saud bin Ahmad Al-Busaidi, *Memoirs of An Omani Gentleman from Zanzibar* (Muscat: Al-Roya Press and Publishing, 2012); Muhammad Marhubi, *My Zanzibar: from Idyllic to Upheaval*, (Independently published, 2017); Emily Ruete, *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess: An Autobiography* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888).

¹³⁰ Most of the interviews took place between 28 January and 12 February 2020.

to the role of the British political agent in Zanzibar in maintaining Zanzibar's independence and facilitating arbitration through the Viceroy of India, which approved the division of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's state into two separate sultanates. Chapter 2 examines the early years of the two centres of Omani power and identifies vital problems with the implementation of the British-led arbitration agreement. Among these issues are the Zanzibar subsidy, conflicts over Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's inheritance and the emergence of the idea of reunification of the two countries in public discourse. Chapter 3 describes the extent of cooperation between the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar and the development of the idea of reunification in the era of British domination in the region. It also details how ending the Zanzibar subsidy dispute, the collapse of the 1895 Omani uprising, and the 1896 coup d'état of Khalid bin Barghash affected Oman and Zanzibar's relationship.

Chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis describe the legal and institutional reforms carried out in Oman and Zanzibar after 1890 and the involvement of British officials in the personal contacts of Omani elites and the ruling family. Among the developments discussed in Chapter 4 are the implementation of passports and border control, the establishment of separate Omani and Zanzibar nationalities and the division of the ruling family into two branches. This part of the thesis not only shows the impact of the new institutions and laws on contacts and ties between Oman and Zanzibar but also indicates the reaction of Zanzibar's Omani elite to these measures. Chapter 5 describes the colonial brokering of contacts between the two groups of Omani elites. It shows that the activities of British officials, in many cases, fostered the maintenance of relations between them.

The final part of the thesis explores the impact of British imperial policy on the religious ties and identity of the two Omani elites. Chapter 6 describes the consequences of the restitution of the imamate in Oman in 1913 on Omani-Zanzibari relations and British policy towards them. It also details the different agendas and approaches to modernisation of the Omani elite of Zanzibar and the imamate leadership. In addition, it outlines the reasons for the end of direct British interventions in the relationship between the two countries. The last chapter of the dissertation elaborates on the cultural differences between the Omani elite and the Omani elite of Zanzibar. It highlights the role of British colonialism, the development of education and the impact of Swahili culture on Omanis' identity in Zanzibar. The chapter also addresses the significance of the Arab revival on Oman-Zanzibar relations and describes how Omani and Zanzibari politicians saw cooperation with Oman after independence.

Chapter 1

From a family dispute to the British arbitration

The conflict over the rule of Oman after the death of Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān in 1856 began like many similar succession disputes in the country’s history. The younger sons of the deceased ruler did not recognise the authority of their elder brother and, taking advantage of the support of the tribes, tried to seize power over all or part of the state. The dispute that arose between Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān’s sons, however, took place for the first time on both shores of the Indian Ocean: in Oman and Zanzibar. It was also the first time that a powerful external force - the British Empire - was fully involved. The result was British arbitration which sanctioned the division of Oman and Zanzibar into two separate countries and made the British the guarantor of this.

It is intention of this chapter to describe how a family conflict over succession developed into the secession of Zanzibar from Oman secured by the British Empire. The actions of Sa‘īd’s sons after the ruler’s death and the impact of tribal divisions on the dynamics of the political conflict between them will be discussed first. The segmentary structure of Omani society will also play a role in analysing British involvement in the succession dispute. Furthermore, the chapter attempts to reveal the extent to which British policy towards the Oman-Zanzibar confrontation was shaped by the discretionary decisions of low-level British officials. Finally, the Canning Award and its significance for the separation process of the two countries will be discussed.

Death of Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān and a Question of Succession

Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān had 36 children. Among them were 26 sons, of whom at least four were capable of taking power at the time of his death.¹³¹ Further complicating the situation, Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān left no direct instructions regarding the succession. As historian Muhammad Bhacker points out, Sa‘īd’s letter to Lord Aberdeen from 1844, naming his sons Khālīd and Thuwaynī as future rulers of the African and Arab parts of the Omani state, respectively, was proof of his

¹³¹ Ruete, *Memoirs*, 8.

disinheriting his eldest son Hilāl, rather than Saʿīd's desire to partition his domain.¹³² Saʿīd's will also did not address the question of succession because it mainly covered the division of his private property.¹³³ Finally, the existing practice of succession in Oman did not establish clear rules for the transfer of power.

Until the end of the 18th century, the Omani ruler, *Imām Al-Muslimīn*, was elected by Ibādī scholars with the support of the tribes.¹³⁴ However, discontent with the reign of Imam Saʿīd bin Aḥmad led to a significant change in this system in 1786. That year, Saʿīd bin Aḥmad's son Ḥamad took real power in the country and adopted the title of *sayyid* (lord), while his father was left with the honorary title of imam.¹³⁵ Then, when Ḥamad died in 1792, his uncle Sulṭān bin Aḥmad acquired Muscat and his nephew's title. Sulṭān ruled until his death in 1804, leaving behind two minor sons, Sālim and Saʿīd. Despite their uncle Qays bin Aḥmad's attempt to conquer Muscat, the sons' rule was saved, and from 1806 Saʿīd bin Sulṭān began to govern in Muscat.¹³⁶

The political structure of Oman based on the division of tribes into two confederations: Hināwī and Ghāfirī, did not guarantee the ruler unconditional support.¹³⁷ Āl Būsaʿīdī tribe belonged to the Hināwī group, but the ruler could not count on the recognition of the entire confederation as other members of the family laid claims to power and had the support of individual tribes. Therefore, he had to seek support from the Ghāfirīs. Saʿīd bin Sulṭān, whose rulership was not recognised by part of the family of the Qays line and some Hināwī tribes, maintained his power thanks to assistance from Ghāfirī tribal leaders like Muḥammad bin Nāṣir Al-Jābrī.¹³⁸ Consequently, the representative of Āl Būsaʿīdī dynasty who wanted to establish authority over Oman had to gain the approval of most tribes and control of Muscat.¹³⁹ At the moment of Saʿīd bin Sulṭān's death, his eldest son Thuwaynī enjoyed this position as he had

¹³² Saʿīd disinherited Hilāl, who then sought help against his father's decision from the British. The ruler of Oman, fearing that the older and more popular Hilāl would seize power after his death with the help of the British, stipulated in his letter to the foreign secretary that it was his will that power be inherited from him by his next sons Khālīd and Thuwaynī. Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 180.

¹³³ *Will of His Highness Saʿīd bin Sultan*, 26 Ramadan 1266 (5 August 1850), MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

¹³⁴ In fact, from 1624, power in Oman was monopolized in the hands of one tribe, as subsequent members of the Āl Yāʿriba family, then, from 1749, the Āl Būsaʿīdī family, were elected to the office of imam.

¹³⁵ *Imāms and Seyyids of Oman*, 200-201.

¹³⁶ Saʿīd took power despite being younger than Sālim. Bhacker gives possible reasons for this. See Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 52-53.

¹³⁷ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 123.

¹³⁸ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 228.

¹³⁹ The sovereignty of the ruler of Muscat over the rest of Omani lands was limited to cities on the coast and some regions in the country's interiors. Al-Rustāq region, for example, ruled by the Qays's branch of the Āl Būsaʿīdī family, was virtually independent of the *sayyid*'s authority in Muscat.

been his father's deputy in Oman since 1833.¹⁴⁰ However, he could not establish his rule over Sa'īd's entire realm, as control of Muscat was no longer enough to assume the throne of Oman. During his father's reign, a new capital had emerged in East Africa — Zanzibar.

Zanzibar was somewhere Sa'īd bin Sulṭān had resided regularly since 1840, and it had also become a permanent home to hundreds of Omani tribespeople and an important centre of commerce.¹⁴¹ According to the data from the Customs House in Zanzibar, its profit surpassed permanently this one from Muscat after 1845.¹⁴² A significant part of Sa'īd's fleet and army remained in Zanzibar, and the African dependencies were much more stable and peaceful than the Arabian part of the country.

During the ruler's absence in Zanzibar, his deputy also resided there, who at the time of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's death, was his younger son Mājīd. He took over the position in 1854 after the death of his brother Khālīd and, unlike Thuwaynī in Muscat, did not have much experience in state affairs.¹⁴³ Mājīd could count on the support of most of Ghāfirī tribes, whose migration to East Africa was encouraged by his father as a counterweight to the influence of the long-settled Hināwī tribes there, Al-Ḥārithī and Al-Barwānī.¹⁴⁴ Sa'īd's removal of Hināwī influence in Zanzibar made them turn against his rule, and this attitude continued towards his son and successor. Nevertheless, not all Hināwīs were against Mājīd as among his allies was Sulaymān bin Ḥamad Āl Būsa'īdī, who was an influential sheikh and his father's minister.¹⁴⁵

Mājīd and Thuwaynī controlled the two most prominent centres of the Omani state and benefited from the support of different tribal confederations. Thuwaynī in Muscat relied on the Hināwīs and Mājīd in Zanzibar on the Ghāfirī confederation. They were thus natural candidates for the succession of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's realm. However, under the conditions of a tribal state with a segmentary structure, the role of the younger sons of the deceased ruler was also relevant. With the help of tribes from the rival confederation, they could make their claims to power. Mājīd was the first to face such attempt after his father's death in 1856. By the time news of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's demise reached Zanzibar, his next son, Barghash, had decided to seize the moment and with the assistance of 'Abdallāh bin Sālim Al-Barwānī assume power in

¹⁴⁰ Sa'īd bin Muḥammad Al-Hāshimī, 'Sd. Thuywani's Internal and External Policy: 1273/1856-1282/1866: Analysis and Evaluation Study', *Majallāt markaz al-wathā'iq wa-dīrsāt al-insāniyya*, no. 14, (2002): 50.

¹⁴¹ Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 223.

¹⁴² Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 77.

¹⁴³ Probably, Mājīd was not even officially appointed to be his father's representative, see Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 182.

¹⁴⁴ See more about Sa'īd's policy towards the migration of Omani tribes into East Africa, Wilkinson, *The Arabs*, 63-69.

¹⁴⁵ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 182.

Zanzibar.¹⁴⁶ Mājid suppressed this coup and retained his position thanks to the support of the Zanzibari elite.¹⁴⁷

The endorsement of Mājid's rule also played an essential role in Zanzibar's independence, but it is impossible to ascertain if Mājid was thinking about being a sovereign ruler from the very beginning. Thuwaynī's attitude towards Mājid and a question of the African dependencies' future were discussed at the Zanzibari court. Their sister, Salma bint Sa'īd, more commonly known as Emily Ruete, wrote in her autobiography that the royal family in Zanzibar was conscious that Thuwaynī was 'the legitimate successor to the government'.¹⁴⁸ This statement, however, could be an addition influenced by her later life in Europe and its idea of primogeniture. Nevertheless, Mājid had to consider Thuwaynī's position as the eldest and most experienced son of Sa'īd.

Muḥammad bin Sālim's Mission

News about Sa'īd's death reached Oman at the beginning of 1857.¹⁴⁹ Even though Thuwaynī considered proceeding to Zanzibar immediately to take control over the African dependencies, a revolt led by his brother, Turkī, *wālī* of Sohar, in March prevented him from doing so.¹⁵⁰ Turkī's rebellion was born out of the abovementioned succession logic in Oman as he desired to challenge his brother's rule with the support of the northern Ghāfirī tribes.¹⁵¹ As a result, Thuwaynī decided to send his cousin, Muḥammad bin Sālim,¹⁵² to Zanzibar to obtain a peaceful agreement with Mājid.¹⁵³ The outcome of Muḥammad's mission is well known — Mājid bin Sa'īd agreed to pay 40,000 MTT yearly to Thuwaynī — but the details of the negotiations remain mysterious.¹⁵⁴

The meaning of this sum and Mājid's political status are subjects of dispute among scholars. John Lorimer stated that the legal status of this subsidy and Mājid's position were not

¹⁴⁶ Sa'īd bin Sulṭān died at sea during a return trip from Oman. The ruler of Oman was traveling with his son Barghash, who, after his father's death, secretly arrived on the shores of Zanzibar and attempted a surprise takeover, see Al-Qāsimī, *Taqsim*, 90; Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 182.

¹⁴⁷ Support of Zanzibari elites was a key factor for Mājid's maintaining power according to Al-Mughayrī, see Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 269.

¹⁴⁸ Ruete, *Memoirs*, 112.

¹⁴⁹ Native Agent at Muscat to Jones, 4 Jumādā Al-Thāniyya 1274 (31 January 1857), IOR/R/15/1/160.

¹⁵⁰ Native Agent at Muscat to Jones, 2 Sha'bān 1274 (29 March 1857), IOR/R/15/1/155.

¹⁵¹ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 229.

¹⁵² Muḥammad bin Sālim was the son of Sālim bin Sulṭān. He is frequently called Ḥamad in primary and secondary sources. However, his brother's name was Ḥamad (who is sometimes called Aḥmad). Therefore, in many cases, it is not possible to distinguish whose son of Sālim bin Sulṭān was mentioned. It seems that the mission of 1857 to Zanzibar was led by Muḥammad bin Sālim, not Ḥamad as Bhacker states because Muḥammad was also an executor of Sa'īd's will. He married his cousin and a daughter of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān, Rāyya. Emily Ruete mentioned him, calling him 'our brother', see Ruete, *Memoirs*, 113.

¹⁵³ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, p. 183.

¹⁵⁴ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 210.

settled during negotiations.¹⁵⁵ Muhammad Bhacker claims that it was a ‘free gift’. According to him, Mājīd was even to promise further funds to Thuwaynī after recognising him as sovereign of Zanzibar.¹⁵⁶ Nāṣir bin ‘Abdallāh Al-Riyāmī argues that Mājīd had agreed to this subsidy, but he realised later that it placed him as a vassal of Thuwaynī and rejected it.¹⁵⁷ Sa‘īd bin Muḥammad Al-Hāshimī concurs with Al-Riyāmī, underling that Mājīd must have realised that he would be under Thuwaynī’s authority because of this agreement.¹⁵⁸ Sulṭān bin Muḥammad Al-Qāsimī sees two possibilities: first, Muḥammad bin Sālim concealed details of his negotiations with Mājīd (that Mājīd would not be a vassal) from Thuwaynī. Or second, he did tell the ruler of Muscat the truth, but Thuwaynī was occupied with Turkī’s rebellion and could not react to his younger brothers’ insubordination.¹⁵⁹

Scholars’ different and often contradictory opinions result from insufficient sources describing this issue. It appears that the negotiations concluded with an oral agreement, meaning no written document was produced detailing its conditions. When the British resident in the Gulf asked Thuwaynī about the written form of Mājīd’s obligations, the ruler of Muscat replied that all the documents were with Muḥammad bin Sālim, and he did not live in Muscat anymore.¹⁶⁰ The reason that Thuwaynī gave seems quite unconvincing as it is hard to imagine that he would let go of his only proof of Mājīd’s subjugation to his rule.¹⁶¹ Thuwaynī’s unconvincing excuse supports the idea that the agreement was not only oral but very general in detail. As a result, the concepts that Thuwaynī agreed to grant independence to Mājīd in return for 40,000 MTT or that Mājīd decided to subjugate to Thuwaynī’s authority are rather unlikely.

In fact, Mājīd wrote to Thuwaynī on 18 May 1858 (14 Shawwāl 1275 AH) and stated, ‘I tell you, you possess no claim nor anything to advance against me. What even was left by our father, everyone has received his lawful share in the presence of Muḥammad bin Sālim’.¹⁶² The latter part of the quote refers to the division of Sa‘īd’s property among his numerous children and concubines. At the same time, the first part can be applied to the legal and political

¹⁵⁵ Lorimer, *Gazetter*, 470.

¹⁵⁶ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 183.

¹⁵⁷ Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 88.

¹⁵⁸ Al-Hāshimī, ‘Sd. Thuywani’s Internal and External Policy’, 52.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Qāsimī, *Taqṣīm*, 91.

¹⁶⁰ Questions put to His Highness Syed Thuwayni, The Imam of Muscat by Captain Felix Jones, 9 May 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

¹⁶¹ Thuwaynī claimed that Mājīd had recognised his authority with the presence of the foreign consuls in Zanzibar, including A. Hamerton, the British representative, see Thuwayni bin Said to Political Resident, Gulf, 23 Rabī‘ Al-Awwal 1276 (19 November 1859), MSA PD 1860, vol. 96.

¹⁶² Majid bin Said to Thuwayni bin Said, 14 Shawwāl 1275 (18 May 1858), IOR/R/15/1/155. The Arabic documents from the British and Indian archives are presented in their English official translations unless it is stated otherwise.

relations between him and Thuwaynī. The fragment implies that Muḥammad bin Sālim presented certain claims on behalf of his cousin, and Mājid refused to accept them. In 1860, Mājid assured William Coghlan, British resident in Aden, that the subsidy he had paid to Thuwaynī was meant as a purely friendly gift.¹⁶³

Taking the above into account, the idea that the challenging situation in Oman forced Thuwaynī to accept Mājid's refusal to recognise his rule in East Africa seems most plausible. However, the question arises why Thuwaynī did not launch the attack on Zanzibar just after he made peace with Turkī. Instead, he decided to proceed to Zanzibar after Mājid refused to continue paying him the subsidy. This means that Thuwaynī accepted the situation in which his younger brother was paying him money but did not recognise his sovereignty. Mājid's pledge to support him financially and his guarantee of non-intervention in Omani affairs were probably sufficient for the ruler in Muscat at that time. Moreover, his younger brother in Zanzibar also appeared satisfied with the status quo at that moment. During the negotiations, Mājid had just overcome the first Barghash's rebellion and still did not feel secure in Zanzibar. Therefore, any promise that Thuwaynī would avoid pressing his claims in East Africa benefited him.

When Muḥammad bin Sālim arrived in Muscat with half of the promised sum, he immediately began to mediate between Thuwaynī and Turkī.¹⁶⁴ As a result of his efforts, Turkī had to abandon any hostile action against Thuwaynī and retrace to Sohar. Thuwaynī was supposed to return to Turkī all the possessions he had taken from him during the fighting.¹⁶⁵ Muḥammad bin Sālim's mediation could be another step toward securing the Thuwaynī-Mājid agreement, as Mājid claimed later that he had agreed to pay 40,000 MTT to Thuwaynī on the conditions that he would cease all hostiles with Turkī and pay him a sum of 10,000 MTT from Mājid's subsidy.¹⁶⁶

Beginning of the Hostilities

When the peace in Oman was reached, Muḥammad bin Sālim wrote to the Indian merchant on behalf of Thuwaynī, asking for an advance on the rest of Mājid's promised sum.¹⁶⁷ However, the new instalment of Mājid's obligation never arrived in Oman. Mājid explained his refusal stating that Thuwaynī had not fulfilled his part of the agreement.¹⁶⁸ It is impossible to

¹⁶³ *Precis of Correspondence relating to Zanzibar Affairs from 1856 to 1872*. Prepared by Captain P.D. Henderson, attached to the Foreign Department, IOR/L/PS/18/B150A, 21.

¹⁶⁴ Mājid promised to pay the agreed sum in two equal parts: the first one with the south-west monsoon and the second with the north-east. Majid bin Said to Banyan Jiram, undated, MSA PD 1861, vol. 33.

¹⁶⁵ Native Agent to Jones, 5 Rabi' Al-Thānī 1274 (23 November 1857), IOR/R/15/1/155.

¹⁶⁶ Rigby to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 1 December 1859, MSA PD 1860, vol. 96.

¹⁶⁷ Muḥammad bin Salim to Ludda Damjee, 14 Rajab 1274, MSA PD 1861, vol. 33.

¹⁶⁸ Majid bin Said to Thuwayni bin Said, 14 Shawwāl 1275 (18 May 1858), IOR/R/15/1/155

clarify Mājīd's accusation because the details of the deal between him and Thuwaynī are unknown. Probably, he meant that Thuwaynī took the money for himself and did not transfer the promised sum to Turkī.¹⁶⁹ Among other factors, the reason for this could be the resumption of hostilities between Turkī and Thuwaynī in August 1858¹⁷⁰ or Thuwaynī's rejection of the division of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's property in Oman.¹⁷¹

Besides these arguments, it seems that the cause for Mājīd's failure to send payment was a decrease in income at the Zanzibari customs house. This loss of income could have prevented Mājīd from meeting his financial obligations to Thuwaynī.¹⁷² This reason was rejected by Omani scholar Al-Hāshimī, who argues that fiscal problems were an insufficient excuse for Mājīd to sever ties with his brother and proclaim independence.¹⁷³ Also, there can be another explanation for Mājīd's decision, which does not exclude others, namely, Mājīd felt secure enough to risk an open confrontation with his elder brother. Unlike Thuwaynī, he enjoyed stability in Zanzibar, and what is more important, he could expect British assistance as in the summer of 1858, a new British representative arrived – Christopher Rigby.¹⁷⁴

Hearing about Mājīd's decision, Thuwaynī decided to proceed to Zanzibar with his naval force to settle the African dependencies' status once and for all. The operation seemed well planned as he announced the prospective expedition among the Omani tribes and encouraged them to gather their forces.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, he was accused of sending money to Barghash and supporting the Al-Ḥārithī tribe in Zanzibar to fuel a rebellion there.¹⁷⁶ Thuwaynī's support for them was natural. From the very beginning, Al-Ḥārithīs from Zanzibar expressed dissatisfaction with Mājīd's rule. The expedition of the ruler of Muscat was also welcomed by the French, who even made an agreement with Thuwaynī. According to it, they were to receive a port on the East African Coast in return for their commitment to Thuwaynī's

¹⁶⁹ From the first instalment of 20,000 MTT, 5,000 was for Turkī in Mājīd's opinion. Rigby to the Secretary of the Government of Bombay, 1 December 1859, MSA PD 1860, vol. 96.

¹⁷⁰ This time the conflict ended quickly as a Wahhābī agent at Buraymī mediated between Turkī and Thuwaynī. In consequence, Turkī got a stipend of 300 MTT from Thuwaynī and an assurance that his rule over Sohar and Liwa would not be undermined. However, he had to accept Thuwaynī's suzerainty. Jones to Anderson, 18 August 1858, IOR/R/15/1/155.

¹⁷¹ Muḥammad bin Sālim was to negotiate the sum of 40,000 MTT for Thuwaynī and as well the partition of Sa'īd's property in Oman, especially his horses, but Thuwaynī rejected transferring Mājīd's share unless he advanced to him the promised subsidy. Native Agent to Jones, 8 Jumādā Al-Awwal 1275 (15 December 1858), IOR/R/1/155.

¹⁷² Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 183.

¹⁷³ Al-Hāshimī, 'Sd. Thuywani's Internal and External Policy', 52.

¹⁷⁴ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 184.

¹⁷⁵ Native Agent at Muscat to Anderson, 8 Jumādā Al-Awwal 1275 (15 December 1858), MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

¹⁷⁶ Coupland, *The Exploitation*, 17.

cause.¹⁷⁷ However, any French compliance in the hostilities between Mājid and Thuwaynī must be considered with caution. The British sources often exaggerated their role in the events.¹⁷⁸

Thuwaynī's army and fleet were ready at the beginning of 1859, and in February, his expedition left Muscat for Zanzibar.¹⁷⁹ Even though news of Thuwaynī's attack reached Zanzibar late, Mājid managed to prepare his defence.¹⁸⁰ Zanzibari historian Sa'īd Al-Mughayrī reported that information about the invasion caused a great disturbance in Zanzibar, but apparently, it was short-lived unrest.¹⁸¹ The exact extent of the Zanzibari Arabs' endorsement of Mājid and his action is impossible to determine. The fact that his authority survived Barghash's first rebellion and that part of Thuwaynī's army, which avoided capture by the British and reached the coast of East Africa, was effectively prevented from landing suggest that Mājid's rule must have had substantial popular support. It likely stemmed from the fact that the Arabs in Zanzibar did not know Thuwaynī, who had never visited East Africa, and were used to having a ruler or his deputy regularly residing in Zanzibar. Moreover, Mājid's decision to secede could not be seen as an act of permanent separation, as divisions of Omani territory between members of the Āl Busa'īdī dynasty had happened many times in the country's history.

The most significant factor in maintaining Mājid's power and implementing his plans for independence was the British. Sa'īd's younger son asked the British representative in Zanzibar to seek the Government of India's intervention to defend his power and resolve the dispute between him and his elder brother, Thuwaynī.¹⁸² The British had a long tradition of interference in the internal affairs of India and the Gulf. Indian princes and *nawabs* (viceroys) treated agents of the East India Company or the British Crown as allies for their battles and disputes.¹⁸³ The Arab sheikhs of the Gulf acted similarly and used the British as influential protectors in their rivalries over limited economic resources in the 19th century.¹⁸⁴ On Omani soil, the British were first engaged in 1844 by Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's first-born son, Hilāl, who sought their help in a conflict with his father.¹⁸⁵ British involvement in such matters allowed

¹⁷⁷ Mombasa, Barawa, or Lamu were mentioned as potential French acquisitions, see Coupland, *The Exploitation*, 22.

¹⁷⁸ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 211.

¹⁷⁹ Jenkins to Jones, 26 February 1859, IOR/R/15/1/155.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Qāsimī, *Taqṣīm*, 100.

¹⁸¹ Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 269-279.

¹⁸² Al-Qāsimī, *Taqṣīm*, 100.

¹⁸³ Barbara N. Ramusack, *The New Cambridge History of India. The Indian Princes and Their States*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 62-63.

¹⁸⁴ James Onley, 'The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century', *New Arabian Studies*, no. 6, (2004), 33-34.

¹⁸⁵ His father disinherited Hilāl bin Sa'īd because of the intrigues of one of Sa'īd's concubines, who preferred her own son, Khālīd, as an heir. In consequence, Hilāl traveled to London and requested aid from the British

them to expand their influence, make local rulers dependent on them for support and thus build colonial power and systems of extraction, despite having few resources of their own back in Britain.¹⁸⁶

Under the conditions of a segmentary state, the inclusion of a foreign and powerful political force in the form of the British significantly disrupted the system of balance that the two tribal confederations guaranteed. Benefiting from the assistance of British officials and the British fleet, Mājid gained a significant advantage over Thuwaynī. His elder brother in Muscat could not count on a similar range of external support. He did try to engage with the French, but they did not have an agent in Muscat at the time and were more interested in East Africa than Oman.¹⁸⁷ The British, on the other hand, were represented in Muscat only by a local agent, and the closest British official in the region was the political resident in the Gulf based in Bushire, Persia, who was from 1856 to 1862 Captain Felix Jones.¹⁸⁸ This former employee of the English India Company was interested in keeping the peace in the Gulf and had no reason to side with Thuwaynī. He only supported him when Mājid tried to stir up revolt against the ruler of Muscat (see below).¹⁸⁹

The situation was different in Zanzibar where the British political agent acted in most cases on his own initiative and far beyond his authority. Rigby was a declared opponent of slavery and decided to use Mājid's precarious position to curb it. He offered the young ruler British recognition and assistance for his rule in Zanzibar in return for adopting anti-French policies and providing the British with the sole discretion to dispossess the Indian population in Zanzibar of their slaves.¹⁹⁰ The British official in Zanzibar believed that the French wanted to obtain territory for themselves in the Gulf, and they supported Thuwaynī against Mājid.¹⁹¹ Therefore, the reports he submitted to Bombay about the conflict between Sa'īd's son were extremely one-sided, and he included plenty of false information designed to portray Thuwaynī and Barghash as threats to British interests.¹⁹²

government in that matter. However, he died in 1851 before the British had a chance to intervene, see Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 179.

¹⁸⁶ Ramusack, *Indian Princes*, 74.

¹⁸⁷ The French were interested in acquiring slaves in East Africa for their plantation on Reunion and sought to enlist Mājid's support for the venture, see Wilkinson, *The Arabs*, 120-121.

¹⁸⁸ The British political agent was not appointed in Muscat until after the announcement of the arbitration in 1861.

¹⁸⁹ Jones to Rigby, 20 August 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 121

¹⁹⁰ Wilkinson, *The Arabs*, 123. Indian merchants in Zanzibar, as subjects of British India, were not allowed to own slaves.

¹⁹¹ Wilkinson, *The Arabs*, 122.

¹⁹² Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 185; Al-Hāshimī, 'Sd. Thuywani's Internal and External Policy', 53; Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 201.

Rigby's actions yielded the result he had desired as British India authorities accepted his call for intervention, and a British squadron under the command of Griffith Jenkins intercepted Thuwaynī's fleet near Ras Al-Hadd. Thuwaynī reluctantly agreed to return to Muscat and involve the British in his dispute with Mājīd. However, part of his fleet, consisting of native vessels, had left Muscat earlier and was not stopped by Commodore Jenkins. The ruler of Muscat promised to send a ship to intercept them and return them to Oman, but most of the fleet reached East Africa and was prevented from landing there.¹⁹³

Thuwaynī returned to Muscat just in time as his brother Turkī bin Sa'īd was about to launch an attack against his capital. According to the British native agent at Muscat, Turkī wrote to Mājīd while Thuwaynī was preparing to invade Zanzibar and offered support. Turkī suggested that he would attack Muscat if Mājīd provided him with adequate resources.¹⁹⁴ The ruler of Zanzibar was to send him 30,000 MTT, two large iron guns, 200 barrels of gunpowder, cannonballs, and other goods via a French vessel that sailed directly from Zanzibar to Sohar.¹⁹⁵ When the whole situation was exposed, Mājīd denied his intention to fuel a revolt against Thuwaynī. He only admitted that he had sent money and ammunition to Turkī, explaining the money rightfully belonged to Turkī as it was his share of the inheritance in Zanzibar.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, the ruler of Zanzibar sent him the sum which had been promised to him by Muḥammad bin Sālim-Mājīd agreement and was not paid by Thuwaynī. When it comes to ammunition, Mājīd claimed that it was a customary gift for his brother.¹⁹⁷

Mājīd's aid for Turkī divided British officials in the region. Rigby supported Mājīd's arguments, but he met with opposition from the British resident in the Gulf. The latter accused Mājīd of promoting unrest in Oman and collaborating with the French. Jones also asked the consul in Zanzibar to prevent Mājīd from acting against Thuwaynī.¹⁹⁸ The dispute between British officials in the Gulf and Zanzibar indicates that British policy towards the conflict between Sa'īd's sons did not follow one predetermined plan, and decisions were taken at the level of the lower administration.

Despite the failure of his expedition, Thuwaynī did not lose hope of regaining Zanzibar. When he returned to Muscat, he wrote to governor of Bombay, John Elphinstone, justifying his actions and explaining his claims. He stated that he intended to negotiate with Mājīd, not wage

¹⁹³ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 184.

¹⁹⁴ Native Agent at Muscat to Jones, 14 Shawwāl 1275 (18 May 1859), IOR/R/15/1/155.

¹⁹⁵ Native Agent at Muscat to Jones, 14 Shawwāl 1275 (18 May 1859), IOR/R/15/1/155.

¹⁹⁶ The share was to amount to 10,000 MTT. Native Agent at Muscat to Jones, 14 Shawwāl 1275 (18 May 1859), IOR/R/15/1/155.

¹⁹⁷ Rigby to the Secretary of the Government of Bombay, 1 December 1859, MSA PD 1860, vol. 96.

¹⁹⁸ Jones to Rigby, 20 August 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

war. However, he did not clarify to Lord Elphinstone why he needed hundreds of soldiers and several ships for these negotiations. Nevertheless, Thuwaynī tried to assure the British official of his goodwill and informed the governor that he had already sent Ḥamad bin Sālīm to bring the fleet of native vessels back.¹⁹⁹ He also added to the letter his claims against Mājīd, formulated in four articles:

Article First: That there shall be one consolidated state without any division; Zanzibar being subordinate to Muscat and that the interests of the one shall be identified with those of the other, as during the time of our father and forefathers.

Article Second: Has reference to a settlement effected by brother Muhammad bin Salim between us with the common consent of all parties, that he [Majid] should pay me a sum of forty thousand French Dollars annually. In the event of Oman being involved in any hostilities, Zanzibar shall afford assistance, as has always been the practice for Zanzibar to assist Oman.

Article Third. That the property of the orphans shall be given up by him and deposited with a trustworthy person, in whose custody all parties may feel satisfied that it will be safe.

Article Fourth: That brother Majid shall indemnify me for all the copes entailed upon me on account of the expense of despatching an army in consequence of his opposition and disobedience.²⁰⁰

Thuwaynī's claims sent to the British are further evidence of the ruler of Muscat's desire to unify his father's state. If Sa'īd's eldest son had been unable or unwilling to address the status of Zanzibar between 1856 and 1859, this attitude had now changed decisively. However, Thuwaynī's intention was not to remove Mājīd from Zanzibar, but he expected his younger brother to be his vassal there. It cannot be ruled out that the letter to the British did not reflect Thuwaynī's true aims in this matter. He was probably aware of the close relationship between Mājīd and the British, so the suggestion that his brother could remain in Zanzibar as a vassal was a concession to the imperial authorities in India. On the other hand, Thuwaynī might have also realised that Mājīd had strong support there and taking direct control or appointing his own governor would not be possible.

Certainly, Thuwaynī wanted to weaken Mājīd's position in Zanzibar; this was the purpose of raising the issue of their younger siblings. They were living in Zanzibar under Mājīd's guardianship, which meant that he could derive income from their share of their late father's estate. Not surprisingly, Thuwaynī was interested in changing this situation and taking control over this source of money. Thuwaynī's letter, though important in reconstructing his political

¹⁹⁹ Substance of a letter from Thuwayni bin Said to Lord Elphinstone, 14 Rajab 1275 (18 February 1859), MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

²⁰⁰ Inclosure to substance of a letter Thuwayni bin Said to Lord Elphinstone, 14 Rajab 1275 (18 February 1859), MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

agenda, did not garner British support. The ruler of Muscat must have been aware of this possibility, as he had also prepared a backup plan.

Hamad bin Sālim's Activities in Zanzibar

On 18 April 1859, Ḥamad bin Sālim (Muḥammad's brother) arrived in Zanzibar from Muscat. Officially, he had come to take back the rest of Thuwaynī's fleet, which had reached East Africa, and resume the negotiations with Mājid. However, he was said to have come to instigate a revolt in his master's name.²⁰¹ Unfortunately, the account of Ḥamad bin Sālim's mission to Zanzibar is covered mainly by Rigby's letters, meaning that it cannot be treated as fully trustworthy. According to Rigby, Ḥamad bin Sālim was a 'very intriguing and unscrupulous person'.²⁰² He accused Ḥamad of giving money to a *jamadar* (army officer) from Mājid's household as a bribe so that he would assassinate the ruler of Zanzibar.²⁰³ This report is impossible to verify, especially as Mājid wrote to Ḥamad just after he departed from Zanzibar and stated, 'I have nothing to complain of you, I have observed nothing but good behaviour on your part'.²⁰⁴

Despite the tone of Mājid's letter, the mission of Thuwaynī's envoy was unsuccessful. Ḥamad bin Sālim was to demand a renewal of the subsidy's payment from Mājid. Moreover, he presented Thuwaynī's desire to care for his younger siblings, who were under the Mājid's custody.²⁰⁵ According to Rigby, Ḥamad also made a third request to Mājid. He was to request the cession of Mombasa, 'or the Coast of Africa', to the ruler of Muscat.²⁰⁶ This last claim needs some explanation as it appears to be surprising. Thuwaynī, in his earlier demands, indicated that all the African dominions which were under his father's rule should also be under his authority. Also, in the subsequent accounts, there is no indication that the ruler of Muscat was prepared to accept only part of the African territories. It is probably Rigby's manipulation that was meant to validate the abovementioned report that Thuwaynī cooperated with the French and promised them territory in East Africa. Rigby also stated in his letters that Ḥamad was in close communication with the French consul in Zanzibar.²⁰⁷ All these efforts aimed to

²⁰¹ Rigby to Anderson, 18 June 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol 189.

²⁰² Rigby to Anderson, 12 September 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol 189.

²⁰³ The plot was discovered, and the *jamadar* was arrested in the Fort. Rigby to Anderson, 12 September 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol 189.

²⁰⁴ Majid bin Said to Hamad bin Salim, Ṣafar 1276 (September 1859), MSA PD 1859, vol. 121. Bhacker trusts Rigby's narration and claimed that it was part of Barghash's intrigues against Mājid. Moreover, Ḥamad's departure from Zanzibar was to be caused by his involvement in this plot, see Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 187.

²⁰⁵ Rigby to Anderson, 18 June 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 189.

²⁰⁶ Rigby to Anderson, 18 June 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 189.

²⁰⁷ Rigby to Anderson, 25 April 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

persuade the British Government of India that supporting Thuwaynī would mean the growth of French influence in East Africa and undermining the British position there.

Interestingly, among Ḥamad's demands reported by Rigby, there was no direct claim concerning the political status of Mājīd. The issue seemed to be crucial for both sons of Sa'īd, but either the British representative in Zanzibar decided to omit it in his letters to the Bombay government or Ḥamad did not present it to Mājīd. Naturally, Rigby did not report to Bombay every detail of Ḥamad's visit. He chose the topics best suited to weaken Thuwaynī's position²⁰⁸. When it comes to Ḥamad bin Sālīm, he might not have presented this claim because he did not want to antagonise Mājīd at the beginning of his mission. It appears that the financial issues were of much greater importance to the ruler of Muscat. At the same time, there is no doubt that Thuwaynī desired political control over Zanzibar at this point. He expressed it directly in the abovementioned letter to Lord Elphinstone and later during his conversation with the resident in the Gulf.²⁰⁹

Notwithstanding the details of Ḥamad's demands, Mājīd's response to them did not leave any space for further negotiations. He stated that he could not do anything regarding Thuwaynī's wishes as he abided by the arbitration of the British government in that matter, and he was waiting for their decision.²¹⁰ Therefore, he did not address any of Ḥamad's requests but only underlined his desire to maintain unity and 'rule the dependencies which I inherited from my father with justice'.²¹¹ Ḥamad tried to persuade Mājīd that the dispute between him and Thuwaynī could be settled without the intermediation of the British Government of India. However, Mājīd was adamant about Ḥamad's arguments.²¹² Thuwaynī's envoy knew that Mājīd's persistence resulted from Rigby's influence. He even attempted to approach the British Political Agent directly in this matter but was met with a very harsh response.²¹³

Despite the failure of Ḥamad's negotiations, he prolonged his stay in Zanzibar several times, finally leaving the island on 11 September 1859.²¹⁴ It makes that Rigby's claim that Ḥamad came to Zanzibar to launch a revolt against Mājīd cannot be easily dismissed as false.

²⁰⁸ The exact passage of Rigby's letter: 'Hamad bin Salem has been most importunate in urging His Highness the sultan to accede to the demands of Syed Thuwayni, particularly to the payment of the forty thousand crowns annually; the cession to Syud Thuwayni of the Port of Mombasa or the coast of Africa and the renunciation of the custody as his father's executor of the custody of the young children of the late Imaum.' Rigby to Anderson, 18 June 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 189.

²⁰⁹ Questions put to His Highness Syed Thuwayni, The Imam of Muscat by Captain Felix Jones, 9 May 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

²¹⁰ Rigby to Anderson, 18 June 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 189.

²¹¹ Quoted in Al-Qāsimī, *Taqsim*, 123.

²¹² Al-Qāsimī, *Taqsim*, 124.

²¹³ Rigby to Anderson, 18 June 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 189.

²¹⁴ Rigby to Anderson, 12 September 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 189.

The reason for Ḥamad's extended stay could not have been the pattern of monsoon winds, as the best time to depart from Zanzibar for Arabian ports was at the beginning of summer. Rigby suspected that Ḥamad's presence in Zanzibar was related to Barghash's intrigues. He reported to Bombay that Ḥamad was waiting until the British ship 'Clive' left Zanzibar. It would give Barghash the necessary advantage over Mājid, which could have resulted in a successful rebellion. However, the British ship remained in the port, and the British consul carefully followed the movements of Mājid's opponents.²¹⁵

The Rebellion of Barghash bin Sa'īd

The plot against Mājid had already begun to thicken even before the arrival of Thuwaynī's envoy. According to Al-Mughayrī, in March 1859, Barghash confirmed to 'Abdallāh bin Sālīm Al-Barwanī that he would receive money guaranteed by Thuwaynī, presumably to stir up a revolt in Zanzibar.²¹⁶ The alliance between Barghash and Al-Ḥārithīs, who had once tried to contest Mājid's authority, was forged anew. The arrival of Ḥamad strengthened Barghash's position as he was rumoured to have obtained 40,000 MTT from Thuwaynī to secure the support of the local elites against Mājid.²¹⁷ Barghash and 'Abdallāh bin Sālīm were also backed by another representative of the Al-Ḥārithī tribe, Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī from Oman, and Nāṣir bin 'Alī who came with Ḥamad bin Sālīm to Zanzibar.²¹⁸ Moreover, Arabs from the Persian Gulf were said to join Barghash's cause.²¹⁹ At the same time, Ḥamad bin Sālīm tried to win over Mājid's minister, Sulaymān bin Ḥamad. However, he failed to do so as Sulaymān transferred Thuwaynī's secret letters to Rigby.²²⁰

According to Rigby, Barghash also enjoyed substantial support from the French. Soon after the failure of Thuwaynī's invasion of Zanzibar, the French warship 'La Cordelière' arrived in Zanzibar. Its commander, Alphonse de Langle, accompanied by the French Consul Ladislavus Cochet, tried to mediate between Mājid and Barghash. The French stated that the British were not allowed to impose British arbitration on the sons of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān.²²¹ They referred to their treaty with the late ruler and claimed they were responsible for making peace

²¹⁵ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 186.

²¹⁶ Barghash bin Said to Abdullah bin Salim Al-Barwani, 23 Sha'bān 1275 (28 March 1859), quoted in Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 278.

²¹⁷ Al-Riyāmī rejects this accusation and states that Rigby had misinformed Mājid to antagonize him and Barghash, see Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 91.

²¹⁸ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 187.

²¹⁹ Rigby to Anderson, 12 September 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 189.

²²⁰ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 186.

²²¹ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 216.

between Mājid and Barghash.²²² They offered Mājid their efforts to mediate between him and Barghash. When it came to Barghash, Cochet assured him that he would receive French protection and be transported to Muscat if negotiations failed. De Langle also assumed that the reconciliation between Mājid and Barghash would enable the French to mediate between Mājid and Thuwaynī.²²³ Despite their ambitions, the French only managed to declare that Barghash was under their protection before additional British forces anchored at Zanzibar and overpowered them, rendering them powerless to offer the protections they had promised.²²⁴

Strengthening the British forces in Zanzibar was a direct result of Rigby's dealings with the British Government of India. He used Ḥamad bin Sālim's stay and an anti-French sentiment among British officials to obtain additional warships.²²⁵ He also urged Mājid to force Ḥamad to leave Zanzibar and take firm action against Barghash. The latter issue was a partial success. Mājid decided to introduce harsh measures against Al-Ḥārithīs, and in July 1859, he ordered the arrest of their principal leaders, including ʿAbdallāh bin Sālim.²²⁶ At the same time, he tried to find a peaceful solution with Barghash. Probably he thought that the pacification of the Al-Ḥārithī tribe would force Barghash to cooperate. He could also treat the French declaration seriously and did not want to antagonise them. As a result, Mājid offered Barghash several chances to migrate to Muscat.

The first time he was about to leave Zanzibar with Ḥamad bin Sālim. Mājid tried to exploit the prolonged stay of Thuwaynī's envoy and insisted that Barghash leave Zanzibar for Muscat, threatening him with arrest or exile.²²⁷ Neither Ḥamad nor Barghash agreed to this as they still hoped for a common rebellion against Mājid. The second chance to peacefully resolve the conflict appeared after Ḥamad's return to Muscat. Mājid presumably thought that his younger brother, if left alone, would be more cooperative. He offered that the British vessel would take Barghash to Muscat and promised that his stay there would be temporary.²²⁸ Not only did Barghash not trust his brother's offer, he also suspected the ship would be bombed on the high seas.²²⁹ The last attempt to persuade Barghash to sail to Muscat came with support

²²² Al-Qāsimī, *Taqṣīm*, 118.

²²³ Al-Qāsimī, *Taqṣīm*, 119.

²²⁴ After the failure of Barghash's rebellion, the French were supposed to present Mājid humiliating demands and temporarily break relations with him. Rigby to Anderson, 13 April 1860, IOR/L/PS/5/504

²²⁵ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 216-217.

²²⁶ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 187.

²²⁷ Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 92.

²²⁸ Substance of a letter from Sulayman bin Hamud to Thuwayni bin Said, 29 Rabīʿ Al-Awwal 1276 (24 October 1859), MSA PD 1860, vol. 96.

²²⁹ Rigby to Anderson, 9 October 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 189. Rigby reported that Barghash was to barricade himself at home with his younger siblings and their mothers and threaten to blow himself up if he was forced to travel.

from Mājīd's minister, Sulaymān bin Ḥamad, and the Indian merchant Ludda Damjee. Thanks to their mediation, Barghash obtained his share in late Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's property as well as a loan for hiring his own vessel to Muscat. Barghash also received one month to arrange his affairs in Zanzibar before leaving.²³⁰

Although the ship was rented, Barghash did not embark on it. He fled to a plantation called 'Marseilles' and gathered his followers there. It was a fortified plantation outside the city of Zanzibar in present-day Kizimbani.²³¹ According to Rigby, Barghash's consent to leave Zanzibar was only a ploy to gain more time. Barghash himself claimed that he was ready to depart from Zanzibar, but Mājīd's forces surrounded his plantation and started hostilities.²³² It is hardly possible as even his sister, Salma bint Sa'īd, who supported him, confirmed his intention to use 'Marseilles' as a hideout for the rebellion.²³³ The attack of Mājīd's troops on the plantation proved ineffective, and only British aid resulted in Barghash's defeat on 16 October 1859.²³⁴ Rigby's long-awaited dream to send Barghash to Muscat could be finally fulfilled. On board the British ship 'Assaye', Barghash departed for Muscat with a promise that he would never return to Zanzibar.²³⁵

Barghash's stay in Muscat did not last long, however. When he reached the capital of Oman, he did not find his brother and former ally because Thuwaynī was in Bandar Abbas. Al-Qāsimī claimed they finally met, but their contact was brief as Barghash desired to proceed to Bombay.²³⁶ Whether he came into conflict with Thuwaynī or if some other factor influenced Barghash's decision to leave Muscat is not certain. Already in November 1859, he wrote an obsequious letter to the British Viceroy asking him for permission to travel to Bombay.²³⁷ The consent was granted, and before the end of 1859, Barghash was in Bombay. His short-lived stay in Muscat begs questions about the nature of the relationship between Barghash and the ruler of Muscat.

Upon first reading, Barghash's rebellion seems to have been influenced by Thuwaynī, as the rebellious prince relied heavily on funds and people from Oman. The revolt had probably

²³⁰ Substance of a letter from Sulayman bin Hamud to Thuwayni bin Said, 29 Rabī' Al-Awwal 1276 (24 October 1859), MSA PD 1860, vol. 96.

²³¹ The name 'Marseilles' was given to the place by its previous owner, Khālīd bin Sa'īd, who was an avid admirer of France, see Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 245.

²³² Barghash bin Said to Thuwayni bin Said, undated, IOR/R/15/1/155.

²³³ Ruete, *Memoirs*, 241.

²³⁴ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 188.

²³⁵ Barghash bin Said to Thuwayni bin Said, undated, MSA PD 1860, vol. 96.

²³⁶ Al-Qāsimī, *Taqsim*, 145.

²³⁷ In that letter, he complained that he had not found Thuwaynī in Muscat on his arrival and 'it was not agreeable to my feelings of respect'. Barghash bin Said to Lord Elphinstone, 17 Rabī' Al-Akhīr 1276 (13 November 1859), MSA PD 1859, vol 189.

been scheduled to begin during Ḥamad bin Sālim's stay in Zanzibar, but Rigby's protective measures prevented it. Al-Mughayrī claimed that Thuwaynī and 'Abdallāh bin Sālim concluded a sort of mutual agreement, and Barghash was supposed to represent Thuwaynī's party in Zanzibar. At the same time, Al-Mughayrī argued that Barghash's support for the ruler of Muscat did not mean resignation from his own ambitions.²³⁸ In fact, Barghash's actions after Ḥamad bin Sālim's departure, including his fleeing to *shamba* 'Marseilles' and the decision to start the rebellion there, appear to be independent moves. Thomas McDow suggests that Barghash probably decided to start his rebellion, still expecting Thuwaynī's aid.²³⁹ This conviction, if true, was an illusion; the coalition against Mājīd was on the verge of collapse.

In September 1859, Rigby reported to Bombay that there was a serious conflict between Al-Ḥārithīs and Thuwaynī. The latter accused the tribe of embezzling the funds he had devoted to the cause of the rebellion. Thuwaynī was also to punish 'Abdallāh bin Sālim by confiscating his large ship in Muscat.²⁴⁰ The action had little impact on Barghash's position as 'Abdallāh bin Sālim had already been arrested, but it may have been the factor that drove Ḥamad to leave Zanzibar and abandon Barghash. Moreover, among Barghash's supporters, there were still tribesmen from the Al-Ḥārithī tribe and volunteers from the Gulf. Their morale must have suffered as a result of Thuwaynī's action. In consequence, Barghash's quick departure from Muscat was probably an effect of his dissatisfaction towards Thuwaynī's conduct during his quarrel with Mājīd.

Barghash's rebellion of 1859 was not merely another succession crisis like the previous one in 1856 or Turkī's struggles in Oman. His rebellion revealed a profound division among the Omani elite in Zanzibar. It turned out that Omani tribes associated with the Hināwī confederation, including Al-Ḥārithī and Al-Barwānī, supported Barghash. While members of Banū Riyām, Al-Maskarī and Al-Mughayrī, comprising the Ghāfiri confederation, backed Mājīd.²⁴¹ The line of support for a particular side in this conflict, however, did not run exclusively along boundaries of the segmentary groups. Mājīd managed to secure backing from some representatives of the Hināwī confederation, like 'Alī bin Mas'ūd and Ḥusayn bin Muḥammad of the Al-Barwānī tribe. At the same time, the Āl Būsa'idī family remained divided, with Sa'id's children Salma, Khūla and 'Abd al-'Azīz supporting Barghash.²⁴²

²³⁸ Al-Mughayrī, *Juhaynat*, 277.

²³⁹ McDow, *Buying Time*, 74.

²⁴⁰ Rigby to Anderson, 21 October 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 189.

²⁴¹ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 187.

²⁴² Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 187.

Consequently, the segmentary nature of Omani society in Zanzibar meant that Mājīd was unable to gain enough support from the Arabs to crush his younger brother's rebellion on his own. British assistance proved necessary. It not only saved Mājīd's position but accelerated the process of dividing the two countries and increased British influence in the region.²⁴³ Rigby's actions based on his own political plans and visions gained acceptance from Bombay and set a precedent for later British representatives in imposing their agenda on a superior level of colonial administration. These events also initiated the British practice of intervening in Zanzibar's internal affairs, culminating in the declaration of a protectorate over the country in 1890.²⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the conclusions drawn by some scholars that Barghash's action was a sign of patriotism in defence of Oman's national unity must be treated with caution.²⁴⁵ It is doubtful that Barghash's main aim was to preserve his father's domain. His motivation was rather to replace Mājīd with Thuwaynī's support. There are no clear indications that as a ruler of Zanzibar, he would be a vassal of Muscat. On the contrary, the aforementioned passage from Al-Mughayrī's work underlines Barghash's political ambitions. His later actions as the Sultan of Zanzibar and his interest in Omani affairs cannot fully explain the agenda of the 1859 rebellion. Probably, any potential unification of late Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's domain under the leadership of Barghash and Thuwaynī would have been as short-lived as their cooperation during the insurrection.

The Canning Award

Thuwaynī's conflict with the Al-Ḥārithī tribe was one reason for his lack of support for Barghash. The second one was an obligation he made to the British. While Barghash was staging his rebellion, after having made a false promise to sail to Muscat, Thuwaynī was forced to submit his dispute with Mājīd to British arbitration. From the outset, the ruler of Muscat was reluctant to accept British intervention in the conflict.²⁴⁶ It is worth noting that one of the aims of Ḥamad's visit to Zanzibar was to resolve the dispute without the involvement of Bombay. Initially, Thuwaynī might have thought he was in a better position than his brother. He was older, more experienced in governance, and had a larger army. However, the British interception of his invasion of Zanzibar and Ḥamad's reports about Rigby must have made it

²⁴³ McDow, *Buying Time*, 74.

²⁴⁴ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 65.

²⁴⁵ Abdul Sheriff and Nāṣir bin 'Abdallāh Al-Riyāmī, among others, represented this view, see Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 88; Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 211.

²⁴⁶ Al-Qāsimī, *Taqīm*, 136.

clear to him that the British favoured Mājīd. As a result, when the viceroy demanded a clear declaration that Thuwaynī would agree to British arbitration, he tried to avoid giving a firm answer. The letter he prepared for the viceroy was very general and without any explicit commitments. It was only through the British envoy's tenacity that Thuwaynī agreed, in his final response, to accept British arbitration and its future outcome and to refrain from any action against Mājīd for its duration.²⁴⁷

As the arbitration was announced, it became clear that Thuwaynī's concerns had been well-founded, but at the initial stage of the British officials' intervention, the matter was not settled against the ruler of Oman. In May 1859, Captain Felix Jones, the British resident for the Persian Gulf, questioned Thuwaynī in Muscat about the character of the Omani 'state' and the issue of succession. During this conversation, Thuwaynī stood firmly in the position that he was the only legitimate successor and ruler of the whole of Oman, including East Africa. Moreover, he underlined that partition of the state would not be acceptable, stating that 'a sultan cannot partition his dominions during his life, how it is possible then to divide them after death?'.²⁴⁸ In this response, as in others, Thuwaynī obviously bent the historical record to fit his agenda. Since the Āl Būsa'īdī dynasty came to power in Oman, the country experienced constant internal disintegration. In fact, no ruler from this dynasty, including the first one, Aḥmad bin Sa'īd, had ever governed the entire territory of Oman.²⁴⁹

The end of Barghash's rebellion and Thuwaynī's cooperation regarding the arbitration facilitated British efforts to end the dispute between the brothers. In June 1860, the Bombay government instructed William Coghlan, the political resident in Aden, to examine the matter and make suggestions regarding the position of Mājīd and Thuwaynī.²⁵⁰ Coghlan was initially against the partition of Oman. However, he later changed his mind under the influence of Rigby and other British officials.²⁵¹ The case was not settled for almost the whole of 1860. This uncertainty caused anxiety in both Muscat and Zanzibar. Mājīd complained that according to rumours he heard from Bombay, the outcome of the arbitration would benefit Thuwaynī.²⁵² The

²⁴⁷ Commander HMS 'Georg' to Anderson, 24 September 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

²⁴⁸ Questions put to His Highness Syed Thuwayni, The Imam of Muscat by Captain Felix Jones, 9 May 1859, MSA PD 1859, vol. 121

²⁴⁹ The territories held by members of the former dynasty, Āl Ya'āriba, had not acknowledged his rule and until the time of Sa'ī bin Sulṭān remained effectively independent, 'On the death of his father, Ahmed bin Said, all the fortress of 'Omān were made over him, with the exception of those at El-Hazm, Nakhl and Yabrin.' *History of Imāms and Seyyids*, 189.

²⁵⁰ *Precis of Correspondence relating to Zanzibar Affairs from 1856 to 1872*. Prepared by Captain P.D. Henderson, attached to the Foreign Department, IOR/L/PS/18/B150A, 19.

²⁵¹ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 185.

²⁵² Substance of a letter from Majid bin Said to Hamad bin Salim, undated, MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

ruler of Muscat, in turn, pressed the British to make a quicker decision, stressing his difficult financial situation.²⁵³

Coghlan submitted his final report on 4 December 1860, stating that the separation of Zanzibar from Oman was justified. He argued that the connection between Oman and Zanzibar was unnatural, and a considerable distance separated the two territories. The political resident in Aden also concluded in his report that the partition of the Omani state would enable a limiting of the slave trade. Finally, it would allow Zanzibar to extend into the interior of Africa and strengthen its economic and political potential.²⁵⁴ Following these recommendations, the viceroy of India, Charles Canning, issued on 2 April 1861 the decision now known as the Canning Award: the partition of Oman and Zanzibar into two independent sultanates.

The arbitration stated that Mājīd would be proclaimed as the sovereign ruler of Zanzibar and all African dominions of Saʿīd bin Sulṭān. He was obliged to pay a sum of 40,000 crowns (MTT) annually to the ruler of Muscat. The subsidy was ‘not to be understood as recognition of the dependence of Zanzibar upon Muscat, neither is to be considered as merely personal between your Highness and your brother Syud Thowaynee’.²⁵⁵ The ruler of Muscat was to receive the subsidy as compensation for his claims to Zanzibar and ‘inequality between the two inheritances’.²⁵⁶ The character of this obligation was permanent and final. Moreover, Mājīd was forced to pay the subsidy for the last two years, amounting to 80,000 crowns. The arbitration also highlighted that Zanzibar and Oman would remain distinct and separate realms. In response to the viceroy’s decision, both Mājīd and Thuwaynī expressed their appreciation and accepted the outcome of the arbitration.²⁵⁷

The ruler of Zanzibar, who was the initiator of the British intervention in the dispute, was initially satisfied with the decision.²⁵⁸ His sovereign rule over Zanzibar and its African dependencies was secured and recognised. The Canning Award was a protective measure against Thuwaynī’s claims and guaranteed British assistance against Barghash and any further

²⁵³ Book No. 219. From November 1856 and January 1857 to July 1861, IOR/R/15/1/155

²⁵⁴ *Precis of Correspondence relating to Zanzibar Affairs from 1856 to 1872*. Prepared by Captain P.D. Henderson, attached to the Foreign Department, IOR/L/PS/18/B150A, 28.

²⁵⁵ The Governor-General of India to the Sultan of Zanzibar, 2 April 1861, quoted in *British and Foreign State Papers*, compiled by the Librarian and Keeper of the Papers, Foreign Office, vol. 56 (London: H.M. Stationery Office), 1396.

²⁵⁶ The Governor-General of India to the Sultan of Zanzibar, 2 April 1861, quoted in *British and Foreign State Papers*, compiled by the Librarian and Keeper of the Papers, Foreign Office, vol. 56 (London: H.M. Stationery Office), 1396.

²⁵⁷ Letters from Mājīd bin Saʿīd and Thuwaynī bin Saʿīd to the Governor-General of India quoted in *British and Foreign State Papers*, compiled by the Librarian and Keeper of the Papers, Foreign Office, vol. 56 (London: H.M. Stationery Office), 1396.

²⁵⁸ Majid bin Said to Rigby, 19 Dhū al-Hijja 1277 (29 June 1861), MSA Pd 1861, vol. 32.

potential intrigues. The Bombay government urged Barghash to obey Mājīd and warned him that he could count on British support unless he acted against Mājīd.²⁵⁹ However, troubles with the arbitration soon began to emerge.

First and foremost, money was a problem for Mājīd. As early as June 1861, he expressed concern to Rigby that he might not be able to pay 80,000 crowns at once. The British political agent reassured the ruler that he did not have to rush and suggested Mājīd could raise the appropriate amount by ransoming the leaders of the Al-Ḥārithī tribe held on Lamu island.²⁶⁰ Mājīd did not accept Rigby's advice.²⁶¹ What is more, he began to express his growing dissatisfaction with the forced payment of the subsidy to Muscat.²⁶² Although Mājīd did not reject the arbitration, his attitude pointed to possible problems with its implementation.

The situation in Oman was different. Formally, Thuwaynī suffered a defeat and had to give up his father's dominions in East Africa. For a short period, however, the arbitration improved his situation. He was to receive regular financial support and recognition of the integrity of his country. The value of the first obligation was immense, as the income derived from Omani territories was less than that derived from East Africa. The second condition was also very beneficial for the ruler of Muscat. The viceroy rejected Turkī bin Sa'īd's claims to have an independent state in Sohar and forced him officially to subordinate to the authority of Thuwaynī.²⁶³ The ruler of Muscat took advantage of these opportunities almost immediately and announced an armed expedition to Sohar in June 1861, accusing his brother of disobedience. The new British political agent in Muscat, William Pongelley, tried to mediate between the brothers, but his incompetence only made Thuwaynī's task easier.²⁶⁴ In effect, Turkī was arrested, and Thuwaynī's son Sālīm was made a new *wālī* of Sohar.²⁶⁵

However, the arbitration was a key contributor to the country's downfall in the longer term. The secession of Zanzibar from Oman, the change in trade routes following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the introduction of steamers, and growing political unrest led to a

²⁵⁹ The Government of Bombay to Barghash bin Said, 23 May 1861, MSA PD 1861, vol. 32.

²⁶⁰ Rigby to the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 29 June 1861, MSA PD 1861, vol. 32.

²⁶¹ Mājīd obtained funds to pay the subsidy, for example by confiscating 'Abdallāh bin Sālīm's assets, after his mysterious death.

²⁶² Precis of Correspondence relating to Zanzibar Affairs from 1856 to 1872. Prepared by Captain P.D. Henderson, attached to the Foreign Department, IOR/L/PS/18/B150A, 55.

²⁶³ The Government of Bombay to Turki bin Said, 27 April 1861, MSA PD 1861, vol. 32.

²⁶⁴ The British agent sought to arrange a meeting between Turkī and Thuwaynī. Turkī's condition was to meet outside Muscat. In effect, the mediation took place in Sib. Pongelley gave Turkī a guarantee of safety and met with him in private. The next day a meeting between both brothers was scheduled, but Turki cancelled it. As a result, the British agent declared that he was no longer a mediator and allowed Thuwaynī to act as he saw fit. The latter arrested Turkī. Pongelley to Kinloch Forbes, 6 July 1861, IOR/R/15/6/4.

²⁶⁵ British Agent at Muscat to Jones, 3 August 1861, IOR/R/15/1/155.

protracted economic and political collapse of the country.²⁶⁶ Therefore, it is unsurprising that both Arabic and Western historiography are highly critical of the Canning Award. Scholars stressed that arbitration represented a European concept of the state as a unified territorial organisation with defined borders and a structure independent from the ruler.²⁶⁷ It was an idea that was not well-suited for the conditions of the tribal state or ‘thalassocracy’.

The Canning Award also significantly increased British influence in both countries. It was particularly visible in the control of the sea. Under the guise of maintaining maritime peace and the security of communication lines to India, the British limited the mobility and freedom of movement of members of the Omani elite. McDow wrote, ‘the bureaucratic wheels had begun to constrain the mobility of Arab rulers in the western Indian Ocean, Sa‘īd’s sons would never move so freely or so frequently as he had’.²⁶⁸ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout placed this policy in the wider context of British colonialism, claiming it was another response to the First War of Indian Independence in 1857. The first one was the Government of India Act which placed India under direct British control. This resolution and the Canning Award aimed to extend and centralise British power over the western Indian Ocean World.²⁶⁹

It is worth pointing out that in the case of Oman and Zanzibar, this consolidation of British control was not always carried out from plans carefully outlined in Bombay or London. Instead, many of the decisions concerning the division of the two countries were taken by the lower levels of the colonial bureaucracy, according to their private opinions and the needs of the moment. In addition, there were often disputes between colonial officials and the Canning Award was influenced by different circumstances and points of view. Apart from prioritising the maintenance of peace in the Indian Ocean, the British administration did not have a predetermined agenda for Oman between 1856 and 1861. The decision to approve the secession of Zanzibar from Oman was taken after extensive deliberation between colonial officials.

Omani historiography takes a different view of this issue, treating the division of Oman and Zanzibar as the intentional destruction of the empire of Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān, the foremost entity that the British had to consider in policy-making in the region.²⁷⁰ Nāṣir Al-Riyāmī also underlined that the partition was made against the feelings of Omani people both in Oman and Zanzibar, who wanted Thuwaynī to be the sole ruler of Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān’s domain. Al-Riyāmī

²⁶⁶ Robert Geran Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 276.

²⁶⁷ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 191; Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 66; Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 216; Al-Qāsimī, *Taqsim*, 320.

²⁶⁸ McDow, *Buying Time*, 71.

²⁶⁹ Jones, *Modern Oman*, 67.

²⁷⁰ Al-Hāshimī, ‘Sd. Thuwayni’s Internal and External Policy’, 55.

proved this assumption by pointing to Barghash as the leader of the opposition against the separation.²⁷¹ However, the real intentions of Barghash are impossible to determine. His rebellion occurred before the Canning Award. After the Canning Award was announced, Barghash remained loyal to the British and Mājīd. Moreover, in one of his letters to Bombay, Rigby stated that the Arabs with whom he spoke were sympathetic to the arbitration.²⁷² This information, given by the British agent, is not enough evidence to resolve the matter. Further analysis would likely indicate that the perception of the arbitration by the Arabs themselves was a process spread over time.

Furthermore, the partition itself was not a new concept to the Omani Arabs. As mentioned earlier, after the civil war in the 18th century, several territories did not recognise the power of the new Imam Aḥmad bin Sa'īd. Among them was East Africa, where the Mazrū'ī tribe from Mombasa refused to submit to his authority. Also, the idea of dividing the country between the members of the ruling family had already been applied in Oman. Aḥmad's successor, Sa'īd bin Aḥmad, who ruled from 1783, was forced to give real power to his brother Qays and son Hamad in 1786.²⁷³ The history of these divisions was well known to the British and was used by both Rigby and Coghlan in their reports.²⁷⁴

One thing that distinguished the partition of 1861 from previous such events was that it was guaranteed by the British.²⁷⁵ This element undoubtedly contributed to maintaining the separation of both countries. For the first time in Omani history, an external force prevented the reunification of the lost territories. However, it does not mean that these attempts were not made. The 'Canning's Knife', as Sheriff put it, did not tear both countries and elites apart in 1861. It was just a first cut. It was only the beginning of a process that would continue over a hundred years, ending in 1964 as a result of the revolution.

Conclusion

The death of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān led to a conflict over succession between his sons. The hostilities between the brothers were fuelled by the Omani social situation where tribes from two rival confederations supported different contenders for power. In Oman, Thuwaynī enjoyed the support of the Hināwī tribes, and his brother Turkī was backed by the opposition group, the

²⁷¹ Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 90.

²⁷² 'All the Arabs with whom I have conversed since the terms of the arbitration become publicly known, have expressed great gratification at the peaceful termination of the disputes between the sons of the late imaum.' Rigby to the Secretary of the Government of Bombay, 29 June 1861, MSA PD 1861, vol. 32.

²⁷³ Patricia Risso, *Oman and Muscat. An Early Modern History* (New York London: Routledge, 1986), 104-105.

²⁷⁴ *Precis of Correspondence relating to Zanzibar Affairs from 1856 to 1872*. Prepared by Captain P.D. Henderson, attached to the Foreign Department, IOR/L/PS/18/B150A,

²⁷⁵ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 217.

Ghāfirī confederation. In Zanzibar, the latter endorsed Mājīd, in turn, Barghash received the backing of most members of the Al-Barwānī and Al-Ḥārithī tribes from the Hināwī confederation. Among these disputes, the one between Thuwaynī in Muscat and Mājīd in Zanzibar was the most significant. Mājīd did not intend to recognise his elder brother's authority and, having the support of some of the local elite, decided to remain an independent ruler of Zanzibar. Thuwaynī initially made no direct claim to East Africa, but when his younger brother refused him financial assistance, he declared himself heir to the whole of his late father's domain and waged a military campaign to subjugate Zanzibar to his rule. However, his fleet was stopped by the British, who acted at Mājīd's request.

The ruler of Zanzibar, like many sheikhs and princes before him, sought the support of the British in his conflict with Thuwaynī to secure his position against the elder and more powerful brother. The British government's agreement to assist Mājīd was based not only on a desire to end a conflict that could destabilise the western Indian Ocean and disrupt lines of communication to India but also on a willingness to increase their political influence and advance their anti-slavery agenda. The British representative in Zanzibar, Christopher Rigby, played a significant role in building British support for Mājīd by sending biased and often false information to Bombay about the threat posed by Thuwaynī and his contacts with the French. Rigby's stance and the changing attitude of other British officials who initially advocated maintaining the unity of the Omani state indicate that British policy towards Oman and Zanzibar was mainly shaped by the decisions of the representatives of the lowest layer of the colonial administration. Political agents and residents enjoyed considerable freedom of action, and the reports they provided, formed the basis of decisions taken in Bombay or London. In effect, their personalities and attitudes heavily determined the line of British imperial policy.

Despite the British supporting Mājīd, his elder brother Thuwaynī did not give up hope of reclaiming East Africa. British control of the sea prevented him from renewing his expedition to Zanzibar, but he could still support forces opposing Mājīd in East Africa, exploiting tribal divisions and rivalries within the ruling family. Chief among those dissatisfied with Mājīd's rule in Zanzibar was another son of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān, Barghash. His reasons for challenging the ruler of Zanzibar were based on the rules of the Omani succession, his political ambitions, and his disagreement with the growing British influence in Zanzibar. However, his collaboration with Thuwaynī did not necessarily imply a desire to incorporate Zanzibar back into Oman. Mājīd was unable to overcome tribal divisions and win the support a sufficient number of Arabs to defeat Barghash alone. The rebellion of his younger brother collapsed with considerable help from British soldiers, paving the way for British arbitration.

The Canning Award not only ended the succession conflict over Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān’s domain but introduced completely new resolutions to the Omani political landscape. It guaranteed the inviolability of the partition of Oman and Zanzibar and introduced the idea of a state and territory compatible with European legal thought. British arbitration sanctioned Mājid’s secession but did not sever the bonds between Oman and Zanzibar. Moreover, it introduced a new link between both countries, the Zanzibar subsidy, and ignored the dispute over the private estate of late Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān. Thus, British arbitration was just the first step toward separating the countries and marked the beginning of significant British involvement in their affairs.

Chapter 2

Incomplete Partition. First Violations of the Canning Award

Partitioning Oman and Zanzibar was meant to end the dispute between successors of Saʿīd bin Sulṭān, bring undisturbed peace, and secure the tranquillity of the western Indian Ocean region. However, like the modern divisions of India, Yugoslavia, or Cyprus, not only did it not stop old conflicts, it created new ones. Although the Canning Award did not result in mass displacement, the death of thousands of people, or national trauma, as in some of the above examples, the disagreement between the Sultans of Oman and Zanzibar persisted. Their disagreement concerned neither the delimitation of borders nor the legitimacy of the two states since the idea of statehood was only vaguely present in both countries.

The conflict erupted from the dispute over the late Saʿīd bin Sulṭān's inheritance, and it was accompanied by new issues: the subsidy problem and the idea of a reunion of the countries. British colonial officials sought to maintain peace between the two sultanates and to enforce their compliance with the Canning Award. However, the uncoordinated actions of the British representatives in Oman and Zanzibar and the discrepancies between the decision-making centres in London and Bombay significantly affected the effectiveness of these efforts.

2.1 Saʿīd bin Sulṭān's Inheritance

Initially, there were no signs of a quarrel over the division of late Saʿīd bin Sulṭān's property. Unlike the question of succession, this issue was regulated by Islamic law and the ruler, who left a will. The Qurʾān precisely indicates who can inherit and what. Most of these regulations can be found in the fourth sura called 'Women' (*Al-Nisāʾ*). It states, for example, that a daughter is entitled to half of what a son might receive from a deceased parent. The Holy Book of Islam defines the heirs and their respective shares.²⁷⁶ These provisions significantly limit the freedom of the testator, but they leave some space for the unbounded disposition of the property in a will. The possibility of freely bequeathing property varies according to the

²⁷⁶ *The Qurʾān*, *Al-Nisāʾ* (4:11).

schools of Islamic law. According to the Ibādī school, the testator could bequeath up to one-third of his estate in his will. Saʿīd bin Sulṭān used this opportunity, making several bequests in his testament.²⁷⁷ They mainly concerned the financial security of his concubines and slaves and the question of ownership of his houses and ships.

In the will dated 26 Ramaḍān 1266 AH (5 August 1850), he ordered that all his warships except two, the ‘Caroline’ and the ‘Truth Alum’, were to be sold, and the acquired money distributed among his heirs in accordance with Islamic law. Moreover, the houses he had possessed in Oman and Africa were to be made *waqfs*, and their income divided among his successors. He also specified that his apparel, ammunition, and weapons should be handed over to his male children as their collective property. Furthermore, Saʿīd bin Sulṭān stipulated additional bequests to his mother, wife, concubines, and slaves. The latter were to be manumitted as well.²⁷⁸

The executors of the will were his wife ‘Azza bint Sayf, son Khālīd, and Saʿīd’s nephew Muḥammad bin Sālīm. At the time of Saʿīd’s demise, his son Khālīd was already dead, and the ruler’s wife did not play much of a role in politics, so Muḥammad oversaw the execution of the will. During his famous visit to Zanzibar, when he was supposed to settle the issue of 40,000 MTT for Thuwaynī with Mājīd, he also divided the late Saʿīd’s property there among his heirs.²⁷⁹ A similar procedure should have also taken place in Oman. However, the conflict between Mājīd and Thuwaynī that arose over the political status of Zanzibar prevented this. Thus, there was a disagreement over the private wealth of the late ruler alongside the political dispute over the relationship between Oman and its African possessions.

The lack of division of Saʿīd’s property in Oman affected primarily Mājīd and the other siblings living in Zanzibar. This was not the only source of conflict as Thuwaynī also raised his grievances about how his father’s property in Zanzibar had been divided, primarily in terms of his right to a landed estate there. Another problem highlighted by Thuwaynī was his brother’s use of the income from his younger siblings’ inheritance, which was complicated by the nature of Saʿīd’s will.²⁸⁰ Saʿīd’s decision to turn a substantial portion of his property into a *waqf* and the collective nature of many of his bequests would have been a source of conflict among his

²⁷⁷ *Held in Trust. Waqf in Islamic World*, ed. Pascale Ghazaleh (The American University of Cairo Press: Cairo 2011), 9.

²⁷⁸ Will of HH Said bin Sultan, 26 Ramadan 1266 (a copy obtained from Thuwayni, 10 May 1859), MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

²⁷⁹ Ruete, *Memoirs*, 113.

²⁸⁰ McDow, *Buying Time*, 69.

many children, even at the best of times. The political dispute between the brothers further exacerbated the situation.

Both brothers sought to present their case on the inheritance dispute before the British and presumably hoped the arbitration would resolve the issue. Among the documents that Thuwaynī provided for the work of Coghlan's committee was a letter he received from his younger siblings, including later rulers Khālifa and 'Alī. In it, the younger brothers complained that after Muḥammad bin Sālim divided the property, they were left at the mercy of Mājīd, who cared for them so little that they had begun to run out of food.²⁸¹ Also, Thuwaynī's declaration of demands concerning Zanzibar, presented to the Lord of Elphinstone in 1859, contained a third point on the need for a suitable guardian to oversee the younger siblings' estate.²⁸² Mājīd also raised the issue of inheritance to the British, claiming that he did not receive his share of his late father's property in Oman.²⁸³

The actions of both Thuwaynī and Mājīd are direct evidence of a lack of distinction between public and private matters of governance. Although the idea of a public treasury (*bayt al-māl*), derived from the ideology of the Ibādī imamate, was known in Oman, it functioned only to a limited extent. Sa'īd bin Sulṭān and his sons made no differentiation between income or expenditure for private and state services.²⁸⁴ Thus, the conflict over the late ruler's property was also a public and state matter. The British saw the issue differently and did not address it in their arbitration. This was due to the European view of the division of private and public property and the British experience in mediating mainly succession disputes in the Gulf and India.

The assumption made by the British that inheritance issues should be handled only privately soon proved a serious obstacle to maintaining peace between Zanzibar and Oman. The unresolved property disputes between Mājīd and Thuwaynī threatened the implementation of the Canning Award just months after it was issued. Interestingly, the immediate cause of the crisis was not the dispute over Mājīd's share of inheritance in Oman or Thuwaynī's estate in

²⁸¹ Translation of a letter from Khalifa et al to Thuwayni bin Said, 25 Rabī' Al-Awwal 1276 (22 October 1859), MSA PD 1860, vol. 98.

²⁸² Inclosure to substance of a letter Thuwayni bin Said to Lord Elphinstone, 14 Rajab 1275 (18 February 1859), MSA PD 1859, vol. 121.

²⁸³ Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 285.

²⁸⁴ Sa'īd bin Sulṭān mentioned himself the institution of *bayt al-māl* in his will, stating that the two ships were to be state property, see Will of HH Said bin Sultan, 26 Ramadan 1266 (a copy obtained from Thuwayni, 10 May 1859), MSA PD 1859, vol. 121. This does not change the fact that he treated the remaining properties as private and disposed of them as such. Wilkinson, *The Arabs*, 69. His sons continued this practice and the first attempts to change it appeared in Oman during the reign of Imam 'Azzān bin Qays, where several properties were confiscated on the grounds that they belonged to *bayt al-māl*. In Zanzibar, the idea of state land was introduced after 1890 on the initiative of the British, see Bennett, *The Arab State*, 169.

Zanzibar but a bequest for their grandmother, Sayyida Ghaniyya bint Sayf bin Muḥammad Āl Busa‘īdiyya.²⁸⁵ The conflict originated from the fact that Ghaniyya lived in Muscat under Thuwaynī’s tutelage but most of her money was deposited in Zanzibar.

2.2 Ghaniyya bint Sayf’s Case

Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān had bequeathed a significant sum of 180,000 MTT to his mother. Although the elderly woman lived in Muscat, the executor of Sa‘īd’s will transferred the money to Luddah Damjee, the head of customs in Zanzibar. It was feared that Ghaniyya bint Sayf’s numerous relatives would squander the sum after the ruler’s death.²⁸⁶ Whether or not this was the real motivation behind Muḥammad bin Sālim’s actions, it very quickly became apparent that Ghaniyya’s grandsons were interested in her money. The first claim was made by Mājīd, who, with each passing day since the Canning Award was proclaimed, grew more and more resentful of paying the subsidy to Oman. Christopher Rigby wrote in October 1861 to Bombay:

His Highness had taken no measures to pay and past of the areas, amounting to 80,000 crowns; nor of the half yearly Installment of 20,000 crowns, due to his brother Sayid Thowenee according to the terms of arbitration. [...] He [Luddah Damjee] informed me that His Highness relied solely upon obtaining possession of a sum of 180,000 crowns, which was bequeathed by the late Imaum to his ages mother who resides at Muscat [...].²⁸⁷

Rigby’s letter clearly indicates that Mājīd decided to use the subsidy imposed on him as a pretext to gain control over his grandmother’s inheritance. He managed to do so and, as a result, was able to pay Thuwaynī the overdue subsidy.²⁸⁸ Importantly, this is the first time that the subsidy introduced in the Canning Award became a tool to put political pressure on Muscat’s ruler. Thus, just a few months after the arbitration provisions came into force, the subsidy revealed itself as a serious deficiency. The problem would manifest itself again with full force after Thuwaynī’s death. At that time, the whole situation was temporarily resolved, and the first subsidy had been paid to Muscat. However, this did not end the story of Sayyida Ghaniyya bint Sayf’s inheritance.

The fact that the sum belonging to Sa‘īd’s mother remained in Zanzibar under the full control of Mājīd did not escape Thuwaynī’s attention. In June 1863, he wrote to Henry Bartle Frere, then the governor of Bombay, that Ghaniyya bint Sayf had bequeathed to him firstly

²⁸⁵ Bhacker stated in his book that she was Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān’s wife, ‘Azza bint Sayf; however, the British sources are quite clear the conflict was over the financial disposition regarding Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān’s mother, see Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 183; Al-Hāshimī, ‘Sd. Thuywani’s Internal and External Policy’, 50.

²⁸⁶ Rigby to Forbes, 5 October 1861, IOR/L/PS/9/38 Secret Letters Received from areas outside India, 1862.

²⁸⁷ Rigby to Forbes, 5 October 1861, IOR/L/PS/9/38 Secret Letters Received from areas outside India, 1862.

²⁸⁸ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 183.

30,000 MTT and then 80,000 MTT from the sum that was under the administration of Muḥammad bin Sālim.²⁸⁹ Thuwaynī informed the governor that he had sent his envoy to Mājid, but the latter refused to pay him the demanded amount. Thuwaynī asked Frere to intervene and insisted that Muḥammad bin Sālim return to Muscat with the money promised to the ruler of Oman by his grandmother.²⁹⁰ Faced with Mājid's intransigence, Thuwaynī turned to the British for help in Ghaniyya bint Sayf's legation despite the experience of the British arbitration, which had largely been imposed on him. This means that the ruler of Oman truly accepted the Canning Award and still regarded the British as potential allies and protectors of his interests.

Frere pledged to Thuwaynī that he would refer the matter to the political agent in Zanzibar. However, claims by the Sultan of Oman posed quite a dilemma for the colonial administration of India.²⁹¹ On the one hand, Thuwaynī warned the governor of Bombay that if the British government did not help in pressing his claims, he would be forced to 'take upon him [Mājid] what is our right'.²⁹² This threat could mean an armed conflict or a new wave of Omani interference in Zanzibar, which would undermine British arbitration and the imperial order they imposed in 1861. On the other hand, for the British, it was a conflict over private property, and they argued that 'the Government does not see fit to interfere in the private family dispute of two independent princes'.²⁹³ Nevertheless, as the conflict escalated, British representatives became involved.

In response to Thuwaynī's claim, the Sultan of Zanzibar addressed the governor of Bombay directly with clarifications. He confirmed that the sum bequeathed to Ghaniyya was in Zanzibar and stated that Thuwaynī had no special right to it. Mājid stressed that she was the grandmother of them all, and everyone should receive an equal share of the amount after her death. Moreover, he indicated that their grandmother had already obtained part of the money from her legation, and it had been seized by Thuwaynī, who took advantage of her advanced age. Finally, Mājid added that the remaining sum owed to Ghaniyya bint Sayf was spent on defence preparations against Thuwaynī's planned attack on Zanzibar. He also emphasised that the ruler of Muscat had not fulfilled his obligations and had not agreed to the division of paternal property, as in Zanzibar.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁹ Earlier, Thuwaynī had sent his minister Ḥajjī Aḥmad to Bombay to present the issue of his grandmother's bequest to the governor, see Disbrowe to Anderson, 18 June 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

²⁹⁰ A substance of a letter from Thuwayni bin Said to Henry Bartle Frere, 22 June 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

²⁹¹ Henry Bartle Frere to Thuwayni bin Said, 19 September 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

²⁹² A substance of a letter from Thuwayni bin Said to Henry Bartle Frere, 22 June 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

²⁹³ Playfair to Anderson, 29 September 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

²⁹⁴ Majid bin Said to Frere, Rabī' Al-Akhīr 1280 (28 September 1863), MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

British officials shared Mājīd's concerns about the independence of Bint Sayf's actions. She was supposed to be nearly 100 years old, and as British Political Agent Robert Playfair presumed, she was 'in second childhood, blind, helpless and quite incapable of managing her property'.²⁹⁵ As a result, the political agent in Zanzibar sent a letter to the political resident in the Gulf asking him for clarification on Sayyida Ghaniyya's status.²⁹⁶ Mājīd also tried to find evidence of his grandmother's incapacity and presented him with a purported letter from a *qāḍī* of Muscat in which the latter admitted that he had been forced to write an instruction on behalf of Ghaniyya bint Sayf to transfer her property to Thuwaynī.²⁹⁷ Simply declaring Ghaniyya incapable of managing of her own property did not settle the matter, as Thuwaynī made further claims on the family estate. Mājīd did likewise, and the conflict escalated significantly.

In addition to the 110,000 MTT that was supposed to belong to Ghaniyya bint Sayf, the ruler of Oman demanded a share in the estate of his brothers who died in Zanzibar in 1858 and 12,000 MTT for a house sold in Zanzibar that was supposed to belong to him. Mājīd did not leave these demands unanswered and added to his claim to property in Oman the sum of 11,000 MTT he had obtained from selling a ship in Muscat in 1858, which Thuwaynī had seized.²⁹⁸ Mājīd did not stop at words but decided to recover the 'stolen' sums. When Thuwaynī's envoy arrived to collect the second part of the subsidy for the year 1863, he received only 9,000 MTT. Mājīd seized the remaining 11,000 MTT against his claim to the ship sold five years earlier.²⁹⁹

It was the second time Mājīd decided to use the subsidy as a form of pressure on Thuwaynī. This time, he not only threatened to withhold payment but also deprived his brother of part of the amount due. Therefore, Mājīd's action was a clear violation of the Canning Award. On this issue, the British did not doubt that intervention was necessary. They regarded the subsidy as a matter of state and demanded an explanation from Mājīd.³⁰⁰ The Sultan of Zanzibar clarified that it was not his intention to violate the British arbitration agreement but that he had repeatedly demanded compensation for the sold ship, and Thuwaynī must permit him to deduct the dues from the subsidy.³⁰¹ Despite these assurances, Thuwaynī demanded British intervention in the subsidy case and sent his envoy to Zanzibar again. His mission was

²⁹⁵ Playfair to Anderson, 29 September 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

²⁹⁶ Playfair to Merweather, 7 November 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

²⁹⁷ A substance of a letter from Ahmad bin Saif el-Salami to Seyed Muhammad bin Salim bin Sultan, 5 Sha'bān 1279 (1 February 1863), MSA PD 1865, vol. 30.

²⁹⁸ Disbrowe to Anderson, 18 June 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

²⁹⁹ Disbrowe to Anderson, 18 June 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

³⁰⁰ Playfair to Anderson, 29 September 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

³⁰¹ Mājīd attached to his letter to the governor an excerpt from a letter from Thuwaynī in which the ruler of Oman indicated that he should collect his due amount from the subsidy, see Majid bin Said to Frere, Rabī' Al-Akhir 1280 (28 September 1863), MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

to obtain the overdue subsidy and raise the question of claims to family property. Bombay's intervention ensured he received the subsidy, but his other claims remained unfulfilled.³⁰²

The swift and decisive reaction of the British ensured that subsidy payments were resumed, and the Canning Award decisions were respected. Nonetheless, the whole affair showed that the arbitration agreement had a fragile foundation. Above all, the subsidy proved to be a link between the two countries through which the ruler of Zanzibar could significantly influence the state of affairs in Oman. The abovementioned situation was only a prelude to this type of policy which came out in full force after 1866. British arbitration also failed to solve the problem of property disputes between the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar. The creation of two separate states did not invalidate the existence of Islamic law, which guaranteed that each legitimate heir should receive a share of the deceased's property.

The dispute of 1863 did not lead to open war. This was not because the disagreement was insignificant but because Thuwaynī was assassinated, and his death fundamentally changed the situation in Oman and Zanzibar. However, until then, the dispute had continued. Initially sceptical of British interference in private disagreements in the ruling family, Playfair wrote in 1865 that 'if Government will not interfere a war between the two sultans is inevitable'.³⁰³ As a result, the British considered renewed participation of the Indian authorities in settling the property dispute between the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar. Mājīd agreed to new British arbitration, so Playfair sought the views of the Sultan of Oman on the matter.³⁰⁴ Thuwaynī, in turn, appointed Muḥammad Khān as his agent to represent him in the dispute.³⁰⁵ Omani agent did not have a chance to arrive in Bombay as his master was assassinated, and the matter became a part of a much more complex problem.

2.3 Conflict between Sālim bin Thuwaynī and Mājīd bin Sa'ūd

When the issue of the property dispute was about to be settled by the governor-general, Thuwaynī was preparing a military expedition against the Wāhhābīs,³⁰⁶ who threatened Oman's

³⁰² Secretary to the Government of Bombay to Thuwayni bin Said, 18 July 1864, MSA PD 1864, vol. 33.

³⁰³ Memorandum from 30 March 1865 regarding dispute between the sultans of Muscat and Zanzibar, MSA PD 1865, vol. 30.

³⁰⁴ Playfair to Disbrowe, 3 April 1865, MSA PD 1865, vol. 30.

³⁰⁵ A substance of a letter from His Highness the Sultan of Muscat to Governor General, 29 Al-Muḥarram 1282 (24 June 1865), MSA PD 1865, vol. 30.

³⁰⁶ The Wāhhābī movement was born thanks to Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wāhhāb (d. 1792), a Muslim scholar from the Najd region. He studied religious studies in Damascus and Baghdad before returning to his homeland in 1742, when he began to preach the need for a crucial renewal of Islam. He persuaded Sheikh Muḥammad bin Sa'ūd, Emir of Al-Dir'iyya, to support his radical theories. Bin Sa'ūd took advantage of the new religious movement to impose his authority on the local tribes of the Najd and Hijaz.

sovereignty and demanded tribute.³⁰⁷ Early in 1866, the expedition set out for the oasis of Al-Buraymi, which had been the target of an Omani attack. Thuwaynī never reached his destination, however. His son Sālīm assassinated him in the Fort of Sohar on 27 Ramaḍān 1282 AH (13 February 1866).³⁰⁸ The Wāhhābīs and Thuwaynī's opponents in Oman, including part of the Ibaḍī elite, were said to have influenced Sālīm's action.³⁰⁹ With the support of them, Sālīm took control of the country, imprisoned his uncle Turkī, and resigned from the Al-Buraymi expedition.³¹⁰ Thuwaynī's assassination and his son's ascension invalidated previous property disputes between the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar but set in motion new much more serious conflicts over the legitimacy of Sālīm's rule and his right to the Zanzibar subsidy.

In the first place, doubts arose among British colonial officials as to whether Sālīm bin Thuwaynī should be recognised as the rightful ruler of Oman. The British resident in the Gulf opposed the new ruler. He urged British subjects to leave Muscat just after the coup and forced Sālīm to release Turkī.³¹¹ The authorities in Bombay adopted a different policy and recognised Sālīm as the Sultan of Oman.³¹² This meant he was entitled to receive the Zanzibar subsidy.

The ruler of Zanzibar did not concur with the view of the Bombay government on the events in Oman. Because Mājīd considered the subsidy a personal matter between him and his brother, he saw his brother's murder as an opportunity to rid himself of the burden of the payment. 'Syud Thoweyene is dead and I am quit of any further obligation', he wrote to Bombay.³¹³ Mājīd's attitude likely resulted from his different understanding of the ideas of states and rulers. In the European approach represented by the British, rulers entered into agreements on behalf of states as entities of their own. In effect, such arrangements were binding for the state and remained in force after the ruler's death. Such a vision of the state was not found in Zanzibar, where there was no division between the public and private affairs of

³⁰⁷ Oman had been paying tribute to the Wāhhābīs since 1802 when Sulṭān bin Aḥmad negotiated with them the terms of the tribute and permission for their agents to operate in Oman in return for refraining from attacking Oman, see *History of the Imāms and Seyyids*, 234.

³⁰⁸ Accounts of Thuwaynī's death are contradictory. They all attribute the role of the killer to his son Sālīm but differ on the details. H. Prinsep claims that the Omani ruler was murdered in an open durbar, see Memorandum of H.T. Prinsep, 15 July 1868, IOR/L/PS/6/560. Emily Ruete claimed that he was shot by Sālīm while he was taking a rest, see Ruete, *Memoirs*, 144. The British resident in the Gulf informed Bombay that Thuwaynī was murdered during the sleep, Pelly to Gonne, 21 February 1866, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³⁰⁹ McDow, *Buying Time*, 80; Al-Hashimi, 'Sd. Thuywani's Internal and External Policy', 69.

³¹⁰ Pelly to Gonne, 21 February 1866, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³¹¹ Sālīm complained about Pelly's hostile behaviour to authorities in Bombay, see Salim bin Thuwayni to Governor General of Bombay, 14 September 1866, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³¹² The British authorities pointed out that murder was a common mean of seizing power in the East. Moreover, it was to be feared that in the absence of British recognition of Sālīm's power, he would turn on the French, see Memorandum of Captain W. J. Eastwick, 13 July 1868, IOR/L/PS/6/560; Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 287.

³¹³ Majid bin Said to Governor General Bombay, 24 January 1867, IOR/L/PS/560.

the rulers.³¹⁴ However, it cannot be ruled out that this was merely an excuse to justify withholding the subsidy to Muscat. It is worth noting that Sālim immediately recognised that he was entitled to the subsidy as his father had been. Moreover, he claimed the property that was supposed to have belonged to Thuwaynī in Zanzibar, thus renewing the property dispute.³¹⁵

Sālim decided to present his claims directly to the Sultan of Zanzibar and sent his envoy to Zanzibar in early 1867 to obtain the subsidy and income from his father's property. Mājid, however, was not going to negotiate with his nephew. When the Omani envoy arrived in Zanzibar, he did not receive a welcoming reception. The sultan refused to meet the envoy and showed him a complete lack of respect. The talks between the Omani agent and the British consul also yielded little. Just after two days there, the Omani delegation decided to return to the country.³¹⁶ Mājid's attitude was likely influenced both by his dislike of Sālim and his recollection of the troubles that resulted from a similar mission of Ḥamad bin Sālim some years ago.

The British did not accept Mājid's earlier explanation that the subsidy payment applied only to him and his brother. Therefore, the Sultan of Zanzibar had to try a different argument. In the first instance, Majid argued that Sālim was a parricide and, on that basis, unable to inherit according to Islamic law.

[...]to do so [paying the subsidy] would bring shame on us before the Arab nation and before the world, and would be a sin in the sight of Government for, by our law, such an one shall not inherit his father.³¹⁷

This allegation pushed back on Sālim's claim to the property left by his father in Zanzibar and challenged his authority in Oman. The claim allowed Mājid to argue that he could not pay the subsidy to his nephew since he was not a legitimate ruler. The British did not share this Mājid's view. Moreover, they tried to support Sālim, whose position was becoming more tenuous with each passing month.

The British estimated Sultan of Oman's annual income at the end of Thuwaynī's rule at 360,000 MTT, of which 40,000 was the subsidy. Fixed expenses were deducted from this sum, including the rent paid to the Shah of Persia for Bandar Abbas and the Wāhhābī tribute.³¹⁸ The remainder was not a large sum and had to cover myriad expenses, including maintaining the

³¹⁴ Pawelczak, *The State and The Stateless*, 299.

³¹⁵ Salim bin Thuwayni to Pelly, 12 Sha'bān 1283 (20 December 1866), MDA PD 1867, vol. 126.

³¹⁶ Churchill to Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 9 June 1867, MSA PD 1867, vol. 46.

³¹⁷ Majid bin Said to the Governor of Bombay, 10 September 1867, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³¹⁸ Statement Showing the Annual Revenues and Tribute of the Sultan of Muskat, 1866, MSA PD 1866, vol. 44. Other revenues for the sultan included customs duties from Muscat and other ports as well as zakat tax and revenues from the overseas territories of Mekran and Bandar Abbas.

garrisons of the forts and paying tribal sheikhs for their loyalty. Nor could Sālim rely on funds left by his father, as Thuwaynī also had significant financial problems, and his Al-Buraymi expedition was severely underfunded.³¹⁹ At the same time, the Sultan of Oman had to finance the defence against his uncle Turkī who tried to gather opponents of the new ruler. Initially, Turkī did not have a significant force, and his attack on Sohar in June 1867 ended in defeat.³²⁰ However, as Sālim's financial position deteriorated, Turkī's activities began to seriously threaten the new ruler. The looming threat of Turkī's disruption materialized in August 1867 when he took Muttrah by surprise.³²¹

The British were aware of Sālim's vulnerable position and, despite failing to reach an agreement with Mājīd, agreed to pay him money towards a future subsidy.³²² This decision was met with protest from Mājīd.³²³ Also, some British officials opposed such extensive assistance to the ruler of Oman exercised by the British political agent in Muscat, George A. Atkinson.³²⁴ Despite these doubts, when Turkī threatened Muscat, the British authorities decided to intervene in Sālim's defence.³²⁵ They forced Turkī to withdraw from Muttrah under the threat of bombardment. He left Oman for Bombay. In return, he received a regular allowance from Sālim.³²⁶ Although Atkinson's actions, like Rigby's in the case of Mājīd, were outside his remit, they were in line with general British policy.³²⁷ The Government of India's aim was peace and stability in Oman. This was to guarantee the security of British positions in the region, maritime peace, and the absence of piracy.³²⁸ Moreover, the British had obligations to Sālim in the form of a guaranteed subsidy and the separation of his state under the Canning Award. This last aspect also concerned protecting Sālim's authority against attempts to undermine it.

³¹⁹ The acting Political Agent in Muscat reported to the Resident in the Gulf that Thuwaynī had nothing but a small sum to maintain 5,000 soldiers. Rozario to Pelly, 8 December 1865, MSA PD 1866, vol. 44.

³²⁰ Atkinson to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 9 June 1867, MSA PD 1867, vol. 43.

³²¹ The situation was also exacerbated by the conflict between Sālim and one of his supporters, Šāliḥ bin 'Alī Al-Ḥārithī. The new Sultan of Oman feared the influential tribal leader of the Al-Ḥārithī tribe from Al-Sharqiyya and wanted to curb his position. However, he only alienated Šāliḥ bin 'Alī and weakened his own rule. McDow, *Buying Time*, 226.

³²² The sultan could only draw from 25,000 to 40,000 rupees. Pelly to the Acting Political Agent, Muscat, 30 August 1867, IOR/R/15/6/1.

³²³ Majid bin Said to Seward, 30 Rajab 1284 (27 November 1867), IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³²⁴ The Resident in the Gulf considered unacceptable the promises made to Sālim by Atkins on further tranches of financial aid and his support for the sultan in the country's internal disputes. Pelly to Atkinson, 21 October 1867, IOR/R/15/6/1.

³²⁵ Telegram from Bombay to Pelly, 19 August 1867, IOR/R/15/6/1.

³²⁶ Political Department to Principal Secretary of State for India, 28 September 1867, MSA PS 1867, vol. 44.

³²⁷ Atkinson repeatedly spoke positively about the ruler of Oman, see for example Atkinson to Gonne, 9 August 1867, IOR/R/15/6/1. He also took initiatives himself to solve Sālim's subsidy problem and appealed to the authorities in India for more support for him. Atkinson to Pelly, 10 June 1867, ZNA AA2/30.

³²⁸ Disbrowe to Pelly, 18 June 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2.

At the same time, Mājīd bin Saʿīd not only stopped the subsidy payments to Oman but also made vigorous efforts to overthrow Sālim. The ruler of Zanzibar declared to the British agent that he wanted to obtain permission from the British government to go to Oman to avenge his late brother.³²⁹ The British officials in India, who recognised Sālim as a legitimate ruler, did not consider giving their consent to such an undertaking. However, it did not change Mājīd's attitude, who, for the first time in his life, began taking a serious interest in the fate of his father's homeland. According to Edwin Seward, the acting political agent in Zanzibar, Oman, was to keep Mājīd occupied to '[distract] his attention from his own proper affairs'.³³⁰

The idea of going to Oman and killing Sālim was within Arab tribal laws, but it is hard to believe that was the primary motivation of the ruler of Zanzibar, who had never set foot in Oman. An important role in arousing Mājīd's ambitions for Oman was played by sheikhs arriving from there to persuade him to intervene in Omani affairs. Some of them were probably simply trying to please Mājīd, who often gave gifts to Arabs from Oman.³³¹ Others realised the weakness of Sālim's power and feared that Wahhābīs would take advantage of the growing chaos in the country.³³² The *wazīr* of Mājīd warned the British political agent that 'Oman is failing into anarchy and that trouble is come upon it; and that if [Mājīd] do not quickly go there, the foreign enemy [Wahhābīs] will possess it and will pass from our lands'.³³³ He also informed Seward that the sultan wanted to dispatch an envoy to Bombay to discuss a prospective voyage to Oman.³³⁴

More than five years after the Canning Award, the British were faced with a second attempt to violate arbitration after the subsidy issue. Unlike in the matter of the subsidy, the British had the final word on a possible invasion of Oman because their fleet controlled that area of the Indian Ocean. They had intercepted Thuwaynī's expedition earlier and could do the same with Mājīd's. Accordingly, they categorically opposed any Zanzibari attempt to interfere in Omani affairs. Moreover, they tried to convince Mājīd that the reunification of Oman and Zanzibar would weaken the latter. Seward's view was that Oman was 'the home of intrigue, and barren of all those of elements of prosperity which now lie fallow on the African

³²⁹ Coupland, *The Exploitation*, 72.

³³⁰ Seward to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 11 January 1867, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³³¹ Churchill to Atkinson, 4 September 1867, MSA PD 1867, vol 43.

³³² Atkinson to Gonne, 9 August 1867, IOR/R/15/6/1. The Government of Bombay was under a false (as it turned out) impression made by Atkinson that Sālim bin Thuwaynī was a capable ruler and a good soldier.

³³³ Seward to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 26 March 1867, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³³⁴ Seward to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 26 March 1867, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

continent'.³³⁵ He also urged the sultan to focus on Zanzibar's possessions on the African mainland and extend his power to its interior.³³⁶

The words of the British representative in Zanzibar sound remarkably prescient, given the fate of the Zanzibari territories on the East African coast after 1888.³³⁷ Mājid could not have known that Zanzibar's dominions on the coast would become part of Germany and Britain in almost two decades. He, therefore, remained vitally preoccupied with the affairs of Oman, though he did not undertake an armed expedition in defiance of the British.³³⁸ Instead, he continued to support Omani Arabs arriving in Zanzibar and send money and weapons to Sālim's opponents.³³⁹ At the same time, the idea of reuniting Oman and Zanzibar emerged in public discourse in Zanzibar. Henry Churchill emphasised that the 'ambition [to reunite Zanzibar with Oman] is not dead but daily gains new life'.³⁴⁰ This also had consequences for Oman, where rumours of an imminent Mājid's invasion undermined Sālim's already weak authority as successive sheikhs disobeyed him.³⁴¹

Mājid eventually agreed to pay the subsidy, but his decision was preceded by months of attempts to avoid it.³⁴² It was then that the idea of abolishing subsidy payments in return for a concession to curb the slave trade in Zanzibar first appeared.³⁴³ From the beginning, the Foreign Office, for which the fight against the slave trade was a priority, was in favour of such a solution. The British also stressed that Mājid was heavily in debt, and the subsidy was a significant burden on him.³⁴⁴ Seward also attacked the subsidy. Unlike many other British officials, he saw it as a means of binding the two countries and making Oman dependent on Zanzibar. He advised the Bombay government to 'sever the last remaining link between the two sultanates' and abolish the subsidy.³⁴⁵ Seward was right about the subsidy binding the two

³³⁵ Seward to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 26 March 1867, IOR/L/PS/6/560

³³⁶ Seward to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 26 March 1867, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³³⁷ The detailed history and reason for the Zanzibar's loss of the coast area, see Bennett, *The Arab State*, 124-164.

³³⁸ Mājid's only significant contribution to expanding the sultanate's authority over the East African coast was the establishment of a new city – Dar As-Salam in the 1860s. However, after his death, the city was abandoned and reemerged as an important post during the German rule.

³³⁹ Pelly to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 22 June 1867, MSA PD 1867, vol. 43.

³⁴⁰ Churchill to Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 17 March 1867, MSA PD 1867, vol. 46.

³⁴¹ Acting Political Agent, Muscat, to Pelly, 24 July 1867, MSA PD 1867, vol. 44.

³⁴² Churchill to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 26 February 1868, MSA PD 1867, vol. 46. Mājid was already considering sending a delegation to London on that matter but ultimately decided not to take this step. The British saw in the attitude of the ruler of Zanzibar the influence of the so-called 'French party', which was supposed to make him hostile to Britain and maintain his persistence on the subsidy issue.

³⁴³ Memorandum of H.B. Frere, 15 July 1868, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³⁴⁴ Churchill to Gonne, 4 March 1868, IOR/LPS/9/48. The British estimated that Mājid's debt in 1868 amounted to 127,000 MTT and the payment of the subsidy would increase it to 207,000 MTT. This calculation was made without considering the sums which Mājid owed to younger siblings.

³⁴⁵ Seward to the Bombay Government, 28 January 1867, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

countries, but he did not see that it was not the last link between them. It soon became clear that there were many other such ties.

The Colonial Office and the Bombay government viewed the subsidy issue differently. They argued that the cancellation of it would lead to the collapse of Oman, a war between both countries, and, consequently, an increase in the slave trade and piracy.³⁴⁶ At that time, the Colonial Office and the Bombay government's opinion prevailed, and the subsidy arrangements were unchanged.³⁴⁷ Finally, in May 1868, Mājīd authorised his agent to pay the subsidy for the previous two years. It was remitted to the Bombay government and then delivered to Sālīm.³⁴⁸

Although the subsidy was renewed, it happened too late to save Sālīm's power over Oman. The ruler of Oman probably never even received the funds because his *wazīr*, Ḥajjī Aḥmad, supposedly misappropriated the first tranche of money, anticipating the imminent collapse of his master's government.³⁴⁹ His prediction proved accurate as only a few months after the decision to resume subsidy payments, Sālīm was forced to seek refuge aboard a British ship as Muscat was besieged by his former supporters led by 'Azzān bin Qays. The rebellion started when the insurgents captured Barka on 23 September and Muttrah on 29 September 1868. Ten days later, Sālīm fled his capital, and 'Azzān was proclaimed the new Imam of Oman.³⁵⁰

Deprived of financial support from the subsidy for two years and threatened by rumours of a planned Zanzibari invasion of Oman, Sālīm bin Thuwaynī was an easy target for the rebels. Certainly, his character and alienation of his former supporters played vital roles in his downfall.³⁵¹ But 'Azzān's success would not have been possible, or at least not so quickly and decisively if Mājīd had not delayed the subsidy payment and undermined the Omani ruler's authority. It emerged that Oman and Zanzibar, despite the Canning Award, continued to be linked by numerous ties.

³⁴⁶ Memorandum J.W. Kaye, 1 July 1868, IOR/L/PS/6/560.

³⁴⁷ Precis of correspondence relating to Zanzibar affairs from 1856 to 1872, IOR/L/PS18/B150A

³⁴⁸ Atkinson to Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 28 May 1868, MSA PD 1867, vol. 46.

³⁴⁹ McGill to the Governor General, 17 January 1869, MSA PD 1869, vol. 156. Ḥajjī Aḥmad, as Sālīm's *wazīr*, was responsible for the contact with the British about the subsidy payment and it was he who arranged for the whole thing to be given to his agent in Bombay Ḥajjī Muḥammad, so McGill's information about possible embezzlement of funds is plausible. After the imamate was declared, the former first minister found refuge in Bandar Abbas, where he assumed power under the Persian protection. Pelly to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 20 June 1868, MSA PD 1867, vol. 46.

³⁵⁰ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 481.

³⁵¹ British reports were initially very positive about the person of Sālīm, with Pengelley writing in 1861 that 'the respectable inhabitants of Muscat, without exception, speak well of his Highness Syud Salim [...], I am of opinion by he is by no means superiors in intelligence to Syud Toorkee [...], it is probable that he may, under good advice, yet become a credit to his country'. However, his assassination of Thuwaynī, his poor choice of allies and vacillation in domestic politics changed his perception. Pengelley to Kinloch Forbes, 30 July 1861, IOR/R/15/6/4.

Despite the arbitration, Mājīd influenced the situation in Oman and affected the country's fate by controlling the subsidy, sending weapons, and financing local sheikhs. Initially, his actions were certainly motivated by his dislike of Sālīm and his desire to save money by forgoing the subsidy payments. However, as the situation in Oman developed, Mājīd showed a genuine interest in the state of his homeland. The apogee of this attitude was experienced by 'Azzān bin Qays himself, whose government also collapsed due to the direct actions of the ruler of Zanzibar.

2.4 Zanzibar and the Imamate of Oman

Much has been written about the institution of the Ibāḍī imamate, although certainly the imamate of 'Azzān bin Qays itself still requires further study.³⁵² Nevertheless, in this work, 'Azzān's rule will be only outlined, and emphasis will be placed on the relationship between the imam and the Zanzibar government. The new government was headed by 'Azzān bin Qays Al Busa'īdī who was a distant relative of Mājīd.³⁵³ The nature of his authority differed from that of Sālīm and his predecessors. This was due to both the rules of the imamate, where the ruler was elected and accountable to the Ibāḍī community, and the presence of two strong personalities around 'Azzān: Ṣalīḥ bin 'Alī Al-Ḥārithī and Sa'īd bin Khalfān Al-Khalilī.³⁵⁴

Zanzibar noticed the change of power in Oman very quickly. Although the fall of Mājīd's despised Sālīm certainly did not worry the ruler of Zanzibar, the new regime in Oman could not count on his favour either. As soon as news of 'Azzān's rebellion reached Mājīd, he announced that he was again suspending the subsidy payment.³⁵⁵ He also sent a delegation to London to negotiate the removal of this obligation.³⁵⁶ This time, however, it was not a question of taking another opportunity to stop this duty. It was part of a broader policy towards the new government in Oman. The new approach involved confiscating the property of people and tribes supporting 'Azzān, seeking alliances against the new government in Oman, withdrawing aid to Omani merchants and sheikhs coming from Oman, and moving Mājīd's family from Oman to Zanzibar.

³⁵² Most of the works of John C. Wilkinson deals with the history of Ibāḍīs and the institution of Imamate, especially: *The Imamate Tradition; Ibāḍism: Origins and Early Development in Oman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). From other authors see, Ghubash, *The Islamic Democratic Tradition*; Al-Rawas, *Oman in Early Islamic History*; Valerie Hoffman, *The Essentials of Ibadi Islam* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012).

³⁵³ 'Azzān bin Qays was the grandson of Qays bin Aḥmad the third son of the founder of Al-Busa'īdī dynasty and the first ruler of Oman from that family, Aḥmad bin Sa'īd (1744-1783).

³⁵⁴ More about Ṣalīḥ bin 'Alī Al-Ḥārithī and Sa'īd bin Khalfān Al-Khalilī, see McDow, *Buying Time*, 215-225.

³⁵⁵ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 490.

³⁵⁶ Churchill to Acting Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 26 February 1869, MSA PD 1869, vol. 153.

On the subsidy issue, Mājīd's decision to withhold payments received an adverse reaction from the Government of India and the political agent in Muscat. The latter argued that this resolution would lead to the invasion of Zanzibar from Oman. In his correspondence with Bombay, he emphasized that 'when the state and people will be deprived of money and possessions, they will turn against Majid and try to obtain their claims by force'.³⁵⁷ The issue of money referred to the subsidy, while the concept of possessions referred to plans to confiscate the estates of the imam's followers in Zanzibar. The warning formulated by the political agent was a direct consequence of his conversation with a leading representative of the new regime, Ṣalīḥ bin 'Alī Al-Ḥārithī. This imamate official had numerous properties in Zanzibar, and their confiscation would have indeed impacted his financial position. Therefore, his words that 'an expedition to Zanzibar would be so popular that [he] would experience no difficulty in gathering 50,000 men to take part in it'³⁵⁸ should not be considered entirely credible. Nevertheless, the very fear of an Omani attack on Zanzibar persisted.

Plans to attack Zanzibar were not just discussed by Ṣalīḥ bin 'Alī and others who were personally interested in the situation in East Africa. The imam also saw the need to reintegrate Zanzibar into the Omani state. This was supposedly one of the main objectives of the imamate.³⁵⁹ Another important factor that explained this approach was financial. The imamate was deprived of an important source of income in the form of a subsidy. Moreover, 'Azzān bin Qays and his government knew that Mājīd's state was much wealthier than Oman. Hence, the inclusion of this 'fountain of money'³⁶⁰ into the imam's dominions would have significantly strengthened the imamate as a whole. However, finances were not the only reason. As mentioned above, critical people in the imamate government had strong family and personal economic ties to Zanzibar. Therefore, it was in their best interest to unite the two lands.

It should also not be forgotten that Ibādīs also inhabited Zanzibar, and the imam had a right to expect that they would submit to his rule. In consequence, only a few years after the arbitration, the idea of Oman and Zanzibar's partition was not rooted among the rulers and the elites. Unlike the British, the Omani Arabs did not see the Caning Award as a final and irrevocable separation of the two territories. The events described in this chapter clearly demonstrate that this was a feeling shared by both the Arabs of Oman and Zanzibar.

³⁵⁷ *Precis of Correspondence relating Zanzibar affair from 1856 to 1872*. IOR/L/PS/B150A, 54.

³⁵⁸ Acting Political Agent, Muscat, to Gonne, 20 November 1868, MSA PD 1869, vol. 156.

³⁵⁹ Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 89.

³⁶⁰ This famous expression was used by 'Abd al-Aziz bin Sa'īd in his letter to his brother Barghash, see Abdulaziz bin Said to Barghash bin Said, undated, MSA PD 1871, vol. 145.

However, the idea of reuniting Oman and Zanzibar under the leadership of Imam ‘Azzān bin Qays was not realised. Above all, the British and the ruler of Zanzibar himself stood in its way. The former communicated to the new authorities in Muscat that British forces would stop any armed naval expedition from Oman.³⁶¹ The solution for the imamate in such a situation could have been to cause a rebellion in Zanzibar and overthrow Mājid. However, this would have required financial resources and the presence of more supporters of the imam in East Africa. The British and Mājid were aware of this threat.

The ruler of Zanzibar, hitherto inclined to receive numerous Arabs from Oman against British suggestions, decided to change his policy. He issued an official proclamation threatening those ships transporting travellers from Oman during the coming monsoon that they could be burnt, and their owners punished.³⁶² The purpose of this legislation was to counteract the possible infiltration of Zanzibar by ‘Azzān’s partisans. According to the British agent, the authorities in Zanzibar were paying considerable attention to the Omani newcomers. Some were even arrested.³⁶³

The proclamation was only an emergency measure. Mājid’s main weapon against ‘Azzān was to continue withholding subsidy payments and support imam’s enemies. Regarding the first issue, the ruler of Zanzibar decided to take the next step and sent his representative to London to negotiate the abolition of the obligation. He hoped for a successful outcome of this mission since ‘Azzān bin Qays, unlike Sālim bin Thuwaynī, did not receive British recognition.³⁶⁴ At the head of the delegation was Mājid’s cousin Muḥammad bin Sālim who set off for London in early 1869 and met with the Queen and Duke of Argyll, Secretary of State for India, during his stay. He conveyed to them Mājid’s position in which he sought the removal of the obligation to pay the subsidy because of the situation in Oman. According to Muḥammad himself, he received a very warm welcome in London and assurances from the Foreign Office that, in the present situation, the British would not expect Zanzibar to pay the subsidy. Henry Churchill, political agent and consul in Zanzibar, was sceptical of these reports and claimed that Muḥammad bin Sālim’s mission was unsuccessful.³⁶⁵

Churchill’s view captures the growing rift between London and British India over the subsidy issue. The Foreign Office saw ‘Azzān’s seizure of power as a usurpation and, on this

³⁶¹ Acting Political Agent Muscat to Gonne, 20 November 1868, MSA PD 1869, vol. 156.

³⁶² Translation of Majid’s Proclamation, 16 Dhū Al-Hijja 1286 (19 March 1870), MSA PD 1870, vol. 91.

³⁶³ Kirk to Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 4 April 1870, MSA PD 1870, vol. 91.

³⁶⁴ Gonne to Secretary to the Government of India, 28 June 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2.

³⁶⁵ Churchill to Acting Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 26 February 1869, MSA PD 1869, vol. 153.

basis, believed that Mājīd could be exempted from the subsidy. London also revisited the idea of changing the nature of the subsidy itself and turning it into a duty paid by the British. In return, the Sultan of Zanzibar would agree to restrict the slave trade in his dominions.³⁶⁶ The Government of India also did not recognise ‘Azzān as a legitimate ruler but did not accept that the obligation to pay the subsidy to Muscat should be removed altogether. In the end, a compromise was reached. Duke Argyll agreed that the subsidy would temporarily be ‘lapsed but not cancelled at all’, and upon the Āl Busa‘īdī dynasty’s return to power in Muscat, payments would be resumed.³⁶⁷ The India Secretary’s decision was a partial success for Mājīd. It only sanctioned the factual situation, namely the suspension of subsidy payments to the ‘Azzān’s government, treated by Mājīd and the British as a usurper. However, it did not solve the subsidy problem as such, which became evident when Turkī took power in Muscat, and the conflict between Oman and Zanzibar resumed.

The lack of subsidy significantly limited the options for ‘Azzān and his supporters. The government in Muscat was forced to look for alternative sources of income. It introduced a new trade policy of greater control over the collection of customs duties and a reduction in their rates. This latter move was intended to encourage merchants to trade in Muscat. However, the imamate’s decisions did not bring the expected results due to the general collapse in commercial activity during this period.³⁶⁸ As a result, the imam was forced to look for other solutions to ensure the flow of money into his budget. One of these was confiscating property belonging to opponents of the new government. Among those affected by confiscation were representatives of the Āl Būsa‘īdī dynasty of Thuwaynī’s line and his son’s supporters. The seizures were mostly based on the argument that the estates owned by members of Thuwaynī’s family were the state’s property and should revert to state ownership. As soon as the state took them over, they were sold to supporters of the new regime.³⁶⁹

Confiscations of properties in Oman and the lack of support of the new government for members of the ruling dynasty made the position of many members of the Āl Būsa‘īdī family in Muscat very challenging. In this situation, some family members decided to leave the

³⁶⁶ Precis of Correspondence relating Zanzibar affair from 1856 to 1872. IOR/L/PS/B150A, 49.

³⁶⁷ Argyll to the Indian Government, 30 July 1869, IOR/L/PS/18/B150A

³⁶⁸ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 79. Initially, the Imamate abandoned the policy of leasing customs duties to Indian merchants and sought to directly control the collection of dues. However, the effectiveness of this solution proved to be low, and it was decided to return to the idea of farming the duties to an Indian firm, but this time, the British were against it. Eventually, the duties were leased to a local merchant at an overvalued rate, see

³⁶⁹ List showing a number of confiscation effected by Khulelelee in Muscat and Oman during the year 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2. However, the income achieved was often much lower than the real value of the confiscated assets. For example, the property of Ghaniyya bint Sālim – Thuwaynī’s grandmother worth 20,000 MTT - was sold for 4,000.

country. The natural direction of their emigration was Zanzibar. For people like Rayya bint Sa‘īd, daughter of Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān and wife of Muḥammad bin Sālim, the decision was not a difficult one, as she had a close family and an assured livelihood in Zanzibar.³⁷⁰ The others had to rely on support from Mājid. The ruler of Zanzibar showed them great hospitality and generosity. Despite the large number of refugees from Muscat, he provided them with accommodation and a monthly allowance.³⁷¹

Mājid’s support for an Omani part of the family, with whom he had hitherto maintained hostile rather than friendly relations, indicates his growing interest in and concern for Omani affairs. Another example of this is the return of the idea of an armed expedition to Oman. The concept of attacking Oman was not new and first came to Mājid’s attention soon after Thuwaynī’s assassination. But now, according to British officials, this idea was much more serious. Members of the Āl Būsa‘īdī family from Oman also played an essential role in reinforcing it after Mājid welcomed them to Zanzibar.

I must admit that the feeling is strong in favour of an expedition to Oman. The Muscat refugees without exception – and they are not a few – assured the Sultan that he has only to present himself in Oman to ensure the success [...].³⁷²

However, it should be pointed out that, again, the British did not suspect that Mājid would be able to go against the instructions of the Indian government, which continued to rule out any Zanzibari intervention in Oman categorically.³⁷³ Nevertheless, Churchill requested an additional warship from the government in India in case an invasion should come to pass.³⁷⁴ In turn, John Kirk in his discussions with the sultan, returned to the argument of the development of Zanzibar and tried to convince him that ‘the possession of Muscat would be a ruin to Zanzibar and that his interest been in consolidating his Kingdom in Africa’.³⁷⁵

2.5 The Wahnābīs and Turkī bin Sa‘īd: Mājid’s Efforts to Overthrow the Imamate

The British action had the intended effect as Mājid never decided to intervene militarily in Oman. The Sultan of Zanzibar, like ‘Azzān in Oman, could not think of an official military

³⁷⁰ List showing a number of confiscation effected by Khulelelee in Muscat and Oman during the year 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2. The new government confiscated her property, estimated at 5,000 MTT.

³⁷¹ Churchill to Atkinson, 3 March 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2. The British resident estimated that Ḥamad bin Sālim (Muḥammad’s brother) himself arrived with a party of 120 people, his family members and servants.

³⁷² Churchill to Acting Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 26 February 1869, MSA PD 1869, vol. 153.

³⁷³ Kirk to Disbrowe, 29 June 1869, MSA PD 1869, vol. 155.

³⁷⁴ Churchill to Acting Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 26 February 1869, MSA PD 1869, vol. 153.

³⁷⁵ Kirk to Disbrowe, 29 June 1869, MSA PD 1869, vol. 155.

expedition that British forces would not intercept.³⁷⁶ However, contrary to his rival in Muscat, Mājid had the finances and logistical support needed to destabilise the government in Oman. Thus, as in the case of Sālim bin Thuwaynī, he used his financial capacity to support opponents of the new regime in Oman. This time, Mājid also sought allies against ‘Azzān outside the country and found them among the Wāhhābīs.

‘Azzān and his supporters’ rise to power marked a turning point in Omani-Wāhhābī relations. Initially, the Wāhhābī emir, ‘Abdallāh bin Fayṣal, sought to continue the friendly relations that began with the reign of Sālim bin Thuwaynī. However, he encountered an unfavourable stance from the imamate.³⁷⁷ There could be several reasons for this position. First, the Ibādī imamate rejected the Wāhhābī interpretation of Islam and felt threatened by their political and ideological activity. Territorial disputes between the two political bodies were also a significant issue. Finally, the imamate authorities already had information about contacts between the Wāhhābīs and Mājid. The imam’s officials seized Mājid’s letter, money, and gifts for ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sudayrī, the Wāhhābī commander in the oasis of Al-Buraymī, from his envoy, Zayd.³⁷⁸

Available sources do not indicate who initiated the relationship between the Wāhhābīs and Mājid. The excerpts cited by the political agent in Muscat from Mājid’s letter to Al-Sudayrī show that contact between the two sides had existed for some time. Mājid thanked the Wāhhābī commander for the gift of the horses and invited his envoy back to Zanzibar. In addition to this letter, Zayd was to hand over 2,500 MTT, a sword, and clothes to his master.³⁷⁹ The items, however, never reached the addressee. Instead, they were intercepted by the authorities in Muscat, who thus received direct evidence of the emerging Wāhhābī-Zanzibar alliance.³⁸⁰ It is unclear whether this information directly affected the imamate’s plans, but just a month later, ‘Azzān’s forces advanced towards Al-Buraymī and took it from the Wāhhābī’s hands.³⁸¹

The revelation of Mājid’s contacts with the Wāhhābīs did not change the Zanzibar ruler’s scheme for this alliance. Moreover, the occupation of Al-Buraymī by the Omanis could only increase the chances of Mājid prompting the Wāhhābīs to attack and retaliate against

³⁷⁶ Pelly to the Government of India, 12 November 1869, IOR/R/15/6/37.

³⁷⁷ Disbrowe to Gonne, 9 June 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2. ‘Abdallāh bin Fayṣal sent a delegation with the gifts and a friendly letter to ‘Azzān bin Qays, but the letter remained without an answer as Al-Khalilī opposed any contacts with the Wāhhābīs.

³⁷⁸ Disbrowe to Pelly, 3 June 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2.

³⁷⁹ Disbrowe to Pelly, 3 June 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2.

³⁸⁰ Zayd’s fate was uncertain. Disbrowe reported that he was released after handing over all his belongings. However, the Wāhhābīs later asked the British to help free him from the hands of the imamate and get back Mājid’s gifts, see Abd al-Rahman bin Ahmad Al-Sudayri to Disbrowe, 8 Rabī‘ al-Awwal 1286 (19 June 1869), IOR/R/15/6/2.

³⁸¹ Disbrowe to Pelly, 10 July 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2.

‘Azzān bin Qays. Thus, the Sultan of Zanzibar remained in contact with the Wahhābī emir and encouraged him to attack the imam’s dominions. According to British letters, Mājīd promised ‘Abdallāh the sum of 100,000 MTT if he captured Sohar.³⁸² ‘Abdallāh did not stage the attack, however, because his position was too weak.

Nevertheless, Mājīd’s contacts with the Wahhābīs prove that the ruler of Zanzibar had a clear plan to overthrow ‘Azzān, and he pursued it with determination. With good reason, the British resident in the Gulf recognised the crucial role the ruler of Zanzibar played in causing political unrest from Bahrain to Oman.³⁸³ Indeed, Mājīd’s plans were far-reaching and not limited to helping the Wahhābīs. A much more influential ally and protégé of Mājīd was his brother Turkī bin Sa‘īd.

Turkī spent most of Sālim’s reign in Bombay, where he went as a result of an agreement between the British and the Sultan of Oman. Turkī was not content with his situation there, and towards the end of Sālim’s rule, he even encouraged Mājīd to support him and act against their nephew in Muscat. But then, the British firmly sided with the recognised ruler of Oman and warned Turkī and Mājīd not to try to undermine Sālim’s authority.³⁸⁴ However, the proclamation of the imamate meant that they were not obliged to keep Turkī out of Omani affairs anymore. As a result, just a few months after ‘Azzān took power, rumours began to circulate about a planned joint attack by Turkī and Mājīd on Oman.³⁸⁵ British reports also claimed mysterious preparations in Yemen’s Mukalla where the *wazīr* of Mājīd was said to be recruiting thousands of men ready to move into Oman.³⁸⁶ Arguably, both reports were completely false, but they indicate growing tension and anticipation of Turkī and Mājīd’s move among Omani Arabs.

Eventually, the British government in India permitted Turkī to travel to Oman. This consent was given on the condition that he would not disrupt maritime peace and that all military operations would be conducted exclusively on land.³⁸⁷ Turkī’s departure from Bombay gave a new impetus to the actions of the ruler of Zanzibar. It was then that he strengthened his cooperation with the Wahhābīs. Moreover, he used the former *wazīr* of Thuwaynī and Sālim

³⁸² Pelly to the Government of India, 6 August 1870, IOR/R/15/6/37.

³⁸³ Pelly to the Government of India, 7 August 1870, IOR/R/15/6/37. Pelly warned the British government in India that Mājīd’s support for the Wahhābīs would make them not only recapture Al-Buraymi but also strike Bahrain where the emir’s brother had taken refuge.

³⁸⁴ Gonne to Churchill, 21 January 1869, MSA PD 1869, vol. 88.

³⁸⁵ Disbrowe to Pelly, 12 April 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2.

³⁸⁶ Disbrowe to Pelly, 10 May 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2.

³⁸⁷ Resolution of the Government of India dated 25 August 1870, IOR/R/15/6/37.

and then the administrator of Bander Abbas, Ḥajjī Aḥmad, to coordinate and transfer letters and money from Zanzibar to his allies in the Gulf.³⁸⁸

Existing research has indicated that the money and credit provided by the ruler of Zanzibar to Turkī played a crucial role in overthrowing the imamate in Oman.³⁸⁹ Undeniably, it was the most important and effective element of Mājīd's support for the forces hostile to 'Azzān's rule. As soon as Turkī reached Oman, he was given the first 20,000 MTT³⁹⁰ to act against the authorities in Muscat.³⁹¹ The next tranche was larger and amounted to 30,000 MTT, but Turkī did not receive it after the capture of Sur.³⁹² Mājīd also transferred funds directly to sheikhs of tribes in Oman to garner their support for Turkī. However, Zanzibari money could not solve all the problems of imamate's opponents. British reports indicate that despite a steady flow of cash, Turkī's financial needs were not being met. The reports also show there were expressions of desertion among the tribes supporting him because of financial troubles.³⁹³ Therefore, it is impossible to look at Turkī's success and Mājīd's subsequent support on behalf only through the perspective of money and credit.

The policy of the ruler of Zanzibar was much more complex and comprehensive in this matter. In addition to the alliance with the Wahnābīs already mentioned, Mājīd announced that Arabs who do not help Turkī are not welcomed to Zanzibar.³⁹⁴ Another form of support from Mājīd to Turkī was the recruitment of soldiers for the campaign against 'Azzān by a Zanzibari agent in Iraq. According to the British representative in Basra, the Persian in the service of Mājīd, 'Alī Khān, arrived in Ottoman Iraq officially to make a pilgrimage to Karbala. However, the real motive for his journey was recruiting mercenaries for Turkī, especially those trained to operate artillery. The same source indicated that around 70 men were recruited.³⁹⁵

Some British officials were sceptical about the information the agency in Basra provided.³⁹⁶ Indeed, information on recruitment of soldiers for Turkī does not feature in many

³⁸⁸ Pelly to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 17 December 1870, IOR/LPS/9/16.

³⁸⁹ McDow, *Buying Time*, 230; Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 80; Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 317.

³⁹⁰ There is conflicting information about the currency of aid. Thomas McDow states that it was given in rupees. British sources, on the other hand, are not consistent on this point, sometimes they stated that the amounts were in rupees, and other times in dollars (Maria Teresa Thalers), see Pelly to the Government of India, 9 August 1870, IOR/R/15/6/37.

³⁹¹ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 486.

³⁹² Pelly to the Government of India, 9 August 1870, IOR/R/15/6/37. As part of this financial support, Mājīd offered 100,000 MTT to the emir of the Wahnābīs for the capture of Sohar.

³⁹³ Secretary to the Bombay Government to the Government of India, 22 November 1870, IOR/R/15/6/37.

³⁹⁴ Native Agent in the Arab Coast to Pelly, 9 Rabi' al-Awwal 1287 (9 June 1870), IOR/L/PS/9/16.

³⁹⁵ Robertson to Herbert, 22 September 1870, IOR/L/PS/9/16.

³⁹⁶ Herbert to Pelly, 30 September 1870, IOR/L/PS/9/16. He wrote in his letter to the Political Resident in the Gulf that: 'I have heard nothing here of any recruiting going'. However, the Political Agent in Turkish Arabia admitted that 'Alī Khān was Mājīd's agent.

British documents. Nevertheless, the statement that the agent was in Iraq at the time and arrived on a ship belonging to Zanzibar points to an ulterior motive. The recruitment action appears to have taken place. Another British letter mentions that 50 to 90 of Turkī's soldiers were in Dubai in 1870, waiting to be transported to Oman by the aforementioned Ḥajjī Aḥmad.³⁹⁷ Recruits from Iraq may have been among them. The whole affair shows again how widely and extensively Mājid acted in his efforts to overthrow 'Azzān. His and Turkī's efforts finally bore fruit when the latter seized Muscat in early 1871 and overthrew the imamate. Mājid did not live to see this success, having died only months earlier, on 7 October 1870.³⁹⁸

2.6 Omani Elites and the First Years of the Partition

The events of the first decade of the Canning Award indicate that Oman and Zanzibar continued to be politically co-dependent, and Omani rulers on both sides of the Indian Ocean were willing and able to influence the domestic politics of the other state. However, British arbitration and imperial policy restricted the freedom and mobility of Omani rulers by not allowing them to travel freely, send troops, or attack the other side. The restrictions on freedom of movement did not apply to the Arab elites, as the Canning Award made no reference to this issue. Nor did it address the right of Omani Arabs to settle, acquire property, or participate in public life in either sultanate.³⁹⁹ Neither border control nor the idea of citizenship was established at that time. It is worth noting, however, that the arbitration sanctioned the creation of two equal centres of Omani power. The partition arrangement meant that both the ruler of Zanzibar and the ruler of Oman could expect the allegiance of the Arab elites, who until then had been subjects of only one ruler and enjoyed full freedom of settlement in both parts of the Omani state. Moreover, for the elites, showing loyalty to one ruler during a conflict could mean entering an unwanted dispute with the other.

One of the first attempts to enforce allegiance to only one ruler was evident in Thuwaynī's confrontation with Muḥammad bin Sālim in 1863. Muḥammad bin Sālim, Thuwaynī's envoy to Zanzibar and later emissary of the ruler of Zanzibar to London, was a cousin of both rulers and their brother-in-law.⁴⁰⁰ Following the execution of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān's last will and attempts to mediate between the cousins, Muḥammad left Oman on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Afterwards, he did not return to Muscat but went instead to Zanzibar.⁴⁰¹ The reasons

³⁹⁷ Secretary to the Bombay Government to the Government of India, 3 August 1870, IOR/R/15/6/37.

³⁹⁸ Governor-General to Secretary of State for India, 14 November 1870, MSA PD 1870, vol. 145.

³⁹⁹ The arbitration only dealt with the political division of the two countries and the payment of the subsidy. The Governor-General of India to the Sultan of Zanzibar, 2 April 1861, quoted in *British and Foreign State Papers*.

⁴⁰⁰ For more information about Muḥammad bin Sālim, see footnote no. 16 from the first chapter.

⁴⁰¹ Substance of a letter from Thuwayni bin Said to Henry Bartle Frere, 22 June 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

for his decision are unknown. It is likely he came into conflict with Thuwaynī over the lack of division of his uncle's property in Oman. Another reason for the quarrel could be that the ruler of Oman broke the settlement terms Muḥammad had negotiated with Mājīd. Thuwaynī's disapproved of his cousin decision to go to Zanzibar as it occurred during the dispute over the bequest of Sa'īd's mother, Ghaniyya bint Sayf. Muḥammad bin Sālim was not only the executor of the ruler's will but also the trustee of Thuwaynī's grandmother's huge legacy. The ruler of Muscat, therefore, saw Muḥammad's trip to Zanzibar as an escape with his grandmother's money which he believed belonged to him.

Thuwaynī bin Sa'īd then asked the British to help recover the money and bring Muḥammad back to Oman. In his letter to the then governor of Bombay, Henry Bartle, he wrote that

[...] the person of Muhammad bin Salim he is our subject and as he left us promising to return after performing the pilgrimage [...] His property and family are at Muscat and he is our subject, it is our duty to bring them together.⁴⁰²

For the first time in Omani-Zanzibar relations, the issue of a person's allegiance to the ruler and, more broadly, his national status emerges. According to Thuwaynī, those with family and property in Oman were his subjects, and he was entitled to their loyalty. He believed a change of residence should not end their allegiance. Thuwaynī's approach did not apply only to Muḥammad bin Sālim. In the same letter, the ruler of Oman also mentioned his persecuted subjects in Zanzibar, referring to the residents and workers of his plantations on the island who were said to have experienced 'tyranny' by Mājīd.⁴⁰³

The ruler of Zanzibar saw the issue differently and replied to the governor of Bombay that Muḥammad bin Sālim was a free man and could travel wherever he wanted. He also alleged that his brother was forbidding Muḥammad bin Sālim's family to leave Oman and thus wanted to force his cousin to return.

On what account does the brother Thuwayni prohibit the family of Muhammad bin Salim from coming to Zanzibar? He is a free agent and is the master of himself and his property, he may live where he pleases.

[...] We beg the honoured Government to cause the release of the family of above mentioned.⁴⁰⁴

Mājīd argued strongly against members of the Omani elite being subordinate to any ruler. He emphasised their right to travel freely and own property in any Omani state. Undeniably, Muḥammad bin Sālim's close relation to the ruler of Zanzibar and the political motivations undergirding the whole affair also played important roles in his assessment. Mājīd also

⁴⁰² Substance of a letter from Thuwayni bin Said to Henry Bartle Frere, 22 June 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

⁴⁰³ Substance of a letter from Thuwayni bin Said to Henry Bartle Frere, 22 June 1863, MSA PD 1863, vol. 38.

⁴⁰⁴ Majid bin Said to Frere, 15 Rabī' Al-Akhir 1280 (28 September 1863), MSA PD 1863, vol. 63.

exploited the idea of Omani Arabs' allegiance to the ruler in Muscat for his own benefit. In response to Thuwaynī's allegations of persecution, Mājīd wrote that 'we do not know who are his subjects in Zanzibar except the Suri Pirates who come down every year for the purpose of stealing slaves'.⁴⁰⁵ He was referring to the Arabs called Northern Arabs in British sources who, because of the economic depression in Oman, came to Zanzibar to trade there before sailing home with the next monsoon.⁴⁰⁶ On the other hand, the Sultan of Zanzibar did not argue that all Oman's inhabitants owed allegiance to the rulers in Muscat. On the contrary, when the British accused him of funding opposition to Sālim in Oman, he replied that the sheikhs to whom he gave gifts were independent individuals and not subjects of Muscat.⁴⁰⁷

Another more explicit example of the introduction of divisive policies between Arabs from Oman and those from Zanzibar was Mājīd's aforementioned declaration on travel from Oman. These regulations announced on 16 Dhū Al-Hijja of the year 1286 AH (19 March 1870) stated that:

Be it known that any vessel coming from Oman and bringing to our dominions in the Sawahil the people of Oman as passengers after this monsoon will be burned and the owners thereof punished, nor will we be responsible for the consequences after the publication of this notice.⁴⁰⁸

Thus, the declaration formally imposed a ban on travel from Oman. However, in clarifications obtained by British officials, Mājīd and his *wazīr* explained that their intention was not to forbid travel between the two countries. Rather, the proclamation aimed to deter 'Azzān's supporters from coming to Zanzibar and provide an opportunity to arrest suspicious individuals.⁴⁰⁹ Indeed, the legislation did not affect traditional trade and migration between Oman and Zanzibar. Even if the ruler of Zanzibar had wanted to do this, he did not have the means to abolish trade and travel between Oman and his lands altogether. No port authorities were in operation during this period, and local ships could dock outside the main ports. The regulations quickly became obsolete when Mājīd died a few months later and his successor, Barghash, enjoyed the sympathy of the authorities in Muscat.⁴¹⁰

Nevertheless, the Decree of Mājīd was the first official document to introduce the term 'people of Oman' in distinction to the Arabs of Zanzibar, subjects of Mājīd bin Sa'īd. Despite the vagueness of the expression and the lack of observance of the regulation, it is evidence of

⁴⁰⁵ Majid bin Said to Frere, 15 Rabī' Al-Akhir 1280 (28 September 1863), MSA PD 1863, vol. 63.

⁴⁰⁶ Coupland, *The Exploitation*, 76.

⁴⁰⁷ Translation of a letter from Majid bin Said to Political Agent Zanzibar, 30 Rajab 1284 (27 November 1867), MSA PD 1868, vol. 87.

⁴⁰⁸ Translation of Proclamation, 16 Dhū Al-Hijja 1286 (19 March 1870), MSA PD 1870, vol. 91.

⁴⁰⁹ Kirk to Chief Secretary to Government of Bombay, 5 April 1870, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

⁴¹⁰ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 215.

an emerging awareness of the separateness of these two political entities among Arab political leaders. Moreover, the ban on Omani Arabs travelling to Zanzibar was also the first attempt to restrict the rights of Arabs to move, settle and live in the other country because of their allegiance to a hostile ruler. Although similar legislation was no longer introduced, the functioning of the two power centres and the conflicts between them increasingly affected the Arab elites of both countries and their freedoms in later years.

2.7 Conclusion

The developments during the first ten years of the Canning Award indicated that, in many respects, its provisions were a dead letter. The subsidy remained unpaid as Mājid successfully got rid of this obligation in 1866. The renewal that took place two years later proved only temporary. The separation of 'two inheritances' remained only on paper as well. Formally, the two countries were distinct political entities, and Mājid's plans to travel to Oman failed twice. However, from 1866 onward, the ruler of Zanzibar was permanently involved in Omani affairs, becoming a key factor in the downfall of both Sālim bin Thuwaynī and 'Azzān bin Qays.

Despite British efforts to restore subsidy payments and, under the guise of maritime peace, prevent any attempt at a direct attack from or on Oman, Mājid shaped the situation in his ancestral country and eventually installed his protegee there. These developments revealed that just a few years after the Canning Award came into force, Oman and Zanzibar were partitioned but not separated. Quarrels over family property and relations between the rulers of both countries testify that the borders drawn by the British did not exist in the political imagination of the ruling parties in either Muscat or Zanzibar. Mājid bin Sa'īd and 'Azzān bin Qays wanted to make Oman and Zanzibar, respectively, part of their countries. This indicates not only a misunderstanding of the Canning Award but also the existence of a strong sense of unity among the rulers and elites of the two countries.

The ruler of Zanzibar had never been to Oman, yet he was keenly concerned about the fate of that land. The politics and influence of the Omani sheikhs and the Muscat family alone do not explain his involvement in Oman. Mājid intervened in the affairs of his homeland not only because he wanted to get rid of 'Azzān, who was a threat to his power, but also because he regarded Oman as an integral part of his patrimony. When Mājid labelled Sālim bin Thuwaynī and 'Azzān bin Qays as usurpers, he positioned himself as the only legitimate Omani ruler. Therefore, he became as responsible for Oman as he was for Zanzibar.

'Azzān bin Qays, in turn, came from a line of the Āl Būsa'īdī family, which did not participate directly in the Omani conquests of East Africa. Nevertheless, he saw Zanzibar as

part of his state. Political and financial issues were not the only reason for this. As an imam, he sought to exercise power over the entire Omani Ibāḍī community. This meant that authority over Oman alone was insufficient, as thousands of Omani Ibāḍīs also lived in Zanzibar. The ten years that had passed after the Canning Award was announced proved to be far too little time for Oman and Zanzibar to cease functioning as one universe in their rulers' minds.

No lasting changes to the mobility or freedom of the Arab elites of Oman or Zanzibar emerged during this decade either. But, significantly, both the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar took the first steps to impose their exclusive authority on the Arabs and to divide them according to their allegiance to a given sultan. These attempts were not the direct result of the Canning Award. They were born out of the two separate centres of power created by British arbitration, which forced the elites to take sides during disputes. Therefore, these efforts were not systemic but part of an ad hoc political struggle. Ten years after the Canning Award, the Omani elites continued to function within both countries without a serious sense of separation. The reign of Turkī and Barghash, the subject of the next chapter, shows that this conviction continued to accompany the rulers of both countries into the future.

The first decade of the Canning Award also highlighted the indecisiveness and irregularity of British policy towards Oman and Zanzibar. During the conflict over the private property of the Āl Būsa'īdī family, British officials initially refused to intervene but, as the dispute escalated, eventually offered their arbitration to the disputants. Similarly, the lack of a coherent and consistent stance on the Zanzibar subsidy issue was evident. The Foreign Office was primarily motivated by an anti-slavery agenda, and thus, was willing to exempt the ruler of Zanzibar from paying the subsidy if he agreed to curtail the slave trade. However, the India Office and other British authorities in India were more concerned with regional stability and, therefore, were opposed to the cancellation of the subsidy. The compromise that was reached during Mājid's reign proved to be fragile, and the accession of Turkī to the Omani throne reignited the conflict over the subsidy, exacerbating the discord within the British administration.

Chapter 3

‘Your State and Mine are One’: The End of the Idea of Reunion

Ten years after the announcement of Lord Caning’s Arbitration, there was still no peace between Zanzibar and Oman. Although with the help of Sultan Mājid, Turkī succeeded in capturing Muscat and overthrowing the imamate of ‘Azzān bin Qays, this did not mean the end of the unrest. After Mājid’s death, his brother Barghash bin Sa‘īd came to power in Zanzibar. Barghash initially declared support for British policy in the region, meaning cooperation in suppressing the slave trade and maintaining the division between the two countries, but his assistance was short-lived. Moreover, the new ruler of Oman, Turkī, needed funds to maintain his power and requested the resumption of subsidy payments. Unlike ‘Azzān, who was considered a usurper by both the British and Zanzibar, Turkī was formally entitled to receive these sums. Despite changes in leadership, tensions and conflicts between Oman and Zanzibar continued.

The principal source of these hostilities was the discontinuation of Zanzibar’s subsidy payments to Oman. This chapter tells the story of the termination of the dispute over the Zanzibar subsidy and indicates the outcomes of British intervention in it. Particular attention is given to the consequences of British political expansion on the development of political contacts between the elites of Oman and Zanzibar. Two aspects of British political expansion are given special attention: An 1890 treaty that made Zanzibar a protectorate of the British Empire and the conclusion of a series of treaties that restricted the slave trade.

Another result of settling the subsidy dispute was the calming of mutual relations between Oman and Zanzibar and an attempt to establish political cooperation between Barghash and Turkī. At the heart of this royal partnership was the idea of reuniting the two countries. This chapter follows the two rulers’ efforts to realise this idea, including their attempts to form a partnership with Barghash as Turkī’s patron. The idea of reuniting Oman and Zanzibar was not only shared by Turkī and Barghash but also by the Arab elites of the two countries.

This chapter also analyses the extent to which the Arabs of Oman and Zanzibar supported the idea of a reunion and their reasons for doing so. It examines the last attempt to unite the two countries by the imamate party in Oman and the Sultan of Zanzibar, Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī. In this regard, the role of Ḥamad and his entourage in instigating the rebellion in Oman and the reasons for its failure are addressed. This study is complemented by a discussion of Khālīd bin Barghash's coup d'état in Zanzibar a year after the uprising in Oman. The chapter indicates the significance of the failure of both political initiatives on the idea of reuniting the two countries and the political contacts between them.

3.1 Question of the Reunion of Oman and Zanzibar after Barghash's Accession

The death of Mājīd bin Sa'īd in 1870 reopened the problem of succession in the Āl Būsa'īdī family and revived the idea of reunifying Oman and Zanzibar. The ruler of Zanzibar himself had no sons, so his numerous brothers were potential successors. Barghash and Turkī had the best chances as the other sons of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān were minors. At the time of Mājīd bin Sa'īd's death, Turkī was fighting 'Azzān bin Qays in Oman. Even if he had wanted to, he could not have gotten directly involved in the succession issue. When it comes to Barghash, since his return from exile in Bombay, he had been living quietly in Zanzibar and had not taken any direct action, which would again expose him to the wrath of Mājīd or the British. He patiently waited for the death of his ailing brother and slowly built up his position.⁴¹¹ Barghash realised that the key to succeeding his brother would be the opinion of the British.

As James Onley has shown, from the 18th century onwards, the British played the role of influential patrons to the sheikhs of the Arabian Gulf, who turned to them in matters of internal and intertribal feuds. The British intervened and supported certain factions as suited their interests. Succession disputes occupied a special place in this ostensible protection system. British support often determined who would take power and paved the way for the dependence of a given region on the power of London.⁴¹² Barghash personally experienced the power of British protection in 1859 when the might of the British army struck down his rebellion against Mājīd. Not surprisingly, when it became clear that his brother was dying, Barghash contacted the British political agent and declared an eagerness to cooperate with the British, including concessions to the slave trade.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ It was served by Barghash's marriage to the daughter of Muḥammad bin Sālim, his uncle, and an influential member of the ruling family, which guaranteed him access to additional financial resources and the support of this part of the family. Churchill to Wedderburn, 30 September 1870, IOR/L/PS/9/49

⁴¹² Onley, 'The Politics of Protection', 57.

⁴¹³ Précis of Correspondence Relating to Zanzibar, IOR/L/PS/18/B/150A, 55.

Although British Consul Henry Churchill had reported to Bombay a few weeks earlier that Barghash had renewed his contacts with a ‘fanatical party’ called *muṭawwa*‘, as soon as Barghash announced his support for the principles of British policy in East Africa, Churchill recognised him as the new Sultan of Zanzibar without consulting his superiors.⁴¹⁴ However, just as quickly as Barghash gained British confirmation of his power, he discarded the notion of a pro-British ruler, turning to *muṭawwa*‘ ideas.⁴¹⁵

The exact position and role of the *muṭawwa*‘ in Zanzibar are not well known. Most information about them is found in one-sided British sources that describe them as fanatics and bigots who wanted to establish religious rule. Their link to the imamate party in Oman seems undeniable, but the extent of their impact on policy in Zanzibar is difficult to identify.⁴¹⁶ A description of their political influence shortly after Barghash took power left no doubt in the minds of the authorities in India that further British intervention in Zanzibari affairs was necessary. According to Churchill, in 1870,

Barghash has thrown off the mask he had put on just before and after his accession and makes no secret of his inclinations to the fanatical party of which headquarters are at Muscat. A Council of Priests is to direct the affairs of the state, the law of the Koran is to be review and there is now a talk of making the Zanzibar dominions an appanage of the Imamate of Muscat as it was in Sayid Saed’s time.⁴¹⁷

Certainly, much of the information in Churchill’s letter was exaggerated, but it appears that Barghash did seriously ponder the question of the two countries’ division. Another source stressed that the new Sultan of Zanzibar was against the partition of Oman and Zanzibar and was considering reuniting them.⁴¹⁸ In addition, his correspondence with representatives of the imamate in Oman indicated that he was at least initially sympathetic to the imamate’s cause. Barghash’s attitude prompted the British representatives in Zanzibar to seek a way out of the situation they had created when they quickly recognised him as ruler. Although Churchill initially complained that there was no suitable candidate to replace Barghash, he later suggested that Bombay support Turkī bin Sa‘īd’s candidacy to the Zanzibari throne.⁴¹⁹

Originally, British officials in Bombay did not oppose this idea. Barghash’s refusal to make any concessions on the slave trade significantly complicated their policy in the region.

⁴¹⁴ Churchill to Wedderburn, 30 September 1870, IOR/L/PS/9/49

⁴¹⁵ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 91.

⁴¹⁶ Coupland, *The Exploitation*, 98; McDow, *Buying Time*, 231; Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 215.

⁴¹⁷ Churchill to the Acting Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 10 October 1870, MSA PD 1870, vol. 145.

⁴¹⁸ Report from Commadore Leopold Health of HMS ‘Teaser’ to Commander in Chief of the Royal Navy, 26 October 1870, MSA PD 1870, vol. 145.

⁴¹⁹ Churchill to the Acting Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 11 October 1870, MSA PD 1870, vol. 145.

Bombay could not see Barghash as an appropriate ruler, and Churchill was heavily criticised for his swift recognition of Mājīd's successor. According to the British, Turkī could have challenged Barghash's authority as his elder brother with greater rights to the throne.⁴²⁰ However, the law of seniority did not function in Omani political tradition, and Turkī himself continued to fight battles in Oman.⁴²¹ The British had also not yet realised that if they allowed Turkī to rule Zanzibar and he later achieved victory in Oman, it would mean the real unification of the two countries, a scenario they wanted to avoid. It is unclear how much Turkī knew about British concerns. It is possible that after Mājīd's death, he considered leaving the country and returning to Zanzibar as several Omani Arabs, led by Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī Al-Ḥārithī, warned Barghash of Turkī's possible intrigues.⁴²² Barghash realised that with the help and consent of the British, Turkī would be able to take actions to undermine his rule. As a result, Barghash decided to abandon his anti-British policy. Much credit was also due to John Kirk, who became acting consul in Zanzibar after Churchill's departure for health reasons.⁴²³ Unlike Churchill, Kirk was able to negotiate with Barghash and skilfully stoke his distrust of the *muṭawwa* ' .⁴²⁴

A significant help to Kirk in his mission to fuel Barghash's dislike of the *muṭawwa* ' were letters from imamate officials. In one of the first letters Barghash received from Oman after he assumed power, Imam 'Azzān bin Qays urged him to submit to him as overlord. In other letters, the Arabs of Oman demanded money and support for their cause.⁴²⁵ Kirk deftly exploited these demands by pointing out that the imamate was merely treating Barghash as an 'agent of the Imam'. He implied that as soon as Barghash complied with their first instructions, others would immediately follow. In turn, he offered British support and recognition of Barghash's rule.⁴²⁶

Consequently, the ruler of Zanzibar began cooperating with the British political agent and abandoned his ideas to reverse the division of Oman and Zanzibar. This change coincided with Turkī's victory in Oman and his capture of Muscat. Upon hearing of the events in Oman, Barghash ordered a solemn celebration in Zanzibar, during which a procession of officials and consular representatives was held, and a salute of honour was fired in Turkī's praise.⁴²⁷ Barghash acknowledged his brother's rule over Oman, but his joy was illusory. In a letter to

⁴²⁰ Political Department to the Political Agent, Zanzibar, 3 December 1870, MSA PD 1870, vol. 145.

⁴²¹ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 221.

⁴²² McDow, *Buying Time*, 232.

⁴²³ Previously, he was a physician and Vice Consul in Zanzibar.

⁴²⁴ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 221.

⁴²⁵ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 92.

⁴²⁶ Kirk to Barghash bin Said, 27 February 1871, MSA PD 1871, vol. 145.

⁴²⁷ Kirk to Wedderburn, 9 March 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

Bombay, Kirk stated that the Sultan of Zanzibar feared further trouble from Turkī. Surely, the reason for Barghash's fears was the Zanzibar subsidy.⁴²⁸

3.2 The End of the Dispute over the Zanzibar Subsidy

The subsidy issue immediately returned with Barghash's assumption of power, as Churchill informed him that he would be obliged to pay the money. Barghash, however, continued Mājīd's policy on the issue by claiming that the situation in Oman did not permit the resumption of payments,

[...] with regard to what you say relative to the subsidy of the 40,000 dollars, awarded by the Governor General of India, we are bound by it but God forbid that the Governor General should force us to do that which would weaken us and strengthen our enemy for now the Government of Muscat has changed and has passed out of the hands of our brother Thoweynee and his successors into the other hands. We trusted that the British Government would not insist on our paying the subsidy to the son of our brother Thuwaynee but instead of that you now address us and menace us with payment of the arrears of this subsidy.⁴²⁹

Churchill did not directly address Barghash's comments in his letter, instead focusing on more pressing issues such as the slave trade and the British presence in Zanzibar. With the new ruler's change of policy, the subject of subsidy fell away altogether. The matter was only raised again following Barghash's abandonment of his anti-British stance and Turkī's assumption of power in Muscat.

Turkī must have foreseen problems with the subsidy payment because he took a two-pronged approach. He contacted Barghash and his *wazīr* directly, and at the same time, he asked the British resident in the Gulf to approach the British government on his behalf and ensure the payment of the subsidy.⁴³⁰ Initially, both rulers agreed to settle the issue without British involvement.⁴³¹ Although Barghash abandoned his anti-British policy, he probably remembered how his brother's conflict with Thuwaynī as well as his younger brother 'Abd al-'Azīz's property disputes led to further British interventions and expanded their influence in Zanzibar.⁴³² The Sultan of Oman also had no reason to be overly confident in the British. He was forced to leave Oman and go into exile in Bombay because of their mediation in his dispute

⁴²⁸ Kirk to Wedderburn, 9 March 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

⁴²⁹ A translation of a letter from Barghash bin Said to Churchill, 12 Shaaban 1287 (6 November 1870,) IOR/L/PS/9/49

⁴³⁰ Turki bin Said to Pelly, 21 Dhū Al-Ḥijja 1287 (13 March 1871), IOR/L/PS/9/17.

⁴³¹ Kirk to Wedderburn, 14 April 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

⁴³² When 'Abd al-'Azīz came back from Bombay with Barghash, he asked Mājīd for his share of his father's inheritance. Abd al-'Azīz tried to incite a riot, which ended with British intervention and Abd al-'Azīz's return to Bombay. Bennett, *The Arab State*, 71.

with Sultan Sālim bin Thuwaynī. Most importantly, it seems that Turkī believed that Oman and Zanzibar should enter a sort of close partnership, and the issue of subsidy would be part of this.

The Omani ruler expressed in a letter to the Zanzibari *wazīr* his belief that there was no need for a middleman between the two sultans.⁴³³ He also referred to the common interests of both countries and stressed that the subsidy would strengthen both Oman and Zanzibar. Turkī saw the need for a very close partnership between the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar to maintain the stability of the two countries that he believed were part of one Omani and Ibādī community.⁴³⁴ This idea was manifested directly in his subsequent letter where he wrote to Barghash that ‘You and I are one as the two knees of the camel, so God unite our world, and it is known that your state and mine are one so we shall overthrow own enemies [...]’.⁴³⁵ Turkī also indicated that his efforts and the losses he suffered fighting the imamate were not just an Omani matter but served ‘all the children of Sayed Saed’.⁴³⁶ In this vision, the subsidy payment guaranteed unity and friendship between the countries. In turn, ‘refusal [to pay the subsidy] a coolness will occasion and division create’.⁴³⁷ Given the history of relations between Turkī and Barghash, it seems that the ideas of cooperation and unity between both countries expressed in these letters by the Omani ruler were not just an attempt to get Barghash to renew the subsidy but indicated Turkī’s genuine opinion.

The Sultan of Zanzibar did not altogether refuse the aid to Oman. Despite abandoning his support for *muṭawwa*’, Barghash still had strong Ibādī beliefs and an interest in Oman.⁴³⁸ He declared in 1871 to Kirk that he had already sent 20,000 MTT Turkī. A year later, he sent 5,000 MTT in response to the Omani ruler’s pleas for assistance.⁴³⁹ However, the ruler of Zanzibar consistently refused to pay the subsidy, claiming that he was willing to help Turkī only on the basis of mutual aid and support.

Your honoured letter reached me, and your brother understood what you said, you say that the 40 000\$ imposed on Zanzibar is to be continued. But the relations between you and me have not reached to that point. And what you said in the latter part of your letter, this is a cause of terror and disturbance of mind. It is a poor kind of brotherly affection which is increased or diminished by gifts. I had thought our staunch brotherhood be mutual assistance and mutual support. I still rely on this belief.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³³ Turki bin Said to Sulayman bin Hamad, undated, MSA PD 1872, vol. 203.

⁴³⁴ Turki bin Said to Sulayman bin Hamad, undated, MSA PD 1872, vol. 203.

⁴³⁵ A translation from a letter from Sayyid Turki to Sayyid Barghash, 6 Rabī‘ Al-Thānī 1288 (25 June 1871), MSA PD 1872, vol. 203.

⁴³⁶ Turki bin Said to Barghash bin Said, 18 Rabī‘ Al-Thānī 1289 (24 June 1872), MSA PD 1872, vol. 203.

⁴³⁷ Turki bin Said to Barghash bin Said, 18 Rabī‘ Al-Thānī 1289 (24 June 1872), MSA PD 1872, vol. 203.

⁴³⁸ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 82.

⁴³⁹ Ross to Pelly, 13 June 1872, IOR/L/PS/9/20.

⁴⁴⁰ A substance of a letter from Barghash bin Said to Turki bin Said, 21 Jumādā Al-Akhīr 1289 (25 August 1872), IOR/L/PS/9/21.

Barghash, like Turkī, appealed to the idea of close cooperation between the two rulers, but he accused his brother of seeing their relationship only through the prism of money for Oman and not offering any support from his side for Zanzibar. Moreover, it was not in Barghash's interest to strengthen his brother's position in Oman. Barghash believed that regular subsidy payments would allow Turkī to gain a dominant position in the country, reducing Barghash's influence there. He also thought it could lead his brother to consider seizing or destabilising Zanzibar.⁴⁴¹ Given the later unequal relationship between the brothers, it is possible to say that Barghash wanted to control Oman through the subsidy paid by him and dependent on his will. Both brothers saw their countries in close cooperation as part of a larger Omani community, although they differed fundamentally on the form of this cooperation. Turkī wanted the partnership and support of Zanzibar, while Barghash saw Oman as dependent and subordinate to him.

Furthermore, Barghash had to reckon with Zanzibar's financial situation. According to Kirk's calculations, at the beginning of his reign, the Sultan of Zanzibar faced not only Mājid's debts but also lower income. The estimated revenue of the Sultan of Zanzibar in 1870 was supposed to be 345,000 MTT, but due to the abolition of the clove tax paid by the Indian merchants, lost revenue from customs duties on the coast, and lost tax paid by Wahadimu, these revenues were 42,000 MTT less.⁴⁴² As a result, settling the outstanding subsidy and paying it regularly to Oman would have deprived Barghash of a significant amount of income.⁴⁴³

Despite these circumstances, it is unlikely that Barghash would have allowed himself to look 'on the subsidy as abolished or the terms of arbitration not legally due'.⁴⁴⁴ What enabled him to make such claims was the impasse that emerged among the British authorities about the issue. The subsidy dispute within the British administration took on a different dimension than in 1868. Admittedly, once again, the British Government of India pressed for the resumption of payments, arguing its position based on the implementation of the arbitration and the interests of Muscat. However, the matter was complicated by the fact that the Foreign Office in London had relieved Mājid of the obligation to pay the subsidy due to 'Azzān bin Qays's assumption of power. Although London's decision was not permanent, it represented a significant break in

⁴⁴¹ Kirk to Wedderburn, 1 January 1872, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

⁴⁴² Administrative Report of the Zanzibar Agency, 1870, MSA PD 1871, vol. 142. At the time, there was no Zanzibari budget, and all the revenues were private money of the Sultan of Zanzibar. Therefore, other revenues, especially those from Barghash's plantations, would have to be included in the quoted sum, see Pawełczak, *The State and Stateless*, 299.

⁴⁴³ The exact loss to Zanzibar's budget is debatable because it is almost equal to the amount of the subsidy, which may indicate that the authorities in Zanzibar were trying to avoid paying the subsidy by pretending such a large drop in revenue. Nevertheless, information about debts after Mājid and liabilities to Barghash's younger siblings significantly limited the financial space for the Sultan of Zanzibar.

⁴⁴⁴ Kirk to Wedderburn, 1 January 1872, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

the British position on the question.⁴⁴⁵ There were also renewed suggestions to exempt Barghash from paying the subsidy in return for accepting a new anti-slavery treaty.⁴⁴⁶ In the absence of a decision from the Home Government on the subsidy, more and more members of the Indian government indicated that this situation would allow Turkī to assert his rights and perhaps lead to his subjugating Zanzibar to Omani rule.⁴⁴⁷

British officials did not deliberate in a void. The aid given to Turkī by Barghash was regarded in Muscat as grossly inadequate, and subsequent efforts of the Omani ruler regarding the subsidy yielded nothing.⁴⁴⁸ With limited financial resources and numerous opponents, including the brother of the defeated imam, Ibrāhīm bin Qays, and former supporters of the imamate headed by Šāliḥ bin ‘Alī Al-Ḥārithī, Turkī’s power was in danger of collapse at any moment. The Sultan of Oman was aware of this and, faced with such a situation, threatened the British with abdication.⁴⁴⁹ Turkī’s threat was a manifestation of the helplessness of his position. The ruler of Oman experienced increasing nervous breakdowns and health problems in the following years, so this may have been one of the first such situations. However, it is possible that Turkī bin Sa‘īd hoped that the vision of chaos, a possible attack on the lives and property of British Indians, and an increase in piracy and the slave trade would compel the British to act on the subsidy matter. It did not happen, however, and the impasse between the government in London and the British authorities in India continued. In the face of this, Turkī resorted to threatening to attack Zanzibar.⁴⁵⁰

This threat was not new. The government of the Imam ‘Azzān bin Qays had also threatened to invade Zanzibar in the absence of subsidy payments with no effect. By 1872, however, the situation had changed, and the Government of India was seriously considering sanctioning such an action. In fact, the viceroy of India endorsed it in his letters, leaving the final word to the Home Government.

The practical result will probably be that the arrangements made by Lord Canning will become a dead-letter. However deplorable this result may be, the Government of India have done their best to prevent it and re helpless to do more. But it is not fair to Muscat that the question should remain in this condition. If [the] subsidy is not to [be] renewed, it is only fair and just to her so plainly and leave her

⁴⁴⁵ Cotton Way to Pelly, 18 July 1870, MSA PD 1870, vol. 91.

⁴⁴⁶ Merewether to Pelly, 28 May 1872, Mss Eur F126/3.

⁴⁴⁷ Among them were Sir R. Temple, who argued that the British should confine themselves to protecting British Indians in the event of war between Oman and Zanzibar, see Minute by Honorable Sir R. Temple, 1871, IOR/R/15/6/37. When it comes to Henry Bartle, he advocated giving Turkī the right to attack Zanzibar if the latter failed to pay the subsidy, Letter from B.H.E Frere, 27 February 1871, IOR/R/15/6/37.

⁴⁴⁸ Ross to Pelly, 20 September 1872, IOR/L/PS/9/20.

⁴⁴⁹ A translation of a letter from Turki bin Said to Political Resident in the Gulf, 23 Rabī‘ Al-Awwal 1289 (1 June 1872), MSA PD 1872, vol. 203.

⁴⁵⁰ Pelly to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 19 October 1872, IOR/L/PS/9/21.

free to take her own measures. The present telegram gives an opportunity of so doing, if the Secretary of State be disposed.⁴⁵¹

Thus, the British Government of India made the matter very clear: if the authorities in London did not take any steps, permission should be given for Turkī's invasion of Zanzibar. This information did not reach the ruler of Oman. In response to his threats to attack Zanzibar, British officials warned him against violating maritime peace and indicated that the subsidy issue was still under consideration. Furthermore, they expressed doubt as to whether an attack on Zanzibar was possible in his financial situation. Turkī, however, countered that there were other options to seize Zanzibar without using force.⁴⁵² He probably had in mind a rebellion against Barghash in Zanzibar inspired by him.

The uprising against the Sultan of Zanzibar was not an entirely unrealistic scenario. In 1872, while Barghash was making his pilgrimage to Mecca, some political disturbances occurred in which the brother of both rulers, Khalīfa bin Sa'īd, became involved. The reason for the political intrigues was the dissatisfaction of some Omani Arabs regarding the sultan's new policy.⁴⁵³ Acting on behalf of Barghash, the regent Muḥammad bin Ḥamad dealt with the troublemakers, sentencing them to exile in East Africa's coast and arresting Khalīfa.⁴⁵⁴ The available material does not indicate Turkī's involvement in this event, but the situation described suggests that there was room for attempts to incite a revolt against Barghash. However, this did not happen because the viceroy's letter had the expected effect in London. The Home Government, anxious to avoid a return to open conflict between Zanzibar and Oman, decided to revisit the idea of transferring subsidy payments to the government in Bombay in return for concessions in the slave trade.

Bartle Frere, the former governor of Bombay, who had already spoken out several times on resolving the subsidy issue, was appointed to carry out this task. In the first instance, Frere moved to Zanzibar and began negotiations with Barghash, but the latter was unwilling to ban the slave trade.⁴⁵⁵ For one, he did not want to restrict the flow of slaves to Zanzibar, which would result in a shortage of labour on the plantations and a loss of income from the slave tax. Second, the abolition of the obligation to pay the subsidy, although it was an optimal solution for Barghash, was not such a great advantage because he already did not pay this money. Moreover, he did not believe that Turkī would make good on his threats to attack Zanzibar.

⁴⁵¹ Viceroy of India to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 15 August 1872, IOR/R/15/6/37.

⁴⁵² Pelly to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 19 October 1872, IOR/L/PS/9/21.

⁴⁵³ It was probably a matter of reducing *muṭawwa*'s influence and re-engaging with the British.

⁴⁵⁴ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 95.

⁴⁵⁵ For the details of the Frere's mission in Zanzibar, see R. J. Gavin, 'The Bartle Frere Mission to Zanzibar, 1873', *The Historical Journal* 5, no. 2 (1962): 122–48.

Barghash argued, not unreasonably, that Turkī would not risk an open invasion because leaving Muscat would mean that his rivals would take over the country. The current ruler of Oman was said to be hated by supporters of the imamate, and the British agent could not rule out the possibility that Barghash himself was fuelling this sentiment.⁴⁵⁶ It appears that Barghash did not want to give up on the subsidy issue, hoping that it would allow him to keep his brother in check and influence the situation in Oman.

Turkī adopted a completely different attitude as his negotiating position was much worse, and he could not afford any demands as the subsidy money was necessary for him to remain in power. His vision of working with Zanzibar on equal terms suffered defeat because Barghash did not agree to this kind of cooperation. As a result, when Frere went to Muscat, he reached a full agreement with Turkī on 14 April 1873.⁴⁵⁷ The Sultan of Oman agreed to suppress the slave trade in his dominions in return for receiving the Zanzibar subsidy from the government in Bombay. An additional condition imposed by Frere was that Oman must renounce any hostile action towards Zanzibar.⁴⁵⁸ This condition meant that Turkī promised on behalf of himself and his successors not to undertake any attempt to reunite Oman and Zanzibar. In return, he received a steady source of income and the settlement of unpaid subsidy payments since his accession to the throne.⁴⁵⁹ This income allowed him to maintain authority and temporarily consolidate control over the country.⁴⁶⁰ At the same time, his power and that of his successors became dependent on the will of Britain.⁴⁶¹

The decisions in Muscat only made sense if the Sultan of Zanzibar agreed to similar concessions. Barghash, however, intended to continue refusing to restrict the slave trade. The British could not allow this. In the face of resistance from the ruler of Zanzibar, the British threatened to bomb the island. Consequently, Barghash signed a treaty suppressing the slave trade, obtaining, in return, an official exemption from paying the Zanzibar subsidy.⁴⁶² With this,

⁴⁵⁶ This stance of supporters of the former imamate was said to have been affected by Turkī's decision to kill one of the movement's key leaders Sheikh Al-Khalīlī. Kirk to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 4 April 1873, IOR/R/15/6/37.

⁴⁵⁷ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 86.

⁴⁵⁸ Frere to Viceroy of India, 15 April 1873, IOR/R/15/6/37.

⁴⁵⁹ Turkī originally expected to be paid the outstanding subsidy considering the reign of Sālim bin Thuwaynī and 'Azzān bin Qays, but eventually the British agreed to the payment counting on his accession to the throne. As a result, Turki received 100,000 MTT in outstanding subsidy. Turki bin Said to Ross, 19 Rabī' Al-Awwal 1290 (17 August 1873), IOR/L/PS/9/22.

⁴⁶⁰ Turkī spent most of the money on current affairs and bribes to key sheikhs while making almost no investment in the country. As a result, he managed to increase his control over Oman, especially over the coast, but the results of these measures proved to be short-lived, and the ruler of Oman again found himself in a difficult financial situation. McDow, *Buying Time*, 237.

⁴⁶¹ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 86.

⁴⁶² Bennett, *The Arab State*, 98.

the history of the subsidy conflict ended, and Zanzibar irretrievably lost the opportunity to directly influence politics in Oman.

British imperial policy further ensured the continued separation of the two countries. Bartle Frere's mission rectified the mistake of the Canning Award and broke the link the British had created between the two countries. It also had other far-reaching effects. The resulting anti-slavery treaties increased Britain's role in the Indian Ocean region and encouraged further British interference in the internal affairs of Oman and Zanzibar.⁴⁶³ Once again, the conflict between members of the Āl Būsa'īdī dynasty and their inability to agree created opportunities for British intervention. It should be noted, however, that the political interdependence between Oman and Zanzibar did not end in 1873, and the rulers of both countries continued to influence the politics of the other country.

This lasting impact was evident in Turkī's attempt to intervene in the case of his younger brother Khalīfa in 1874. This Omani prince had been under strict house arrest in Zanzibar since his attempt to instigate political unrest in 1872. Khalīfa's situation captured Turkī's attention, and in 1874 he sought the help of the Indian government to free his brother. The ruler of Oman offered that he could receive his younger brother in Muscat if Barghash did not want him to remain in Zanzibar. In response to this proposal, Barghash said that he had already offered Khalīfa exile to Muscat, but he had refused.⁴⁶⁴ Eventually, Khalīfa was freed and settled in the city of Marka on the Somali coast.⁴⁶⁵ What is interesting throughout this story is the motivation of the Sultan of Oman. According to the British, the reason for Turkī's interest in his younger brother's fate was to extract money from Barghash and to try to influence Zanzibari affairs.⁴⁶⁶ Khalīfa had practically no assets, so Barghash should pay for his upkeep. Moreover, at that time, Barghash did not have any sons, which made Khalīfa one of Barghash's potential successors.⁴⁶⁷ 'Taking care' of him would give Turkī an additional advantage in relations with the ruler of Zanzibar.

Barghash also remained well-informed about the events in his elder brother's state. When the latter asked for further financial assistance, Barghash refused to support him and

⁴⁶³ The Treaty of 1873 and the Supplementary Treaty between Britain and Zanzibar, adopted two years later, allowed the British fleet to search ships suspected of illegally transporting slaves and, in some cases, to seize such vessels in Zanzibari waters. This meant consenting to the regular presence of the British fleet in the Zanzibar area. Neither treaty ended British efforts to fully abolish slavery in the Sultanate of Zanzibar. Britain continued efforts in subsequent years, remaining a source of intervention in the internal affairs of the country. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, 120-122.

⁴⁶⁴ Khalīfa was said to have feared that he would also be treated as a prisoner in Muscat and was said to have sought British protection.

⁴⁶⁵ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 103.

⁴⁶⁶ Kirk to Secretary of the State for Foreign Affairs, 1 March 1875, IOR/R/15/6/37.

⁴⁶⁷ Barghash's son Khālid was born after Turkī made his suggestion regarding Khalīfa.

blamed Turkī for the political mistakes that had led him into another crisis.⁴⁶⁸ Barghash's response showed that he was keenly interested in the internal situation in Oman but did not use this knowledge against his brother. On the contrary, he decided to assist Turkī by allowing him to deport political opponents from Oman to Zanzibar. One of the first such decisions was the exile of Badr bin Sayf Al-Busa'īdī in 1878, a former *wālī* of Sohar who was arrested for trying to become too independent in his position. Shortly after his arrest, he was exiled to Zanzibar.⁴⁶⁹ In subsequent years, exiles from Oman included former *Wazīr* Sa'īd bin Muḥammad and Turkī's nephew 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Thuwaynī. Barghash also took advantage of opportunities to get rid of politically inconvenient individuals. In 1884, he sent the dismissed governors of Lamu and Mombasa to Oman.⁴⁷⁰ A year later, he exiled Sheikh 'Alī bin Khāmis Al-Barwānī for abandoning the Ibādī branch of Islam in favour of Sunnism.⁴⁷¹

The above measures indicate that, unlike in previous years, the two rulers began to support each other against attempts to weaken their power rather than use these opportunities to meddle in internal affairs. Certainly, the reason for this change was that the subsidy dispute had ended, and thus a major stimulus for mutual intrigue was removed. However, a much more important factor that brought the two rulers together was their common enemies. When the politics of exile between Oman and Zanzibar began, strong opposition to Barghash emerged in Pemba. They opposed the fiscal policies of the Sultan of Zanzibar and, together with their Omani allies, wanted to restore the imamate and reunite the two countries.⁴⁷²

3.3 From Dreams of Reunion to Patronage

Following the hurricane of 1872, which destroyed most of the clove plantations on the island of Zanzibar, Pemba began to play a dominant role in clove cultivation. The demand for slaves to staff clove plantations increased, and Barghash's signing of the 1873 treaty made rising demand difficult to meet. Moreover, the mounting expenses of the ruler of Zanzibar forced him to raise the clove tax. The first tax increases occurred in 1872 and continued in the

⁴⁶⁸ Barghash indicated that Turkī had freed the hostile sheikhs and enabled them to attempt to attack Muscat. *Persian Gulf Gazetteer, Historical and Political Materials, Maskat territory, 1872-1903*, 43, IOR/R/15/1/723.

⁴⁶⁹ Political Resident in the Gulf to the Government of India, 15 March 1878, IOR/R/15/6/37. Badr bin Sayf Al-Busa'īdī was later pardoned and allowed to return to Oman in 1880, where he assumed a post of *wālī* of Mutrah, see. McDow, *Buying Time*, 252.

⁴⁷⁰ Entries of 24th and 29th of November, *Political Diary of the Muscat Political Agency*, IOR/R/15/6/14.

⁴⁷¹ 'Alī bin Khāmis Al-Barwānī later returned to Zanzibar, where he was imprisoned again. Unlike another scholar who also converted to Sunni Islam, 'Alī bin 'Abdullāh Al-Mazru'ī, who was imprisoned but not exiled (only released under Sultan Khalīfa) because his family had lived in Mombasa for centuries. Abdul Sherriff, 'Mosques, Merchants and Landowners in Zanzibar Stone Town', *Azania: Archeological Research in Africa*, vol 27, no. 1 (1992), 96.

⁴⁷² Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 324.

following years. The Arab elite of Pemba, who until then had enjoyed a good deal of autonomy and had not been burdened with taxes or other financial obligations to the state, began to express their dissatisfaction.⁴⁷³ Among those most opposed to the new tax were two sheikhs of the Al-Mughayrī tribe, Jūmā bin Sa'īd and 'Issā bin Rāshid. The former was also a close associate of Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī Al-Ḥārithī in Oman and one of the leading opponents of Sultan Turkī. These two representatives of the Omani elite on either shore of the Indian Ocean were united by their dislike for their rulers and their support for the idea of imamate.⁴⁷⁴

The restoration of the office of the imam appeared to the Arab elites as a remedy for many problems. First and foremost, it would fulfil a religious duty since, for the Ibādīs, the imamate was a fundamental political institution.⁴⁷⁵ Secondly, it would allow Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī to return to power, which he had lost with the fall of 'Azzān's government. Finally, for the representatives of Omani elites in both countries, the imamate guaranteed the rejection of infidel influence, like that of the British, and thus the abolition of anti-slavery treaties and excessive taxation in Pemba. According to Al-Mughayrī, Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī and his allies were to overthrow Turkī, restore the imamate in Oman and then subjugate Zanzibar.⁴⁷⁶ These actions would be supported by funds from selling and indebting properties that the Omani elite owned in both countries.⁴⁷⁷

This plan was only partially successful. Turkī managed to seize some of the funds after he was informed of his political opponents' intentions.⁴⁷⁸ Although his actions did not prevent Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī and his allies from attacking Muscat, they are evidence of contact between the brothers and an attempt to counter their common enemies.⁴⁷⁹ Barghash himself was limited in what he could do in Pemba, where he had only just begun to consolidate his authority and develop an armed force that could enforce his power.⁴⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Turkī asked the Sultan of Zanzibar for financial assistance and confiscation of Jūmā bin Sa'īd's property in Pemba on

⁴⁷³ For details of Barghash's conflict with the Arabs of Pemba and the characteristics of the Arab community there in the 19th century, see Marek Pawelczak, 'The Death of Captain Brownrigg and the Decline of Planters' Rule in Pemba', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 53, no. 1 (2020): 71-95.

⁴⁷⁴ Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 324.

⁴⁷⁵ According to the *Bāb Al-Imāma* by Al-Ṣā'ighī: 'The Qur'an, the *sunna*, and *ijmā'* declare that the Imām is one of God's ordinances; it is a collective obligation on all the Muslims. No army is assembled, no judgement or legal opinion is held nor legal punishment imposed, except through the Imām.' cited in Wilkinson, 'The Ibādī "Imāma"', 535.

⁴⁷⁶ Al-Mughayrī reported that some Arabs in Pemba did not believe that Barghash would cut taxes and thus were said to be inclined to support the idea. Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 324.

⁴⁷⁷ McDow, *Buying Time*, 243-244.

⁴⁷⁸ Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 324.

⁴⁷⁹ The attacks were made in 1877 and a year later in 1878. McDow, *Buying Time*, 234-244.

⁴⁸⁰ Pawelczak, 'The Death of Captain Brownrigg', 85.

the occasion of another crisis in 1883.⁴⁸¹ According to Al-Mughayrī, Barghash carried out the property seizure to limit the movement's possibilities against both rulers.⁴⁸²

The two rulers shared not only common enemies but also a common identity and sense of unity. Turkī's appeal to the idea of two camel's knees during the Zanzibar subsidy crisis was not just an ad hoc concept. The ruler of Muscat shared this belief throughout his reign, as evidenced by the issue of his attempted abdication in favour of Barghash in 1880. It was not the first attempt by the Sultan of Oman to relinquish his power, as he had also tried to do so during the subsidy stalemate. Turkī contemplated abdication for the second time in 1875 while his younger brother 'Abd al- 'Āzīz was serving as his advisor.⁴⁸³ The difficult political situation in Oman and Turkī's health issues were at the heart of his attempts to abdicate. Despite the regular payment of the Zanzibar subsidy by the British government in Bombay, Turkī's position was very weak. He was unable to attract allies and associates, and his indecisiveness weakened his power.⁴⁸⁴

However, the attempted abdication in 1880 stands out from earlier events of this kind. It was not only about Turkī giving up power but also about the possibility of uniting Oman and Zanzibar. According to Kirk, Turkī was prepared to hand over power to anyone who would provide him with a decent pension after his abdication, but the choice of Barghash instead of one of his sons indicates that it was not only Turkī's own prosperity that was at stake.⁴⁸⁵ The Sultan of Oman was aware of the opportunities and unique resources Zanzibar possessed. It was through Mājid's financial aid and policies that he became ruler, and access to Zanzibar's credit financed the rebellions against him in the previous years. Turkī appeared to have recognised that past cooperation and occasional assistance against common enemies were insufficient for Oman to survive. His vision of two Omani countries closely bound together and like the knees of a camel moving in the same direction proved unrealisable because of the weakness of his power and the lack of help from Barghash. So, he decided to go a step further, to reunite the two countries.

From the accounts of British officials, the Sultan of Oman's plan does not look like a haphazard venture. It was kept secret for a long time, so even the British authorities in the Gulf

⁴⁸¹ Kirk to Secretary to the Government of India, 23 November 1883, IOR/R/15/6/14.

⁴⁸² Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 324.

⁴⁸³ 'Abd al- 'Āzīz would later become Turkī's regent, albeit for a short time, see Sebastian Žbik, 'The Omani Prince in the Search for Protectors. Abdulaziz bin Said's Struggle for Power and Money in the Time of Growing British Dominance in the Indian Ocean Region.' *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 23, no. 1 (2022).

⁴⁸⁴ McDow, *Buying Time*, 237.

⁴⁸⁵ Kirk to Secretary to the Government of India, 8 March 1880, IOR/R/15/6/143, file 6/1.

initially denied the reports of the political agent in Zanzibar.⁴⁸⁶ The basic premise of the scheme was discussed during the Zanzibari envoy's visit to Muscat. Moreover, Turkī wanted to negotiate further details personally with Barghash during their meeting in Zanzibar.⁴⁸⁷ Barghash also appeared to be interested in taking power in Oman. Kirk claimed he was even eager to negotiate the matter with the British government.

I also have reason to [...] believe that Seyyid Burghash would be ready to try to obtain the consent of the British Government by promising in [the] event of his uniting the thrones to release the Indian treasury for ever from all claim for the \$40.000 which has been paid since the Bartle Frere's visit.⁴⁸⁸

While Turkī's reasons for abdicating and merging the two countries seem clear, Barghash's motivation requires some explanation. The Sultan of Zanzibar was obviously interested in the fate of his country of origin. Unlike his predecessor, he visited Oman several times and remained an ardent Ibādī Muslim. He also contributed to the flourishing of Arab and Omani culture in Zanzibar by bringing artists and a printing press from Egypt and Syria and attracting religious authorities and writers from Oman.⁴⁸⁹ At the same time, however, he was aware of the extent of the country's problems and the difficulties in governing it. Historian Marek Pawełczak explains Barghash's motivation by linking it to the Pemba case and his political opponents' bonds with the imamate faction. He suggests that the ruler of Zanzibar wanted to take control of Oman to curb the power of imamate's supporters there and restrict their influence on Arabs in East Africa, as his brother was unable to do that.⁴⁹⁰

Barghash, like Turkī, recognised that the current formula of coexistence between Oman and Zanzibar was not working, and if Oman remained weak, it could have dangerous consequences for Zanzibar. The imamate faction also planned to reunify the two countries, but in this scenario, it would have meant the fall of Barghash and Turkī. Therefore, cooperation between the brothers was necessary to maintain their rule. It should not be forgotten as well that at the beginning of his reign, Barghash considered the division of the two countries an unfavourable decision. Therefore, he saw in his brother's abdication an opportunity to correct the situation and reunite the Omani communities. Ultimately, however, the reunification of the two countries and Turkī's resignation did not occur. There is much evidence to suggest that the failure of reunification was not due to direct British intervention. Naturally, officials in both the Gulf and Zanzibar spoke unequivocally against such plans. Edward Ross, the political resident

⁴⁸⁶ Ross to Secretary to the Government of India, 26 April 1880, IOR/R/15/6/143, file 6/1.

⁴⁸⁷ Kirk to Secretary to the Government of India, 8 March 1880, IOR/R/15/6/143, file 6/1.

⁴⁸⁸ Kirk to Secretary to the Government of India, 8 March 1880, IOR/R/15/6/143, file 6/1.

⁴⁸⁹ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 83

⁴⁹⁰ Pawełczak, 'The Death of Captain Brownrigg', 84.

in the Gulf, requested the Government of India to act decisively on the matter and end the talks between Barghash and Turkī. The Calcutta government saw no need for this, claiming that:

It is not impossible that negotiations will fall without any action from Her Majesty Government. British action could lead to afford Turki opportunity for claiming a guarantee of permanent pecuniary aid in return for his deference to our objections.⁴⁹¹

The calculations of British officials in Calcutta turned out to be accurate as there is no evidence that Barghash or Turkī officially raised the issue.

The reasons for this turn of events are not known. Instead, one can identify several arguments for why the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar did not attempt to negotiate the matter with Britain. One reason may have been that their own negotiations had failed, just as the Indian government had predicted. However, there is no evidence for this in the sources. Another issue was Turkī's health, which was said to have significantly deteriorated during the period, and it was suspected that the ruler of Oman was about to die.⁴⁹² This grave situation left no time for a complex operation that would have required months of negotiation. The most probable reason, however, was that the rulers realised that their plan had no chance of garnering the consent of the British, based on their initial reactions, and thus could never have been carried out successfully.

The Omani researcher, Nāṣir Al-Riyāmī, rejects this argument and credits the British with disrupting plans for reunification, stating that it would have been illogical for Barghash to refuse power in Oman.⁴⁹³ The two rulers indeed were keen to unite Oman and Zanzibar, but Britain did not need to act in this matter as both Turkī and Barghash were aware of its power. The imposition of the anti-slavery treaty on the ruler of Zanzibar and the unanimity of the British colonial apparatus on the question of reunification left no other options. The Government of India, in June 1880, definitively formulated the principle of non-reunion of Oman and Zanzibar:

[...] it is not the intention of government to interfere actively with the course of a possible dynastic struggle in Oman, unless interference should become necessary to prevent the re-union of Muscat and Zanzibar. Putting aside Seyyid Burghash, or whoever might then be the ruler of Zanzibar.⁴⁹⁴

In this situation, the two brothers decided to reformulate their relations. After initially rejecting the vision of equal partnership and then the idea of reunifying the two countries, Barghash and

⁴⁹¹ Secretary to the Government of India to Ross, 27 May 1880, IOR/R/15/6/143, file 6/1.

⁴⁹² Ross to Secretary to the Government of India, 8 April 1880, IOR/R/15/6/143, file 6/1.

⁴⁹³ Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣīyāt*, 89.

⁴⁹⁴ Secretary to the Government of India to Ross, 25 June 1880, IOR/R/15/6/143, file 6/1.

Turkī adopted a formula that McDow, in *Buying Time*, describes as a patron-client relationship.⁴⁹⁵

In this configuration, the relationship between Barghash and Turkī was based on inequality and hierarchy. Beginning in the 1880s, the ruler of Zanzibar started to support his brother in Oman broadly. He sent him a sum of up to 15,000 MTT almost every year and donated two modern steamers and weapons to him.⁴⁹⁶ Barghash also lent the ruler of Oman ships for the regular transport of pilgrims to and from Mecca and allowed Turkī to use his vessel for military purposes.⁴⁹⁷ The Sultan of Oman repaid his younger brother by offering him horses, camels, and political subordination, as he could not afford more.⁴⁹⁸ McDow situates the beginnings of this new dimension of contact between the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar in the rebellion of 1883 when again a coalition of tribes under Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī threatened Muscat. Turkī turned to Barghash for help, and the latter, unlike before, sent him financial aid of 15,000 MTT. Turkī’s throne, however, was not saved by Barghash but by the British, whose intervention helped the Omani ruler defeat the rebel attack.⁴⁹⁹ It seems that the rebellion itself, although one of the most dangerous during Turkī’s reign, did not change Barghash’s attitude. Turkī had already asked many times for help from the Sultan of Zanzibar during previous attacks on Muscat and had never been met with such generous support. So, everything indicates that the abdication affair was the turning point in the relations between the two rulers.

Barghash realised he could not have become Sultan of Oman because the British would never have agreed to it. He could, however, become more involved in Omani affairs and support his brother as an informal patron and overlord. Between 1880 and 1888, Oman and Zanzibar had virtually no political boundaries. Zanzibari money financed Turkī’s operations against rebels, while Barghash’s ships carried Omani pilgrims and participated in Omani naval operations. Although the two countries were not reunited, the process of separation was halted. This special relationship culminated in a visit by Barghash and his court to Oman. The reason for the trip was said to be the health problems of the Sultan of Zanzibar. He wanted to bathe in the hot springs at Wadi Bawshar (now part of Muscat) to cure progressive consumption.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁵ McDow, *Buying Time*, 252.

⁴⁹⁶ McDow, *Buying Time*, 251.

⁴⁹⁷ Barghash’s vessel SS Malacca was used by Turki to send his envoy ‘Alī bin Jūmā to Zanzibar, and by his brother Muḥammad to increase sultan’s power in Suhar. *Entry of 6th December 1884*, Political Diary of the Muscat Political Agency, IOR/R/15/6/14.

⁴⁹⁸ McDow, *Buying Time*, 253.

⁴⁹⁹ McDow, *Buying Time*, 248.

⁵⁰⁰ Al-Mughayri, *Juḥaynat*, 345.

Barghash spent almost two weeks in Oman, and during this time, his health deteriorated severely despite bathing in hot springs. Barghash ended his visit so abruptly that Turkī did not have the opportunity to say goodbye.⁵⁰¹ Nevertheless, a few days earlier, Barghash managed to deliver lavished gifts to Turkī, his sons and the people of Muscat. He gave the ruler of Oman the sum of 50,000 rupees. Each of Turkī's sons received 2,000 rupees. In addition, Turkī's associates received cash gifts. Considerable sums of money were also given to the *qāḍīs*, who were to distribute them among the poor of Muscat.⁵⁰² The scale and size of Barghash's gifts clearly indicate that the ruler of Zanzibar saw himself as a patron and benefactor of Turkī and Oman. He probably also realised that it would be his final trip to Oman and his last direct contact with his brother as his health was deteriorating rapidly. He may have wanted to provide adequate support to his brother in the event of his death. Indeed, Barghash bin Sa'īd died a few hours after arriving in Zanzibar, and his brother Turkī bin Sa'īd also passed away shortly afterwards.⁵⁰³

After the death of Barghash and Turkī, their successors ended the patron-client relationship as it had not been institutionalised but the result of personal arrangements and decisions of Barghash, who, in 1880, decided to regularly and multidimensionally assist his brother and his power in Oman. The informal and undefined nature of this cooperation was probably deliberate to avoid objections from the British hostile to any rapprochement between the divided countries. The result was significant unity and political connection between the countries under conditions of British domination in this part of the Indian Ocean. The ruler of Zanzibar carried out several areas of Omani policy by transporting Omani pilgrims free of charge and providing arms and funds to the Omani ruler regularly. Barghash thus succeeded in tempering the decision to divide the two countries. He could also count on his brother to effectively limit the influence of the imamate faction and their shared political opponents, thereby consolidating his own power in Pemba. Finally, by offering such large and extensive assistance to Oman, he was realising the ideas of Omani and Ibāḍī unity, which he had never really abandoned. As for Turkī, he could strengthen his power, ensure a smooth succession to his son Fayṣal, and achieve the close cooperation and coexistence with Zanzibar that he had mentioned from the beginning of his reign, but not on equal terms as he had dreamed initially.

⁵⁰¹ Al-Mughayri, *Juhaynat*, 346; *Entry of 17th March*, Political Diary of the Muscat Political Agency, IOR/R/15/6/14.

⁵⁰² *Entry of 13th March 1888*, Political Diary of the Muscat Political Agency, IOR/R/15/6/14.

⁵⁰³ McDow, *Buying Time*, 254.

Although the relationship between Barghash and Turkī was not institutionalised, the heirs of the two rulers, Khalīfa bin Sa‘īd (r. 1888-1890) in Zanzibar and Fayṣal bin Turkī (r. 1888-1913) in Oman, tried to maintain the close and frequent contacts. Zanzibar ships transported Omani pilgrims, and the exchange of gifts between the two rulers also continued.⁵⁰⁴ The cooperation between the two rulers even accelerated when the problem of the Arab elite in Pemba arose again. Some members of the Al-Maskarī tribe from Pemba were to take advantage of the change of power in the Sultanate of Zanzibar to approach Sayyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Sa‘īd with an offer of assuming power there in exchange for the abolition of the clove tax. The Arabs of Pemba were said to have denied these revelations, but they were confirmed by the envoy of Sultan Fayṣal, ‘Alī bin Jūma, who stated that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz had received such an ‘invitation’ from Pemba.⁵⁰⁵ The whole affair was uneventful as ‘Abd al-‘Azīz went to Bombay and remained exiled there until his death.⁵⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the situation indicates that anti-centralist tendencies were still present in Pemba and that part of the elite there shared the Omani community’s sense of unity, as they were prepared to hand over power to a prince who had been in Oman for more than ten years and who had worked intensively with Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī’s circle.

3.4 The Arab Elites’ Unity and the Question of Reunion of Both Countries

The story of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Sa‘īd provides further evidence that Arab elites were in constant and close contact with each other on familial, religious, and political levels. It is evident by the request of the Omani Sheikhs Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī Al-Ḥārithī and Jūma bin Sa‘īd Al-Mughayrī to the new Sultan Fayṣal bin Turkī in 1888 in which they suggested that Sayyid ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Sa‘īd be sent to join the struggle of the Omani Arabs against the German colonisation of East Africa.⁵⁰⁷ The proposal initially came out as a solution to the conflict between Fayṣal and his uncle, but it shows that Omani elites were closely following the fate of their relatives in East Africa. In turn, when Barghash refused to pay Turkī the subsidy, most of the ruling family and the Arab elite in Zanzibar were said to have urged him to end the dispute.⁵⁰⁸ This attitude was not only due to a sense of Arab and Ibāḍī identity and the relatively short time that had passed since the division of the two countries. It also had practical reasons.

⁵⁰⁴ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 513.

⁵⁰⁵ Smith to Lord Salisbury, 26 January 1889, IOR/R/15/6/37.

⁵⁰⁶ For the history of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s struggle for power in Oman and Zanzibar, see Żbik, ‘The Omani Prince’.

⁵⁰⁷ Entry 16th December 1888, Political Diary of the Muscat Political Agency, IOR/R/15/6/14.

⁵⁰⁸ Kirk to Wedderburn 1 January 1872, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

Because many members of the ruling family and the elite had estates and relatives in Oman, they had an interest in the prosperity and stability of the country.

The relationship of the Arab elite in Zanzibar with Oman is particularly noteworthy because it was the group most at risk of losing its Arab and Ibādī identities. Salmā bin Saʿīd captured the cosmopolitan nature of Zanzibar in the first half of the 19th century in her memoirs, where she mentioned that the cultural changes taking place among the Arabs in Zanzibar were noticed by their relatives in Oman.⁵⁰⁹ Traveller Richard Burton also pointed out that the Arabs in Zanzibar used Sunni religious texts because Ibādī ones were unavailable there, marking a significant religious shift.⁵¹⁰ Despite the migration of a few Ibādī scholars to Zanzibar during Saʿīd's reign, there was little government interest in religious matters, and traditional morality was weakened.⁵¹¹ Only the accession of Barghash changed this situation. Here, a key role was played by the importation of a printing press to Zanzibar and the establishment of the Sultanic Press in 1879/1880, which printed Arabic works, primarily Ibādī religious texts.⁵¹² The presence of these texts strengthened the position of the Ibādī *madhhab* in Zanzibar and allowed it to have a cultural and religious impact on the Ibādī community outside East Africa, particularly in Oman. The maintenance of Arab and Ibādī identities can also be seen in Barghash's other activities. The ruler of Zanzibar fought Arabs who abandoned Ibādism in favour of other branches of Islam and attracted prominent Ibādīs from Oman to the country.⁵¹³ Among them were the influential thinker and poet Nāṣir bin Sālim Al-Bahlānī Al-Rawāhī, known as Abū Muṣlīm, who co-founded the first Arabic community newspaper in Zanzibar, *Al-Najāh*, in 1911 and contributed greatly to the Arab revival in Zanzibar.⁵¹⁴

On the other hand, two separate centres of power and ensuing conflicts undermined the positions of the elites and contact between them. A good illustration of this problem is the story of part of the ruling family, which, after ʿAzzān bin Qays came to power in Oman, was deprived of its sources of income and forced to flee to Zanzibar. They were taken in by Mājid, who provided them with accommodation and pensions.⁵¹⁵ However, his successor Barghash considered the presence of this part of the family a considerable financial and political burden.

⁵⁰⁹ Ruete, *Memoirs*, 60.

⁵¹⁰ Richard F. Burton, *Zanzibar. City, Island and Coast* (London 1872) vol. 1, 405.

⁵¹¹ Sebastian Żbik, 'Wybrane przykłady zmiany kulturowej wśród omańskiej społeczności w Afryce Wschodniej w latach 1806-1856', *Przemiany kulturowe w Afryce. Historia i antropologia*, ed. Maciej Żabek (Warszawa: WUW, 2020), 135.

⁵¹² Philip C. Sadgrove, *The Press Engine of Mini-renaissance in Zanzibar (1860-1920)*, 'History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East Publisher', *Journal of Semitic Studies: Supplement*, 15, 2005, 153.

⁵¹³ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 83.

⁵¹⁴ Sadgrove, *The Press Engine*, 169.

⁵¹⁵ Churchill to Atkinson, 3 March 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2.

Only when he received word of Turkī's capture of Muscat did he inform them that he could no longer support them and they should return to Oman.⁵¹⁶ A similar policy change affected the Northern Arabs, who came to Zanzibar to trade and acquire slaves before returning to Oman.⁵¹⁷ The new Sultan of Zanzibar refused them the traditional gifts that, in Mājid's time, had totalled as high as 50 000 MTT.⁵¹⁸

Although there were still no significant changes of a systemic or institutional nature that would limit the ability of the Arab elites to move, settle, or live, again, as in the previous period, political circumstances emerged that significantly affected the freedom of the elites in both countries. It was especially apparent during the cooperation between Turkī and Barghash in the field of fighting the imamate faction and other political opponents or persons in disfavour. This was the second time in the history of Oman and Zanzibar's separation that there had been such a clear attempt to restrict the flow of resources and aid from one country to the other. The Omani ruler tried to seize some of the funds intended for the rebels and asked Barghash to confiscate their assets in East Africa. The reach and effectiveness of this policy were limited, and Arabs in Oman who had access to property or credit in Zanzibar mostly succeeded in raising money to finance their attacks against Turkī, but further obstacles to their free contact were introduced. The practice of deporting troublesome people was much more widespread between 1870-1888. Both rulers ordered deportations, usually against disloyal officials or those considered too independent. Cooperation between Turkī and Barghash ensured the smooth execution of deportations and allowed the rulers to get rid of dangerous persons without antagonising whole tribes and provoking additional conflicts.

It should be noted that the deportation policy was an expansion of previous attempts to restrict the movement of certain persons, an action introduced in Mājid's 1870 declaration mentioned in the previous chapter. Unlike the earlier act, however, the deportations were individual and not known to be legally regulated. Nevertheless, they represented another attempt to restrict freedom of movement and the activities of elites in both countries. These restrictions were ad hoc and introduced on the individual initiative of the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar. Anti-slavery policies promoted by the British were of a different nature.

Even before the proclamation of the anti-slavery treaty of 1873, Turkī bin Sa'īd announced two new resolutions against the slave trade. The first proclamation (or first part of

⁵¹⁶ Kirk to Wedderburn, 20 April 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

⁵¹⁷ At first, they bought slaves and took them to Oman, but when it became illegal to export slaves from Africa to Arabia, some of them started smuggling slaves out of Zanzibar.

⁵¹⁸ Kirk to Wedderburn, 9 March 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

the same document) directly targeted the owners and captains of ships that transported slaves to Oman.⁵¹⁹ The resolution threatened that such persons would be punished and their ships burned.⁵²⁰ The second act indicated that all ships belonging to Turkī's subjects sailing from Muscat and other Omani ports had to have travel documents issued in Muscat detailing the goods being transported.⁵²¹ Turkī likely made these new rules in response to the British anti-slavery policy. They also offered a legal basis for the British to search and seize ships suspected of smuggling slaves in Omani waters, an eventual requirement with the introduction of the 1873 treaty.

The decisions made under Turkī were also significant for the process of separation of the two countries because only the subjects of the Sultan of Oman were bound by them. This specific legal language thus officially distinguished the Arabs of Oman from those of Zanzibar. When in 1871 a British ship stopped a vessel carrying slaves in the waters of the Sultanate of Zanzibar, and it turned out that the captain and the crew were Arabs from Muscat, they were released, as it was determined they were not subject to the jurisdiction of Sultan Barghash.⁵²² As a result, the anti-slavery measures contributed to a more rapid development of legal status for the inhabitants of Oman and Zanzibar and separate jurisdictions. Of course, these legal restraints applied more to ordinary Arabs than to representatives of the elite, but the issue of restricting the slave trade also struck the Omani elites significantly.

The impact of anti-slavery policies on the Arab elite has been studied in many ways, particularly in Zanzibar.⁵²³ For this study, it is important to note that this was another factor that contributed to the persistence of the sense of unity and the idea of reuniting the countries. Limited access to slaves, their high price, and British actions targeting smugglers effectively affected both Omani elites. In Oman, restrictions on the slave trade hampered merchants and the acquisition of slaves for date production.⁵²⁴ While in Zanzibar, it affected the clove plantations where slaves were the primary labour force.⁵²⁵ It also made travel between the two countries more difficult. When the part of the ruling family who came to Zanzibar after 1868

⁵¹⁹ They were recorded by the British in a short space of time, so they were probably released together or one just after each other.

⁵²⁰ Proclamation of Syud Toorke bin Saed dated 5 May 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/22.

⁵²¹ Proclamation in the Name of His Highness Syud Toorkee, dated 17 May 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/17.

⁵²² Kirk to Miles, 3 June 1871, MSA PD 1871, vol. 86.

⁵²³ Among the most important works on the topic of slavery in Zanzibar and Oman are: Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*; Croucher, *Cloves and Capitalism*; Mathews Hopper, *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Fair, *Pastimes and politics*; Elisabeth McMahon, *Slavery and Emancipation in Islamic East Africa: From Honor to Respectability* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁵²⁴ Hopper, *Slaves of One Master*, 64.

⁵²⁵ Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, 131.

wanted to return to Muscat, they had to face the fact that neither Sultan Barghash nor the British consul could guarantee them an exemption from checking whether the slaves who sailed with them were doing so voluntarily.⁵²⁶ Similar restrictions affected others like Rāshid bin ‘Amūr Al-Ghaythī who sold his house in Zanzibar and decided to return to Oman in 1878. He had to report to the British consulate the slaves he was taking with him.⁵²⁷ Given that slavery was legal based on Islam and Arab tradition, the Arab elites opposed restrictions on the slave trade.⁵²⁸ A shared dislike of this and other changes that restricted the freedom of travel and action of the Arab elites significantly bolstered their sense of unity and caused the idea of reunion to grow instead of dying out.

The fact that the imamate faction with Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī and Jūmā bin Sa‘īd wanted to overthrow Turkī and Barghash and merge the two countries shows that British domination, anti-slavery measures, and restrictions on elite liberties kindled desires for reunion. This growing spirit culminated in rebellion of 1895. The elites had religious, political, and economic reasons for their discontent. From a religious point of view, an important issue was the unity of the Ibādī community, which the division of Oman and Zanzibar violated. The second important point was the appointment of an imam as a just ruler with the legitimacy to rule Muslims. This last matter was related to political and economic issues. Turkī and Barghash’s approval of anti-slavery treaties and excessive fiscal burdens, such as in the Pemba case, as well as deportations and restrictions on the freedom of the elites, violated the legitimacy of the Muslim ruler. In the eyes of the Ibādī community, rulers who exercised such sweeping powers to restrict the slave trade, limit freedom of movement, and exile opponents appeared as tyrants.⁵²⁹ Of course, such a view was shared only in Oman in Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī’s circles and Zanzibar among some elites in Pemba. Nevertheless, the rebellion of 1895 proved that this was a powerful movement.

3.5 The Final Attempt to Reunite Both Countries

Initially, the successors of Turkī and Barghash maintained contact, but the intensity of relations between the states decreased. The reason for this was the situation in Zanzibar, where Barghash’s successors, his brothers Khalīfa (r. 1888-1890) and ‘Alī (r. 1890-1893), faced European colonial ambitions. Both ‘Alī and Khalīfa tried to counter German attempts to occupy the East African coast, considered a part of the Sultanate of Zanzibar. To do so, they worked

⁵²⁶ Kirk to Wedderburn, 20 April 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

⁵²⁷ McDow, *Buying Time*, 184.

⁵²⁸ For example, the Arab elite was outraged at Sultan ‘Alī’s attempt to introduce further anti-slavery restrictions in 1890. Despite the British protectorate, outrage forced him to abandon new law. Bennett, *The Arab State*, 165.

⁵²⁹ Wilkinson, ‘The Ibādī “Imāma”’, 356.

with the British, making far-reaching concessions to them. Eventually, Sultan ‘Alī bin Sa‘īd agreed to the British protectorate of Zanzibar and the loss of the East African coast to the Germans and the British in 1890.⁵³⁰ In this situation, the rulers of Zanzibar did not have the opportunity to keep intensive relations with Oman because their attention and resources were devoted to East African affairs. Nevertheless, a certain amount of contact and cooperation persisted because, even after the loss of the East African coast, the Sultan of Oman Fayṣal bin Turkī planned to visit Zanzibar to marry a daughter of Sultan Ali.⁵³¹ However, the intended visit was cancelled as a consequence of the passing of Sultan ‘Alī in 1893.⁵³²

No Omani ruler had planned a visit to Zanzibar since Turkī in 1880, so the reason for such a venture could not have been just family matters. Probably Fayṣal was counting on the help of Sultan ‘Alī to reduce the influence of Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī who was still using the finances from Zanzibar to build opposition against the ruler in Muscat.⁵³³ The case of Fayṣal’s unrealised visit to Zanzibar also points to another important issue. Unlike Barghash’s visit to Oman, it was facilitated by British agents in Oman and Zanzibar, indicating the emergence of new political realities after 1890.⁵³⁴ In the beginning, the Arab elites seemed to be unaware of the importance of the British protectorate and, as the British themselves pointed out: ‘they [the Arabs] only knew a paper had been signed’.⁵³⁵ Sultan ‘Alī bin Sa‘īd was the first to feel the extent of the changes resulting from British protection. His power was significantly reduced in favour of the British consul general and first minister. The Zanzibari dependence on the British was also aggravated because Europeans and British Indians headed the new offices. Finally, the financial independence of the ruler of Zanzibar was limited by the creation of a state budget controlled by the colonisers. Sultan ‘Alī received only a fixed amount from this budget and the revenues of the royal estates.⁵³⁶

From the point of view of the separation process between Oman and Zanzibar, this last change was fundamental. The patron-client relationship between Turkī and Barghash

⁵³⁰ The coast of Tanganyika was fully acquired by the Germans, while the British leased the coast of Kenya from the Sultan of Zanzibar. Thus, the inhabitants of the Kenyan coast remained formally subjects of the sultan. Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 111.

⁵³¹ Sadler to the Government of India, 27 February 1893, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1

⁵³² Rodd to Sadler, 13 April 1893, ZNA AC2/9.

⁵³³ McDow, *Buying Time*, 255.

⁵³⁴ Rodd to Salder, 13 April 1893, ZNA AC2/9.

⁵³⁵ Despatch no. 82, 15 March 1893, ZNA AC1/11. Zanzibar was the first Arab country where the British declared an official protectorate. While the British occupation of Egypt began in 1882, Egypt was not declared a protectorate until the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and the Arab elites of Zanzibar and Oman were likely not familiar with the Egyptian experience of British rule. The position of the local elites in German East Africa could be an example of such a situation, but there the role of the Arab elite was incomparably smaller even before the arrival of the Germans.

⁵³⁶ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 169.

functioned thanks to Zanzibar's financial resources. The restriction of the right to dispose of these resources and their diminution following the loss of the East African coast reduced the ability of Zanzibar's rulers to influence Oman. Still, this did not mean the relationship between Oman and Zanzibar was severed. On the contrary, growing British presence and British control of Zanzibar raised the issue again. In response to British policy towards Oman and Zanzibar, the voices of dissent among the Arab elites of both countries grew stronger. One of the reactions to the new situation was the revival of the idea of reuniting the two countries.

The elites in Oman and the new Sultan of Zanzibar, Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī, were responsible for bringing back the idea of reunification. Ḥamad was the son of the Sultan of Oman Thuwaynī and the younger brother of Sālim. Ḥamad lived quietly in Oman during his brother's reign and under the imamate of 'Azzān bin Qays. However, his situation changed when his uncle Turkī bin Sa'īd rose to power.⁵³⁷ Turkī regarded Thuwaynī's surviving sons as threats to his power and repeatedly tried to remove them from Muscat.⁵³⁸ He mostly succeeded in this matter, exiling Ḥārūb bin Thuwaynī to Persia, and deporting 'Abd al-'Azīz to Zanzibar.⁵³⁹ Ḥamad shared the fate of his brothers even though his wife Turkiyya was a daughter of Turkī. He was forced to divorce her and leave Oman. He first went to India and then finally arrived in Zanzibar at the end of Barghash's rule.⁵⁴⁰

When Sultan 'Alī bin Sa'īd died without sons, Ḥamad became one of the candidates for the throne. After 'Ali bin Sa'īd's death, Barghash's son Khālīd tried to gain power for the first time. However, the opposed attitude of the British and some of the elite led him to abandon his claim to power.⁵⁴¹ Eventually, the British approved Ḥamad as the new Sultan of Zanzibar because he appeared to them as a cooperative and harmless person. The British may have seen Ḥamad as a non-Zanzibari person without much property and influence. Moreover, Ḥamad himself was said to give the impression of being ready to submit to Zanzibar's protectors.⁵⁴² The reality turned out to be radically different. Ḥamad was no stranger to Zanzibar's elite, even though he had only lived in East Africa for a short time. His marriage to Barghash's daughter undoubtedly influenced his position, but it was also the result of an abiding sense of unity between the Arab elites of the two countries.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁷ Al-Mughayrī, *Juhaynat*, 352.

⁵³⁸ Ross to the Government of India, 2 August 1876, IOR/R/15/6/37.

⁵³⁹ Miles to Bombay Government, 3 June 1879, IOR/R/15/6/37.

⁵⁴⁰ Al-Mughayrī, *Juhaynat*, 352.

⁵⁴¹ Al-Mughayrī, *Juhaynat*, 351-352.

⁵⁴² Despatch no. 82, 15 March 1893, ZNA AC1/11.

⁵⁴³ British sources stressed the influence and importance of Sultan Ḥamad's wife. One states that she was 'reputed to be a lady of very emancipated intelligence [...] her husband is pretty devoted to her and contrary to the customs has taken no other wives'. Despatch no. 81, 13 March 1893, ZNA AC1/11.

Ḥamad's pro-Britishness appears to have been feigned from the start. Even before ascending the throne, he had been in contact with Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī in Oman (although the latter complained in 1893 that he had not received a letter from Ḥamad for a long time).⁵⁴⁴ Furthermore, immediately after assuming power, he received Ṣāliḥ's son, 'Abdullāh, and brought his own family to Zanzibar. Among the new immigrants was his nephew, Khalīfa bin Ḥārūb bin Thuwaynī, who would later become Sultan of Zanzibar.⁵⁴⁵ Certainly, Ḥamad's advisors played a crucial role in implementing independent and anti-British policies. Hilāl bin 'Amr Al-Khanjarī Al-Ḥārithī was the most influential person in Ḥamad's court and, according to Al-Mughayrī, 'all the things passed through the hands of Sheikh Hilāl bin 'Amr in the sultanate of Sayyid Ḥamad'.⁵⁴⁶ Hilāl bin 'Amr Al-Khanjarī Al-Ḥārithī was a native of 'Izz in Al-Sharqiyya region in Oman, and his brother Muḥsin remained a powerful ally of Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī in Oman.⁵⁴⁷

Therefore, it is not surprising that 'Abdullāh bin Ṣāliḥ repeated his visit to Zanzibar the following year. This time he was accompanied by Muḥsin bin 'Amr. Some British accounts saw the visit as the start of an attempt to reunite the two countries and stated that 'four leading sheikhs from Muscat had arrived at Zanzibar, the object of their visit was to offer to His Highness the Sultan the rulership of Oman'.⁵⁴⁸ The British were correct that there were plans to merge the two countries, but they were not undertaken in Oman but in Zanzibar. The details of the negotiations are known from the account of Badr bin Sayf, a member of the ruling family in Muscat. Badr bin Sayf revealed to British officials that:

[...] the matter was finally arranged whilst the three Sheikhs, one of whom was Sheikh Saleh's son, were at Zanzibar, they agreeing to attack Seyyid Faysal in any way they could and Seyyid Hamid pledging himself to bear the cost by sending Sheikh Saleh money and ammunition, after which Sheikh Saleh received a letter from his son telling him that the agreement had been concluded and that if he (Sheikh Saleh) did not accept, the Sultan of Zanzibar would find some other instrument. That thereupon he (Sheikh Saleh) accepted the agreement and commenced his plans which ended in the seizure of Maskat.⁵⁴⁹

It is clear from Badr's description that the Sultan of Zanzibar not only supported the rebellion but initiated it. However, it must be remembered that Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī urged Badr bin Sayf to join the attempted overthrow of Fayṣal, but he refused Ṣāliḥ's offer and was placed under house

⁵⁴⁴ Salih bin Ali to Hamad bin Thuwayni, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁴⁵ Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyyāt*, 121.

⁵⁴⁶ Al-Mughayrā, *Juḥaynat*, 353.

⁵⁴⁷ McDow, *Buying Time*, 255.

⁵⁴⁸ Undersecretary of Foreign Office to the Government of India, 20 March 1894, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁴⁹ Sadler to Wilson, 2 April 1895, IOR/L/PS/10/397, File 2698/1913 Muscat: rebellion against the Sultan

arrest for the duration of the uprising. Therefore, his account to British officials may have been exaggerated to discredit Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī. The narrative that Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī was behind the attempt to overthrow Fayṣal was also repeated by other representatives of the Arab elite, such as the former *wazīr* of Omani ruler, Sa‘īd bin ‘Alī Al-Ḥārithī.⁵⁵⁰

On the other hand, some rebel leaders, in conversation with the British after the rebellion, rejected this. Muḥsin bin ‘Amr was rumoured to have said that the rebels acted independently and only proposed the Sultan of Zanzibar as a new Omani ruler because ‘Sayyid Faisal was not a friend of [the British] government, and they had chosen Sayyid Hamid-bin-Thoweyni because they knew he was’.⁵⁵¹ Arguably, this claim could have been an attempt to protect the Sultan of Zanzibar and his advisers from the consequences of participating in a lost rebellion. Therefore, it must be assumed that the initiative to merge the two countries came from the Zanzibari side, and regardless of personal involvement, the uprising must have had the approval of Sultan Ḥamad. This account is confirmed by Al-Mughayrī, who stated that the decision to bring Muscat under Zanzibar’s control was taken by a group of advisors to Sultan Ḥamad known as the Consultative Committee (arab. *al-lajna al-istishāriyya*) in which Sheikh Hilāl bin ‘Amr played a major role.⁵⁵²

While British sources agreed with Arab ones on the involvement of Hilāl bin ‘Amr in the rebellion, their assessments of Sultan Ḥamad bin Thuywanī’s actions differed. British Political Agent and Consul Arthur Hardinge denied the participation of the Sultan of Zanzibar in events in Oman and stated that:

Some of the rumours circulated in Muscat respecting the part played by the Sultan of Zanzibar in the rebellion were absurd; one of them, for instance, was that he had actually started in a ship for Oman to put himself at the head of the insurgents, and this being so, it is only fair to him that others, less palpably untrue, should be received with a good deal of caution.⁵⁵³

The issue of Ḥamad’s involvement in the uprising against Fayṣal bin Turki was seen differently by First Minister Llyod Mathews, who stressed that the reunification of Oman and Zanzibar was Ḥamad’s ‘greatest wish’.⁵⁵⁴ Once again, British colonial officials had opposing views on the relationship between Oman and Zanzibar. In the face of the collapse of the uprising in Oman, this disagreement had no political consequences. In a different scenario, however, it could have weakened the British response to the actions of Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī’s partisans.

⁵⁵⁰ Said bin Ali to Faysal bin Turki, 14 Shawwal 1312 (10 October 1895), IOR/L/PS/10/397, File 2698/1913 Muscat: rebellion against the Sultan.

⁵⁵¹ J. A. Saldanha, *Precis of Maskat Affairs, 1892-1905: in Two Parts, Part I*, 14, IOR/L/PS/20/C245.

⁵⁵² Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 353.

⁵⁵³ Hardinge to Salisbury, 31 August 1895, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁵⁴ Mathews to Rodd, 19 January 1894, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

Although Ḥamad could not officially assist his Omani allies while his country remained a British protectorate, his advisers did so on his behalf. The image of a ruler dominated by Hilāl and other Muscat Arabs is conflated with the real actions of Ḥamad, who, as one of the last Sultans of Zanzibar, actively sought to limit British influence.⁵⁵⁵ It was not just a sense of Omani unity or nostalgia for his country of origin that influenced his anti-British actions. Ḥamad struggled with the limitations of his power in Zanzibar and trusted that he would be more independent in Oman.⁵⁵⁶ The Sultan of Zanzibar and some members of the elite likely realised that this was the last moment to attempt reunification, as growing British control over Zanzibar and its resources would shortly make the scheme impossible. Paradoxically, the British protectorate pushed Ḥamad to support or initiate the rebellion in Oman.

The very idea of declaring Ḥamad the Sultan of Oman and directly reuniting the two countries very quickly proved impossible as soon as the British announced that the Arabs in Oman could appoint anyone they wanted to the throne except Ḥamad.⁵⁵⁷ It seems that Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī was prepared for this eventuality, and the rebels considered choosing someone who would be a puppet sultan ruling in the Sultan of Zanzibar’s name.⁵⁵⁸ The choice of a representative of the Bin Qays branch, the one that overthrew Ḥamad’s brother appears surprising. Perhaps it was a concession from Ḥamad to the party of Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī who served ‘Azzān.⁵⁵⁹

Unlike in the case of Ḥamad, Ṣāliḥ’s greatest desire was to restore the institution of the imamate. The reunification of the two countries was only an offshoot of this idea, which appealed to him because of the concept of the unity of the Ibādī community and for practical reasons, such as free access to Zanzibari money and estates for the sake of this institution.⁵⁶⁰ The candidacy of ‘Azzān bin Qays’s son to the throne of Oman did not mark a departure from the plan to reunite the two countries but an attempt to adapt it to changing political conditions. Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī knew like no one else that it was Zanzibar that had contributed to the collapse of the imamate in 1871 and probably concluded that the partial revival of this institution could only succeed with the consent and support of Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī. In effect, the plan was to indirectly reunite both countries and create a state of dependency between Oman and Zanzibar

⁵⁵⁵ Ḥamad sought support from the French consul and tried to form an army dependent on him. He gathered almost 1000 soldiers under his leadership. Bennett, *The Arab State*, 177-178.

⁵⁵⁶ Mathews to Rodd, 19 January 1894, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁵⁷ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 542.

⁵⁵⁸ Hardinge to Salisbury, 29 December 1895, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁵⁹ It was planned to install ‘Azzān bin Qays’s son on the throne of Muscat. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 541.

⁵⁶⁰ McDow, *Buying Time*, 254.

to a greater extent than under Barghash and Turkī, as the new ruler of Oman would pay a tribute to Zanzibar.⁵⁶¹

Regardless of the feasibility of such an arrangement, Ḥamad did not have the wealth and opportunities that Barghash had enjoyed. British accounts emphasised that he was heavily in debt and was even said to have sold off his movable and immovable property to curry favour with Omani sheikhs.⁵⁶² As a result, he actually had to limit himself to supporting the rebellion in secret. The greatest efforts to support the operations in Muscat were made by Hilāl bin ‘Amr, who sought to raise the necessary funds among Zanzibar’s Arab elite.⁵⁶³ The amount of aid given is impossible to determine. According to the British, the support provided was small, even though the rebels and their allies were able to evade British attempts to restrict arms and money smuggling into Oman.⁵⁶⁴ Whatever the amount and type of aid given, it was not enough to achieve a victory for the rebellion. After initial successes in taking Muscat and the sultan’s palace on 15 February 1895, the rebels were unable to capture Mutrah or the Al-Jalali Fort where Fayṣal had taken refuge. Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī counted on the arrival of Ḥamad or support from Zanzibar, but neither of these happened.⁵⁶⁵ In the meantime, Fayṣal managed to gather reinforcements and bribe some sheikhs. Finally, on 9 March, a settlement was reached in which the ruler agreed to pay the rebels and the representatives of the ‘Azzān bin Qays line in return for their ending the rebellion and leaving Muscat.⁵⁶⁶

The defeat of the rebellion happened despite British passivity. Aside from incomplete control of the transport of arms from Zanzibar and warning Ḥamad, the British did not interfere in Omani affairs and did nothing to protect the Sultan of Oman despite his appeal for their help.⁵⁶⁷ During Ṣāliḥ Al-Ḥārithī’s previous attacks on Muscat, the British had declared their support for Fayṣal. This time, however, they took a neutral stance, pointing to the Omani ruler’s independence and the conflict’s internal nature.⁵⁶⁸ The inconsistency in the British approach to this matter was another manifestation of the lack of the centralisation of imperial policy. British political agents and residents frequently acted without explicit instructions from their superiors and followed their own assumptions. Because they were on the ground and had direct control over the situation, they could influence British colonial strategy more than decision-makers in

⁵⁶¹ Hardinge to Salisbury, 29 December 1895, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁶² Persian Gulf Gazetteer, Historical and Political Materials, Maskat territory, 1872-1903, 45, IOR/R/15/1/723.

⁵⁶³ Hardinge to Salisbury, 29 December 1895, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁶⁴ Persian Gulf Gazetteer. Part 1. Historical and political materials. Précis on arms trade in the Persian Gulf, IOR/L/PS/20/C237, 4.

⁵⁶⁵ McDow, *Buying Time*, 257.

⁵⁶⁶ McDow, *Buying Time*, 257.

⁵⁶⁷ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 88.

⁵⁶⁸ McDow, *Buying Time*, 257.

India and London. Their accountability to their superiors was also limited, given their distance from the centre of colonial power and the lack of developed control mechanisms.⁵⁶⁹ As a result, any change of lower British officials could result in a shift in British policy. During the 1895 rebellion, James Hayes Sadler headed the political agency in Muscat. He had been in this role officially since 1892 but was not in Muscat from 1893 to 1894 as he was then acting resident in the Gulf.⁵⁷⁰ He was not bound by the decisions of his predecessors and, in the absence of clear directives from his superiors, resolved not to assist Fayṣal.

In the case of the 1895 rebellion, it was, therefore, not the British who played a crucial role in its defeat. Naturally, the British protectorate of Zanzibar and the limited resources and opportunities available to the Sultan of Zanzibar influenced the outcome of the uprising, but the other vital problem was the lack of sufficient support among Arabs. This was due to the constraints brought by the tribal division in Oman. Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī did not attempt to win the support of a confederation of Ghāfirī tribes as he represented the opposite group of Hināwī tribes and solely relied on Zanzibar’s promise of assistance.⁵⁷¹

The migration of Arabs from Oman to Zanzibar did not concern the whole country but included mainly the interior regions of Al-Dakhiliyya and Al-Sharqiyya.⁵⁷² The tribes of Al-Batina, mostly of the Ghāfirī confederation, which had only limited contact with East Africa, were not interested in the unification with Zanzibar as much as the Sharqiyya’s tribes, which had been connected to East Africa for decades. It must not be forgotten that not all the tribes of Oman were of Ibāḍī Islam, and hence some groups did not like the idea of the Bin Qays returning to the throne of Oman with the support of Zanzibar.⁵⁷³ Moreover, Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī did not enjoy full cooperation from Hināwīs. The refusal of Badr bin Sayf to collaborate or the situation of Sa‘īd bin ‘Alī Al-Ḥārithī, who was forced to side with the rebels after the threat of seizure of his property in Zanzibar indicates that Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī’s authority had eroded and his scheme of putting Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī or his vassal on the throne of Oman was not entirely supported even in his own tribal group.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁶⁹ In the case of Henry Churchill, who prematurely gave Barghash British support despite concerns about the credibility of the latter’s declaration to curb the slave trade, the only consequence drawn against the British official by his superiors was the expression of disapproval of his move.

⁵⁷⁰ Paul J. Rich, *Creating the Arabian Gulf: The British Raj and the Invasions of the Gulf* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), 230.

⁵⁷¹ McDow, *Buying Time*, 258.

⁵⁷² Wilkinson, *The Arabs*, 57.

⁵⁷³ Especially that the participation in the migration to East Africa since the time of Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān was mainly of Ibāḍī tribes. Al-Mughayrī even claimed that only such tribes migrated to Zanzibar. Al-Mughayrī, *Juḥaynat*, 141.

⁵⁷⁴ Sadler to Wilson, 2 April 1895, IOR/L/PS/10/397, File 2698/1913 Muscat: Rebellion against the Sultan

Also, in Zanzibar, the idea of aiding the rebellion was not fully praised. The lukewarm feeling was due to the British protectorate, control of the arms and money transfers, and the attitudes of part of the elite. British estimates of aid mentioned a small sum between 4,000 and 5,000 MTT sent to Oman before the rebellion began.⁵⁷⁵ British patrols curtailed subsequent assistance, but colonial officials themselves admitted that they could not stop the transfer of funds altogether.⁵⁷⁶ Yet for almost three weeks, rebel forces waited in vain in Muscat for support from Zanzibar. Hilāl bin ‘Amr thus appears to have failed to raise or send sufficient cash and weapons to Zanzibar. This may have been due to animosity within the Arab elite, which became fully manifest after the defeat of the rebellion when the British reported that Hilāl faced increasing disfavour from other Arabs and the sultan himself.⁵⁷⁷ As a result, the British easily persuaded Ḥamad to deport his advisor.⁵⁷⁸ Another reason for the failure of support for Oman may have been the situation of some elite representatives who did not want to sacrifice their dwindling fortunes to the rebellion in a distant land. The indebtedness of Arab plantations to Indian merchants, difficult access to slaves and the division of property due to inheritance rules limited the financial possibilities of the Arab elite in Zanzibar.⁵⁷⁹ Consequently, like Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī, some Arabs in Zanzibar were unable to support the rebellion financially. The absence of this aid was a crucial signal to Omani Arabs that they could no longer count on Zanzibar as much as they had in the past.

The 1895 rebellion, although a failure, indicates that after forty years, there were still influential people in both Oman and Zanzibar interested in reuniting the two countries. Britain played a key role; even with minimal involvement, it was able to thwart the rebel plans. At the same time, the downfall of this action shows that there were no longer sufficient opportunities and resources to realise reunification. The Omani Arabs found themselves devoid of the backing of their wealthier kin in Zanzibar and were additionally hindered by their own inability to consolidate their efforts and overcome tribal and individual animosities, in order to achieve the goal of unifying the two countries. Zanzibar was thus ceasing to be ‘a fountain of money’⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁵ Telegram from the British Residency in Bushire to the Political Agent in Muscat mentioned 5000 MTT sent from Zanzibar to Oman, IOR/L/PS/10/397, File 2698/1913 Muscat: rebellion against the Sultan. In turn, Persian Gulf Gazetteer stated that around 4,900 MTT was dispatched. Persian Gulf Gazetteer, Historical and Political Materials, Maskat territory, 1872-1903, IOR/R/15/1/723, 45.

⁵⁷⁶ Persian Gulf Gazetteer. Part 1. Historical and political materials. Précis on arms trade in the Persian Gulf, IOR/L/PS/20/C237, 4.

⁵⁷⁷ Hardinge to Undersecretary to the Foreign Office, 9 April 1896, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁷⁸ Hardinge to Salisbury, 9 May 1896, ZNA AC1/33.

⁵⁷⁹ Cooper, *Slavery Plantation*, 131.

⁵⁸⁰ An expression used by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Sa‘īd to describe Zanzibar in a letter to his brother Barghash where he asked him for financial support: ‘Zanzibar is the fountain of money and we cannot get on without Zanzibar and

for Oman and a source of support for and against the central government there. The final confirmation of this change was the defeat of Khālīd bin Barghash's rebellion in 1896.

3.6 The Rebellion of Khalid bin Barghash and Oman

Khālīd bin Barghash, who had already tried to seize power in 1893, attempted to do so again three years later. When it became apparent that Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī was dying, he was to name his cousin as successor, probably hoping that he would maintain his anti-British course and try to keep some independence of the sultan's office. Taking advantage of the confusion following Ḥamad's death, Khālīd seized the reins and declared himself the Sultan of Zanzibar. The British did not recognise this act and demanded that he resign. Khālīd did not give in to British demands, and the British navy bombarded the sultan's palace and adjacent buildings forcing Khālīd to flee to the German consulate, where he received protection.⁵⁸¹ This event, commonly but erroneously called the shortest war in history, proved that the British mastered unlimited control over Zanzibar.⁵⁸² One might even venture to say that it marks the proper beginning of British rule over Zanzibar. The British not only demonstrated their strength and Zanzibar's vulnerability by bombing the city and ending the Arabs' resistance in a matter of minutes but also by severely punishing Khālīd's partisans.

For the separation process, this event had two outcomes. First, it indicated to elites in Zanzibar the consequences of opposing the British. It also precluded wider support for any attempt to undermine the colonial-imposed order, including attempts to support political change in Muscat. The scale of repression was significant. The British arrested at least thirteen Arab sheikhs, six of whom were released on payment of fines. The other seven also paid fines, but because their 'homes [were] in Oman', they were stripped of their property in Zanzibar and deported to Oman.⁵⁸³ The British arbitrarily divided the Arab elite into those they believed were Arabs from Oman and those from Zanzibar, thus dealing another blow to the unity of the Arab Omani community and their freedom to live and work in both countries. Moreover, the expulsion of the sheikhs from Zanzibar confirmed to the Omani elite that Zanzibar was under complete British control and would no longer support or assist political actions in Oman.

moreover all my troubles have strung from there.' Abdulaziz bin Said to Barghash bin Said, undated, MSA PD 1871, vol. 145.

⁵⁸¹ McDow, *Buying Time*, 258.

⁵⁸² As Geoffrey Owen points out, the British decision to use full force was unjustified. The Khālīd's forces had virtually no chance of attacking the British. It was one-sided shelling rather than war. Geoffrey Ross Owens, 'Exploring the Articulation of Governmentality and Sovereignty: The Chwaka Road and the Bombardment of Zanzibar, 1895-1896', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 8, no. 2 (2007).

⁵⁸³ Hardinge to Salisbury, 18 May 1897, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

Khālīd's rebellion points to one more thing in the Oman and Zanzibar separation process. Namely, while the idea of reunification may no longer have functioned in public discourse, a sense of unity and disagreement with British rule still united the elites of both countries. This is evidenced by letters from Oman to Khālīd bin Barghash intercepted by the British. These letters were sent from Sultan Fayṣal himself, his brother Muḥammad bin Turkī, or *Jamadar* Sulaymān after Khālīd's defeat. They were not politically motivated but expressed sympathy for the prince and support for his attempt to take power. Muḥammad bin Turkī even wrote that:

We thank God for your safety, after you had tried your best to get your rights, because you are a rightman, but oh my brother every thing is executed at its time and when the time is near it will be and nothing will prevent it.⁵⁸⁴

Khālīd's support in Muscat was based on family connections; his sister Sharāfa was married to Prince Fahd bin Turkī.⁵⁸⁵ Additionally, Sultan Fayṣal certainly did not forget the British for their passivity when he was besieged at the Fort in Muscat, so it is hardly surprising that he was sympathetic to attempts to limit their role in Zanzibar.

Moreover, Khālīd could count on support from the Qays branch of Āl Būsa'īdī family and some sheikhs from the Al-Ḥārithī tribe. The British report explained the Āl Būsa'īdī family's sympathy for Khālīd by way of the assistance the family had received from Khālīd's father, Barghash. The sheikhs' support was said to be due to their contacts with relatives in Zanzibar.⁵⁸⁶ None of these expressions of sympathy had any political significance. Still, they did indicate ongoing connections between the elites of the two countries and, despite their differences, a sense of shared identity and common interests. As it turned out, these were the solid foundations that allowed the Arab elites of both countries to resume political cooperation in the first half of the 20th century.

3.7 Conclusion

The change of leadership in Zanzibar in 1870 and in Oman the following year did not lead to a calming of relations between the two countries. This was due to the Zanzibar subsidy problem and Oman and Zanzibar's political independence. Although both Barghash and Turkī declared their support for Omani unity and their aversion to partition, they were unable to agree on the subsidy. As a result, once again, Britain intervened in the Omani-Zanzibar dispute by

⁵⁸⁴ Muhammad bin Turki to Khalid bin Barghash, 10 September 1896, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁸⁵ Their marriage ended tragically when Fahd died by suicide in 1894. The reason was supposedly that he was unable to divorce Sharīfa because he could not afford to return her *mahr*. Hardinge to Undersecretary to the Foreign Office, 24 October 1894, IOR/R/15/6/143 File 6/1.

⁵⁸⁶ Beville to Hardinge, 7 January 1897, ZNA AC2/28.

transferring the obligation to pay the subsidy to the government in Bombay. Passing the responsibility of the subsidy payment to Bombay removed an important source of conflict from Oman-Zanzibar relations and a means for Zanzibar to influence the situation in Oman. Another result of British involvement in the Oman-Zanzibar dispute was that the rulers of these countries signed anti-slavery treaties, which led to increased British influence in both countries.

The attempted partnership between Barghash and Turkī failed, but the removal of the subsidy problem and the actions of their common enemies led them to seek new forms of collaboration. These began with the deportation of political enemies and efforts to control the flow of money from Zanzibar to Oman. Their collaborations culminated in 1880 when Turkī expressed his wish to abdicate in favour of Barghash and thus unite the two countries. This event did not occur as the British ruled out the reunion, but it resulted in closer cooperation between the brothers than before, in which Barghash took the role of a patron of Turkī and Oman. As a result, between 1883 and 1888, the Sultan of Zanzibar organised and financed many Omani activities, such as transporting pilgrims, buying a steamer and consolidating control over the country. Despite the growing position of the British in the western Indian Ocean, both rulers succeeded in significantly halting the separation process.

Zanzibar's involvement in Omani affairs did not survive the deaths of Barghash and Turkī. Barghash's successors had to deal with the problem of European colonisation in East Africa, which resulted in the Sultanate of Zanzibar losing its independence and becoming a British protectorate in 1890. Subsequent restrictions of the sultan's power and income were other steps the British Empire took to limit Zanzibari influence over Oman. Growing British influence in both countries, anti-slavery policies and the concept of Omani and Ibādī unity still present among the elite led to the return of the idea of reuniting the two states in the 1890s. Particularly important in supporting this idea were circles associated with the imamate, which in Oman was led by Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī.

Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī's cooperation with Zanzibar's new ruler, Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī, led to a rebellion in Oman in 1895, in which they aimed to overthrow Sultan Fayṣal bin Turkī and put Ḥamad on the throne, uniting both countries. The staunch British opposition to the reunification of Oman and Zanzibar caused Omani sheikhs to consider the election of representatives of the Bin Qays family to the throne of Oman as a vassal of Zanzibar. However, this did not happen because, after the first successes, Sultan Fayṣal was able to gain an advantage over the rebels and defend his authority. Despite a long history of interference in Oman's internal affairs, the British remained neutral in this conflict, and the rebellion collapsed not only due to the British protectorate of Zanzibar but also because of divisions in the Omani society and lack of sufficient

support from Arabs in Zanzibar. The absence of British intervention on the side of the Omani ruler points again to the decentralised nature of their imperial policy. Policymaking was primarily in the hands of political agents, who enjoyed considerable latitude. In practice, British policy was determined by the personal preferences of lower-rank colonial officials rather than their superiors in Bombay or London. The influence of these officials translated into a lack of support for Sultan Fayṣal in 1895, despite previous interventions on his behalf by former British agents in Muscat.

Both the rebellion in Oman and Khālīd's coup d'état played key roles in the continued separation of the two countries. These actions also revealed that strong ties still existed between Oman and Zanzibar almost half a century after the official division of the two countries. These two political actions also shared similar goals of empowering Arab elites and regaining their political prominence in their respective countries. The Arabs in Oman recognised that Sultan Fayṣal was subservient to the British and that, under his rule, Oman was not realising Ibāḍī ideals. The remedy for this was to overthrow him and remerge the country with Zanzibar. Khālīd, like Ṣāliḥ, objected to the growing position of the British, resenting meddling in Zanzibar's internal affairs, including in the question of succession. As a result, both movements targeted the British, although the attitudes of the movement's leaders towards the British government varied.

Khālīd's actions constituted an open defiance of British imperial authority and a breach of the British protectorate of Zanzibar. In the case of Oman, the issue was much more complex. Ṣāliḥ's party did not seek conflict with the British. On the contrary, it tried to avoid antagonising them. The imamate faction was prepared to abandon its plan to appoint Ḥamad to the throne of Oman in the face of British opposition. Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī was aware of Britain's role in the downfall of imamate 'Azzān bin Qays and the failure of his previous political actions. Hence, he did not want to enter a war with the British authorities. This was not the only difference between the two movements, as they were also formed by different political circles. The rebellion in Oman was driven by tribesmen loyal to the imamate's cause, while the uprising in Zanzibar was mainly palace-based. The size of the two movements was also dissimilar. In Oman, Ṣāliḥ managed to mobilise almost the entire Hināwī confederation and succeeded in seizing Muscat. In the case of Khālīd, he could count on the support of part of the Arab elite and the armed forces created by his predecessor of around 3,000. However, these forces were of little use as the British reigned supreme at sea and crushed the uprising in a matter of minutes.

Finally, the rebellion of 1895 ended attempts to unite Oman and Zanzibar and provided that Zanzibar ceased to be a source of assistance and inspiration for direct political change in

Oman. This was made more explicit still by the failure of Khālid bin Barghash's rebellion, after which the British took complete control of Zanzibar and deported many Arabs to Oman. At the same time, the expressions of support for Khālid from elite representatives in Oman, although not of political significance, demonstrated the mutual contact and sense of unity that were still present between the Arabs of the two countries despite the end of the idea of the reunion. These connections proved essential in the renewal of the imamate institution in Oman in 1913 and the support for Omani modernisation by Zanzibar's Arab elite in the 1940s and 1950s.

Chapter 4

Colonial Power and Sovereignty: Legal and Institutional Aspects of the Separation Process

British actions towards the separation of Oman and Zanzibar were dictated by immediate needs rather than a long-term strategy. While the British maintained the principle of non-reunification of the two countries from the very beginning of British arbitration, they acted unsystematically and reactively on other issues. The British engagement with Oman and Zanzibar was based on the strength of the British navy and the often chaotic actions of political agents. The best example of this type of policy was the turbulent history of the Zanzibar subsidy. However, after 1896, the situation changed significantly as a new factor emerged in British policy in the region, which also played a crucial role in the separation process of Oman and Zanzibar. This new factor was the law and the institutions of a colonial state.

The brutal suppression of Khālid bin Barghash's rebellion brought full British control over Zanzibar. To consolidate their power, the British began to build the structures of a colonial state based on European law and institutions. British administrators created offices and regulations that organised many areas of daily life, including migration, nationality, inheritance, and property matters. The new institutions and strictures significantly affected the contacts of Zanzibar's Arab elite with Oman, especially as similar regulations were created in Oman. Although the British provided support for modernisation actions in Oman, their objectives were focused on fortifying the central authority and establishing the fundamental elements of a sovereign state, rather than being driven by attempts to increase their role there. Regardless of the different axiological foundations of these measures, they initiated a new stage of separation between the elites of the two countries based on restrictions on migration, an idea of nationality, and the division of the royal family into two branches.

4.1 British Colonialism and State-building in Oman and Zanzibar

The efficiency with which the Royal Navy forced the surrender of Khālid bin Barghash in 1896 was impressive. It also showed that British power could quell the mutiny, not prevent it. Measures taken so far had proved insufficient to ensure the uninterrupted exercise of British rule in Zanzibar. The experience of the Great Rebellion of 1857-1858 in India demonstrated that preventing acts of resistance by the local population was crucial to ensuring long-term peace for the British. The best tools for this task were imperial institutions and colonial laws, which acted as visible emblems of British power and limited the ability of native peoples to contest the colonial order.⁵⁸⁷ Therefore, successive political agents did their best to introduce what they believed was a modern state to Zanzibar by creating elaborate administration and legal systems.

The political factor was not, however, the only one that prompted the British to expand their power structures in Zanzibar. Practical and ideological considerations were the other major objectives of the changes. The British colonial authorities saw their activities as part of a civilising mission to the ‘backward’ territories. It was a mission intended to bring European achievements to the colonies.⁵⁸⁸ Moreover, the British wanted to replace local institutions with those familiar to them because it allowed them to govern foreign territory more easily and effectively. Despite decades of an Arab sultanate, the British claimed in 1891 that ‘no organized Government can be said to have existed at all.’⁵⁸⁹ In this context, the aim was to implement a European legal and social system and capitalist economic relations in Zanzibar. An example of such an attitude can be found in the British *waqf* policy, which Norbert Oberauer analysed and concluded that it ‘reflected notions of social order that were both modern and capitalist.’⁵⁹⁰

The third reason for the expansion of state institutions was war. Although Zanzibar was not at the centre of the warfare of the First and Second World Wars, the former conflict significantly affected the situation on the islands. The islands bordered German East Africa, so many measures were introduced in the sultanate to make it easier for the British to control the security of Zanzibar by restricting the right to travel or live there. Many of these decisions were

⁵⁸⁷ Jon Wilson, ‘The Temperament of Empire: Law and Conquest in late 19th-century India’ in *Subjects, Citizens and Law: Colonial and Independent India*, ed. Gunnel Cederlöf and Sanjukta Das Gupta, (London: Routledge, 2019), 40-41.

⁵⁸⁸ *Colonialism as civilizing mission: Cultural ideology in British India*, eds. Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 4-5.

⁵⁸⁹ British Agent and Consul General, Gerald Portal’s words, cited in Bennet, *The Arab State*, 168. Bissell attributes these words to Robert Lyne, see Bissell, *Urban Design*, 68.

⁵⁹⁰ Norbert Oberauer “‘Fantastic Charities’: The Transformation of *Waqf* Practice in Colonial Zanzibar”, *Islamic Law and Society* 15, no. 3 (2008), 316.

intended to be temporary, but they remained in force and evolved during the Second World War, this time due to the proximity of Italian Somalia.⁵⁹¹

However, it is worth noting that, as with the separation process, British officials did not always act coherently and effectively in building colonial institutions in Zanzibar. As William Bissell rightly points out, in the early days of the British protectorate in Zanzibar, the term colonial state meant ‘the handful of British officials sent out to the Indian Ocean periphery with ambiguous aims and divided responsibilities.’⁵⁹² Despite declarations of ground-breaking changes to the protectorate sent by colonial Zanzibari officials to their superiors in London, the process of colonial state-building progressed slowly due to staff shortages, limited finances and a lack of understanding of the institutions in place.⁵⁹³ As a result, the administrative transformation of Zanzibar took several decades, and its impact on the separation of Oman and Zanzibar became apparent gradually.

With few resources and a few officials, bringing about institutional change required a ruler who was cooperative and loyal to the colonial power. Sultan Ḥamūd bin Muḥammad (r. 1896-1902), the grandson of Sa‘īd bin Sulṭān, was such a person. To guarantee his total surrender to colonial rule, the British forced him to accept numerous restrictions of a financial nature, including a significant reduction of his income and loss of control over the state budget.⁵⁹⁴ As part of the new political reality, Sultan Ḥamūd issued a decree abolishing slavery in the sultanate in 1897, thus bringing to formal end years of British efforts on that issue.⁵⁹⁵ In return for his pro-British policy, Ḥamūd obtained British recognition for his son ‘Alī’s succession to the throne.⁵⁹⁶

When Ḥamūd died in 1902, the British took advantage of ‘Alī’s young age (17) and, contrary to Arab tradition, which held that men aged 16 could accede the throne, declared him too young to rule.⁵⁹⁷ The regency held by First Minister Alexander S. Rogers⁵⁹⁸ was used by

⁵⁹¹ Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 123-124.

⁵⁹² Bissell, *Urban Design*, 74.

⁵⁹³ Bissell, *Urban Design*, 83.

⁵⁹⁴ Conditions agreed by His Highness Hamoud bin Mahmud on his accession, 27 August 1896, ZNA AC2/79. The final personal allowance for Ḥamūd was set at Rs 15,000. In addition, he received nearly 20,000 rupees to maintain his family and palace. In addition, as the last Sultan of Zanzibar, he drew an income of 200,000 rupees a year from the estates, see Memorandum of 30 August 1902, ZNA AC3/13.

⁵⁹⁵ For abolition of slavery and the effects of 1897’s decree, see: Jonathon Glassman, *Racial Violence, Universal History, and Echoes of Abolition in Twentieth-Century Zanzibar* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010); Raphaël Cheriau, ‘The French Flag in Zanzibar Waters 1860s-1900s: Abolition and Imperial Rivalry in the Western Indian Ocean’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume 49, 2021, Issue 1; McMahon, *Slavery and Emancipation*; Abdulaziz Y. Lodhi, *The Institution of Slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1973); Stockreiter, *Islamic Law*.

⁵⁹⁶ Bennet, *The Arab State*, 185.

⁵⁹⁷ The British announced that he would take power when he turned 21.

⁵⁹⁸ Rogers took office as first minister following the death of Llyod Mathews in 1901.

the British to deepen their control over Zanzibar and expand colonial institutions there. Rogers made decisions without consulting ‘Alī and often without even informing him.⁵⁹⁹ During this time, the British began not only to legally regulate areas in which the institutions of the sultanate had not interfered but also initiated a process of subordinating spheres hitherto defined by Islamic law or custom. These actions included the introduction of legal arrangements and colonial control over the Islamic judiciary, the administration of *waqfs*, and the regulation of inheritances.⁶⁰⁰ The power of the British political agent increased further when, at the end of the regency in 1905, Rogers resigned as first minister, and the offices of the political agent and consul took over his powers.⁶⁰¹

The accession of Khalīfa bin Ḥarub to the throne in 1911 and his long reign finally ended the colonial state-building process in Zanzibar. Khalīfa, despite his birth in Muscat, did not intend to oppose the British and was a faithful follower of their policies.⁶⁰² In 1913, control over the Zanzibar Protectorate was transferred to the Colonial Office, and the office of the political resident replaced the position of the political agent and consul. The result was a system in which British officials in Zanzibar exercised power equal to that of the colonial governor.⁶⁰³

The sultan formally headed the Protectorate Council, which was transformed into two independent institutions — the Executive Council led by the sultan and the Legislative Council headed by the resident — in 1926.⁶⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the decisive role under the Zanzibar Order-in-Council of 1924 was played by the resident who signed decrees issued in the name of the sultan, making them universally binding.⁶⁰⁵ The general and unitary nature of the regulations

⁵⁹⁹ Benyan Saud Turki, ‘The Sultan of the Arab State of Zanzibar and the Regent, 1902-1905’, *Journal of the Documentation and Humanities Research Center*, 1997, no. 9, 6.

⁶⁰⁰ The topic of British interference in the Islamic legal system in Zanzibar has been addressed by Abdulkadir Hashim, *Reforming and Retreating: British Policies on Transforming the Administration of Islamic Law and its Institution in the Busa’idi Sultanate 1890-1963*, PhD dissertation, University of Western Cape, 2010. In addition, justice reform issues have been described by Elke E. Stockreiter “‘British kadhis’ and ‘Muslim judges’: Modernisation, Inconsistencies and Accommodation in Zanzibar’s Colonial Judiciary”, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 4:3 (2010), 560-576. On British *waqf* politics in Zanzibar, see Peter Lienhardt, ‘Family Waqf in Zanzibar’, *Journal of the Anthropology Society of Oxford*, 27, no 2 (1996), 95-106; Oberauer “‘Fantastic Charities,’” 315-370.

⁶⁰¹ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 192.

⁶⁰² There is no study in English devoted to this ruler and his reign. Most information can be found in works devoted to the general history of Zanzibar like Bennett’s book *The Arab State of Zanzibar*. However, there is a book in Arabic about his reign, see Ahmad bin Khalfān Al-Shalbī, *Zinjibār fī ‘ahd al-sulṭān Khalīfa bin Ḥarub Āl Būsa ‘īdī (1911-1960)*, (Muscat: Dar Al-Farqad, 2015).

⁶⁰³ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 179. Thomas Metcalf points out that the system of the colonial rule introduced in Zanzibar may have been modelled on that in Malaysia, where the political resident was not just an advisor to the ruler but exercised real power in the country. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, 42.

⁶⁰⁴ In the Executive Council, all members were European officials. In the Legislative Council, a few representatives of the Arab and Indian (and later African) elites were included.

⁶⁰⁵ *The Dominions Office and Colonial Office List: Comprising Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the Oversea Dominions and Colonial Dependencies of Great Britain* (London: Walerlow&Son, 1932), 502.

enacted by the British resulted in a shift in Zanzibar from a traditional and divided sovereignty to a single and indivisible one.⁶⁰⁶ The previous power of the sultan, sheikhs or the autonomy of religious and ethnic groups was replaced by the consolidated authority of the Zanzibar government. Of course, under the terms of the protectorate, this was only internal sovereignty based on the government's right to impose its will on the subjects and the subjects' duty of obedience to the government without any formal channels through which to challenge or influence its policy.⁶⁰⁷

The British also played a crucial role in attempts to build state institutions and sovereignty in Oman. The country, unlike Zanzibar, was not declared a British protectorate and remained formally independent but continued to be under very strong British influence until 1970.⁶⁰⁸ The events that defined relations between Oman and Britain for several decades were the ultimatum of the Viceroy of India in 1899, the imamate's renewal in 1913 and its attempts to conquer Muscat.

The origins of the first event were French efforts to limit the British position in Oman and gain Sultan Fayṣal's approval for the construction of a French coaling station at Bandar Jissah, a natural bay near Muscat, in 1898.⁶⁰⁹ The British viewed Omani-French cooperation as a threat to their power in India and a violation of the Anglo-Omani non-alienation clause of 1891, according to which the ruler of Oman, on behalf of himself and his successors, agreed never to 'cede, sell, mortgage, or otherwise give for occupation' any part of Omani dominions except to the British.⁶¹⁰ As a result, the British threatened to bomb Muscat if the sultan did not cease his contact with the French. The foreign situation favoured the British because, in June 1898, there was a change at the head of the French Foreign Ministry. The advocate of an

⁶⁰⁶ The pre-colonial idea of sovereignty is based on the principles of governance prevalent in the Ottoman, Safavid or Mughal empires, where there were organisations, groups or territories exercising their authority alongside central government bodies. Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*, 25.

⁶⁰⁷ There are two basic aspects of sovereignty. One is internal: the right of the sovereign to exercise power over his subjects. The other external, referring to the relationship between the sovereign and other independent states or rulers. Francis H. Hinsel, *Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 158.

⁶⁰⁸ Although the degree of British involvement in Omani affairs varied according to the period and the ruler, until 1967 the sultans in Muscat were significantly dependent on the authorities in London. The first changes in this regard came in 1951 with the signing of a new treaty between Oman and Britain, which formally restored control of foreign affairs to Muscat. In 1958 the Declaration of Non-Alienation of 1891 was revoked and in 1967 additional British territorial rights in Oman were terminated, see Alston, Laing, *Unshook Till the End of Time*.

⁶⁰⁹ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 89; Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 248.

⁶¹⁰ Anglo-Omani Non-Alienation declaration was a secret clause included in the Treaty of Commerce signed by Sultan Fayṣal and the British political resident in the Gulf, Edward Ross, on 19 March 1891. It replaced the Treaty of 1839. Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 223.

ambitious imperial policy, Gabriel Hanotoux, was replaced by Théophile Delcassé, a supporter of cooperation with the British.⁶¹¹

In early February 1899, the British withheld payment of the Zanzibar subsidy and sent an ultimatum to Fayṣal demanding the withdrawal of consent for the French station in Oman. The Sultan of Oman, faced with a change in French attitude, agreed to the British ultimatum. However, this was not enough for Lord Curzon and under threat of bombardment, Fayṣal had to publicly consent to all British demands on a British ship.⁶¹² The consequence of submitting to the British ultimatum was not only the abandonment of contacts with the French but also the recognition that Britain was the only European imperial power with which Oman could have contact and to whose policies it must subordinate its actions.⁶¹³ Formally, Oman remained an independent country, but its ruler was now dependent on the British.

The dependence of the rulers of Oman on Britain deepened significantly after 1913 when the Ibādī tribes of the Omani interior restored the institution of the imamate and elected Sālim bin Rāshid Al-Kharūṣī to lead it. Under the leadership of the imam, a coalition of Omani tribes attacked Muscat and Al-Batina on several occasions, and each of these attacks was repulsed with the help of British troops.⁶¹⁴ Thus, also in internal matters, the sultan was reliant on the British. Unlike in Zanzibar, the British were not interested in a weak ruler in Oman. Maintaining British troops in Muscat to defend the sultan and his rule consumed considerable British resources, which were increasingly limited during and after the First World War.⁶¹⁵ As a result, British political agents urged Taymūr bin Fayṣal, sultan since 1913, to build the institutions of a modern state to consolidate and strengthen his power.⁶¹⁶

Following British advice, the Omani customs department was reorganised beginning in 1913 and placed under the direct authority of the sultan. In 1920, the Council of Ministers was

⁶¹¹ France's new foreign minister wanted to gain Britain's support against the rising Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy. As a result, France had not only to give up its influence in Oman but also to withdraw Jean-Baptiste Marchand's expedition from Fashoda and agree on new spheres of influence there.

⁶¹² Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 251-252.

⁶¹³ Fayṣal's withdrawal from cooperation with the French did not end the tensions between London, Paris, and Muscat as the problem of Omanis under French protection grew in importance. The phenomenon itself was not new. Already in the mid-19th century, France had given protection to inhabitants of Zanzibar. Those granted protection were excluded from Zanzibar and British jurisdiction. The issue returned at the end of the 19th century when French protection became very desirable for Omanis who wanted to avoid British anti-slavery restrictions. Matters became so serious that the problem was subject to international arbitration in Hague, see Raphaël Cheriau, *Imperial Powers and Humanitarian Interventions: The Zanzibar Sultanate, Britain, and France in the Indian Ocean, 1862-1905* (London: Routledge, 2021), 173-197.

⁶¹⁴ The imam sought the unification of the whole Oman under his rule and accused the ruler in Muscat of tolerating un-Islamic practices like the sale of alcohol and restricting the application of Islamic law.

⁶¹⁵ John Darwin, *The Empire Project. The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 360-361.

⁶¹⁶ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 45.

established to advise and increasingly replace the ruler in governing the country.⁶¹⁷ It consisted of four members and was headed by Sultan Faysal's brother Nādir bin Fayṣal. Expanding the administration and the army entailed increased costs, which the government in Muscat was forced to finance through additional foreign loans, worsening Oman's already dire financial situation. Omani finances were later reorganised by the Briton Thomas Bertram, who took over as financial advisor and later as minister (*wazīr*) and real head of the Council of Ministers.⁶¹⁸

A new phase in state-building in Oman came with the assumption of power by Taymūr's son, Sa'īd, who had already headed the Council of Ministers since 1929. The young ruler believed the country's main problem was its poor financial situation and low income, which led to its dependence on the British. As a result, he focused on reducing expenditure and increasing revenue in the first years of his reign. He dissolved the Council of Ministers, replacing it with three offices that were directly dependent on him: the Office of the Finance Adviser, the Office of the Internal Affairs, and the Court of Justice. He also reduced the allowances of members of the ruling family and investment plans while expanding customs control at ports such as Sur and Sohar.⁶¹⁹

The new policy resulted in repaying loans and balancing the Omani budget, reducing Oman's dependence on the British. However, the new fiscal focus also halted the further development of state institutions. The symbol of Omani sovereignty became the customs offices spread around Oman's ports, which, in addition to collecting revenue for the Muscat government, were a reminder of its political power over these cities.⁶²⁰ Nevertheless, the transition to unified internal sovereignty in Oman did not take place because sheikhs of the tribes remained the most important source of power in many territories. Furthermore, in the Omani interior, until the 1950s, internal authority was exercised by the imam. Sa'īd bin Taymur was more successful in terms of external sovereignty as, in 1939, he established the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, later replaced by the Directorate of External Affairs.⁶²¹ It was headed by his uncle Shihāb and, although most foreign affairs passed through the British political agent, Shihāb was also in charge of issuing passports and controlling the police and

⁶¹⁷ Taymūr bin Fayṣal very quickly lost interest in ruling and spent most of his time in Dhofar or India, eventually abdicating in 1932 when his successor Sa'id reached the age of 21. Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 45; Peterson, *Oman*, 75.

⁶¹⁸ Peterson, *Oman*, 76-77.

⁶¹⁹ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 48-50.

⁶²⁰ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 51.

⁶²¹ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 56.

prisons — essential institutions of a modern state whose foundations had been laid despite financial constraints.⁶²²

While Zanzibar grew its state institutions at a rapid clip, growth in Oman was much slower during this period. Until 1970, Muscat authorities intervened very little in the daily life of the Omani people.⁶²³ Nevertheless, the establishment of several modern offices, the introduction of controls on goods and people and the idea of Omani external sovereignty, together with reforms in Zanzibar, introduced fundamental changes in the legal framework of contact between the two countries' Arab elites. As Samson Bezabeh points out, 'the very logic of state making and building empires involves a process of naming, defining, classifying, and controlling space.'⁶²⁴ One of the elemental ways a state controls space is by delimiting its spatial boundaries or borders and implementing rules and procedures for how those boundaries can be crossed. This issue took on particular importance during conflict or war, during which a rapid influx of people could destabilise society and threaten state authority. Hence, one of the first areas of state and empire regulation was the issue of controlling mobility and migration.

4.2 Regulating Mobility between Oman and Zanzibar

Before the period of immigration decrees and port and border control acts, the Indian Ocean had mechanisms that circumscribed movement and settlement. Until the introduction of steamships, seasonal monsoon winds significantly limited the time of travel and its extent, which naturally regularized migration flows. There were also administrative and political restrictions. Many ports had an official called *amīr al-baḥr* who oversaw what was coming and why.⁶²⁵ On Omani ground, an attempt to control migration was also made by Sa'īd bin Sulṭān who, by granting land in Zanzibar and Pemba, tried to create a notion of the migration policy for his new centre of power.⁶²⁶ Other measures also included those described in previous chapters, including Mājid's decree restricting the migration of Arabs from Oman and the British detention of local ships to search for smuggled slaves. However, none of these solutions was systemic; they did not introduce a generally applicable regulation enforced and observed by the relevant institutions. More comprehensive policies only appeared with the creation of a colonial or sovereign state.

⁶²² In 1945, Shihāb was replaced by the British clerk, Peterson, *Oman*, 81.

⁶²³ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 56.

⁶²⁴ Bezabeh, *Subjects of Empires*, 11.

⁶²⁵ Bezabeh, *Subjects of Empires*, 31-32.

⁶²⁶ Wilkinson, *The Arabs*, 65.

One of the most important means of controlling migration in the 20th century became the passport. Documents allowing an individual to be identified and entitling them to stay abroad were known across many cultures and different periods of history. In Europe, regulations restricting the right to freedom of movement appeared as early as the late Middle Ages, mainly affecting the lower strata of society. The aims of these regulations varied, but the most significant motivation was the desire to instil a sense of duty to the emerging modern state, ensuring the payment of taxes and service in the army of the sovereign.⁶²⁷ Passports made it possible to identify those who belonged and those who did not in an increasingly national and bureaucratic state. However, passports did not come into mass use until the First World War. The dreams of absolutist monarchs of complete control over their subjects were hindered by the spread of travel and the idea of personal freedom, which the passport obligation did indeed compromise.⁶²⁸ The situation only changed during the First World War when security considerations allowed European governments to impose border controls and the use of the passport. This solution, meant to be temporary, has become a permanent feature of migration control and a symbol of ethnicity and citizenship.⁶²⁹

While passports were not introduced to Oman and Zanzibar until the colonial period, the idea of identity documents for travellers was already familiar there. Sultan Barghash wanted to issue such documents to members of his family who were returning to Oman after the overthrow of the imamate. The documents were intended to enable them to evade British control and confirm their right to the slaves who travelled with them.⁶³⁰ Plans to introduce a uniform regulation on migration to Zanzibar appeared as early as 1909, but the British Foreign Office was opposed to this idea due to protests from foreign powers, primarily France, which was afraid of losing the privileges enjoyed by its citizens coming to Zanzibar.⁶³¹ As a result, for many years, regulations in this regard were included in various acts.

A passport as an official document allowing one to cross borders was introduced in the Ports Decree of 1911. It required people travelling by local boats from Zanzibar to Oman and the Persian Gulf to carry an identifying document containing essential information about the travellers, like their physical description, names, or homeland.⁶³² However, until the outbreak of World War I, the control of travel documents was sporadic. The conflict between the Central

⁶²⁷ Torpey, *Invention of the Passports*, 24.

⁶²⁸ Torpey, *Invention of the Passports*, 78-80.

⁶²⁹ Torpey, *Invention of the Passports*, 164-165.

⁶³⁰ Kirk to Wedderburn, 20 April 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

⁶³¹ The Immigration Regulations and Restriction Decree, ZNA AB26/15.

⁶³² Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 118.

Powers and the Entente changed the situation significantly. Britain was at war with Germany and had to ensure the safety and security of its colonies and dependent territories. This also applied to Zanzibar, which not only bordered German East Africa but also had numerous social and economic ties to the German territory. Zanzibar's Arab elite had families, friends, businesses, and property there.⁶³³ All this made Arab journeys between Zanzibar and German East Africa frequent and regular during peacetime. Under wartime conditions, however, these border crossings posed a significant threat to British security, more so as the British suspected some Arabs of cooperation with Germany.⁶³⁴

In the new situation, it was necessary for British to create mechanisms to control the influx of people from the mainland. These restrictions were included in the Zanzibar Public Order Decree of 1914. The new law stipulated that the captain of any ship arriving at the Sultanate of Zanzibar should have a passenger list, and no person could disembark in Zanzibar without the consent of a British political resident. This regulation was strengthened a year later by the creation of an immigration office and the appointment of an embarkation officer. From then on, each ship had to present its passenger list to this official, and no one could enter Zanzibar without his permission.⁶³⁵ Passport matters were also subject to stricter control following the 1914 decree. Passports were only issued to subjects of the Sultan of Zanzibar and to the Arabs of Oman who settled in Zanzibar or lived in both countries.⁶³⁶ So, Arabs travelling from Oman to Zanzibar temporarily were denied the right to a Zanzibari passport. The decree was a significant blow to the free movement of non-elite Omani Arabs who visited Zanzibar for commercial purposes only during the monsoons. Given the greater control of arriving dhows, new regulations forced them to apply for Omani travel documents.⁶³⁷ The Sultanate of Oman and Muscat also began to issue passports after the First World War, and they could be obtained in Oman and Zanzibar. Moreover, until the fall of the imamate, the subjects of the imam had the right to obtain a sultanate's passport.⁶³⁸

While the implementation of new regulations did not prohibit the movement of people between Oman and Zanzibar, it did put an end to the mobility unrestricted by bureaucratic

⁶³³ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 113.

⁶³⁴ The most notorious case of German espionage in Zanzibar was the accusations against Sulaymān bin Nāṣir Al-Lamkī, a former wālī of Dar As-Salam, and his sons. One of them, Nāṣir, was the publisher of *Al-Najāḥ* (the Success), a magazine critical of the British. The British believed that through their association with German East Africa they represented the interests of the enemy, and they were deported to India in 1914. Mathews, *The Zinjibari Diaspora*, 122.

⁶³⁵ The Immigration Regulations and Restriction Decree, ZNA AB26/15.

⁶³⁶ Pearce to the Political Agent, Muscat, 1 April 1915, ZNA AB26/39.

⁶³⁷ Dhow - a traditional Arab sailing vessel, with one or more sails. Its type was *bağla*, which was used for long-distance voyages.

⁶³⁸ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 155.

measures. Formally, Arabs from both countries could obtain a passport in Oman or Zanzibar which entitled them to travel legally to the other country. In reality, however, the situation was more complicated. Obtaining a passport cost money and took time. Although existing regulations made it possible to obtain a passport in Zanzibar for an Omani person who had lived in the protectorate for several years, the procedure itself was not without problems. Sometimes the colonial administration denied the right to a passport to Omani persons in Zanzibar despite their declared residence. In these situations, the Arab Association, representing Zanzibar's Arab elite, would often intervene and confirm that the applicant met the eligibility requirements, lobbying the colonial authorities to change their decision.⁶³⁹

The actions of the authorities in Muscat also caused problems for travellers between Oman and Zanzibar. In 1930, the Sultanate of Oman introduced regulations that an Omani passport could only be applied for at the passport office in Muscat. This change meant not only that Omani Arabs could not obtain a passport in Zanzibar but also that residents of other Omani ports had to go first to Muscat to obtain a passport before travelling further.⁶⁴⁰ It was not the only problem. Another issue was the need to take photographs for such documents, which was not easy to organise in many Indian Ocean ports as photo studios were uncommon there. Photography also raised cultural concerns among some Muslims. In 1948, the Muslim Association in Zanzibar objected to the obligation to attach photographs to identity documents on behalf of women who covered their faces. The colonial authorities accepted the exclusion of *pardanashin* (hidden behind the veil) women from this requirement.⁶⁴¹ In addition, corruption, understaffing and personnel conflicts at the Muscat passport office were also problems, which could affect the time and process of applying for a passport.⁶⁴² The cost of obtaining a passport was also a key constraint on travellers outside the elite. By 1935, the price of a passport application in Zanzibar was 12 shillings. It rose to 15 the following year.⁶⁴³

The implementation of the passport obligation was, therefore, very slow. Data from 1933 indicated that between 95 and 99 per cent of Arab migrants in Zanzibar did not have proper documents to enter the country.⁶⁴⁴ As a result, the colonial authorities agreed to issue temporary permits that allowed entry into Zanzibar. This policy ended with the outbreak of the Second World War when, once again, security considerations led the British to tighten their

⁶³⁹ Issue of British Passports to Natives of Zanzibar and Muscat, ZNA AB26/39.

⁶⁴⁰ Issue of British Passports to Natives of Zanzibar and Muscat, ZNA AB26/39.

⁶⁴¹ Security Bonds for Immigrants, ZNA AB26/93.

⁶⁴² *Al-Falaq*, 25 March, 1944.

⁶⁴³ Regulations on passports, 1936, ZNA AB26/43. Exempt from this fee were government officers, their servants, students sent to study abroad.

⁶⁴⁴ Issue of British Passports to Natives of Zanzibar and Muscat, ZNA AB26/39.

migration policy. The Zanzibar Protectorate no longer directly bordered hostile territory because after the end of the First World War, German East Africa fell to Great Britain,⁶⁴⁵ but Italian Somalia was also a frequent destination for local boats from Oman or Zanzibar.⁶⁴⁶ At the beginning of 1941, colonial officials in Zanzibar required a passport or other identity document for those arriving at the protectorate. They no longer issued temporary entry permits except for residents of East African territories. Male passengers, their wives, and children under 16 could enter using a shared document. Information about the new regulations was sent to Muscat and other ports in Arabia.⁶⁴⁷

Enforcement of the new requirements, like the previous ones, went very reluctantly. Arabs in many ports, including Sur, from which many ships were arriving, could not secure the proper documents. In many cases, local authorities or governors issued their own certificates, often without photographs, which were eventually accepted despite not meeting British requirements.⁶⁴⁸ In these situations, control of migration was carried out in person by colonial officials who interviewed arrivals with inadequate documents and decided whether they should be allowed into the country.⁶⁴⁹

The regulation of migration in Zanzibar was accompanied by similar changes in Oman. Even before the outbreak of the Second World War, the government in Muscat had tightened its rules for passports and travel permits. It also announced new prices for issuing documents and made it compulsory for anyone travelling by dhow to pay a fee of one rupee or 1,5 shillings to the Department of Passports in Muscat.⁶⁵⁰ The government of Sultan Saʿīd bin Taymūr introduced further immigration policies in the post-war period. In 1952, the authorities introduced the principle that all non-Omani citizens arriving in the country must obtain a visa. In Zanzibar, it was possible to acquire one at the office in Bayt Al-Ajāʿib.⁶⁵¹ This regulation was a response to the new nationality decree in Zanzibar, which introduced additional restrictions to the naturalisation procedure.

The immigration procedures introduced by Oman were, therefore, not numerous and were mostly issued in response to regulations enacted in Zanzibar. The purpose of Oman's new

⁶⁴⁵ After the Paris Peace Conference, the British were granted the entire former GEA territory. However, Belgium's protests resulted in the British ceding Rwanda and Urundi to the Belgians. It was also determined in 1919 that Portugal would have jurisdiction over the areas surrounding the Rovuma River, see William R. Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

⁶⁴⁶ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 123.

⁶⁴⁷ Issue of British Passports to Natives of Zanzibar and Muscat, ZNA AB26/39.

⁶⁴⁸ Issue of British Passports to Natives of Zanzibar and Muscat, ZNA AB26/39.

⁶⁴⁹ Immigration and Passport Laws, 1917-1952, ZNA AB26/7

⁶⁵⁰ *Al-Falaq*, February 19, 1938.

⁶⁵¹ Issue of British Passports to Natives of Zanzibar and Muscat, ZNA AB26/39.

immigration procedures was not to restrict or prevent travel between Oman and Zanzibar but to mark the power of the Sultan of Muscat. The most significant change they brought was the need to obtain a visa to Oman for representatives of Zanzibar's Arab elite who did not have Omani nationality. The option to acquire this document in Zanzibar made the whole procedure significantly easier. Until the end of the Sultanate of Zanzibar, Oman's immigration policy did not cause major problems in contact between the peoples of the two countries.⁶⁵² The situation was different with the policy of the colonial authorities in Zanzibar, who, since the outbreak of the Second World War, did not stop at regulating migration but also began to work intensively to restrict it, which particularly hit the Omani Arabs.

4.3 Attempts to Limit Immigration between Oman and Zanzibar

One of the historical drivers of Omani migration to East Africa was an influx of Omani Arabs to Zanzibar looking to improve their economic situation. This immigration accelerated with the development of Zanzibar as an important node of trade and the introduction of the clove plantation system at the beginning of the 19th century. As a result, Oman's African possessions became richer than its Arab territories as early as the time of Sa'īd bin Sulṭān.⁶⁵³ Salma bint Sa'īd observed in the first half of the 19th century that Arabs from Oman were coming to Zanzibar to make money and then returning to their homeland.⁶⁵⁴ They ranged from those who stayed only for the monsoon period for trading purposes to those coming for longer residence.⁶⁵⁵ The latter group was referred to as Manga Arabs and were engaged in work on plantations as overseers or agents, in services as shopkeepers, in transportation, or in obtaining copra.⁶⁵⁶ This type of immigration increased significantly with the partition of Oman and Zanzibar and the subsequent crises and problems that affected the former country.

The small and unstable income of the Sultans of Oman made it impossible for them to govern effectively, resulting in successive rebellions and the accompanying destruction of property and disruption of trade. Omani trade also suffered from changes of a global nature. The widespread use of steamships from the 1860s and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869

⁶⁵² The situation changed dramatically with the revolution in Zanzibar. Thousands of Zanzibar Arabs wanted to flee to their ancestral country from the persecution and confiscations in Zanzibar, but the vast majority of them did not have an Omani passport allowing them to enter the country and be recognised as nationals. Initially, Sa'īd bin Taymūr opened the borders to Zanzibar refugees regardless of their nationality, but fear of civil unrest and the outbreak of conflict in Dhofar prompted him to reverse this decision. The lack of an Omani passport prevented entry into Oman from that point forward, forcing hundreds of Arabs to seek refuge in other countries. Return to Oman only became possible after 1970 when Sultan Qābūs bin Sa'īd came to power.

⁶⁵³ Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 76-78.

⁶⁵⁴ Ruete, *Memoirs*, 256.

⁶⁵⁵ Arab traders brought salt and dry fishes, dates, and salt to Zanzibar.

⁶⁵⁶ The term *Manga* means 'an Arab' in Swahili. *Al-Falaq*, 880, 4 March 1944.

significantly reduced the importance of trade in the Persian Gulf and, thus, the significance of Omani merchants and ports. Changes in shipping also led to lower customs duties for the rulers and revenues of Omani Arabs.⁶⁵⁷ The third major factor that prompted Omanis to migrate to Zanzibar was the natural disasters and droughts that devastated the country. According to research from historian Thomas F. McDow, from the 1870s onward, Oman was plagued by heavy rains, storms, and cyclones that destroyed much of the date crop.⁶⁵⁸ Many Omanis who grew poorer in these circumstances decided to migrate to Zanzibar either permanently or temporarily. Emigration from Oman peaked in the first half of the 20th century when the world wars and resulting economic disruption took their toll on Oman's already difficult position.⁶⁵⁹

The growing number of arriving migrants raised numerous concerns for British officials in Zanzibar. Security issues, in particular, were important to the colonial power. According to colonial authorities, the influx of large numbers of difficult-to-control migrants was a threat to public order. Reports of riots involving Manga Arabs only reinforced the British view of Omani Arabs as a source of unrest.⁶⁶⁰ In addition, the British acknowledged critical voices from the African community, which, in an era of emerging nationalisms, saw the arrival of Arabs as a danger to their position at home.⁶⁶¹ The protectorate authorities were also concerned about economic issues arising from the presence of the Manga Arabs, pointing out that Zanzibar could not provide work and food to such a large number of people. They predicted the growth of a destitute population dependent on the government or who the government would have to pay to deport.⁶⁶² Given this, attempts were made to tighten the law on deportation and to introduce the institution of deposit.

Deportation concerned people who broke the law. It was used repeatedly in the precolonial period against members of the elite who posed a threat to the ruler. During the protectorate, the decision to deport was also taken by a British political agent.⁶⁶³ In 1923, the

⁶⁵⁷ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 70.

⁶⁵⁸ Up to 90 per cent of crops in the Al-Sharqiyya region were to be destroyed because of torrential rains and floods in the 1870s, see McDow, *Buying Time*, 40.

⁶⁵⁹ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 93.

⁶⁶⁰ British reports mention several incidents involving Manga Arabs, among them was a quarrel between an Arab and an Indian shopkeeper in Wete in 1928, which ended with the former being hit in the face. As a result, around 30 Manga Arabs wanted to take revenge on the shopkeeper, but a local official and elderly Arabs stopped them. This did not end the matter, however, as the Arabs demanded justice and demonstrated in Wete. The police intervened and arrested three of the protesters. Fearing escalation, the outraged Arabs were threatened with further punishment, including deportation from Pemba. Report on Manga Arabs Riots, 1928, ZNA AB70/3.

⁶⁶¹ Glassman, *War of Words*, 63.

⁶⁶² Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 134.

⁶⁶³ On the initiative of a British Resident, Sayyid Tālib bin Hamad was exiled in 1909 from Zanzibar, see Muscat Diaries, 1908-1909, IOR/R/15/6/352. Earlier, Sultan Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī's decision to banish Hilāl bin 'Amr was prompted by suggestions from British officials. Memorandum from 24 June 1897, IOR/R/15/6/143.

Local Deportation Decree listed the categories of offences for which deportation from Zanzibar was possible, including behaviour that threatened the peace and public order of the Zanzibar Protectorate or attempted to incite conflict between the sultan and the people or the British government or the British political resident. In this capacity, exile from Zanzibar still mainly applied to political offenders. This state of affairs changed when, in 1934, an amendment was introduced to the Immigration and Restriction Act of 1923. The amendment stated that ‘if any person who would be a prohibited immigrant if he landed in the protectorate, secrets himself on the vessel [...] such person shall be removed from the protectorate on the next succeeding vessel’.⁶⁶⁴ This meant extending the category of deportation to people who refused to register on passenger lists and did not correctly report their arrival. This new regulation was part of a broader crackdown on the mooring of local boats outside of colonial-designated places, where there were no officials to verify the required documents and passenger travel permits. This was a significant problem as most vessels arriving in Zanzibar were dhows, which could easily anchor outside the designated places so their passengers could slip ashore undetected. Figures for 1939 showed that 525 steamers and 2,727 dhows were registered in Zanzibar.⁶⁶⁵

The expansion of the institution of deportation did not result in Arabs of Omani origin being forced to leave Zanzibar *en masse*. The basis for deportation was a breach of the law, which, in the case of Manga Arabs, did not happen often. In 1945, 66 people were expelled from the protectorate, of which only four were of Omani origin. The vast majority of those deported were from the African continent.⁶⁶⁶ Documents on the deportation of Arabs to Oman indicate that they mainly committed crimes of theft and burglary.⁶⁶⁷ Most often, they had lived in Zanzibar for several years and had no family there. This data implies that deportation was used for criminals with no measurable ties to Zanzibar.

Deportations of Arabs to Oman were not a major problem in terms of numbers and politics. The repatriation issue was different. With the worsening economic crisis in Oman after the First World War, the number of Omanis arriving in Zanzibar for work increased. Between 1924 and 1927, the total number of migrants arriving in Zanzibar ranged from 24,000 to over 27,000 per year, most of them coming from the Arabian Peninsula.⁶⁶⁸ By comparison, the population census in 1948 estimated the total population of the protectorate at over 264,000.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁴ Immigration and Passport Law, 1917-1952, ZNA AB26/7.

⁶⁶⁵ Report of Arrivals for the Zanzibar Port, 1940, ZNA AB88/41.

⁶⁶⁶ Deportation of Undesirable Persons, 1924-1955, ZNA AB26/82.

⁶⁶⁷ Deportation of Undesirable Persons, 1924-1955, ZNA AB26/82.

⁶⁶⁸ The figures also included merchants and people arriving in Zanzibar temporarily. Report on Zanzibar from 16 April 1929, ZNA AB88/28.

⁶⁶⁹ Notes on the Census of the Zanzibar Protectorate, 1948, cited in Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 71.

According to the colonial authorities, the influx of such a large number of people, the vast majority of them very poor, meant that Zanzibar's economy could not absorb all those willing to work. As a result, there was a problem of destitute people without jobs and families that the colonial government had to address to avoid creating a large group of unemployed who could be easily radicalised and threaten public order.⁶⁷⁰

Under these circumstances, the protectorate government sought to repatriate impoverished migrants. The identification of such persons was the responsibility of the territorial authorities, such as *mudirs* and district commissioners, who, with the help of the police, established the identity and number of persons to be repatriated. However, the government soon found that the cost of repatriation was quite high, and it did not want expenses to be covered by public funds.⁶⁷¹ In 1936, 56 people were sent back to Oman, but as early as 1940, when migration to Zanzibar increased during the Second World War, the colonial authorities were deporting more than 200 people a month to Oman, most of them destitute and very ill.⁶⁷² The colonial officials were looking for a solution that would allow them to pass this cost on to the passengers themselves. As a result, from 1927 onwards, they started to demand a deposit from passengers who were going to Zanzibar and were not permanent residents or citizens there.⁶⁷³ The sum was to guarantee funds for return to the country of origin if a person was refused entry to Zanzibar or found during their stay that they had to be repatriated. Under wartime conditions, newcomers from outside Zanzibar had three months to find employment or another source of livelihood. Otherwise, they had to leave the country.⁶⁷⁴

Deposits were another measure after passenger lists, passports, and travel permits that strengthened the colonial authorities' control over immigration to Zanzibar. However, unlike previous regulations, deposits not only made it more difficult to move between Oman and Zanzibar but also aimed to limit the movement in numbers. Indeed, the requirement of a deposit as a condition of admission to Zanzibar reduced the number of people who could afford to travel to Zanzibar by eliminating possibilities for those who could not bear the deposit. The responsibility of verifying that a deposit had been paid fell on the ships' captains, who were accountable to the immigration officials. Captains also had to provide a list of passengers and crew with details and documents authorising them to travel. Those who did not have relevant

⁶⁷⁰ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 134.

⁶⁷¹ The cost of repatriation in 1935 was estimated at 2,500 shillings. For destitute persons who were subject to repatriation organised by the District Commissioner, 1,000 shillings were allocated in 1937. Deportation of Undesirable Persons, 1924-1955, ZNA AB26/82.

⁶⁷² Deportation of Undesirable Persons, 1924-1955, ZNA AB26/82; Mathews, *The Zinjibari Diaspora*, 137.

⁶⁷³ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 134.

⁶⁷⁴ *Al-Falaq*, February 8, 1941.

documents or deposits were denied entry to Zanzibar and detained at Prison Island or Langoni Prison Camp until their status was clarified or they were sent back to their country of origin.⁶⁷⁵

Following the introduction of these regulations, the colonial power succeeded in limiting the influx of migrants to Zanzibar. The Arab press reported a decline in the number of dhows arriving in Zanzibar in the 1940s.⁶⁷⁶ Government statistics from the 1950s also reflect declining immigration.⁶⁷⁷ However, it was not regulations alone that caused the number of Omani immigrants to drop during this period. Not all of the new procedures were followed, and many accounts from the 1950s confirm that a lack of documents did not always prevent travel to Zanzibar.⁶⁷⁸ Moreover, until the end of the colonial period, there were places where a dhow could moor unnoticed by the authorities and disembark migrants illegally.⁶⁷⁹

The second major factor that contributed to declining Omani immigration to Zanzibar was the start of oil production in countries such as Kuwait and Qatar. The subsequent expansion of industry, infrastructure and other sectors of the economy required additional foreign workers. Hence, many Omanis found work in nearby countries, abandoning their journeys to East Africa.⁶⁸⁰ As a result, migration pressure on Zanzibar eased. However, dhows from Oman continued to come to Zanzibar until the end of the sultanate. Finally, the revolution and the unification of Zanzibar with Tanganyika resulted in a total travel ban on local Arab boats issued in 1965, ending a centuries-old tradition of Arab immigration to Zanzibar.⁶⁸¹

4.4 Opposition from the Arab Elite in Zanzibar to the Immigration Policy

The regulations described above formally applied to any person travelling between Oman and Zanzibar. The Zanzibari elite had to have a passport. Beginning in the 1950s, they also had to apply for a visa to Oman if they did not have Omani nationality. Likewise, the Omani elite was supposed to have valid travel papers and pay a deposit if they travelled to Zanzibar and did not have Zanzibari documents. Naturally, implementing these restrictions took time, and not all requirements were equally and effectively enforced. However, the example of the correspondence of Sheikh Ḥamad bin Sulaymān Al-Ismāʿīlī from Wete in Pemba with British officials indicates that the new regulations also affected the elite. During wartime, Sheikh Al-

⁶⁷⁵ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 137.

⁶⁷⁶ *Al-Falaq*, March 30, 1940; *Al-Falaq*, January 1, 1944.

⁶⁷⁷ Seasonal Dhow Passage, ZNA AK18/13. In March 1956, for example, there were 114 local boats arriving in Zanzibar; a year later it was only 67.

⁶⁷⁸ Interview with a representative of Al-Hajari tribe from Al-Yahmadi, Ibra, Oman 2 February 2019.

⁶⁷⁹ Seasonal Dhow Passage, ZNA AK18/13.

⁶⁸⁰ Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf. Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 80-82.

⁶⁸¹ Seasonal Dhow Passage, ZNA AK18/13.

Ismā'īlī wanted to bring his wife and children from Muscat back to Zanzibar. In 1938, he travelled to Oman with his three sons, where he took a new wife, his Omani relative Nāṣira bint 'Alī Al-Ismā'īlīyya. After that, he returned to Zanzibar with his son 'Alī, leaving his wife and other sons in Oman. As the Second World War began, he sent 'Alī back to Muscat, and in 1940, he asked the British for permission for his wife, an Omani national, and children to travel to Zanzibar. In such circumstances, the Zanzibar government saw no obstacle to Nāṣira and the sheikh's children travelling to Zanzibar.⁶⁸²

At the same time, Sheikh Al-Ismā'īlī's story confirms that the validity of the new regulations was not an obstacle for the elite in their travels between Oman and Zanzibar. Representatives of the elite could easily afford and obtain travel documents. They had the education, experience of contacting the administration, and means to obtain the relevant documents. Moreover, like Sheikh Al-Ismā'īlī, they could count on the favour of British officials. The British Empire was monarchical and aristocratic, and as David Cannadine has shown, this did not just mean that it was headed by a king-emperor and an aristocratic elite. It also meant that British officials valued and supported tradition, hierarchy and the local elites.⁶⁸³ Consequently, the Arab elite experienced no trouble travelling between Oman and Zanzibar. *Al-Falaq* regularly described the greetings and farewells of Arab sheikhs arriving from or going to Oman.⁶⁸⁴ The editor of this magazine, Sheikh Hāshil bin Rāshid Al-Maskarī, was famous for maintaining two houses, one in Oman and the other in Zanzibar, and making biennial trips between the two countries.⁶⁸⁵

The situation was different with Manga Arabs, who often lacked the competence and resources to cope with the new migration regulations in Zanzibar. When the French colonial power in Djibouti introduced similar regulations restricting the freedom of travel and activities of the Yemenis living there, they protested the new rules.⁶⁸⁶ The Manga Arabs did not protest the British regulations because, unlike the Yemenis, they did not have the status of colonial subjects. They were merely newcomers from a theoretically foreign country and, therefore, had no rights in Zanzibar. The Arab elite of Zanzibar protested on their behalf.

The first source of criticism from the Arab elite, represented by the Arab Association, was the value of the deposit required from immigrants. When the deposit for Arabs was

⁶⁸² Hall to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, ZNA AB88/41.

⁶⁸³ David Cannadine. *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 111.

⁶⁸⁴ An example of such a reference can be found in news of the farewell at the Mkunazini Club of four sheikhs heading to Oman, *Al-Falaq*, March 19, 1938.

⁶⁸⁵ Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 242; Interview with the son of Sheikh Hāshil, 'Abdallāh Al-Maskarī, Muscat, 4 February 2020.

⁶⁸⁶ Bezabeh, *Subjects of Empire*, 40-41.

increased from 20 shillings to 40 in 1941, *Al-Falaq*, the press organ of the Arab Association, criticised such a decision and the timing of its announcement, which was said to be too short for some Arabs travelling to Zanzibar to prepare for such a change.⁶⁸⁷ The Arab Association pointed out that the deposit was already high before the increase, and it was not the only cost that travellers had to bear. The administrative expenses also included the cost of travel, food, documents, and photographs for their identity documents.⁶⁸⁸ In addition, *Al-Falaq* also criticised the introduction of deposits for travel between Kenya and Zanzibar. The Kenyan coast was formally part of the Sultanate of Zanzibar, leased to Kenya, so its inhabitants were subjects of the sultan.⁶⁸⁹ *Al-Falaq* alleged that the deposits did not include Indians and Goans, and people travelling between Kenya and Tanganyika.⁶⁹⁰ The protectorate government responded that it had ‘no wish to place unnecessary obstacles in the way of traditional interchange of visits between Arabs of His Highness’s Dominions and Arabs of the Arabian peninsula’, but, given the situation caused by the war, high commodity prices, unemployment and the decline in copra trade, migration to the protectorate must be limited.⁶⁹¹

The colonial authorities assured the Arab Association that the deposit, as well as other restrictions, were temporary and would be lifted after the war.⁶⁹² Moreover, the protectorate officials introduced the possibility of obtaining the right of re-entry to Zanzibar for those aliens who had property or business in Zanzibar. In theory, this regulation was intended to facilitate travel for people who frequently moved between Zanzibar and neighbouring territories. When someone left Zanzibar for a period, they could apply to the immigration office for a return permit, which would release them from the deposit and allow a hassle-free return to Zanzibar.⁶⁹³ Despite this intended use, the issue of return permits became another flashpoint between the government and the Arab Association. According to the Arab elite, the immigration authorities made it difficult for Omani Arabs to obtain permission to return to Zanzibar if they did not prove that they had property in the protectorate. The Arab elite pointed out that the restriction on the right to return to Zanzibar affected many Arabs who had no property but often travelled to Zanzibar for other reasons.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁸⁷ *Al-Falaq*, February 8, 1941.

⁶⁸⁸ Issue of British Passport to Natives of Zanzibar and Muscat, ZNA AB26/39.

⁶⁸⁹ Brennan, ‘Lowering the Sultan’s Flag’, 834.

⁶⁹⁰ *Al-Falaq*, December 13, 1941.

⁶⁹¹ Memorandum of the Government, 1940, ZNA AB26/39.

⁶⁹² *Al-Falaq*, December 13, 1941.

⁶⁹³ Memorandum on Regulations on Arab Migration, 1943, ZNA AB26/6

⁶⁹⁴ Manga Arab Migrants, 1944-1945, ZNA AB 26/92.

The government rejected the Arab Association's objections stating that owning property was one of several criteria for obtaining the right to return. Other accepted reasons included having a business or other relationship there or providing the information of a Zanzibari national who would be responsible for the person from outside.⁶⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the Arab Association continued to criticise the government's migration policy. It also lobbied for decisions to allow Omani Arabs to return to Zanzibar to be decided by a special committee on Arab migration rather than by an immigration officer. The association called for the committee to also include representatives of the Omani elite. In addition, it demanded that newcomers from the Arabian Peninsula have the right to disembark in Zanzibar and explain the reasons for their arrival even if they did not have the relevant documents.⁶⁹⁶ The Arab Association stressed that after the long journey in poor conditions on local boats, those arriving in Zanzibar were often exhausted and in poor health. According to the Arab elite, denying them the right to go ashore and sending them back when they did not meet immigration requirements was unacceptable.⁶⁹⁷ On the latter issue, it also appealed to the Muscat government to provide better travel conditions for people travelling by dhows to Zanzibar.⁶⁹⁸

The Arab elite did not only protest against the specific provisions of the colonial migration policy. They also challenged the whole idea of restricting the immigration of Manga Arabs. According to the Arab Association, the new settlers were one of the three pillars on which Zanzibar's prosperity rested. The others were trade with Arabia and the Gulf and workers from the mainland.⁶⁹⁹ In the view of the Arab elite, Zanzibar needed migrants to work in plantations, services, and copra gathering. In addition, the Omani Arabs were involved in trade with the Gulf, which was also seen as essential to the economy of both islands. As a result, the role of Arab arrivals was doubly important. The actions of the colonial authorities to restrict migration and Arab trade were, in the view of the Arab elite, incomprehensible and unjustified.

The Arab Association did not limit its activities to criticising the government. It also provided aid to Arab migrants. Thus, the Arab elite working within the association intervened in the cases of Omanis who had problems with immigration procedures in Zanzibar. The association repeatedly vouched for newcomers' identities and ties to Zanzibar before colonial

⁶⁹⁵ Memorandum explaining the Government's position toward migration, 1944, ZNA AB 26/92.

⁶⁹⁶ Manga Arab Migrants, 1944-1945, ZNA AB 26/92. There was already the Arab Immigration Committee within the government, but it was appointed without the participation of the Arab Association and consisted of local officials (*mudīrs*). The Committee made recommendations on the right of return for Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula to Zanzibar, and the decision was made by the immigration officer on this basis.

⁶⁹⁷ Manga Arab Migrants, 1944-1945, ZNA AB 26/92.

⁶⁹⁸ *Al-Falaq*, 'To the Government of Muscat', March 4, 1939.

⁶⁹⁹ *Al-Falaq*, 'Conclusion', February 12, 1944.

officials to help secure their right to return.⁷⁰⁰ In case of problems, the Arab Association was the first point of contact for Arabs as well as the colonial administration.⁷⁰¹ When Rāshid bin Sālim Al-Zakwanī, an immigrant from Muscat, lost confirmation of his deposit in 1946, the president of the Arab Association intervened in his case with an immigration officer. The president confirmed that Rāshid was an immigrant who had arrived in Zanzibar the previous year but had been granted unconditional entry to the protectorate because he was helping his father run a shop in Kengeja on Pemba.⁷⁰² Omani newcomers to Zanzibar could also count on further support from the Arab Association, including help finding jobs, contacting relatives, and securing a place to live.⁷⁰³ The association even established a hostel for Arab migrants who had nowhere to live immediately after arriving on the island.⁷⁰⁴ In addition, the Arab elite financed the issuing of travel documents for those who did not have the means to do so.⁷⁰⁵

The Arab Association also participated in repatriating Arabs from Zanzibar by paying for the costs of this procedure. This was the case for Šāliḥ bin Sa‘īd Al-Fahdī, who travelled between Oman and Zanzibar and worked in governmental shambas until 1935, when he decided to settle permanently in Zanzibar. He travelled by steamer from Oman via Bombay with his wife. During their journey, Šāliḥ’s wife ‘contracted madness and continued to be mad until [...] Zanzibar’.⁷⁰⁶ Al-Fahdī claimed that he had already spent all his money in Zanzibar to help his wife, but it had not solved anything, and the only option was to return to Oman as she had no relatives or friends in Zanzibar. However, he did not have the means to do so. He informed the sultan and the Arab Association of his circumstances and asked the British resident to finance his and his wife’s return to Oman.⁷⁰⁷ A report from the European Hospital in Zanzibar confirmed that Šāliḥ Al-Fahdī’s wife was experiencing mental problems, but doctors diagnosed the issue as melancholy and not dangerous for her or those around her.⁷⁰⁸ Following the hospital’s recommendation, the Arab Association, with the authorities in Zanzibar, financed the return of Šāliḥ and his wife to Oman. As a result, the couple’s journey to Muscat was paid for half by the Zanzibar government and half by the Arab elite.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁰ Issue of British Passport to Natives of Zanzibar and Muscat, ZNA AB26/39.

⁷⁰¹ Subsequent changes in migration rules concerning Omani Arabs were communicated by the colonial authorities to the Arab Association with a request that it would inform those in Oman.

⁷⁰² Control of Manga Arabs, ZNA AB26/6.

⁷⁰³ Interview with Sa‘īd Al-Murjabī, Muscat, 30.01.2020.

⁷⁰⁴ Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 140.

⁷⁰⁵ Deportation of Undesirable Persons, 1924-1955, ZNA AB26/82.

⁷⁰⁶ Saleh bin Said el-Fahdi to the British Resident, 27 Rabi Al-Thani 1354/27 July 1935, ZNA AB88/34.

⁷⁰⁷ Saleh bin Said el-Fahdi to the British Resident, 27 Rabi Al-Thani 1354/ 27 July 1935, ZNA AB88/34.

⁷⁰⁸ Report by S.M. Vasallo, Senior Specialist Officer, European Hospital Zanzibar, 20 September 1935, ZNA AB88/34.

⁷⁰⁹ Jones to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 1 October 1935, ZNA AB88/34.

Al-Fahdī's example shows that not only was the Arab Association able to go beyond criticism of the government, the two parties even worked together on certain issues in the field of migration. The Arab Association's wide-ranging activity on this issue prompts a closer look at the motives of the Arab elite, who themselves were affected in a small way by the restrictions imposed on migration. It seems that there were at least several reasons for the Arab elite's support for Omani Arabs. A key element was that the Arab elite was linked to Omani migrants by tribal, cultural, and religious ties. From this came the traditional obligation to help the poor, needy, and relatives, the fulfilment of which was certainly important to some Arabs in Zanzibar.⁷¹⁰ Omani migrants also functioned in a tribal system, where the patronage of an influential sheikh provided those lower in the tribal hierarchy with protection and assistance and, in return, received a loyal client.⁷¹¹ Although the tribal nature of the Arab elite in Zanzibar diminished with colonial reforms and the building of modern state institutions, the group did not shed its paternalistic character.⁷¹² Moreover, the mode of governance of the colonial power in many territories, including Zanzibar, reinforced the paternalistic nature of the elites. The colonial government used tribal sheikhs, landowners, and religious authorities as intermediaries between itself and the subaltern citizens. In exchange for privileges, prestige, and concessions from the authorities, local elites agreed to cooperate with the colonialists, becoming 'vehicles not only of political control but for the delivery of social services'.⁷¹³

In the case of Zanzibar, Manga Arabs were one such subaltern group. They came from a poor country and were confronted with an unfamiliar and unfriendly bureaucracy from the start. They were required to have documents, photographs, and permits that they often had no way of obtaining in Oman. The immigration regulations that applied to them changed very quickly and, like colonial law, only provided formal equality. In reality, rules were often applied unevenly. The colonial authorities introduced different categories of people and hierarchies of citizenship, which resulted in the rights of many groups being overlooked.⁷¹⁴ Faced with the non-recognition of rights, tardiness or ill-will of officials, Omani Arabs were vulnerable in Zanzibar. Oman did not have a consulate or representation in Zanzibar to aid Omani migrants

⁷¹⁰ Helping the poor and needy plays an important role in Islam. One of the five basic duties of every Muslim (*farīda*) is to give alms (*zakāt*). The issue of supporting the needy is repeatedly addressed in the Qur'an and Muslim tradition. It is founded on two statements, that poor and needy people have the right to receive a share from the wealth of others, and that rich people should share what they do not need to live.

⁷¹¹ Onley, 'The Politics of Protection', 57.

⁷¹² Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 31.

⁷¹³ Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 168.

⁷¹⁴ Gunnel Cederlöf, 'Becoming and Being a Subject: An Introduction' in *Subjects, Citizens, and Law: Colonial and Independent India*, eds. Gunnel Cederlöf and Sanukta Das Gupta (London: Routledge, 2019), 6.

because Omani sovereignty and state institution building remained limited by the scarcity of Omani resources and British interference. As a result, the Arab Association, with its interventions and support for newcomers from Oman, filled an institutional void created by the uneven bureaucratic development of Oman and Zanzibar. At the same time, the association fulfilled its paternalistic ‘task’, acting as a mediating elite between the colonial power and underprivileged groups.

Finally, the Arab elite of Zanzibar also accomplished utilitarian and political goals in accepting Arab migrants. Omani Arabs were needed by the elite to work on plantations, as brokers in the sale of cloves and other agricultural products, or as traders bringing goods from Arabia.⁷¹⁵ The Arab elite preferred to see their Omani brethren in these positions rather than representatives of other ethnic groups. This was due to growing tensions between the Arab minority, who were politically and economically privileged, and the rest of Zanzibar society, who, from the early 20th century onwards, revealed increasing political aspirations. The influx of Omani Arabs was seen as a counterbalance to African migration from the mainland and a numerical strengthening of the Arab community in Zanzibar.⁷¹⁶ Not insignificant was also the ideology of pan-Arabism which reached Zanzibar at the beginning of the 20th century through the Arab press, books and people living or educated in Egypt, Syria, or Palestine.⁷¹⁷ The Arab elite largely embraced the ideas of Arab unity and saw helping the Arabs of Oman as an expression of these ideas.

The categories of Manga Arabs and elites were also fluid and depended primarily on the economic situation of the family or individual. The history of the migration of Omani Arabs holds many examples of people who arrived as Manga and later became rich and influential merchants or landowners.⁷¹⁸ The elite themselves rejected such classifications and divisions among Arabs, seeing them as an attempt to divide the Arab community. In 1944, *Al-Falaq* referred to this problem in an article titled ‘Sartorial Significance’:

It is apparent that the non-Arab elements in this country are labouring under a deep-rooted impression that the word “Mmanga” apply to a distinct class of Oman Arabs, who differ in every aspect of life from local Arabs as if the ancestors of latter had come from another land and had nothing in common with the former.⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁵ *Al-Falaq*, ‘Our Trade with Arabia and Persian Gulf. Threats were not Altogether Idle’, February 26, 1944.

⁷¹⁶ The Arab elite was initially not opposed to the immigration of Africans from the mainland, however, during ethnic tensions and power rivalries in Zanzibar, they began to strongly criticise the different rules for the admission of people from the interior, Glassman, *War of Words*, 202-203.

⁷¹⁷ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 91-92.

⁷¹⁸ Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 133.

⁷¹⁹ *Al-Falaq*, ‘Sartorial Significance’, March 11, 1944.

The press organ of the Arab Association strongly opposed the division of Arabs into Manga and elite, pointing out that they all came from one country. Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism also emphasised unity and a sense of community among Arabs, regardless of their material status and place of residence. These ideas undeniably contributed to this attitude among Zanzibar's Arab elite. These were central elements of the Arab revival movement that developed as a response by local elites to the colonial policies of European countries, about which more will be said in Chapter 7. This feeling of solidarity of Zanzibar's Arab elite with the Manga Arabs was reinforced by the British treatment of Omani migrants as subaltern people. The protectorate's migration policy, unjust in the view of Zanzibari Arabs, unintentionally brought the old and new migrations together. The idea of a colonial state, which in most situations served to divide and break traditional ties, in this case, worked in reverse, bringing the two Arab communities closer and thus acting against the process of separation between the two countries.

However, this is not to say that British colonial institutions and laws did not establish new divisions between Oman and Zanzibar in many aspects. The colonial power succeeded in reducing the number of immigrants to Zanzibar and introducing a permanent system of passports, permits, and visas between Oman and Zanzibar. Migration was also not the only sphere where newly created institutions reinforced the process of separation between the two countries and their elites. Another aspect was that of nationality.

4.5 Introduction of Omani and Zanzibari Nationalities

When the British consul in Zanzibar wrote to the British resident in the Gulf regarding the status of Zanzibari Arabs in Oman in 1904, he received a reply that 'it is advisable, if possible, to avoid raising the matter so long as there is no special occasion to do so'.⁷²⁰ This approach of avoiding the issue among colonial officials prevailed for many years, and the status of Arabs' allegiance to the rulers of Oman or Zanzibar was not clearly defined.⁷²¹ As shown in previous chapters, there had been several situations in which attempts were made to indicate the nationality of the Arabs to one sultanate or the other. However, those arose from the political claims of the rulers themselves or practical circumstances such as the need to establish under whose jurisdiction those caught smuggling slaves fell. The situation changed dramatically with the introduction of passports and the first travel regulations by Zanzibar's colonial authorities.

⁷²⁰ Cox to Cave, 31 December 1904, ZNA AC2/66

⁷²¹ A perspective on the extent and nature of the jurisdiction of Zanzibar's pre-1890 rulers is presented in the text of *The Jurisdiction of the Sultan of Zanzibar and the Subjects of Foreign Nations*, trans. Katrin Bromber, Bibliotheca Academica. Sammlung Interdisziplinärer Studien, Band 8 (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2001).

This was because there was a need to determine who was a Zanzibari and could obtain a passport and who was an alien and subject to the new migration policy. As a result, the passport also became a document certifying someone's nationality.⁷²²

The concept of nationality is often associated with the term citizenship, which most often stems from the former. However, this was not the arrangement in many colonies and dependent territories where residents could be nationals but not citizens.⁷²³ This situation arose because the inhabitants of the colonies were not allowed to participate fully in the public life of their territory or metropolis. According to the standard definition of citizenship, it indicates an individual's full-fledged belonging to the state and defines a person's rights and duties towards the state.⁷²⁴ Analyses of the difference between citizenship and subjecthood emphasise that citizens, as opposed to subjects, enjoy full rights in a given political organisation.⁷²⁵ Taking the example of France and its overseas territories, the process of granting citizenship to the inhabitants of the colonies varied from territory to territory and over time. Before 1946 in Algeria, Muslims were deprived of citizenship status, and French and non-Muslims were citizens even though the country was part of the French Republic. In the French colonies in the Caribbean and the four cities of Senegal (the Quatre Communes), the process of establishing citizenship began with the abolition of slavery in 1848, and, in turn, the inhabitants of the remaining French African territories had the status of subjects.⁷²⁶ The granting of citizenship rights to all subjects of the French Empire in 1946 did not end the distinction between the people of the metropolis and the colonies. The dichotomy continued to function within the category of citizens and involved a weakening of the right of citizens in the colonies to decide in elections.⁷²⁷

British colonialism also limited the introduction of the institution of citizenship in the colonies and dependent territories. The colonial structures created by the British in the Raj did not grant citizenship to its residents but consolidated the status of subjects of princes and added allegiance to the British Empire.⁷²⁸ A similar policy occurred in Zanzibar, where decrees introduced by the British political resident through the mediation of the sultan created the legal

⁷²² Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 119.

⁷²³ Emmanuelle Saada, *Empire's Children. Race, Filiation and Citizenship in the French Colonies* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 97.

⁷²⁴ Definition based on the introduction to the topic of citizenship by Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation. Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 4.

⁷²⁵ Subjects, unlike citizens, are entitled to different courts, different definitions of offences and are bound by other laws and codes. Saada, *Empire's Children*, 95-96.

⁷²⁶ Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire*, 21.

⁷²⁷ Saada, *Empire's Children*, 97.

⁷²⁸ Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*, 43.

category of Zanzibari nationality and combined it with the status of a subject. The British in Zanzibar did not implement citizenship in the sense described above. Zanzibaris, including the Arab elite, did not have full rights in British-controlled Zanzibar, although they were able to hold senior positions in the colonial administration beginning in 1947, and, from 1957, they could elect representatives to the Legislative Council. Their legal status differed from that enjoyed by British nationals in Zanzibar until 1963. Nevertheless, the Arab elite wanted to be and felt like citizens of Zanzibar, as the Arab press and leaders repeatedly emphasised.⁷²⁹ Because of this sentiment and the many other works which describe the status of those in the colonies as citizens, the term citizenship is also used in this thesis to refer to changes in nationality in Zanzibar and Oman.⁷³⁰ It will, therefore, present the colonial context of restricted citizenship as an intermediate term between the subjecthood declared by the letter of the decrees and the aspirations of the Arab elite for full citizenship.

The first act that defined the concept of a subject of the Sultan of Zanzibar, a Zanzibari, and determined who could be one and under what conditions was the Nationality and Naturalization Decree of 1911. It stated that a Zanzibari is a person born of a Zanzibari father or who obtained his status through naturalisation.⁷³¹ A foreign person could obtain Zanzibari citizenship after three years of continuous residence or five years of total residence. Application for this status had to be made to the British resident.⁷³² The introduction of the idea of Zanzibari nationality led to the legal separation of Zanzibar Arabs from their Omani relatives. Nevertheless, this was not an absolute distinction, as the rules of naturalisation for Omani Arabs allowed them to obtain citizenship based on residence. A second important consequence of the adoption of the new law was the entrenchment of the patriarchal form of the Arab family in Zanzibar. The source of nationality was a man.⁷³³ It was the Zanzibari man, as a father, who transmitted nationality to his children and, as a husband, granted nationality to his foreign wife. In contrast, a Zanzibari woman marrying a foreigner was forced to renounce her citizenship.⁷³⁴

As with immigration, the war situation and security concerns in the protectorate prompted British authorities to further limit access to Zanzibari nationality. The subject of the new regulation was the question of naturalisation to which, in addition to the obligation to live

⁷²⁹ *Al-Falaq*, 'Citizenship', 538, 29 April 1939.

⁷³⁰ Among the works that describe Zanzibar colonial legislation under the term citizenship are Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 109, 127; Glassman, *War of Words*, 80. From other regions, the work of Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 2.

⁷³¹ The detailed arrangements also introduced the possibility that a child born to unknown parents in Zanzibar or parents from abroad would also receive Zanzibar citizenship.

⁷³² Nationality and Naturalization Decree, 1911, ZNA AB88/24.

⁷³³ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 67.

⁷³⁴ Nationality and Naturalization Decree, 1911, ZNA AB88/24.

in Zanzibar for a certain period, was added a duty to own property in the protectorate and to make a declaration:

Vouching for applicant's good character and loyalty in the prescribed at the back of the said form No. 1 made by two persons each of whom is (i) a Zanzibar (ii) not the agent or advocate of the applicant and (iii) able to testify to the facts of residence from personal knowledge and not information only.⁷³⁵

The new regulations meant that to obtain Zanzibari citizenship, one had to live in Zanzibar, be well-rooted there and maintain contact with other citizens. Thus, as with the tightening of immigration policy, the regulations introduced in 1941 affected mainly Manga Arabs in Zanzibar, some of whom had no family or friends there. Hence, their ability to obtain citizenship was restricted, and another bureaucratic barrier was added to discourage them from migrating to Zanzibar. For the Arab elite, who maintained extensive family and business contacts, getting confirmation of their status from relatives or friends in Zanzibar was usually not a problem.⁷³⁶

The end of the Second World War did not stop the tightening of civic politics in Zanzibar because, with the preparation of the Legislative Council elections in 1948, there was a need to clarify who, as a Zanzibari citizen, could vote.⁷³⁷ In the protectorate's multi-ethnic and conflicted society, this was one of the most significant political tensions.⁷³⁸ During this period, calls for tighter laws came from the Arab elite, who strongly opposed British proposals that the council member elections should also be open to British protected persons, most of whom were Indians without Zanzibari citizenship or with dual citizenship.⁷³⁹ The Arab Association wanted to restrict the right to vote only to those with Zanzibari citizenship. Resistance from the Arab community and the Shirazi Association led the British to withdraw their announcement of elections. The colonial authorities promulgated a new Nationality Decree in 1952, but elections were not held until 1957.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁵ The Nationality and Naturalization Decree of 1941, ZNA AB26/87.

⁷³⁶ For more on the contacts of Arab elites under British domination, see Chapter 5.

⁷³⁷ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 142.

⁷³⁸ Glassman, *War of Words*, 59. Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 183-184.

⁷³⁹ The conflict between the Indian community and the Arab elite had a long history, but it was significantly amplified in the 1930s when the British administration decided to enact a series of legal changes designed to limit the indebtedness of Arab plantations to Indian merchants. The reform programme included the declaration of a moratorium on debt repayment, a ban on plantation takeovers except when the consent of the Residency was obtained and granting monopoly status to the Clove Growers Association. The changes were intended to save and strengthen clove plantations, but the extent of the changes strongly favoured the Arabs. The introduction of this scheme in 1937 led to a boycott of the sale of cloves by the Indian National Association in Zanzibar. The Indian National Congress also joined the boycott. This decision led to strong anti-Indian sentiment among Arab and African growers. However, under pressure from London, authorities in Zanzibar decided to soften the changes, and a compromise was reached between the government and the Indian National Association. Nevertheless, relations between the communities remained strained. See Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 114-119.

⁷⁴⁰ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 132-135.

The new legislation gave precedence to birth as the source of citizenship over the residency requirement and the naturalisation process. Historian Nathaniel Mathews has highlights that, ‘Naturalization drives were held to create citizens, and thus voters’.⁷⁴¹ The new law aimed to limit this possibility. Although the principle of naturalisation after three years of continuous residence or five years overall and possession of the property was retained, a regulation was introduced that a foreign wife of a Zanzibari citizen no longer obtained Zanzibari status automatically. Instead, the foreign wife would have to make an appropriate application, and her husband was obliged to confirm his citizenship as part of the process. The new law also extended the principle of obtaining citizenship by birth. It stated that anyone born in Zanzibar after the decree came into force would be recognised as a Zanzibari national. Persons born outside the protectorate but living there since childhood could also obtain citizenship status after three years of adult life there.⁷⁴²

At the same time, Oman was also introducing nationality regulations. However, they were not as extensive and detailed as those in Zanzibar. As mentioned earlier, visas to enter the country for those without Omani nationality began to apply in 1952, although the definition of Omani nationality itself did not appear until 1972.⁷⁴³ A decade earlier, Sa‘īd bin Taymūr had indicated for security reasons that the only proof of Omani nationality was the sultan’s passport. This document was issued to persons born or resident in Oman or from areas under the imam’s rule.⁷⁴⁴ This state of affairs lasted until 1954, when Sultan Sa‘īd launched an attack on the imamate.⁷⁴⁵ In response, the imamate authorities declared itself a sovereign country and began issuing its own passports, which weakened the emerging Omani nationality.⁷⁴⁶ Until the 1960s, Oman’s actions on the topic of citizenship were thus minimal and aimed at marking Oman’s nascent sovereignty rather than exerting real control over migration or citizens’ affairs. It is also impossible to speak of the creation of a sense of national identity in Oman during this period, as the country remained a tribal society where kinship ties and subordination to the sheikh of one’s tribe were paramount.⁷⁴⁷

From a formal point of view, the Zanzibari nationality legislation initiated in 1911 legally separated the Arab elites of the two countries as it created a category of Zanzibari

⁷⁴¹ Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 142.

⁷⁴² Nationality Decree of 1952, ZNA AB26/39.

⁷⁴³ Ian Skeet, *Oman. Politics and Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 67.

⁷⁴⁴ Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 155.

⁷⁴⁵ From 1913 to 1954, the Imamate of Oman functioned in the interior of Oman. Based on the 1920 Sib agreement, the imamate conducted its own internal policies, while its external contacts were the responsibility of the sultan in Muscat. For more on this, see Chapter 6.

⁷⁴⁶ Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 155.

⁷⁴⁷ Rabi, *Oman under Sa‘id*, 36-37.

citizens and foreigners. The latter group included representatives of the Arab elite who were not born in Zanzibar, did not own property, or live there. Even if they frequently visited Zanzibar, they did not meet the conditions for citizenship. Thus, in the eyes of the law, they were aliens in the protectorate, and all immigration restrictions applied to them. The available sources do not reveal the size of this group. However, a lack of reports about protests from the elite against the new citizenship policy or problems with entry into the country indicates that it was not a major problem if it existed at all.

On the contrary, sources suggest that the lack of Zanzibari citizenship was not a problem for Omani Arabs. One example is the story of ‘Azza bint Sa‘īd Al-Barwāniyya, a subject of the Sultan of Oman who died in Muscat in October 1921 and left two plantations in Zanzibar. The details of her life are unknown, but documents of probate proceedings demonstrate that, despite her lack of Zanzibari citizenship, she maintained and later successfully bequeathed property in the protectorate to her heirs.⁷⁴⁸ This means that legal regulations distinguishing the subjects of Muscat from those of Zanzibar did not lead to a real separation between the elites of the two countries.

The reason for this lack of real separation was the nature of Zanzibari nationality which, as in many colonial territories, was fluid and did not exclude other allegiances. Mathews emphasizes this using the example of the Al-Lamkī family who, over a single century, were subjects of the Sultans of Muscat and Zanzibar, German subjects, and British protected persons.⁷⁴⁹ This is also indicated by the dispute cited above about the dual nationality of the Indian community and their rights to participate in elections in Zanzibar. The Arab elite of Zanzibar, who were opposed to such an arrangement, were themselves made up of several people with Zanzibari and Omani nationality, including the three most influential leaders of the Arab Association, who were born in Oman as subjects of the Sultan of Muscat and acquired their Zanzibari nationality through naturalisation.⁷⁵⁰

The second reason for the ineffectiveness of the legislation was that the introduced formula of a single Zanzibari nationality was disconnected from the social reality where there was not a Zanzibari identity, but many separate identities represented by the various ethnic communities of the protectorate. Moreover, the adoption of a strict legal category did not lead to the creation of a Zanzibari identity despite attempts to do so. Many factors contributed to this

⁷⁴⁸ Azza bin Said bin Ahmad Al-Barwani, ZNA HC1/1916.

⁷⁴⁹ Mathews, ‘The Zinjibari Diaspora’, 123.

⁷⁵⁰ These individuals were the association’s president Sheikh Sulaymān Al-Hārithī, vice-president and member of the Al-Būsa‘īdī family, Sayyid Sayf bin Ḥamūd, and editor of the association’s press organ Sheikh Hāshil bin Rāshid Al-Maskarī.

situation, and they are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7. It should be noted that among these factors were the legal policies of Zanzibar's colonial authorities. Although the British included an inclusive and uniform definition of Zanzibari nationality in the nationality decrees, in practice, they followed a policy of racial division until the end of their rule in Zanzibar. Identity papers, probate records, and other official documents contained notations denoting the ethnicity of their holders as either Arab, African, or Asian.⁷⁵¹ In addition, until 1957, non-official members of the Legislative Council were chosen based on their ethnic affiliation. All this indeed reinforced the ethnic divisions in Zanzibari society, undermining the concept of a Zanzibari nation.

Furthermore, as Jonathon Glassman points out, racial divisions were at work in East Africa long before the British subjugated the region. Sa'īd bin Sulṭān and his successors also contributed to the creation of separate categories of Arabs, Indians, natives, or slaves and assigned them different roles and positions in the state.⁷⁵² In the 20th century, the communities also reinforced ethnic divisions by organising themselves into their own associations, attacking each other in the press and provoking ethnic riots.⁷⁵³ In the face of these factors, the idea of nationhood introduced in Zanzibar remained only a legal term that formally distinguished between the Arab elites of the two countries. It did not carry with it the complete division of the two communities and the creation of two separate nations.

4.6 Division of the Royal Family

The adoption of legal and institutional frameworks for migration and nationality did not end the process of formal change within Oman and Zanzibar because of British colonialism and the idea of sovereignty. The third central element of state-building introduced in both countries was the establishment of civil lists for members of the ruling dynasty and the division of the Āl Būsa'īdī family into two separate branches. The principle of paying pensions to members of the ruling family was already followed in Oman and Zanzibar before the colonial period. Sa'īd bin Sulṭān paid emoluments to his nephews Muḥammad and Ḥamad of 300 and 130 MTT per month, respectively.⁷⁵⁴ The money paid by the ruler was in addition to the income received by members of the ruling dynasty from their estates, and they were often paid for their official positions. Mājīd also offered salaries to members of the ruling family when some of his relatives

⁷⁵¹ An example of this is the inheritance Testamentary and Intestate petition of estate of Shaykha bint Sayf Al-Hināwiyya from 1926, where it is stated that Shaykha was 'an Arab and one of H.H's subjects.' ZNA HC1/2579.

⁷⁵² Glassman, *War of Words*, 44.

⁷⁵³ Glassman, *War of Words*, 231-233.

⁷⁵⁴ Atkinson to Pelly, 8 October 1867, IOR/R/15/6/1.

fled Oman following the imamate proclamation, as they had no other means of income.⁷⁵⁵ Allowances for a member of the ruling dynasty were also a vital political tool. Sālīm bin Thuwaynī paid Turkī bin Sa‘īd’s pension in return for which the latter agreed to go to Bombay and stay out of Omani politics. When Turkī became Sultan of Oman, he followed a similar policy and, on several occasions, paid his brother and other influential people in Oman monthly emoluments in return for not opposing his rule.⁷⁵⁶ In all these cases, the sultan paid salaries at his discretion, not according to a fixed rule. This changed as the institution of the modern state began to be built in Oman and Zanzibar.

In Zanzibar, implementing a permanent civil list that included the sultan and his family was one of the first decisions of the colonial administration after the introduction of the protectorate. The British authorities recognised most of the estates that the sultan owned as state lands. They took over supervision of them, arguing that the previous management had been inefficient and had not generated adequate revenue.⁷⁵⁷ In return, the ruler received a fixed sum annually for his and his family’s expenses. In 1901, the civil list accounted for one-quarter of the state expenditure. It had declined to only 10% eight years later.⁷⁵⁸ Formally, the distribution of funds within the family was decided by the sultan, but realistically the British had the deciding voice as the funds for pensions for members of the ruling family came from the state budget. The colonial administration tried to counteract the expansion of the civil list. However, this was not easy as, due to inheritance and the significant indebtedness of the clove plantations, few members of the ruling family owned their own estates, and allowances were their only source of income.⁷⁵⁹

Until 1911, any member of the Āl Būsa‘īdī family (*Awlād al-Imām*) in Zanzibar was entitled to collect funds from the civil list. They also had the right to live in government housing without paying rent.⁷⁶⁰ In later years, however, the colonial administration tried to limit these entitlements to the sultan and his immediate family, including the offspring of the previous ruler, ‘Alī bin Ḥamūd (1902-1911). The colonial administration regarded emoluments as a kind of privilege rather than a right of every member of the ruling dynasty.⁷⁶¹ In the case of the marriage of a member of the ruling family, especially a woman, allowances were reduced or cancelled. It was supposed that, in such a situation, the person could rely on the spouse’s

⁷⁵⁵ Churchill to Acting Political Agent, Muscat, 3 March 1869, MSA PD 1869.

⁷⁵⁶ McDow, *Buying Time*, 251.

⁷⁵⁷ Memorandum, 30 August 1902, ZNA AC3/13.

⁷⁵⁸ Bennet, *The Arab State*, 193.

⁷⁵⁹ Sayyida Meya and Sayyid Seif bin Hamoud bin Faisal, ZNA AB10/106.

⁷⁶⁰ Khalifa bin Said bin Ali to Secretary of State for the Colonies, FO 371/149169.

⁷⁶¹ Foreign Office to Edward Clarke, 26 June 1912, 14 October 1943,

income. Another reason for removal from the civil list was bad conduct or deportation from the country. Such was the fate of ‘Alīya and Sharīfa, daughters of Sultan Barghash, who were exiled from the country by Sultan ‘Alī bin Ḥamūd.⁷⁶² Their emoluments were withheld and not paid even when the order to leave the country was revoked by Sultan Khalīfa in 1912, and Sharīfa bint Barghash returned to the country. Her salary was only resumed in 1934 due to her dire financial situation and after numerous interventions with the colonial authorities.⁷⁶³

Another reason some family members lost their emoluments was a voluntary change of residence. This was the situation faced by Ḥamūd bin Muḥammad bin ‘Alī (d. 1929). He came from a secondary line of the ruling family. His father, Muḥammad, was the grandson of the Sultan of Oman, Sālim bin Thuwaynī (1866-1868). Muḥammad lived permanently in Zanzibar, where he remained with his mother, ‘Alīya bint Barghash, after his father was exiled to Oman.⁷⁶⁴ Muḥammad received an allowance of 100 rupees in 1916. This amount increased to 150 in 1922. In addition to him, his wife, a daughter of former Sultan ‘Alī bin Ḥamūd, and his daughters received emoluments. Allowances, however, were not received by his son Ḥamūd, who was resident in Muscat.⁷⁶⁵ The Zanzibar government took advantage of the fact that Ḥamūd was outside the protectorate and did not claim emoluments and did not award him a salary, even though his other family members received one. This case shows that the civil list was an important source of dividing members of the ruling family into Zanzibar and Omani parts.

This situation can be seen even more clearly in the example of other members of the dynasty from Oman. The Sultan of Oman, like the colonial authorities in Zanzibar, also introduced a civil list for members of the ruling family. Unlike in Zanzibar, the civil list in Muscat was a tool for the ruler to control members of the dynasty, as the sultan was the sole decision maker regarding the allocation and amount of emoluments. It was thus an expression not of the limitation but the sovereignty of the sultan’s power in Muscat. Given the restricted financial resources available to the ruler of Oman, allowances were scrupulously controlled, and their level was not significant.⁷⁶⁶ The first to find out it was Ḥamūd bin Fayṣal bin Turkī.

⁷⁶² ‘Alīya was exiled from Zanzibar by Sultan ‘Alī bin Ḥamūd along with her sister Sharīfa and other members of the dynasty. Personal File of Sheriffa and Aliyah bint Barghash, ZNA AB10/215.

⁷⁶³ Personal File of Sheriffa and Aliyah bint Barghash, ZNA AB10/215.

⁷⁶⁴ The story of ‘Alī bin Sālim is described in detail in the next chapter.

⁷⁶⁵ Sayyid Muhammad bin Ali bin Salim bin Thuwayni, ZNA AB10/103.

⁷⁶⁶ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 49.

In 1935, Ḥamūd left Oman to celebrate his son's wedding in Zanzibar.⁷⁶⁷ The climate in Zanzibar proved much better for him, and for medical reasons, he decided to stay permanently in East Africa. Ḥamūd was drawing monthly a 600-rupee allowance in Oman, but the Sultan of Oman withheld it after he had been outside the country for six months. Ḥamūd contacted Muscat about restoring his salary, but to no avail, so he asked the protectorate officials to intervene in his case with the Sultan of Oman.⁷⁶⁸ The authorities in Muscat, however, refused to pay him his salary, arguing that he was drawing it not as a member of the ruling family but in connection with his functions as the governor of Barka in 1916 and Mutrah in 1923.⁷⁶⁹ In the opinion of the Sultan of Oman, only Ḥamūd's return to Muscat could solve his problem. He refused to travel to Muscat for family reasons and because of the war. He cited examples of other dynasty members who received allowances despite not staying in Muscat.⁷⁷⁰ Ḥamūd could not count on emoluments from the Zanzibar civil list as, to the colonial authorities, he was a representative of a foreign state and was a member of the Muscat line of the dynasty.⁷⁷¹

His son Sayf, one of the leaders of the nationalist movement in Zanzibar and publisher of *Al-Nahḍa* newspaper since 1955, could not count on emoluments either. He received his pension from the civil list as the husband of Rayya, the granddaughter of Sultan 'Alī bin Ḥamūd. After her death, he continued to receive payments to support their children.⁷⁷² Sayf tried, after his father's death, to ask for help from British officials in obtaining an allowance for himself from Muscat. But, like his father, he was denied this support. The British argued that the civil list in Oman was a sovereign matter for the Sultan of Oman, and they could not provide any assistance in this issue.⁷⁷³

The problem of mobility and contact within the family under the civil list regime was also experienced by Ḥamūd's cousins from Muscat in 1938. Maḥmūd, Khālīd and Sa'īd, sons of Muḥammad bin Turkī, decided to leave Oman for Zanzibar in early February. Apart from the allowance, which they believed was too low, the reason for their emigration was their ill-treatment by Sa'īd bin Taymūr.⁷⁷⁴ We do not know the details of their case, but the authorities in Zanzibar were not inclined to grant the visitors from Muscat allowances at the expense of

⁷⁶⁷ His son Sayf married Rayya bint Muḥammad, a representative of the Zanzibari line of the dynasty, and decided to settle in Zanzibar.

⁷⁶⁸ Hamoud bin Faysal bin Turki to Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 31 February 1943, ZNA AB10/97.

⁷⁶⁹ Metcalfe to the British Resident in Zanzibar, 2 December 1943, ZNA AB10/97.

⁷⁷⁰ Hamoud bin Faysal bin Turki to the Palace in Muscat, 24 October 1944, ZNA AB10/97. He mentioned Sayyid Thiyāb bin Fahd staying in France and Sayyid Turkī in Turkey.

⁷⁷¹ The problem was never resolved because Ḥamūd died during the negotiations in 1949.

⁷⁷² Sayyida Meya and Sayyid Seif bin Hamoud bin Faisal, ZNA AB10/106.

⁷⁷³ Rolfe to Bullock, 29 July 1960, FO 371/149169.

⁷⁷⁴ Muscat Intelligence Summary for the period from 1st to 28th February 1938, FO 371/21824/553.

the Zanzibar civil list. This meant that the sultan's guests had to find another source of income or return to Oman. However, finding a job for a member of the ruling family was not easy, as they would not accept just any job. With civil lists in force, they could not count on a salary and accommodation as their ancestors had when fleeing Oman under Mājīd and Barghash. Consequently, Maḥmūd bin Muḥammad, and likely also his brothers, came to terms with the Sultan of Oman and returned to Muscat in 1940. Upon his return, Maḥmūd took up the role of governor of Barka.⁷⁷⁵

The experience of Ḥamūd and his cousins shows that under the conditions in which the civil lists operated, mobility and contact between members of the Āl Būsa'īdī family in Oman and Zanzibar became increasingly difficult. If a member of the dynasty did not have their own financial resources and could not count on emoluments from the civil list, then they could not stay longer or move to the other country. These de facto restrictions resulted in a decline in the number of contacts, marriages, and relationships between family members living on both sides of the Indian Ocean.⁷⁷⁶

The second factor that influenced the formation of two separate branches of the dynasty was the stabilisation of rules of succession in both countries based on primogeniture. The lack of a clear succession law was one of the main reasons for the division of Oman and Zanzibar and provoked many conflicts later, including Barghash's activity, 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Sa'īd's attacks on Muscat and Khālīd bin Barghash's rebellion. At the beginning of the 20th century, both countries succeeded in establishing stable rules of succession, although these were not promulgated in the form of laws or decrees. In Zanzibar after 1896, the British became the undisputed decision-makers on the succession issue. Their agreement led to Khalīfa bin Ḥarub taking the throne of Oman in 1911, followed by his son 'Abdallāh in 1960, and 'Abdallāh's son Jamshīd in 1963.⁷⁷⁷

In Oman, succession to the throne was decided by the sultan and an informal family council. In 1913, Fayṣal's eldest son was deemed unfit to be the next ruler and another son, Taymūr, took the throne. When Taymūr decided to abdicate in 1932, he appointed his son and head of the Council of Ministers, Sa'īd, which was approved by the family council. The British

⁷⁷⁵ Ruling Family of Muscat and Oman, FO 371/149169.

⁷⁷⁶ The last important member of the Āl Būsa'īdī family to marry a representative of the dynasty from the other side of the Indian Ocean was the grandson of Sultan Fayṣal, Sayf, who took Rayya bint Muḥammad Āl Būsa'īdiyya as his wife in 1935 in Zanzibar and settled with her there.

⁷⁷⁷ Succession to the Sultanate of Zanzibar, CO 822/564.

did not have a decisive vote in that process, but their support ensured the steadiness of the new sultan's power.⁷⁷⁸

Consequently, after 1911, the throne of Oman and Zanzibar was taken by persons who were born and lived in their homeland. This, combined with the civil list, the idea of citizenship and sovereignty, led to the division into two separate branches of the Āl Būsa'īdī dynasty. The legal distinction between the two distinct branches of the ruling family had important consequences on the functioning of members of the ruling dynasty. In 1943, Sharīfa bint Barghash asked the colonial administration of Zanzibar to help her bring her grandchildren back from war-torn France. Her son Thiyāb had fought in the Second World War and had two children there from a relationship with a German woman. The British responded that Thiyāb was the son of Fahad bin Turkī of Oman and, therefore, his grandchildren were 'more closely related to the House of Muscat,' making it a matter for the Omani government.⁷⁷⁹ As a result, the British denied assistance to Sharīfa in this matter.

A year later, the Āl Būsa'īdī dynasty celebrated the bicentenary of its rule in Oman. This anniversary should have been an opportunity to renew contacts between the two parts of the dynasty and the rulers themselves, Khalīfa bin Ḥarub and Sa'īd bin Taymūr. However, this did not happen. The rulers, through British political agents, only contacted each other about the date of the ceremony. The British authorities wanted the celebrations to occur simultaneously in both Muscat and Zanzibar. Another issue was the problem of selecting the date of the anniversary of Aḥmad bin Sa'īd's assumption of power. Initially, 1941 was planned, but after consultation, the date was moved to 1944.⁷⁸⁰ The next problem was related to the day of the event. The final date proposed was 20 November, the day Sa'īd bin Sulṭān took power in Oman in 1806. The date was chosen to highlight the role of this figure in Zanzibar's history.⁷⁸¹

The memorandum for issuing stamps on this occasion described that Sultan Khalīfa bin Ḥarub 'has decided, in consultation with His Highness of Muscat, that the Bicentenary of the Al-Busa'id Dynasty shall be commemorated in Zanzibar on the 20th of November'.⁷⁸² However, the issues were settled by British political agents. The ruler of Oman showed only mild interest in the whole affair.⁷⁸³ Back in 1941, when the subject of the anniversary was first discussed, British agents emphasised the low level of interest in the matter in Oman:

⁷⁷⁸ Monteith to Political Resident in the Gulf, 23 March 1960, FO 371/149169.

⁷⁷⁹ Personal File Sheriffa and Aliyah bint Barghash ZNA AB10/251.

⁷⁸⁰ Acting British Resident, Zanzibar, to the Secretary of State for Colonies, 24 February 1944, CO 618/81/8.

⁷⁸¹ Scott to Harrison, 9 October 1944, CO 618/81/8.

⁷⁸² Issue of Commemorative Stamps, 1944, CO 618/81/8.

⁷⁸³ Acting British Resident, Zanzibar, to the Secretary of State for Colonies, 24 February 1944, CO 618/81/8.

Actually the anniversary appears to be attracting little or no attention in the Persian Gulf and, unless the Sultan of Zanzibar or his people are more impressed by it, it would seem questionable whether any special message to the Sultan in honour of the occasion is necessary or desirable.⁷⁸⁴

On the day of the celebrations, Saʿīd bin Taymār was in Salalah. Apart from receiving congratulations from state leaders and prominent individuals and releasing a commemorative stamp, there were no celebrations in Oman.⁷⁸⁵ Meanwhile, despite the wartime conditions, several events were planned in Zanzibar, including a public holiday, a few receptions in the sultan's palace and public illuminations.⁷⁸⁶

The difference in the scale of the bicentenary celebrations was certainly due to financial reasons and Saʿīd bin Taymūr's dislike of formal ceremonies and pomp.⁷⁸⁷ It is unlikely that the Sultan of Oman would not care about his family history or deliberately ignore his relative on the throne of Zanzibar. He had family connections to Zanzibar as his mother was the daughter of ʿAlī bin Sālim, who lived in Zanzibar for many years, and ʿAlīya bint Barghash. However, it seems that Saʿīd bin Taymūr may have viewed the celebrations as a colonial initiative largely organised by the British. Hence, he probably did not want to take much part in it as the ruler of a formally independent state. A story about the choice of a commemorative postage stamp for Oman indicates this. The Zanzibari version of the stamp featured a dhow on a map of Oman and Zanzibar with a British monarch effigy. Oman rejected this motif in favour of a simple inscription in Arabic, 'Al BuSaid 1363', on an Indian stamp. According to British officials, this was done to avoid any 'unfortunate' comparisons with Zanzibar, which was a British protectorate.⁷⁸⁸

The idea of sovereignty, as in the case of immigration and citizenship, once again contributed to the separation of the two countries and elites. This time, it was conducive to marking the separateness of the two parts of the ruling family. This does not mean that Khalīfa bin Ḥarub and Saʿīd bin Taymūr did not maintain relations with each other. Both rulers communicated but did it irregularly and mainly because of the most significant events in their countries.⁷⁸⁹ An example of this formal and distanced relationship was the meeting between the two rulers, which took place in London in 1960.

⁷⁸⁴ Parkinson to Colonial Office, 6 November 1941, IOR/L/PS/12/2980.

⁷⁸⁵ Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to Secretary of State for India, 4 November 1944, CO 618/81/8.

⁷⁸⁶ Acting British Resident, Zanzibar, to the Secretary of State for Colonies, 23 April 1944, CO 618/81/8.

⁷⁸⁷ Walker to Monteith, 29 April 1960, FO 371/149169.

⁷⁸⁸ Telegram to India Office, 16 March 1944, IOR/L/PS/12/2980.

⁷⁸⁹ For example, the Sultan of Zanzibar congratulated the Sultan of Oman on his victory over the imam in 1957 and wished his country 'economic and social improvement'. Telegram from Khalifa bin Harub to the Sultan of Muscat, 20 August 1957, ZNA AB10/55. Telegram was the response from Zanzibar to the letter from the Directorate of the Internal Affairs of Muscat dated 20 Shaʿbān 1376 (21 March 1957) informing Khalīfa about the

The first meeting between the Sultans of Oman and Zanzibar since Barghash's visit to Oman in 1888 occurred by complete coincidence. In June 1960, Sultan Sa'īd bin Taymūr went to London for two months on a private trip. The purpose of his journey was to visit the London Clinic to receive treatment for high blood pressure. Because of his health, his official meetings and events were kept to a minimum.⁷⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the sultan attended some public events, including a royal tournament to celebrate Trooping the Colours, where he was entertained by Queen Elizabeth II.⁷⁹¹ Towards the end of his stay in London, the Arabian Department of the British Foreign Office received a call from the private secretary to the Sultan of Zanzibar, Khalīfa bin Ḥarub, asking if Sultan Sa'īd was still in London because the ruler of Zanzibar was also visiting the British capital and would like to see him. The FO official confirmed the Omani monarch's presence and asked:

[...] whether the two branches of the AlBuSaid still kept in touch. He [the private secretary to Sultan of Zanzibar] said that he did not know but that he imagined his Sultan was thinking of contacting the Sultan of Muscat, while they were both in London.⁷⁹²

The two monarchs met in London, although the details of their conversations are unknown. Nevertheless, what is most relevant here are the circumstances of the event, which show that contact between sultans and dynasties functioned on a very limited level. The fact that the Sultan of Zanzibar's private secretary did not know whether his ruler was in regular contact with Muscat is evidence of this. Further testimony is the situation where two rulers from the same dynasty visit London and find out about the other's stay only after their arrival. Finally, it is significant that Khalīfa's secretary inquired with the British Foreign Office about the presence of the ruler of Muscat. This indirect mode of communication confirms the lack of functioning, permanent and internal communication channels between Zanzibar and Oman. This was a natural consequence of a situation in which contacts between members of the dynasty were mainly made through British intermediation.⁷⁹³ It should be stressed that the British did not only facilitate political activities but also private contacts between the Arab elites of Oman and Zanzibar, as the next chapter discusses.

victory over the rebels in Jabal Akhdar and establishing peace in Oman. Another response expressed the Sultan of Zanzibar's joy over the defeat of the rebels and hope for continuous peace in the country.

⁷⁹⁰ Visit of the Sultan of Muscat, 20 May 1960, FO 371/149169.

⁷⁹¹ Acland to Ford, 9 June 1960, FO 371/149169.

⁷⁹² Minutes of the Arabian Department, 14 July 1960, FO 371/149169.

⁷⁹³ The main communication between the sultans and members of the ruling family was based on the exchange of letters or telegrams, usually transmitted by British offices. For example, in 1915, the Zanzibar Government asked the British Agent in Muscat to transmit Arabic letters written by Sultan Khalīfa bin Ḥarub to the Sultan of Oman. Cave to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 17 July 1915, ZNA AB88/3.

4.7 Conclusion

Until the 1890s, the British participated in the separation of Oman and Zanzibar and their elites politically. However, with the establishment of the colonial state in Zanzibar and the attempt to build a modern administration in Oman, legal and institutional factors emerged that influenced the separation process between the two countries. New drivers included migration, nationality, and the division of the ruling dynasty into separate branches. Regarding migration, free and unrestricted movement between Oman and Zanzibar was replaced by passport and visa regimes. In addition, Zanzibari nationality and the rules for its acquisition were defined and excluded a significant number of Omani Arabs. However, despite these changes, the Arab elites of both countries could acquire the relevant documents and legally travel between the shores of the Indian Ocean. The characteristics of colonial nationality allowed for multiple allegiances and did not preclude dual possession of Omani and Zanzibar nationality. Also, the lack of Zanzibari nationality did not prevent one from owning property in the protectorate and contacting relatives or acquaintances there.

The ability of Arab elites to travel and settle in Oman or Zanzibar did not mean that legal changes in migration and nationality did not affect the separation process between the two states. In the early 20th century, Arabs from Zanzibar began to be defined in legal terms as Zanzibaris and Arabs from Oman as Omanis. Even if these categories did not work to their full potential due to the underdevelopment of the state machinery in Oman and ethnic divisions in Zanzibar, they still entrenched a sense of distinctiveness between the two communities. An Arab from Zanzibar was henceforth treated as a Zanzibari in all official matters and shared this status with members of African communities, which fostered the construction of a common Zanzibari identity. Moreover, possessing a passport was associated with certain privileges and opportunities. In the case of Zanzibar, Arabs as colonial subjects were entitled to assistance from British diplomatic missions while they were travelling abroad. On the other hand, Omanis were sometimes able to receive diplomatic aid, but this was not the rule as they came from a formally independent state.⁷⁹⁴ A Zanzibari passport also allowed the protectorate's nationals to access higher education at universities in Africa, such as Makerere and Entebbe Colleges in British Uganda, or Britain because Zanzibar was a beneficiary of colonial development programmes. As a result, passports and the politics of nationality contributed to new distinctions and divisions between the two elites.

⁷⁹⁴ This issue is discussed more extensively in Chapter 5.

Unlike in the case of political activities, when the British introduced new legal regulations, they did not aim to reinforce the separation of Oman and Zanzibar. Their aim was instead to strengthen colonial power, build modern institutions and enhance the security of the protectorate. In the case of Oman, Britain also sought to develop the structures of a sovereign state. In many areas, therefore, the British considered the peculiarities of contact between the two communities by giving the opportunity to naturalise or obtain a passport for those living or owning property in both countries. An exception to this approach was the immigration policy towards Manga Arabs, where the colonial authorities overtly and deliberately sought to restrict their movement. Despite the success of this scheme, the regulations introduced provoked a backlash from a section of the Arab elite, who became involved on the side of Omani migrants. This contributed to a rapprochement between the elite and Manga Arabs, in many respects, different groups of Arabs and, as a consequence, limited in this capacity the process of separation between the two countries.

The legal settlement of contacts between Oman and Zanzibar affected relations between members of the ruling dynasty to the greatest extent. The introduction of the civil list, the stabilisation of modes of succession, and the emerging politics of nationhood and sovereignty led to the division of the dynasty into two separate branches and a reduction in contact between members of the Āl Būsaʿīdī family of Muscat and Zanzibar. As a result, events that should have strengthened the internal relations of the ruling family, like the bicentenary of the dynasty or the first meeting of the rulers of the two countries in decades, occurred through British mediation and had little significance for either branch of the family.

While the changes described above did not lead to immediate transformations within Arab elite contacts, they were the next steps in cutting ties between Oman and Zanzibar. Together with the political separation and cultural changes within Zanzibar's Arab elite, they had significant effects, which materialized particularly after 1964, when the Sultan of Oman Saʿīd bin Taymūr refused to accept Zanzibari refugees claiming that they were not Omani but Zanzibari citizens.⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁹⁵ Initially, Saʿīd bin Taymūr agreed to let in refugees from Zanzibar, but the conflict in Dhofar and security concerns prompted him to change his decision. See Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 173-174.

Chapter 5

Sultans, Sheikhs, and Political Agents: The British Role in Sustaining Contact between Oman and Zanzibar

The legal and institutional actions of the British in restricting the immigration of Manga Arabs to Zanzibar, described in the previous chapter, unexpectedly resulted in bringing together Zanzibar's Arab elite and Omani migrants, weakening the separation process between the two countries. This was not the first time that the decisions of the colonial authorities had unintentionally served to reconnect the two countries. A similar situation occurred with the introduction of the Zanzibari subsidy, which Sultans of Zanzibar used to interfere in Omani affairs for years. Moreover, the creation of the Zanzibar Protectorate under British control and the limitation of the sultan's power were probably factors that prompted Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī and his associates to support the rebellion in Oman. They saw rebellion's success as an opportunity to strengthen the sultan's power and limit British influence in Zanzibar. These actions were all side-effects of British efforts to separate Oman and Zanzibar. Instead, they contributed to briefly reinforcing connections between the two countries. The activities of British officials who mediated in the private affairs of the Arab communities of Oman and Zanzibar were a different matter.

With the establishment of a colonial administration in Zanzibar and the incorporation of Oman into the British sphere of influence, political agents in Muscat and residents in Zanzibar began assisting the Arab elites in Oman and Zanzibar with travel between the two countries, family matters, and property and inheritance issues. They also acted as intermediaries between members of the ruling family. These mediations were the third aspect of British colonialism's influence on the separation process. Unlike British political and legal interventions in Omani-Zanzibari relations, their mediation strengthened ties between the elites of the two countries. This chapter reveals how British officials aided the Omani and Zanzibari

elites in their mutual relations. It examines the extent and nature of this activity within the context of broader contacts between the two countries.

5.1 The Basis for British Officials' Engagement with Private Matters of Arab Elites

British mediation between Oman and Zanzibar was not new. British colonial officials had been brokering contacts between the rulers of Oman and Zanzibar from 1856, just as they had with Arab sheikhs in the Gulf and Indian princes. British interventions in the private affairs of the Āl Būsa'īdī dynasty were not uncommon either, as demonstrated by the conflict over Ghaniyya bint Sayf's legate or the property disputes between 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Sa'īd and his siblings. The framework for this intermediation was set by the traditional protector-protégé relationship and the local rulers' treaties with Britain regarding trade and anti-slavery measures.⁷⁹⁶ The rules of British interference in the affairs of the Arab elite in Zanzibar changed significantly with the declaration of the protectorate. From 1890, a British political agent and later a resident were members of the Zanzibar government and dealt with local affairs on a regular and systemic basis.

According to the 1893 regulation on Zanzibar's relations with foreign countries, a British agent was to act as the sultan's foreign minister and have control over whom the ruler met with and for what purpose, as 'any political matter related to the sultan, his family, [and] his subjects should pass through British Agent'.⁷⁹⁷ As a result, the British controlled relations between the two countries, mediated the exchange of correspondence between them, and organised transport for members of the ruling dynasty travelling from Zanzibar to Oman. Moreover, the status of the protectorate meant that the sultan's subjects were also regarded as British protected persons or British dependants outside their own territory. With that status, they could apply for British passports and receive consular protection and 'good offices' on the same terms as British subjects.⁷⁹⁸ This implied that Arabs from Zanzibar travelling to Oman or dealing with family or business matters in Oman could count on the assistance and support of a British resident in Zanzibar and a political agent in Muscat.

The situation was different in Oman, which remained a formally independent state under informal British protection. Colonial officials in Muscat acted as advisers to the sultan and did

⁷⁹⁶ Onley, *Arabian Frontier*, 3.

⁷⁹⁷ Rules of guidance of His Highness the Sultan in his relations with Foreigners and Foreign representatives, 16 October 1893, ZNA AC3/4.

⁷⁹⁸ Colonial authorities debated the right of Zanzibaris to apply for a British passport and only allowed them to do so beginning in 1914. Issue of British Passports to Natives of Zanzibar and Muscat, ZNA AB26/39. The latter powers were in international matters and did not include the right to use the British flag on a ship until 1892. Onley, *Arabian Frontier*, 21.

not have the same powers as in Zanzibar. Subjects of the Sultan of Oman, except in extraordinary circumstances, were not treated as British protected persons and could not obtain a British passport.⁷⁹⁹ This rule should have also applied to consular protection and ‘good offices’, but, in this case, British officials repeatedly intervened on the side of the Omani Arabs. The British chose to intervene for two reasons. First, despite the creation of the Office of Foreign Minister in 1939, Omani foreign policy was largely conducted by a British political agent. Therefore, Omani-Zanzibari relations in both countries were carried out by British officials, giving them an intra-imperial character. Second, at the sultan’s request, the British intervened in his or his subjects’ affairs, considering Oman as their sphere of influence.⁸⁰⁰ This policy reflected an inconsistent attitude toward mediation in favour of the Arabs of Oman. For example, a British agent refused to intervene in the case of Ḥabīb bin Sulaymān, a merchant from Muscat who had been robbed in Congo. However, he tried to help an Omani merchant arrested for debts in Al-Luhhayah in Ottoman Yemen.⁸⁰¹ Despite these ambiguities, in relation to Zanzibari issues, British officials in Muscat tried to intervene regularly.

It is worth noting that in both Oman and Zanzibar, the main reasons that colonial officials intervened were petitions or requests from representatives of the Arab communities. Firstly, the cause for these petitions was the legal and institutional changes in Zanzibar described earlier. The sultan and the sheikhs were deprived of traditional power; they could not intervene effectively and efficiently in many matters. Issues of migration, debt enforcement, or inheritance passed through the British offices of the Zanzibar Protectorate, and only colonial officials had the authority and capacity to carry them out.⁸⁰² Furthermore, in numerous situations, it was inefficient, expensive, or impossible for someone in Zanzibar to send a letter or representative to Oman and vice versa by the traditional route on a dhow. Hence, the Arabs began to ask British officials to use ‘good offices’ in their affairs, who, benefiting from the telegraph and other modern tools, could quickly contact and settle the matter.

⁷⁹⁹ British Resident to Abdalla bin Nasor bin Salim el-Maamiri, 19 July 1935, ZNA AB88/34.

⁸⁰⁰ Grey to the Government of India, 24 August 1905, IOR/L/PS/10/27/2, P. 4. 733/1904.

⁸⁰¹ In the case of Ḥabīb bin Sulaymān, the refusal of the British may have been influenced by the fact that Ḥabīb was accused of being a German agent. Political Agent, Zanzibar to Political Agent, Muscat, 5 April 1909, IOR/L/PS/10/27/2, P. 4. 733/1904. In the situation of the merchant in Yemen, the British achieved nothing despite their attempts to intervene because the Ottoman government refused them the right to represent a subject of the Sultan of Oman. British Ambassador in Ottoman Empire to Consul and Political Agent, Muscat, 24 April 1913, IOR/L/PS/10/27/2, P. 4. 733/1904.

⁸⁰² An example is the office of the Administrator General in Zanzibar, which dealt with estates where there was no will, or the testator had designated the office as executor. So, if it was named as executor of the will then it was also dealing with matters relating to estates outside Zanzibar, including Oman, see Pearce to Wingate, 20 February 1920, ZNA AB88/10.

In Oman, the sultan had more power, but his administration was not advanced enough to adequately handle the issues that arose from contact with the modern and better-developed Zanzibar. Neither Oman nor Zanzibar had diplomatic representation of their own, and temporary envoys and traditional institutions were often insufficient to mediate the many problems that affected the populations of the two countries.⁸⁰³ The Arab Association in Zanzibar may have been effective in dealing with Omani migrants in the protectorate. However, they did not have the capacity to intervene in cases of Omani sailors stranded in Somalia or organise compensation for a Muscati dhow. These were the opportunities that British officials in both countries had, and, like many other parts of the Empire, they sought to carry out the requests of colonial subjects.⁸⁰⁴

According to Ronald Robinson's theory of collaboration, local elites' cooperation with the colonial power was vital to the success of the imperial project. He writes that 'without indigenous collaboration, when the time came for it,' Europeans could not 'have conquered and ruled their non-European empires'.⁸⁰⁵ It is possible, therefore, to view British involvement in the private concerns of Arab elites as another aspect of cooperation between colonial authorities and local communities intended to solidify British imperialism. Indeed, the petitions of Arab elites to British officials resulted from the weakening of traditional institutions in Zanzibar. They were also a sign of the Zanzibari Arabs' dependence on the imperial bureaucratic machine. At the same time, there is no compelling indication that British interference in the private matters of the two elites was intended as another instrument to deepen the separation process between the two countries.

The British did not mediate all contacts between Omani and Zanzibari elites. They only intervened when matters were dealt with by colonial institutions, such as with migration or inheritance, or where an effective coercive apparatus or quick and efficient communication was needed, such as settling debts or handling property matters. Colonial officials only addressed family and social issues on a limited scale. The British did not concern themselves with religious and intellectual contacts between the Arab elites of the two countries. When an Arab

⁸⁰³ Oman had only one consul abroad before 1970 and that was a British official representing the interests of the Sultan of Oman in London from 1963. Peterson, *Oman*, 82. Zanzibar, on the other hand, planned to establish several foreign representations, including one in Cairo, when it became independent in late 1963. Foreign Policy of Zanzibar, Cabinet Papers no. 109, 1 November 1963, CO 882/3205.

⁸⁰⁴ British colonial officials also responded to petitions from local inhabitants in other parts of the British Empire, see Chima J. Korieh, "'May It Please Your Honor': Letters of Petition as Historical Evidence in an African Colonial Context", *History in Africa*, 37 (2010), 83-106.

⁸⁰⁵ Ronald Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration' in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, ed. E. R. J. Owen and R. B. Sutcliffe, (London: Longman, 1972), 120.

from Zanzibar wanted a legal opinion from an Ibādī scholar in Oman, he contacted him through acquaintances rather than British officials.⁸⁰⁶

The lack of intervention by colonial officials in such matters was not only due to the extensive network of religious and family contacts of Arab elites but also to the limited capacity of the British administration in Zanzibar. The protectorate's offices were operational only for a few hours a day until 1907, with a scarce number of officials. Even with the expansion of the colonial administration in subsequent years, there was no significant improvement in the availability of comprehensive social services, as British officials showed minimal interest in their development.⁸⁰⁷ Consequently, colonial officials were primarily involved in cases brought forth by the elite, and even in such matters, their intervention was not universal.

The colonial administration also did not replace local institutions in the contacts between both countries. Especially in Oman, the role of the sultan, sheikh or *wālī* remained important. Searches for an estate or heir were done with the help of these institutions, even if the request was overseen by an office in Zanzibar. It is also noteworthy that the colonial authorities did not interfere with these contacts and did not seek to restrict them on their own. As a result, the involvement of British officials in the personal contacts of the two elites should be viewed as a factor that fostered the development of relations between Oman and Zanzibar. In situations where the distance between countries, loss of contact with relatives or the ineffectiveness of traditional institutions threatened to sever links between these countries, the support of colonial officials sustained them.

5.2 Migration and Travels between Oman and Zanzibar

One of the most important areas of activity for British colonial officials was the problems of Arab elites related to travel and mobility between Oman and Zanzibar. The regulation of migration and the introduction of the idea of nationality in Oman and Zanzibar did not lead to a termination of journeys between the two countries. The Arab elites continued to travel to the other side of the Indian Ocean either for short visits on family or business matters or as permanent or temporary migrants. The predominant direction of travel was from Oman to Zanzibar, as Zanzibar remained a developed and prosperous country, where clove cultivation and trade could provide a significant income, despite the British protectorate and the loss of control of the East African coast.⁸⁰⁸ Meanwhile, in Oman, successive economic and political

⁸⁰⁶ Ghazal, 'Omani Fatwas', 239-240.

⁸⁰⁷ Bissell, *Urban Design*, 100.

⁸⁰⁸ Bennet, *The Arab State*, 205.

crises affected the elite, reducing their income and threatening their status. In these conditions, going to Zanzibar appeared as an opportunity to improve their situation. The economic factor was, therefore, important in the emigration of the Omani elite. However, unlike the representatives of lower social strata, who migrated in search of work, they usually had their own or family estates in Zanzibar or had the means to acquire such lands.⁸⁰⁹

Other reasons also prompted the Omani elite to settle in Zanzibar. Notably, the climate and living conditions were better there. Al-Mughayrī had already claimed that the primary reason for the migration and relocation of Saʿīd bin Sulṭān's court from Muscat to Zanzibar in 1840 was East Africa's superior climate.⁸¹⁰ Other accounts and memories of the Arab elite also highlighted the problem of heat and harsh living conditions in Oman before 1970.⁸¹¹ The prominent differences in living standards between the two countries in the first half of the 20th century should also be noted. The elite in Zanzibar benefited from sports clubs, cinemas, modern schools, and telephones. From the second half of the 20th century, they also enjoyed an airport which offered connections to countries such as Egypt and Iraq.⁸¹² Many of these facilities and technological advances were not available in Oman or were available only partially. Despite the modernisation process initiated by Saʿīd bin Taymūr, Oman remained a severely underdeveloped country until 1970.⁸¹³ As a result, many who had sufficient means to live in Oman decided to move to Zanzibar. An example of this is the migration of the sons of Sheikh Hāshil bin Rāshid Al-Maskarī, Sālim and Sayf, who, despite their considerable wealth, decided to emigrate to Zanzibar.⁸¹⁴

Another important reason the elites went to Zanzibar was an invitation from the ruler of Zanzibar. Sultan Barghash was responsible for bringing many Arabs from Oman and employing them in his administration. His successors continued this policy, although, for political and

⁸⁰⁹ For example, Sheikh 'Alī bin 'Umayr Al-Marhūbī, who travelled between Oman and Zanzibar for many years, finally decided to sell his property in Oman and build a house in Zanzibar. Then he became an influential person and was appointed to the Legislative Council. Marhubi, *My Zanzibar*, 10.

⁸¹⁰ Al-Mughayrī, *Juhaynat*, 143.

⁸¹¹ Al-Busaidi, *Omani Gentleman*, 8; Marhubi, *My Zanzibar*, 11.

⁸¹² *Al-Falaq* mentioned the use of air travel by the Arab elite several times. For more on sports clubs and cinemas in Zanzibar, see Laura Fair's works, *Pastime and Politics* and *Reel Pleasures: Cinema Audiences and Entrepreneurs in 20th Century Urban Tanzania* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2018).

⁸¹³ The country's development programme was limited due to Saʿīd bin Taymūr's policies and lack of sufficient funding. Nevertheless, thanks to a British development subsidy, several modernisation projects have been completed since 1959, including the construction of roads, the development of medical care and education. Peterson, *Oman*, 83-84. There was also an airfield in Oman that operated flights between Muscat and Bahrain, but steamships and local boats remained Oman's main means of outside transport. Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 423.

⁸¹⁴ Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 421.

economic reasons, they did so on a reduced scale.⁸¹⁵ For example, Sultan Ḥamad bin Thuwaynī brought his nephew Khalīfa bin Ḥārūb to Zanzibar, and he later became Sultan of Zanzibar in 1911. Khalīfa, already a ruler, persuaded his friend Ḥamad bin Aḥmad Āl Būsaʿidī to come to Zanzibar by offering him an office at his court.⁸¹⁶ Family and social considerations were not the only factors that brought people from Oman. Knowledge of Arabic and the Ibādī law of the elite there also played a crucial role. People from Oman were often hired to work as *qāḍīs* or Arabic-language secretaries because the education available for these positions in Zanzibar was insufficient.⁸¹⁷

The situation changed in the 1950s when the Muslim Academy in Zanzibar was founded. This institution taught Arabic and Islamic studies to prepare individuals for administrative positions and promote Islamic education among the Arab population in East Africa.⁸¹⁸ It represented various schools of Islamic law, and members of the Arab Association were involved in its founding.⁸¹⁹ Thus, the development of modern religious and secular education in Zanzibar was another reason for the emigration of Omani Arabs who could not hope to access similar institutions in their own country.⁸²⁰ Interestingly, when Sultan Saʿīd bin Taymūr sought an Arabic and Islamic tutor for his son Qābūs in 1957, he considered teachers of the Muslim Academy for the post.⁸²¹

Finally, migration was a consequence of marriages between relatives from both countries. Consanguineous marriages were prevalent among the Arab elites of both countries as they allowed wealth to be kept within the family and strengthened kinship relationships.⁸²²

⁸¹⁵ Beginning in 1893, the rulers of Zanzibar had a strictly defined civil list which limited their financial possibilities, including the extension of their court with new positions. In addition, the British were responsible for employment policy in the Zanzibari administration until 1961.

⁸¹⁶ This was Ḥamad's second emigration. He had left Oman for financial reasons in the 1880s but returned to the country (most likely because he was deported) after Khālīd bin Barghash's rebellion in 1896. Later his granddaughter married Sultan Khalīfa bin Ḥārūb. Al-Busaidi, *Memoirs of An Omani Gentleman*, 25.

⁸¹⁷ An example was Sheikh Muḥammad Al-Jamālī who migrated from Oman to Zanzibar to work for *Al-Falaq* magazine. After two years, however, in the absence of further career prospects, he returned to Oman where he worked in the service of the Sultan of Oman.

⁸¹⁸ Roman Loimeier, *Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills. The Politics of Islamic Education in 20th century Zanzibar* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 413.

⁸¹⁹ Loimeier, *Between Social Skills*, 416.

⁸²⁰ Chauncy to Alford, 23 January 1957, ZNA AB82/156. The first modern governmental school in Oman was established in Muscat in 1941 (al-saʿīdiyya school). By 1970, there were only four such institutions in Muscat, Muttrah, Salalah). Ramzi Nasser, 'Educational Reform in Oman: System and Structural Changes' in *Education Systems Around the World*, ed. Gilson Port, (London: IntechOpen, 2019).

⁸²¹ Eventually, the sultan was offered a candidate from outside the academy. The recommended person was Sheikh Muhammad Ali Al-Mjeni, who was renowned for his very good knowledge of Arabic and had been assistant private secretary to the British resident for 10 years. However, due to his advanced age and lack of formal qualifications, he was rejected. Chauncy to Alford, 8 June 1957, ZNA AB82/156.

⁸²² Consanguineous marriages were not an exclusively Omani phenomenon. Historically and today, they are widespread in many Muslim countries. In Oman in 2000, more than 50 per cent of marriages were within the

Moreover, in such marriages, negotiating the contract and the *mahr* (dower) was easier because the bride and groom's families knew each other. In some cases, the future wife and husband were acquainted before their marriage, which facilitated their later cohabitation.⁸²³ It is impossible to estimate how many consanguineous marriages within the Omani elite occurred between families on either side of the ocean. It seems that it was not a large percentage since Arabs in Zanzibar often married family members already in East Africa or women of African origin.⁸²⁴ Nevertheless, Salma bint Sa'īd mentioned family members who married Omani relatives in the 19th century.⁸²⁵ Similar examples concerning the ruling family and the elites can also be found in later years. These marriages meant that the bridegroom travelled to Oman or from Oman to marry, or the bride moved to the other side of the Indian Ocean to live with her new husband.⁸²⁶

The migration of Arabs also included departures from Zanzibar to Oman. Representatives of the elite returned to Oman permanently or temporarily for various purposes. Some returned to their country of origin when their situation had enhanced. Others visited for a few years to see their families, tend their properties or investments or improve their Arabic and deepen their religious studies. The latter was common among the pious Ibādīs and scholars of Zanzibar who travelled to Oman to expand their knowledge or interact with Omani scholars.⁸²⁷ Another important reason for migration from Zanzibar to Oman was the expansion of the Omani administration in the early 20th century and the consequent need for skilled workers unavailable in Oman. The authorities in Muscat approached the government in Zanzibar several times to ask if there were any people with the necessary skills in the protectorate. The sultan's government was looking not only for Arabs but also those of other nationalities. The range of positions available was wide and, in 1957, included teachers, agricultural officers, and doctors:

The Sultan of Muscat and Oman is frequently asking me to try [to] find him school teachers, agricultural assistants, fishery officers, doctors and the like. He wants Arabs, Indians or Pakistanis at salaries varying from 400 rps. per mensem for teachers to rps. 8000 for Agricultural and Fishery officers and 1200 rps. for doctors. I have not, at this moment, been asked to obtain anyone, but I

family. Islam, M. Mazharul, 'The Practice of Consanguineous Marriage in Oman: Prevalence, Trends and Determinants', *Journal of Biosocial Science* 44, no. 5 (2012), 571–594.

⁸²³ Alan H. Bittles, 'When Cousins Marry: A Review of Consanguinity in the Middle East', *Perspectives in Human Biology* 1, (1995), 71–83.

⁸²⁴ Al-Busaidi, *Omani Gentleman*, 29, 78. Sa'ud's father Aḥmad, who migrated from Oman during the reign of Sultan Khalīfa, married a representative daughter of Kenya-born Ḥamad bin Sulaymān Āl Būsa'īdī. Then, Sa'ud himself married Zanzibar-born Samīra bint Sālim Al-Ma'amariyya. In turn, the grandfather of Muḥammad Al-Marhūbī, Sheikh 'Alī bin 'Umayr Al-Marhūbī, married several women in his life, some of whom were African. Marhubi, *My Zanzibar*, 13.

⁸²⁵ Ruete, *Memoirs*, 49.

⁸²⁶ The marriage of Sheikh Al-Ismā'īlī described in the previous chapter is an example of this situation.

⁸²⁷ Bang, *Sufis and Scholars*, 154; Al-Riyami, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 54.

wonder if you could let me know whether we would stand any chance of finding suitable candidates in Zanzibar.⁸²⁸

The above request was not fulfilled because the Zanzibarisation of the protectorate's civil service was accelerating, and, apart from one candidate, the authorities in Zanzibar could not offer anyone suitable.⁸²⁹ Nevertheless, in previous years people from Zanzibar had travelled to Oman to work in the administration there.⁸³⁰ Their migration indicates that Zanzibaris also played an essential role in Omani modernisation even before 1970.

Migration from Zanzibar to Oman posed many administrative and logistical problems, which British officials had to handle. British involvement in these matters stemmed from the institutional conditions that had prevailed since 1911 when mobility and nationality began to be regulated in both countries. The colonial power was responsible for the situation on the ocean, the control of boats and passengers, and, therefore, in the event of a collision or other incident related to travelling, it was ex officio in charge of solving the problem. In addition, British officials were taking up cases referred to them by the Arabs themselves.

Shipwrecks were among the most serious challenges on the journey between Oman and Zanzibar. Travel between the two countries could be done in two ways: directly by local dhow during the monsoon or indirectly by steamer from Zanzibar via Bombay, Karachi, or sometimes Gwadar to Muscat.⁸³¹ Dhow was the most dangerous way to travel, which was sometimes chosen also by representatives of the elite.⁸³² When travelling on a dhow, passengers were in danger of being hit by a storm, colliding with another ship or even being attacked and kidnapped by Somali pirates. The latter happened to Sheikh Sālim bin Hāshil Al-Maskarī when he was returning from Oman to Zanzibar with his minor sons in 1927. During the voyage, their ship wrecked off the coast of Somalia, but the passengers managed to swim to the shore. Once safely ashore, Sheikh Sālim returned to the shipwrecked vessel to collect his belongings, leaving his two sons on the beach. While he was away, the Somali tribe kidnapped his youngest son Sālim, who was about six years old. As soon as Sheikh Sālim arrived in Hobya, he contacted the Italian consul about the kidnapping. He was eventually forced to leave Somalia without his son. When

⁸²⁸ Chauncy to Alford, 24 January 1957, ZNA AB82/156.

⁸²⁹ Eccles to Chauncy, 19 March 1957, ZNA AB82/156. The Zanzibari authorities suggested that Muscat hire an Arab Zanzibari as Superintendent of Gardens. The said Arab lived in London where he went after he could not find a position in Zanzibar suitable to his training.

⁸³⁰ Secretary to the Government of Zanzibar to Ali bin Salim, 12 April 1921, ZNA AB88/11.

⁸³¹ An example of such a voyage by steamer was 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd Al-Riyāmī's voyage from Zanzibar to Muscat, via Mombasa and Karachi in 1949. Al-Riyāmī, *Shakhṣiyāt*, 501.

⁸³² Interview with Sa'īd bin Muḥammad Al-Marjabī, Muscat, 30 January 2020.

he finally got to Zanzibar, he implored British officials for help, and they intervened with the Italian consul over the fate of Sheikh Sālim's son.⁸³³

Another shipwreck that required the assistance of colonial officials in Zanzibar was the sinking of the dhow 'Mansuri' near Chumba Island off the coast of Zanzibar. The dhow was on its way to Muscat with 17 people on board, of whom 15 survived. After the shipwreck, colonial clerks compensated the ship's captain 225 shillings and paid for the return of the remaining passengers to Oman. The situation involved the consul in Muscat, as the passengers were subjects of the Sultan of Oman. It was, therefore, incumbent on Muscat to reimburse these funds to the authorities in Zanzibar.⁸³⁴ A similar event occurred when there was a collision between two dhows, one from Oman and the other from Zanzibar. Because the Omani dhow was responsible for the incident, a British official from Zanzibar asked Oman via the political agent in Muscat to pay the compensation awarded to the captain of the Zanzibari vessel.⁸³⁵

Much more complicated was the case of the 'Al-Khaḍrā' ship and the taking of the sultan's flag from it by the Italians. The Omani vessel sailed under *nākhūdā* (captain) Mubārak bin Khāmis Al-Alāwī Al-Waladī to Hafun in Italian Somaliland, then to Mombasa, and finally to Zanzibar. However, when the ship docked at Hafun, the Italians confiscated the Sultan of Oman's flag and detained the crew for several days. Eventually, the Italians seized the ship and forbade any vessel under the Omani flag to enter Hafun again.⁸³⁶ The stated reason for their action was to combat arms smuggling, and similar measures were to be taken against other ships sailing from Oman.⁸³⁷ The vessel's crew managed to reach Mombasa, where 'Alī bin Sayf Al-Manthirī and Sālim bin 'Alī Al-Ḥārithī wrote directly to Sultan Fayṣal with information about the whole affair and a request for intervention.

We have reached the port of Mombasa quite safe. We are now bound for the port of Zanzibar. We write for your information that we went into the vessel of Sayyid Hamad bin Akil at Sur and sailed to Hafun. Italian Consul objected and took our flag. We spoke to him about it and asked for reasons for which our flag was seized. We told him that the flag was our Sultan's. We do not know what he means by this seizure and why he has seized it. Italian Consul told us that the next season if any vessel came with that flag, she would find herself in peril. We are in great trouble on account of this. We are your subjects and wait for your orders.⁸³⁸

⁸³³ Crofton to Royal Consular Agent for Italy, 2 April 1927. ZNA AB88/23.

⁸³⁴ Hollis to Murphy, 25 April 1928, ZNA AB88/25.

⁸³⁵ Hollis to Hinde, 14 May 1924, ZNA AB88/20

⁸³⁶ Clarke to Foreign Office, 10 February 1909, IOR/L/PS/10/111, File 619/1907.

⁸³⁷ The Italians were said to have found one concealed and undeclared rifle by the crew on board 'Al-Khaḍrā'. Acting Consul-General for Italy at Aden to the First Assistant to the Political Resident in Aden, 22 December 1908, IOR/L/PS/10/111, File 619/1907.

⁸³⁸ Ali bin Saif al-Manthiri and Salim bin Ali bin Humaid Al-Harithi to Sayyid Faysal bin Turki, 16 Safar 1327/9 March 1909, IOR/L/PS/10/111, File 619/1907.

However, the Sultan of Oman was limited in what he could do as he had no envoy in Somalia, so he asked the British to represent him.⁸³⁹ Fayṣal bin Turkī demanded the ship's return and compensation on behalf of his subjects. The British consul in Muscat referred the case to the resident in Aden, and the consul in Zanzibar was also involved.⁸⁴⁰ Eventually, thanks to British efforts in 1911, the captain and owner not only got the ship back but also received compensation and travel expenses.

The 'Al-Khaḍrā' case points to the limited capacity of the Omani sultans and their diplomatic and bureaucratic apparatuses when it came to handling travel issues controlled by colonial powers. As a result, the subjects of the Sultans of Oman and Zanzibar often preferred to turn immediately to British officials. This was also the case when a former slave of Sheikh Mas'ūd bin Sālim Al-Maskarī was enslaved in Dubai. A freedman named Abed bin Bilal travelled from Zanzibar to Muscat in 1915. He then continued to Dubai, where he was kidnapped and enslaved again by Arabs a few years later as revenge for the kidnapping of slaves from Dubai by the Arabs of Muscat. As he had once belonged to Sheikh Mas'ūd, the latter asked the British high commissioner to intervene in the case and free Abed. British officials approached those in Muscat who contacted a British agent in Sharjah through the Bushire residency to enquire about Abed's fate. The clerk in Sharjah could not establish Abed's whereabouts, but he suspected that the freedman most likely died from the plague in the epidemic that struck Dubai in 1924.⁸⁴¹

People travelling between Oman and Zanzibar were not always capable of organising the journey themselves. In such situations, they or their families requested assistance from the colonial authorities for their voyage. The journey of 16-year-old Ḥamūd bin Ḥamad bin Sayf Al-Kindī, who was returning to his father in Muscat in 1911, is one example of this. He had been visiting his uncle Sālim bin Sayf in Zanzibar and was returning to Muscat on his own as a minor. The British political agent asked his counterpart in Muscat to give the young traveller the necessary assistance on his arrival in Muscat.⁸⁴² The matter of Ḥamūd's journey was already known to the British official because there had been earlier problems in establishing whether the boy had actually sailed from Zanzibar. He was not on the passenger list, but witnesses confirmed that he had left the protectorate on board the dhow 'Mubarakī'.⁸⁴³ His omission from

⁸³⁹ It was not until May that the sultan's envoy, 'Abdullāh bin Hilāl, travelled to Aden to take possession of the recovered ship and to agree on further details of the arrangement that Italy negotiated with the British.

⁸⁴⁰ Viceroy of India to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 21 May 1909, IOR/L/PS/10/111, File 619/1907.

⁸⁴¹ Acting High Commissioner in Zanzibar to Crosthwaite, 10 March 1925, ZNA AB88/21.

⁸⁴² Clarke to Knox, 27 April 1911, ZNA AC1/99.

⁸⁴³ Clarke to Knox, 26 April 1911, ZNA AC1/99. On the list was Ṣāliḥ bin Ḥamad bin Ṣāliḥ Al-Kindī who did not go to Muscat, so Ḥamad's name was probably written incorrectly.

the passenger list turned out to be an error, and the young traveller arrived safely in Muscat, where his father was waiting for him.⁸⁴⁴

A colonial power with a network of clerks and modern means of communication could quickly and efficiently resolve a shipwreck or ascertain the fate of a former slave or family member on a sea voyage. Nevertheless, this did not mean that British officials were involved in all matters of mobility. If a voyage went smoothly, the intervention of a colonial official was not necessary. Moreover, Arabs travelling from Oman to Zanzibar could count on the support and assistance of the Arab Association, which was significantly involved in facilitating contact between the two countries. Finally, colonial authority was limited in Oman, particularly in the country's interior, where the role of traditional institutions remained unchallenged. This is evidenced by the story of two natives of Tanganyika, Said and Muhammad, who worked in Zanzibar for the Omani merchant Sinān bin Musallam Al-Amirī. The merchant later took the pair to Oman and sold them as slaves to the Bedouins. To escape from captivity, they turned to the imam for help, who informed Sa'īd bin Taymūr of the case. The sultan arranged a dhow to transport them, and in March 1935, Said and Muhammad returned to Zanzibar.

The repatriation of the two former slaves took place solely based on cooperation between the sultan and the imam. It was probably Sa'īd bin Taymūr who informed the Sultan of Zanzibar of the whole situation, and then the latter passed the message on to the British resident. The colonial officer only got involved in the case when he requested that Muscat impose the appropriate punishment on Sinān, a subject of the Sultan of Oman.⁸⁴⁵ Thus, despite British involvement in Omani and Zanzibari affairs, direct relations between the rulers and traditional institutions of Oman and Zanzibar did not disappear. In other cases, British intermediation facilitated travel for Arabs from both countries and helped solve problems that resulted from this mobility. Arab families travelled from Oman to Zanzibar or vice versa, knowing they could count on colonial officials to assist them in the event of an inconvenience. Without British help, the trips would still have taken place. However, with British support, the journeys were simpler and, therefore, undertaken more willingly and frequently by the Arab elites.

5.3 Family and Financial Matters

British assistance also concerned family and property matters of people who had already emigrated to Oman or Zanzibar. British officials' support for Arab mobility was critical because Omani migration was one of the most significant remaining links between Oman and Zanzibar

⁸⁴⁴ Knox to Clarke, 18 May 1911, ZNA AC2/115.

⁸⁴⁵ Jones to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 4 May 1935, ZNA AB88/34.

until 1964, when the Zanzibari Revolution began. While many Omanis emigrated, they remained connected to their country of origin through family ties and properties or finances they shared with family members and business partners still in Oman. These bonds may have weakened in later generations, but in many cases, subsequent migration renewed their strength, sustaining relationships between the two countries and their elites.

One example of this migration pattern is the family history of Muḥammad bin Sālim, a member of the ruling dynasty mentioned several times in this work. After negotiating an agreement between Thuwaynī and Mājīd and probably arguing with the former, Muḥammad decided to leave Oman and settle in Zanzibar, where he served as an advisor, regent, and envoy to Sultan Mājīd until his death.⁸⁴⁶ Muḥammad bin Sālim went to Zanzibar with only part of his family. His brother Ḥamad, son Saʿīd, and wife Rayya remained in Oman. His wife followed him to Zanzibar only after ʿAzzān bin Qays came to power and the imamate confiscated her property in Oman.⁸⁴⁷ Muḥammad bin Sālim and Rayya's son Saʿīd also travelled to Zanzibar with his mother. However, after the fall of the imamate, he returned to Oman, where he spent the rest of his life acting as *wazīr* for the Sultans Turkī and Fayṣal.⁸⁴⁸ Contact between Muḥammad bin Sālim's family members was never severed as his other son, Ḥamad, who lived in Zanzibar, visited his brother and cousins in Oman.⁸⁴⁹ Later, Saʿīd's son, Muḥammad, who worked for the British consul in Muscat, planned to migrate to Zanzibar in 1909 because part of the Omani elite disliked him due to his involvement with the British.⁸⁵⁰

During the time of the imamate of ʿAzzān, Muḥammad bin Sālim's brother, Ḥamad, also went to Zanzibar. Though, like his nephew, he returned to Oman after Turkī came to power, some of his family remained in Zanzibar, including his sons Kinda and Ṭālib.⁸⁵¹ Neither child was destined to live a peaceful life in Zanzibar. Kinda was imprisoned alongside his cousin Ṭālāl bin Muḥammad bin Sālim for drunkenness and assaulting members of the ruling family. After his wife intervened, Kinda was pardoned by the British and banished to Aden in 1903.⁸⁵²

⁸⁴⁶ Turki bin Said to Chief Secretary of Government, 23 November 1867, ZNA AA3/30. Turkī described Muḥammad bin Sālim in the letter to the British official as a person 'who conduct the affairs of Government in Zanzibar during absence of Majid'.

⁸⁴⁷ List showing a number of the confiscation affected by Khuleelee in Muscat and Oman during the year 1869, IOR/R/15/6/2.

⁸⁴⁸ Persian Gulf Administration Reports 1883/84 - 1904/05, IOR/R/15/1/709, 250.

⁸⁴⁹ Ḥamad bin Muḥammad bin Salim visited Oman at least once in 1888 as recorded in British documents, see "Entry of 13th November 1888", Political Diary of the Muscat Political Agency, IOR/R/15/6/14

⁸⁵⁰ Muḥammad bin Saʿīd helped the British identify the killers of the survivors of the SS 'Baron Inverdale' and supported them during the French flag crisis. He was also described as a confidential agent to the British agency and then officially its dragoman. The political agent and consul in Muscat forwarded his request for employment there to Zanzibar. Holland to Clarke, 19 January 1909, ZNA AC2/89.

⁸⁵¹ Kirk to Wedderburn, 20 April 1871, IOR/L/PS/9/49.

⁸⁵² Eliot to the Resident in Aden, 13 November 1903, ZNA AC2/58.

His brother Ṭālib was expelled from Zanzibar in 1909 and settled in Muscat.⁸⁵³ A different fate befell Kinda's sons, especially Sālīm. He became an influential figure in Zanzibar as president of the Arab Association and a member of the Legislative Council from 1926.⁸⁵⁴ Furthermore, Sālīm bin Kinda maintained regular contact with Oman, where in 1905, he inherited property from his nephew Sayf bin Ḥamad bin Sālīm.⁸⁵⁵

Muhammad bin Salim's family story was not unique. From a later period, the story of Sa'īd bin Nāṣir Al-Kindī's sons is similar. Sheikh Sa'īd Al-Kindī (1852-1936) was an influential religious scholar and *qāḍī* in Oman, and his sons played significant roles in Oman and Zanzibar.⁸⁵⁶ Muḥammad bin Sa'īd was a clerk (*munṣī*) in the court of the Sultan of Zanzibar in 1915, and his son, Sa'īd bin Muḥammad, taught Ibādī subjects at the Muslim Academy beginning in 1955.⁸⁵⁷ Sa'īd bin Nāṣir's other sons, Aḥmad and Yaḥyā, were associated with the Imamate of Oman.⁸⁵⁸ Another of Sa'īd's sons, 'Isā (1889-1972), started his career fighting alongside the imam but, in later years, emigrated to Zanzibar, where he worked as a poet, writer and imam of a mosque.⁸⁵⁹ Members of the Al-Kindī family who lived in Oman, including Yaḥyā bin Aḥmad Al-Kindī and Ḥamūd bin Aḥmad Al-Kindī, sometimes visited their family in Zanzibar.⁸⁶⁰

Several factors determined this pattern of migration. The division of property certainly played an important role. As a result of the process of inheritance, estates scattered around Oman and Zanzibar passed to successive heirs. Those who received properties in Oman decided to stay there since the inheritance in Zanzibar already belonged to their sisters and brothers.⁸⁶¹ Other factors were political. In the case of Muḥammad bin Sālīm's family, Sultan Thuwaynī was said to have denied Muḥammad's wife the right to leave the country, hoping thereby to force him to return and settle the matter of Ghaniyya bint Sayf's money in favour of the Omani

⁸⁵³ The reason for his exile is unknown, but he arrived in Muscat in 1909, see 'Entry of 16 August 1909', Muscat Diaries 1908-1909, IOR/R/15/6/352.

⁸⁵⁴ Chief Secretary to the Government to the President of Arab Association, 22 February 1926, ZNA AB88/22.

⁸⁵⁵ Administrator General to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 20 May 1946, ZNA HC1/4142.

⁸⁵⁶ Sheikh Nāṣir bin Sa'īd Al-Kindī played a major role in the negotiations between the imam and the sultan that led to the Sib Agreement in 1920, see Hussein Ghubash, *Oman. The Islamic Democratic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2006), 169.

⁸⁵⁷ Loimeier, *Between Social Skills*, 437.

⁸⁵⁸ IOR/R/15/6/204, File 8/20: Muscat State Affairs, Rise of Omanis.

⁸⁵⁹ Ḥamad bin Sayf Al-Būsa'īdī, *Qalā'id al-Jamān fī Asmā' ba'd Shu'arā' 'Umān* (Muscat: Maṭba'at 'Umān wa-maktabiha, 1993), 286.

⁸⁶⁰ Yaḥyā bin Aḥmad and Ḥamūd bin Aḥmad descended from the line of the sheikh Sa'īd bin Aḥmad bin Sa'īd Al-Kindī (d. 1792), see more Sulaymān bin Ḥamūd Al-Kindī, *Al-Albāb fī Dhikr Nasab Al-Ahl wa-l-Aḥbāb* (Muscat: Maktabat 'Ulūm Al-Nasab, 2013), 25, 34.

⁸⁶¹ An example of this division of property into Omani and Zanzibari parts is the will of Marhūn bin Sulaymān Al-Riyāmī. His heirs were his sons, Sulaymān and Sa'īd, who inherited his property in Zanzibar, while Marhūn's estate in Oman was given as *waqf* to the community of Maqqaza (Izki). 'Will of Marhūn bin Sulaymān bin Ṣāliḥ Al-Riyāmī, 12 Ramadan 1362/12 September 1943', in *Al-'Alāqāt al-tārīkhīya*, vol. 2, 136.

ruler.⁸⁶² The emigration of the elite was also influenced by deportation and property seizure practised by the rulers of both countries since Mājīd and ‘Azzān and continued by subsequent sultans. The invitations and offers made by the sultans of Zanzibar for selected representatives of the elite to settle and work in Zanzibar also played a role.

Moreover, there were personal motivations; some preferred to leave Oman for the wealthier and more stable Zanzibar, while others chose to remain in their native land where most of their family lived. The latter was a motivation for the wives of Sayyid Khūnda bin Ḥamad Āl Būsa‘īdī who decided to remain in Oman despite their husband’s exile to Zanzibar.⁸⁶³ A similar resolution was made by ‘Alīya bint Barghash when in 1898, her husband ‘Alī bin Sālīm was banished from Zanzibar.⁸⁶⁴ The decision to migrate was also related to stress and anxiety, especially when newcomers did not have any close relatives nearby. This was the case for Ṣāliḥ bin Sa‘īd Al-Fahdī’s wife, whose story was detailed in the previous chapter. The depression she experienced after immigrating to Zanzibar, where she had no family or friends, was certainly not an isolated case.⁸⁶⁵ Notably, women needed a male companion during a voyage. Finding a male companion for a woman whose husband had already left the country was not always possible, and this also shaped migration patterns.⁸⁶⁶ In the situation of temporary migration from Oman to Zanzibar, on the other hand, it was often decided that only a male member of the family would leave, and his wife, children and other relatives would remain because someone had to look after the house and property until the expatriate returned.⁸⁶⁷

Having part of a family in Zanzibar and part in Oman meant the family members contacted each other frequently about personal, financial, and property-related matters. Communication was mainly carried out by letters and less frequently via telegram.⁸⁶⁸ Letters were passed through friends, relatives or sheikhs who travelled to the other side of the Indian

⁸⁶² Memorandum from 30 March 1865 regarding dispute between the sultans of Muscat and Zanzibar, MSA Pol. Dep. 1866, vol. 44.

⁸⁶³ Beville to the Political Agent and Consul in Zanzibar, 21 December 1896, ZNA AC2/28. Khūnda bin Ḥamad had two wives, the first one was Omani, and the second one was of Wahhabi Islam.

⁸⁶⁴ Cave to Foreign Office, 20 November 1901, IOR/L/PS/20/C245.

⁸⁶⁵ Saleh bin Said el-Fahdi to the British Resident, 27 Rabi Al-Thani 1354/ 27 July 1935, ZNA AB88/34.

⁸⁶⁶ Al-Busaidi, *Omani Gentleman*, 26.

⁸⁶⁷ It was the case of the first migration of Ḥamad bin Aḥmad Āl Būsa‘īdī who then left his family in Oman. Only the second time when he took up a position at court at the invitation of Khalīfa bin Hārūb did he bring his family to Zanzibar, see Al-Busaidi, *Omani Gentleman*, 8, 25.

⁸⁶⁸ This was because Oman’s post office was under British control until 1966 and served mainly colonial purposes. *Kitāb tārikh al-barīd fī ‘Umān* (Muscat: Wizārat al-barīd wa-l-barq wa-l-hātif, 2011). In Zanzibar the postal services were supposed to have started during Barghash’s reign after his visit to Egypt. However, the permanent and regular post office was established only at the initiative of the British, first as a part of the Indian administration then as a unit of the Protectorate of Zanzibar. Edward B. Proud, *Postal History of Uganda and Zanzibar* (Heathfield: Postal History Publications, 1993).

Ocean.⁸⁶⁹ In the 20th century, correspondence was sent by airmail, especially if the letters concerned important or official matters, such as passport renewal or property matters.⁸⁷⁰

Sometimes when dealing with family problems, however, correspondence with a family member was not enough, and a person would turn to the colonial authorities for intervention, particularly if they were highly placed enough to obtain British assistance. For example, in the 1920s, Sayyid Sayf bin Ḥamūd Āl Būsaʿīdī referred an alimony-related case to the British resident. It was the case of Amna bint Aḥmad, whose father was titled ‘sayyid’, indicating that she may have been a distant representative of the Āl Būsaʿīdī dynasty.⁸⁷¹ In 1921, Amna’s husband, ‘Abdullāh bin Shaykh, an employee of the Zanzibar Customs Department, divorced her. The pair had a daughter named Fāṭima, and ‘Abdullāh promised to continue supporting Amna and his daughter financially after the divorce. However, he withheld support when his ex-wife decided to leave Zanzibar for Muscat, presumably to return to her family, without his permission. As a result, Amna, who had her mother as a dependent, fell into debt in Muscat and was in dire financial straits. ‘Abdullāh was prepared to resume support for his wife but expected that she and his daughter would return to Zanzibar. He refused to support Amna’s mother.⁸⁷²

However, British involvement in personal matters seems to have been rare, as not many documents in the archive deal with these issues. More often, Arabs dealt with their family matters through family members, tribal sheikhs, and elders.⁸⁷³ British officials may have also refused to take on such issues because they were considered beyond their duties and ‘good offices’. The only exceptions were when the case involved a person of high standing. The aristocratic nature of the British Empire meant that those placed high in the social hierarchy could count on additional assistance from the colonial administration.⁸⁷⁴ In Amna’s case, it was also significant that her ex-husband was an employee of the Zanzibar Protectorate’s administration. His position may have contributed to the British decision to intervene.

⁸⁶⁹ Interview with Saʿīd Al-Murjabī, Muscat, 30 January 2020.

⁸⁷⁰ An example of correspondence sent by airmail was the case of the renewal of a passport by a resident of Zanzibar and subject of the Sultan of Oman, Aḥmad bin Ḥamdān bin Ḥumayd Al-Ḥārthī. Aḥmad approached the Omani Interior Minister, Sayyid Aḥmad bin Ibrāhīm Āl Būsaʿīdī, with a request to renew his passport in 1950 as he could not leave Zanzibar without a valid document. In response to his request a new passport was issued and sent to him by airmail. Ahmad bin Hamdan bin Humadi al Harthi to Saiyid Ahmad bin Ibrahim, 29 Dhū Al-Qaʿada 1939/ 12 September 1950, FO 1016/357.

⁸⁷¹ Chief Secretary to the Government to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 12 August 1932, ZNA AB88/31.

⁸⁷² Statement of the Assistant Comptroller of Customs, His Highness Customs Preventive Force, 1932, ZNA AB88/31.

⁸⁷³ Interview with Saʿīd Al-Murjabī, Muscat, 30 January 2020.

⁸⁷⁴ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 111.

It was a different situation with financial and property matters over which the British had direct control as members of the Zanzibar administration. As such, British officials intermediated in many issues concerning Arab money on either shore of the Indian Ocean. For example, when family members stayed on the other side of the Indian Ocean, financial support and funds transfers became an issue. When Sa‘īd bin Rāshid bin Muḥammad Al-Nabhānī of Pemba wanted to send 50 rupees to his daughter in Oman in 1934, he sent the money to ‘Azīz bin Sa‘īd in Muscat, who was supposed to give this sum to his daughter through Zahūr bin Khalfān. Al-Nabhānī said the money reached the intermediaries, but his daughter never received it. She stated on her return from Muscat to Pemba that ‘Azīz bin Sa‘īd claimed that he had not received the money.⁸⁷⁵ Therefore, at Sa‘īd bin Rāshid’s request, Zanzibar Protectorate officials asked the political agent and consul in Muscat to secure the return of the sum or clarify the forfeiture of the money.⁸⁷⁶

Al-Nabhānī’s example shows that Arabs transferred money to their relatives on the other side of the Indian Ocean through local merchants and agents. Unfortunately, this method was fraught with the risk of embezzlement. Hence, they also tried to send money through relatives or trusted persons. The latter included the president of the Arab Association in Zanzibar or another reputable sheikh who, thanks to his contacts in both countries, could organise the transfer of funds safely and efficiently.⁸⁷⁷ Other options included transmitting funds via the British consulates, through the post and later via banks, but these options required commissions and other fees.⁸⁷⁸ Given the uncertainty of the agents’ services and the irregularity of sheikhs’ travel, the choice of British offices as intermediaries in funds transfers between Oman and Zanzibar seems understandable. Arabs who chose to take advantage of the modern tools offered by the colonial administration did not have to fear embezzlement of their funds or wait a long time for them to be delivered. With the bureaucratisation of Zanzibar and the development of

⁸⁷⁵ Statement by Said bin Rashid bin Mohammad el Nabhani duly sworn on 16th January 1936 before W.S. Marchant, ZNA AB88/35.

⁸⁷⁶ Chief Secretary to the Government to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 31 January 1936, ZNA AB 88/35.

⁸⁷⁷ The method of sending funds through the Arab Association president is confirmed by Muḥammad bin Ḥamūd Al-Bahlānī in the case of his father’s debts in Oman, see Mohamed bin Hamoud bin Salim to the Public Trustee, 24 July 1950, ZNA HC1/4137.

⁸⁷⁸ In the case of Jukha bint Aḥmad bin Nāṣir Al-Riyāmiyyah, the Administrator General charged 12 rupees for the transfer of funds to Zanzibar from the sale of property in Oman. Administrator General to Political Agent, Muscat, 4 March 1920, ZNA AB88/10.

the protectorate's administration, the elite there became increasingly accustomed to the services of British officials and preferred to use them rather than traditional methods in many matters.⁸⁷⁹

Having family on the other side of the Indian Ocean also meant that a person could inherit a portion of an estate and sometimes liabilities to that estate. In such a situation, the heir could either personally travel to take possession of the inheritance or appoint an agent (*wakīl*). The agent usually lived in the country where the estate was located or travelled there frequently. His task was either to sell the estate and transfer the funds to the heir or to look after the estate and transfer a regular income from it to the owner. Sālim bin Kinda appointed an agent in 1905 when he inherited several date plantations in Oman from his nephew Sayf bin Ḥamad. As he could not visit Oman regularly, he appointed his trustee to look after the property, sell the produce and send the profits to Zanzibar. The granting of a power of attorney was formal and took place before the *qāḍī* in the presence of witnesses. In 1942, Sālim appointed Sayf bin Ḥamūd bin Fayṣal Āl Būsa'īdī as his new trustee:

Seyyid Salim Kindeh, Auladil Imam, residing in Zanzibar appeared before the Kadhi of Sheria personally [...] to make disposition and he (Kadhi) obtained from him a Power of Attorney in favour of Seyyid Seif bin Hamoud bin Feisal, Auladil Imam, to make possession and handle his (Seyd. Salim) property in Musanna at Muscat from the hands of his Trustee Hamoud bin Hemed El Amiry. And he should look after the property and control the produce and expand, sell the produce etc. When he finds beneficial to demand accounts from the attorney and receive all moneys and produce etc. and to answer all enquires and appear for him in all matters concerning the property. [...] In fact Seyyid Salim Kindeh has given Seyyid Seif bin Hamoud bin Feisal a full and complete Power of Attorney and he (Seyd. Salim) revokes the previous Power of Attorney given to Hamoud bin Hemed El Amiry on his declaration.⁸⁸⁰

The act of appointing an attorney quoted above proved ineffective as the Omani government ultimately took control of the property. The reasons for this decision are unknown, but it was not a confiscation as Sayyid Nādir's letter to Sālim made clear that the government was not interested in the property and Sālim bin Kinda should appoint a trustee for that estate.⁸⁸¹ It is likely that the appointment was not recognised in Muscat because it took place in Zanzibar and the trustee had been a permanent resident of Zanzibar since 1935, so he could not fulfil his

⁸⁷⁹ Transfers of Arabs' funds between Oman and Zanzibar through British political agents are one of the most common issues raised in colonial correspondence between Muscat and Zanzibar, see files ZNA AB88 Secretariat and Residency Correspondence, Miscellaneous.

⁸⁸⁰ A letter of attorney to Seif bin Hamoud issued by Salim bin Kindeh to supervise his estate in Oman, 21 Rabī' Al-Akhīr 1361/ 7 May 1942. ZNA HC1/4142.

⁸⁸¹ Nādir bin Fayṣal bin Turkī to Sālim bin Kinda, 29 Ṣafar 1347/15 August 1928, ZNA HC1/4142. The letter was sent before Ḥamūd bin Ḥamad was established as trustee and indicated that the Omani government urged Sālim to appoint a trustee for his estate if he wanted to receive the rights to the property.

duties.⁸⁸² On the other hand, the predecessor trustee of the estate, Ḥamūd bin Ḥamad Al-‘Āmirī, signalled as early as 1937 that he could no longer take care of Sālim’s estate, which is probably why the Omani government intervened.⁸⁸³ After the death of Sālim bin Kinda in 1946, his heirs, led by his nephew Sayyid Kinda bin Sa‘īd bin Kinda, decided to sell this property in Oman.⁸⁸⁴

The case of Sālim bin Kinda’s estate in Oman points to several important things. First, it shows that managing property hundreds of kilometres away was difficult and appointing a trustee did not always solve the problem. The challenge was primarily to find a confident person with the time and ability to look after someone else’s property for many years. Sālim’s situation was unique because, as a member of the ruling dynasty, he got support from his relatives and the Sultan of Oman. Despite this, for at least four years, his property in Oman did not have a designated *wakīl*.⁸⁸⁵ In cases where, unlike Sālim, an heir could not rely on the help of their family because they did not keep in contact with them or none of their close relatives was alive anymore, the estate’s maintenance and the appointment of a trustee was even more difficult.⁸⁸⁶ As a result, many Omanis decided to sell properties they inherited on the other side of the Indian Ocean.

Selling a property thousands of kilometres away could also generate numerous problems. Ghāzān bin Muḥammad Al-Ma‘walī discovered this in 1904 when he tried to reclaim an estate left to him in Oman. His father was supposed to have a property worth 9,000 rupees in Oman, but when he died, Ghāzān and his brothers were minors. Therefore, the care of the Omani estate was transferred to his father’s relative, Nāṣir bin Ḥamad Al-Ma‘walī. When Ghāzān came of age, he designated a *wakīl* in Oman to obtain his share of the inheritance, sell it and transfer the funds to him.⁸⁸⁷ To Ghāzān’s surprise, his agent ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Muḥammad Al-Rawāḥī ascertained that Muḥammad Al-Ma‘walī had left no property in Oman, and his sons’ claims had no basis.⁸⁸⁸ When the sons contacted the British political agent in Muscat, he stated that the *wakīl* was ‘[...] not the man these persons should employ as their wakil if they wish for success in an undertaking. One of them had better come [to Oman] himself’.⁸⁸⁹

⁸⁸² Sayf bin Ḥamūd was a member of the Omani branch of the ruling family, but he went to Zanzibar in 1935 and married Rayya bint Muḥammad there. After the marriage, he decided to settle in Zanzibar permanently.

⁸⁸³ Ḥamūd bin Ḥamad Al-‘Āmirī to Sālim bin Kinda, 26 Rabī‘ Al-Awwal 1356/ 5 June 1937, ZNA HC1/4142.

⁸⁸⁴ Administrator General to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 20 May 1946, ZNA HC1/4142.

⁸⁸⁵ Administrator General to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 20 May 1946, ZNA HC1/4142.

⁸⁸⁶ A similar situation happened to Muḥammad bin Ḥamūd Al-Bahlanī, who had no contact with his family in Oman or knowledge of the inherited property there. Consequently, he relied on the local sheikh and the office of the Administrator General to locate and sell the inheritance. ZNA HC1/4137.

⁸⁸⁷ Rogers to Cave, 15 September 1904, ZNA AC3/16.

⁸⁸⁸ Probably the same one who was a trusted agent and dragoman of the French consul in Muscat, hence British opinion of him may have been politically motivated.

⁸⁸⁹ Grey to Cave, 25 April 1905, ZNA AC2/66.

The Arab elite knew about dishonest agents and sought to draw attention to the issue. In 1946, when a woman from the Al-Ḥārithī family in the interior of Oman approached Ḥamad bin Sulaymān bin Ḥumayd Al-Ḥārithī, the former *wālī* of the imam in Wadi Maawil, to appoint an agent to a relative's estate, Ḥamad advised her against appointing the man she had chosen as he was in Ḥamad's view an 'unsatisfactory' candidate.⁸⁹⁰ In consequence, Ḥamad asked Oman's interior minister, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Āl Būsa'īdī, to carry out the deceased's will. The British consulate in Muscat was also informed of the case to obtain a swift identification of the property and maintain efficient communication with Zanzibar.⁸⁹¹

In some circumstances, if the deceased left property in both countries, the heir who lived in one of them resigned from the part on the other side of the Indian Ocean.⁸⁹² They probably did this to avoid problems with appointing an agent or travelling to a distant country. If the heir decided to undertake the journey and had a high enough social standing, the colonial officials could support him. For example, when Sheikh Sālim bin Sālim Al-Rāshidī went to Oman to obtain a property left to him there, the British resident in Zanzibar asked the consul in Muscat to support him because he was 'a good friend of the Sultan of Zanzibar'.⁸⁹³ However, not everyone could make such an endeavour. It was often the case that the heir on the other side of the Indian Ocean did not know the relatives or the property he was inheriting. This meant that even after successful inheritance proceedings, the heir could not be sure he had received the correct share if he did not go in person.⁸⁹⁴ In that situation, the only option left was to appoint a *wakīl* or ask for the help of a colonial clerk. The latter option was used by 'Alī bin 'Abdullāh, who asked the British resident to transfer to him a sum from his father's estate in Muscat.

I most humbly and respectfully beg to inform you that about 20 days ago, I learnt with great regret that my father, Abdulla bin Ali died at Muscat, in Bab el-Saghir. I understand that he left about 150 dollars which sum is deposited with one Seyyid Karim bin Salman. As I am poor and cannot afford to go to Muscat to attend this matter, I request you Sir, to be good enough to write to the

⁸⁹⁰ Ḥamad bin Sulaiman bin Humaid to Saiyid Ahmad, 24 Jumada Al-Awwal 1365/ 26 April 1946, FO 1016/357.

⁸⁹¹ Ḥamad bin Sulaiman bin Humaid to Saiyid Ahmad, 24 Jumada Al-Awwal 1365/ 26 April 1946, FO 1016/357.

⁸⁹² An example of such a decision was the estate of Muḥammad bin Sālim Al-Riyāmī, who died in Zanzibar in 1944 and owned property in Oman and Zanzibar. His wife Ghāya bint Aḥmad bin 'Alī Al-Riyāmīyya approached Sulaymān bin Ḥimyar Al-Nabhānī, sheikh of Banū Riyām and one of the most important officials of the imamate, requesting her share of her husband's inheritance in Oman. At the same time, she informed him that she was renouncing her claim to her husband's estate in Zanzibar. Sulayman bin Himyar to Saiyid Ahmad bin Ibrahim, 13 Sha'ban 1363/ 3 August 1944, FO 1016/357.

⁸⁹³ Rankine to Fowle, 16 April 1930, ZNA AB88/29.

⁸⁹⁴ Muḥammad bin 'Alī Al-Tinawī of Zanzibar was in such a situation, when he received 38,3 rupees as his share of property in Oman and asked the British consul to verify his inheritance and the rules for its distribution. Pearce to Wingate, 8 April 1920, ZNA AB88/10.

Political Agents and H.B.M. Consul, to make enquiries and to remit to you the properties left by me deceased father.⁸⁹⁵

British officials complied with 'Alī's request. The funds were sent from Muscat to Zanzibar by Postal Money Order and then transferred to the heir. The whole matter was dealt with in just over two months and saved 'Alī bin 'Abdullāh a lot of time and resources.⁸⁹⁶

In many inheritance cases, British officials acted not at the request of those concerned but *ex officio*. This was because inheritance matters in Zanzibar had been subject to colonial regulations since the early 20th century. Many were under the authority of the British-controlled office of the Administrator General, which conducted inheritance affairs if a person died without a will or executor or named the office their executor.⁸⁹⁷ When such proceedings included Oman, the Administrator General sent its agent there or asked the British consul in Muscat for help.⁸⁹⁸ It also dealt with claims and debts to property in Zanzibar by people from Oman.⁸⁹⁹ The Administrator General charged a fee for its actions. This fee and the costs of the probate procedure were usually taken from the inheritance proceeds.⁹⁰⁰ The Council of Ministers in Oman was also temporarily involved in inheritance matters between both countries. After the council was abolished at the beginning of Sa'īd bin Taymūr's rule, inheritance issues came under the authority of the interior minister.⁹⁰¹ If the case involved the interior of Oman, then the British agent in Muscat contacted the imamate authorities or directly through the sultan's officials.⁹⁰²

Inheritance cases between Oman and Zanzibar often required the participation of all institutions, both consuls, the Administrator General and the Arab authorities. A good

⁸⁹⁵ Alī bin Abdulla to the Acting Chief Secretary, 10 April 1922, ZNA AB88/16.

⁸⁹⁶ The resident in Zanzibar thanked the political agent in Muscat as early as 20 June for transferring the funds and sent him 'Alī's receipt of the sum. Sinclair to Rae, 10 April 1922, ZNA AB88/16.

⁸⁹⁷ A Decree to Make Provisions of the Appointment and Duties of An Administrator General, 20 July 1925, ZNA AB18/28

⁸⁹⁸ In 1920, the Administrator General sent Ghanīm Llafī to Oman to sell the property of the late Jukha bint Aḥmad bin Nāṣir Al-Riyāmīyya. The agent was given a salary for three months and a return ticket to Zanzibar, but the administration in Zanzibar asked Muscat to support him if procedures took longer. The money used to support the agent was to be taken from the funds obtained from the sale of his assets. Pearce to Wingate, 20 February 1920, ZNA AB88/10.

⁸⁹⁹ The Administrator General settled the debt of Mayya bint 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Būsa'īdī, daughter of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Sa'īd, to a merchant from Mutrah. He transferred the sum of 219.5 from her estate to him through the British consul in Muscat. Administrator General to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 21 August 1933, ZNA HC1/4084.

⁹⁰⁰ Ahmad bin Saleh Ba-Ashan to Pearce, undated, ZNA AB88/15.

⁹⁰¹ For example, in 1928, the Council of Ministers of Oman approached the British resident in Zanzibar about the claim of the sister of late Sūda bint Salmān who lived in Oman to a deceased estate in Zanzibar. Murphy to Hollis, 21 December 1928, ZNA AB88/26.

⁹⁰² In April 1921, the British consul in Muscat corresponded on behalf of the resident in Zanzibar with Sheikh 'Īsa bin Šālīḥ al-Ḥārithī, the paramount sheikh of the Al-Ḥārithī tribe and one of the imam's most important aides, regarding the estate of Jukha bint Aḥmad Al-Riyāmīyya, see Wingate to Shaikh 'Īsa bin Sāleh bin 'Alī al Ḥārithi, 25 Rajab 1339/4 April 1921, FO 371/126892.

illustration of this is the situation of Muḥammad bin Ḥamūd Al-Bahlānī, whose father, Sheikh Ḥamūd bin Sālīm bin Ḥamūd Al-Bahlānī died in 1946 in Zanzibar, leaving properties and huge debts in both countries. The debts and inheritance procedures in Zanzibar were handled by the offices of the Zanzibar Protectorate: the Public Trustee and Administrator General. However, the question of ascertaining the deceased's estate in Oman and settling debts there remained. The deceased's widow and one daughter lived in Oman, while the rest of the family of five sons, five daughters and a second widow, resided in Zanzibar.⁹⁰³ The eldest son, Muḥammad, did not know about his father's Omani estate and appeared to have had no communication with his stepmother and half-sister in Oman. In a letter to the Public Trustee, he mentioned contact with his uncle Sheikh Muḥammad bin Sālīm who lived in Izkī, whom British officials were able to reach through Sheikh 'Alī bin Ṣāliḥ Al-Riyāmī.

As for the property in Muscat, I suggest that you may get in touch with the British Council of that locality who will help you to fetch my uncle Sheikh Muhammad bin Salim el-Behlani, who stays in Azki – Oman, through the help of Sheikh Ali bin Saleh bin Ali el-Riyami. My uncle knows very well about the said property and will be very useful to you in that direction.⁹⁰⁴

The Administrator General passed this information to the political agent in Muscat, just as Muḥammad had suggested, instructing him to find Sheikh 'Alī bin Ṣāliḥ Al-Riyāmī and, through him, Muḥammad bin Ḥamūd's uncle. The British official in Muscat then asked the sultan to refer the matter to Sheikh 'Alī through his *wālī*. Finally, Ḥamūd bin Sālīm's assets in Oman were sold, and the Muscat agency transferred money to Zanzibar to satisfy creditors there.⁹⁰⁵ Ḥamūd's large family received nothing, as all funds were used to settle his debts.⁹⁰⁶

Another important problem that involved the cooperation of many institutions was the identification of heirs. Especially if it concerned Oman, the process took time because most potential heirs lived in the country's interior, where the British agent's powers were very limited.⁹⁰⁷ The British resident, therefore, usually contacted his counterpart in Muscat, and the latter forwarded the case to the sultan. The ruler of Oman would instruct the *wālī* of the province where the deceased's family originated to search for that person's relatives. If the *wālī* did not

⁹⁰³ Administrator General's no. 8A of 1946, ZNA HC/1/4137.

⁹⁰⁴ Mohamed bin Hamoud bin Salim to the Public Trustee, 4 October 1946, ZNA HC/1/4137.

⁹⁰⁵ Administrator General to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 26 October 1946, ZNA HC/1/4137.

⁹⁰⁶ Mohamed bin Hamoud bin Salim to the Public Trustee, 24 July 1950, ZNA HC/1/4137.

⁹⁰⁷ This was admitted by the political agent in Muscat during the inheritance proceedings of Sālīm bin Hilāl Āl Būsa'īdī, whose heirs lived in Samad in the interior of the country. Grey to Cave, 18 April 1905, ZNA AC2/66.

know the family, he would ask the tribal leaders to identify the person.⁹⁰⁸ If heirs could not be identified, the funds from the estate passed to the treasury (*bayt al-māl*).⁹⁰⁹

Inheritance matters were the second area, after migration affairs, in which colonial officials acted on multiple levels. This was due to the multitude of such cases, the result of uninterrupted migration, and the inheritance rules of Islamic law, which granted inheritances to numerous relatives of the deceased. Because of the importance of the cases, the distance between the two countries, and the various problems that arose in taking up an inheritance, Arabs from both countries turned to colonial officials for assistance in handling them. In addition, inheritance matters legally became the subject of official actions by colonial officials following institutional changes in Zanzibar. If a person died in Zanzibar and had property or heirs there, their death prompted the involvement of colonial authorities even if the person was a subject of the Sultan of Muscat or the Imam of Oman. Despite the distinctive legal orders and differences in the development of Oman and Zanzibar, the colonial authorities, the traditional and modern organs of the Sultanate of Oman and the imamate leadership worked together to resolve inheritance cases, making this link between Oman and Zanzibar unbroken. Unlike in the case of restrictions on migration, the colonial regulation of inheritance and the actions of British officials helped maintain relations between the two countries and their elites.

Colonial and Arab officials in both countries were also involved in debts. As Fahad Bishara points out in his work on the role of financial bonds in the Indian Ocean area in the 19th century, debt was the most permanent and indisputable obligation in Muslim law.⁹¹⁰ This meant that the emigration of a debtor from one country to another did not end his obligation to repay the debt. Moreover, credit was often obtained against property on the other end of the Indian Ocean.⁹¹¹ This legal mechanism was an attempt to bypass incurring debt at an interest rate, which Muslim law prohibits. In Zanzibar, taking on debt involved a sale of property with a repurchase option that implied loan repayments.⁹¹² The enforcement of such obligations was carried out based on a *waraqā* — a document outlining the details of the obligation. It bore the name of the borrower and was written down by the *kātib* and confirmed by the *qāḍī*.⁹¹³

⁹⁰⁸ Knox to Clarke, 7 November 1911, ZNA AC/115. The procedure described was carried out, for example, in the case of the heirs of Malik bin Rāshid Al-Rāshidī, except that the German consul was also involved in his case, as Al-Rāshidī had died in German East Africa. Clarke to the German Consul in Zanzibar, 31 January 1911, ZNA AC1/99.

⁹⁰⁹ Administrator General's Report of 1932, ZNA AB18/1.

⁹¹⁰ Bishara, *A Sea of Debt*, 63.

⁹¹¹ Bishara, *A Sea of Debt*, 89.

⁹¹² Bishara, *A Sea of Debt*, 90-91. This type of property 'sale' which allowed for re-purchase after a certain period is called *khiyār*. It permitted one to collect profits from the property after its formal sale. This distinguished *khiyār* from a similar institution called *rahn*.

⁹¹³ Bishara, *A Sea of Debt*, 67.

However, a written *waraqā* did not always guarantee the repayment of the debt, especially if the borrower was no longer in the country.

In such situations, the merchants, who were most often the source of the loans, asked the sultan to intervene to secure repayment. When ‘Abdullāh bin Rāshid lent 850 MTT to ‘Alī bin Sālim bin Muḥammad Al-Ṣāliḥī of Suwayq in Oman before 1907, Al-Ṣāliḥī secured the loan with a date garden that he owned in Suwayq. He borrowed the funds to buy a boat. ‘Abdullāh did not receive timely repayment of the money because ‘Alī bin Sālim sold the new boat, mortgaged the garden and left for Zanzibar. The lender sought intervention in this matter from Sultan Fayṣal bin Turkī. However, according to ‘Abdullāh, soliciting the help of the Sultan of Oman to recover his money had ‘so far proved fruitless’.⁹¹⁴ Therefore, ‘Abdullāh asked the political agent and consul in Muscat to find ‘Alī through the consul in Zanzibar and retrieve the funds from him.⁹¹⁵ Ultimately, the colonial official was unable to help. When the consul reached the debtor, it appeared that Al-Ṣāliḥī had declared bankruptcy in 1907, sold his boat and was now poor and working as a labourer in Zanzibar.⁹¹⁶

A different ending befell the claim of the Zanzibari merchant against Sayyid ‘Alī bin Sālim Āl Būsa‘īdī. ‘Alī bin Sālim was the son of the deposed Sultan of Oman, Sālim bin Thuwaynī, and during his stay in Zanzibar, he fell into debt and did not settle it before returning to Muscat. Then, the lender, Banyan merchant Jassomal Karanchand, approached the British political agent to settle the debt of Sayyid ‘Alī bin Sālim.⁹¹⁷ The merchant’s action and the officials’ intervention were successful as ‘Alī bin Sālim transferred the owed sum to the British agency in Muscat, and the latter remitted the funds to Zanzibar.⁹¹⁸

Islamic law and custom offered institutions and solutions to the various problems that arose within family and property matters. In the event of a family conflict or rupture, the sheikh of the tribe or the Arab Association in Zanzibar provided assistance. In financial matters, loans and their repayment were regulated by written commitments, while in inheritance matters, official agents were appointed to act in accordance with the will of the nominator. In many situations, however, the distance between countries and the dishonesty of agents meant that aggrieved parties turned to colonial officials. Lenders resorted to the assistance of colonial officials when legal obligations were insufficient to recover their money, and the sultans and their officials could not enforce them. With their coercive apparatus and modern

⁹¹⁴ Holland to Clarke, 19 January 1910, ZNA AC2/97.

⁹¹⁵ Holland to Clarke, 19 January 1910, ZNA AC2/97.

⁹¹⁶ Clarke to Holland, 31 March 1910, ZNA AC2/98.

⁹¹⁷ Clarke to Holland, 24 November 1909, ZNA AC2/95.

⁹¹⁸ Holland to Clarke, 28 January 1910, ZNA AC2/97.

communication tools, British officials could mediate debt cases between Oman and Zanzibar more easily and efficiently. British interventions, therefore, introduced a new quality to contacts between Oman and Zanzibar and, in many ways, served the interests of the Arab elite. Together, these factors sustained the ties between the two countries.

5.4 Affairs of the Ruling Families

British involvement in the private dealings of the ruling family had a long history dating back to before the partition of Oman and Zanzibar. Their involvement resulted both from requests from members of the ruling dynasty themselves and political calculations by the British. After 1890, British intervention in Āl Būsaʿīdī affairs took on new implication as it had a significant political dimension. Interference in the private affairs of the ruling family strengthened British control over the sultan and limited his ability to contest colonial authority. In addition, British officials, as members of the protectorate government, decided many matters concerning members of the Āl Būsaʿīdī family, including the civil list and deportations. In the face of this, *Awlād al-Imām* representatives addressed complaints and petitions to the British about their emoluments, family, and political matters. Many of these issues also concerned members of the dynasty in Oman. In this regard, too, the British intermediary maintained contacts between Oman and Zanzibar.

The Āl Būsaʿīdī family of Oman and Zanzibar shared many relations before the family separated into two distinct branches, and connections between the two decreased in the second half of the 20th century. The main communication between the sultans and the members of the ruling family was based on the exchange of letters or telegrams, usually transmitted by British offices.⁹¹⁹ They concerned various topics, including family matters and financial issues. The sultans of Oman and Zanzibar also communicated with each other about major events in their countries.⁹²⁰ In addition, they sent each other greetings during Muslim festivals. They also communicated on practical matters, such as the repair of the Sultan of Oman's steamer, 'Nūr al-Baḥr', which was to take place in Zanzibar in 1909.⁹²¹

In the area of family matters, contacts between the Āl Būsaʿīdī family in Oman and Zanzibar concerned family marriages, births, and deaths. For example, a telegram was sent to

⁹¹⁹ Cave to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 17 July 1915, ZNA AB88/3. In this letter, for example, the Zanzibar Government asked the British Agent in Muscat to transmit Arabic letters written by Sultan Khalīfa bin Ḥārūb to the Sultan of Oman.

⁹²⁰ This communication was not always of a direct and ongoing nature. In 1902, when the Sultan of Zanzibar, Ḥamūd, died, the ruler of Muscat learnt about it from a press dispatch and confirmed the news through British diplomats with the Zanzibar authorities. Laronce to Delcassé, 24 July 1902, 210CPCOM/1 Zanzibar Protectorat Anglais 1895-1903.

⁹²¹ Fayṣal bin Turkī to 'Alī bin Ḥamūd, 4 Ṣafar 1327/24 February 1909, OM.NRAA.A.2.2.7.2.1

Muscat when the uncle of the Omani Sultan, Sālim bin Ḥamad bin Sulṭān, died in Zanzibar in 1908. A telegram was sent to Zanzibar when Sultan Khalīfa's aunt, Thūrayya bint Thuwaynī, passed away in Oman in 1937.⁹²² Travel by representatives of the dynasty between Oman and Zanzibar was also an important topic and source of contact between members of the ruling family. Such trips were organised because of exiles, weddings or simply the desire to visit relatives living on the other side of the Indian Ocean. If a representative of the Muscat branch travelled, the ruler of Oman would write to the Sultan of Zanzibar, asking for his permission to receive the relative and requesting him to organise their stay.⁹²³ It was not uncommon for the British to be involved in preparations for such a journey, arranging a steamer and assisting with the arrival.⁹²⁴ Members of the ruling family travelled using a regular steamer via Bombay, Gwadar and Karachi or by the sultan's or British ships.⁹²⁵

There was also a need to organise transport when a ruling family member was banished from one country to another. The policy of forced migration initiated by Mājīd and 'Azzān and developed by Barghash and Turkī continued until Khalīfa bin Ḥārūb acceded to the throne of Zanzibar.⁹²⁶ An example of an exile with longer-term implications for relations among the ruling family was the banishment of 'Alī bin Sālim bin Thuwaynī in 1898. He was the son of the deposed Sultan of Oman, Sālim bin Thuwaynī (r. 1866-1868), and during the reign of Imam 'Azzān, he and his family (but without his father) went to Zanzibar, where they remained. 'Alī was exiled to Muscat because of his political intrigues to support Khālīd bin Muḥammad, brother of the reigning sultan, for the Zanzibari throne.⁹²⁷ 'Alī bin Sālim left his family behind in Zanzibar because his wife, 'Alīya bint Barghash, who had lived there all her life, did not want to leave.⁹²⁸ 'Alī's financial situation was precarious after his exile, as the Sultan of Zanzibar had allotted him only a one-time allowance of 200 rupees. His upkeep was thus left

⁹²² 31 December 1908, *Administration Report of the Maskat Political Agency*, 71, IOR/R/15/1/710; Watts to the Chief Secretary to the Government, 11 January 1938, ZNA AB82/285.

⁹²³ Fayṣal bin Turkī to 'Alī bin Ḥamūd, 10 Ṣafar 1322/ 25 April 1904, OM.NRAA.A.2.2.7.2.1.

⁹²⁴ An example of British support for such journeys can be seen in the steamer journey of Asila bint Thuwaynī, sister of the Sultan of Zanzibar, to Muscat requested by the political agent in Muscat by the Zanzibar Government. Hardinge to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 20 April 1896, ZNA AC2/22.

⁹²⁵ There were exceptions to this, as three of Muḥammad bin Turkī's sons left Oman for Zanzibar by dhow in 1938 after their conflict with Sultan Sa'īd. Muscat Intelligence Summary for the period from 1st to 28th February 1938, FO 371/21824/553.

⁹²⁶ Among the last reported exiles from Zanzibar to Muscat was Ṭālib bin Ḥamad Āl Būsa'īdī in 1909, mentioned in the previous part of this chapter.

⁹²⁷ Cave to Foreign Office 4 November 1904, Précis of Maskat Affairs, 1892-1905; In Two Parts by J.A. Saldanha, IOR/L/PS/20/C245, 145.

⁹²⁸ The situation for 'Alī's wife was not easy either. Although she was supposed receive a monthly stipend of 200 rupees from the Sultan of Zanzibar, this was reduced on the grounds that 'she misused the money in leading an irregular life'. Cave to Foreign Office, 20 November 1901, Précis of Maskat Affairs, 1892-1905; In Two Parts by J.A. Saldanha, IOR/L/PS/20/C245, 145.

to the Sultan of Oman, who treated his guest as an ‘unnecessary burden’.⁹²⁹ Due to ‘Alī bin Sālīm’s difficult financial situation and his family’s stay in Zanzibar, his case was the subject of numerous direct contacts between the two sultans and British agents.

‘Alī’s first attempt to return to Zanzibar came in 1902 when Sultan Ḥamūd bin Muḥammad died, and power was assumed by his son ‘Alī and by First Minister Rogers as regent. Nonetheless, the young ruler and his regent decided that because Khālīd bin Muḥammad, for whom ‘Alī was to conduct his intrigues, was still alive, it was inadvisable to end his exile.⁹³⁰ Still, ‘Alī obtained permission from the Zanzibar government to briefly visit his family in 1904.⁹³¹ The information about his stay is contradictory. A letter to Muscat from the British agent in Zanzibar claimed that ‘Alī’s stay had gone smoothly, and he was even to receive a property there from the sultan.⁹³² However, a telegram from Muscat reported that during his stay in Zanzibar, ‘Alī bin Sālīm was raising funds to support the overthrow of Sultan Fayṣal.⁹³³ Grounds for the allegations must have proved tenuous as ‘Alī bin Sālīm continued his stay in Muscat.⁹³⁴ Furthermore, in 1908, he visited his family in Zanzibar again and returned to Muscat with his daughters, who would marry Fayṣal’s sons, including the future Sultan of Oman, Taymūr.⁹³⁵

‘Alī bin Sālīm’s return to Muscat in 1909 was not without problems. He asked the British agent to help him on his journey, as the Sultan of Oman did not want to comply with his request. ‘Alī expected Fayṣal bin Turkī to cover his travel expenses by sending him a sum of 400 rupees. The sultan did not want to grant this amount and instead proposed a maximum of 300 rupees. Eventually, after negotiations between the sultan and British agents in Muscat and Zanzibar, the Zanzibar government gave him 400 rupees to be reimbursed by Fayṣal bin Turkī.⁹³⁶ ‘Alī bin Sālīm was not without financial problems for the rest of his life. As the father-in-law of the ruler of Oman, he planned to travel to Ibn Sa‘ūd in Riyadh in 1920, hoping to obtain a large

⁹²⁹ Précis of Maskat Affairs, 1892-1905; In Two Parts by J.A. Saldanha, IOR/L/PS/20/C245, 145.

⁹³⁰ Cave to Foreign Office, 4 November 1902, Précis of Maskat Affairs, 1892-1905; In Two Parts by J.A. Saldanha, IOR/L/PS/20/C245, 145.

⁹³¹ Laronce to Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, 15 April 1904, 210CPCOM/2 Zanzibar Protectorat Anglais 1904-1914.

⁹³² Cave to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 11 October 1904, ZNA AC2/59.

⁹³³ Telegram from Muscat dated 17 May 1904, Précis of Maskat Affairs, 1892-1905; In Two Parts by J.A. Saldanha, IOR/L/PS/20/C245, 145.

⁹³⁴ The 1905 British report stressed that ‘Alī was opposed to Sultan Fayṣal and closely associated with the French consul’s interpreter, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Al-Rawāḥī. Thus, he supposedly had an anti-British attitude. *Muscat Miscellaneous*, IOR/R/15/1/553, File 59/15 C (A 15), 236.

⁹³⁵ Taymūr married Fāṭima bint ‘Alī as early as 1904, and his brothers, Muḥammad and Nādir, married ‘Alī bin Sālīm’s daughters in 1909. Annual Administration Report of the Maskat Political Agency for the Year 1909, Administration Reports 1905-1910, IOR/R/15/1/710, 236.

⁹³⁶ Clarke to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 13 October 1909, ZNA AC2/95.

gift of money which he could use to repay his enormous debts.⁹³⁷ Unfortunately for ‘Alī, the British obstructed his journey, detained him in Bahrain and sent him back to Muscat. The British feared the political overtones of his planned visit, given the new Saudi ruler’s claims to large areas of the Arabian Peninsula, including the interior of Oman.⁹³⁸

‘Alī bin Sālim’s wife, ‘Alīya bint Barghash and her sister Sharīfa, ex-wife of Sultan Fayṣal’s brother Fahd, were also sources of tension in the ruling family in both Oman and Zanzibar. When ‘Alīya’s husband was exiled, she refused to travel to Muscat. ‘Alī bin Sālim later divorced her and took their daughters to Muscat, where the young women married Sultan Fayṣal’s sons, Taymūr, Muḥammad, and Nādir.⁹³⁹ However, this was not the end of ‘Alīya’s problems. In 1909, Sultan ‘Alī bin Ḥamūd exiled her, her sister Sharīfa, and other members of the dynasty from Zanzibar.⁹⁴⁰ The official reason for their exile was drinking alcohol and ‘misbehaving in public’.⁹⁴¹ British sources also identified another cause for the decision. Namely, ‘Alīya’s stance in the conflict between Sharīfa and ‘Alī bin Ḥamūd. The sultan was to come to Sharīfa and make advances to her, but she ‘had strongly remonstrated his taking undue liberties with her’, and the sultan took offence.⁹⁴²

Regardless of the true motives of their deportation, the women were forced to sail on a German steamer to Bombay. They were meant to continue to Muscat, but the Sultan of Oman strongly protested ‘Alīya’s arrival. He is said to have feared, probably under the influence of ‘Alīya’s ex-husband, that she would abduct their daughters from Muscat.⁹⁴³ Eventually, ‘Alīya and Sharīfa left Bombay for Bagamoyo in German East Africa. From there, through the British agent in Zanzibar and his wife, the sisters tried to obtain the resumption of their allowances, which had been suspended with the banishment.⁹⁴⁴ This was not granted, but after the death of their sister Nūnū, they received her inheritance. Following the abdication of Sultan ‘Alī bin Ḥamūd, the new ruler of Zanzibar, allowed them to return to the country.⁹⁴⁵

⁹³⁷ ‘Alī bin Sālim had already received a gift of 1,000 rupees from the Sheikh of Bahrain. He hoped for similar generosity from Ibn Sa‘ud and invoked the Saudis’ good relations with his father Sālim bin Thuwaynī. Wingate to Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 13 April 1920, IOR/R/15/6/34 File XXV/7.

⁹³⁸ Wingate to Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 7 April 1920, IOR/R/15/6/34 File XXV/7.

⁹³⁹ ‘Alī bin Sālim’s son Muḥammad remained in Zanzibar but visited his family in Muscat. For example, in 1922 he made a short visit to Oman. His son Ḥamūd died in 1929 in Oman. Sayyid Mohammed bin Ali bin Salim bin Thuwayni, ZNA AB10/103.

⁹⁴⁰ Other exiled relatives of ‘Alī bin Ḥamūd were Tammūra, Shwāna and Nūnū bint Barghash. All the women went into exile in Muscat.

⁹⁴¹ Personal File of Sheriffa and Aliyah bint Barghash, ZNA AB10/215.

⁹⁴² Personal File of Sheriffa and Aliyah bint Barghash, ZNA AB10/215.

⁹⁴³ Faysal bin Turki to Khalifa bin Harub, 25 Rabī‘ Al-Akhīr/ 4 April 1913, ZNA AB10/215.

⁹⁴⁴ Sharifa and Aliya bint Barghash to the wife of Mr. Clarke, 17 March 1910, ZNA AC2/100.

⁹⁴⁵ Clarke to Foreign Office, 26 June 1912, ZNA AB10/215. Zanzibar’s budget, on the other hand, was used to pay for the children of both women. In addition, Zanzibar paid for Sharīfa’s son Thiyāb bin Fahd to study in the UK.

The cases of ‘Alīya and Sharīfa must be categorised as private conflicts within the ruling family, involving both parts of the Āl Būsa‘īdī family. On the other hand, the stories of ‘Alī bin Sālim and other exiled Sayyids indicate the continuous presence of political threads in the relations between Āl Būsa‘īdī members in Oman and Zanzibar. In most cases, such ‘political intrigues’ involved expressing dissatisfaction with the policies of a given ruler or attempting to build support for an alternative claimant. They did not, however, involve attempts to disrupt the division of Oman and Zanzibar. The above examples of exiles also show the considerable freedom of the rulers of both countries in decisions about deportation. It was up to them to make the final decision, and the colonial officials usually only mediated between the exiled members of the dynasty and the sultans.

British officials played a more essential role in the financial affairs of the ruling family, among which were the petitions for increased allowances discussed in the previous chapter and inheritance cases. Like representatives of the elite, Āl Būsa‘īdis also had a share in inheritances regardless of where they lived, as was already indicated by the history of Sālim bin Kinda. An example of one of the longest and most complex cases was the inheritance proceedings of Thiyāb bin Fahd, son of the previously mentioned Sharīfa bint Barghash and Fahd bin Turkī. He inherited property in Oman from his father and in Zanzibar from his mother. In 1909, Thiyāb left Zanzibar and went to Muscat, where he married his cousin, Shartū bin Fayṣal, and then left to continue his studies abroad. While in Europe, he married a German woman and had two children, Armand and Liliana, who took their mother’s name, Mollemberg. He fought in World War II and was killed in battle in France in January 1945.⁹⁴⁶

When the Administrator General initiated inheritance proceedings in Zanzibar, Thiyāb’s estate was valued at over 60,000 shillings. A question arose over whether his German children were Muslims. If not, they could not inherit.⁹⁴⁷ His death led to a civil case involving two of his children and 13 other members of the dynasty, including the ex-Sultan of Oman, Taymūr, who was the deceased’s uncle and heir to Thiyāb’s first wife, who had died before her husband.⁹⁴⁸ After ten years of proceedings, it was determined that Thiyāb’s children, Armand and Liliana, could legally inherit, and Armand received half of the estate. The other half was divided between the daughter and the *sayyids*: Taymūr, ‘Alī and Shihāb from Oman, brothers of Thiyāb’s first wife.⁹⁴⁹

⁹⁴⁶ Personal File of Sherffā and Aliyah bint Barghash, ZNA AB10/215, 90.

⁹⁴⁷ Sayyid Theyab bin Fahad, ZNA HC1/4133.

⁹⁴⁸ Mrs Mollemberg was a protestant, and she left Thiyāb after the end of the German occupation of France. The children stayed in France under the care of the French public assistance.

⁹⁴⁹ Sayyid Theyab bin Fahad, ZNA HC1/4133.

Still, this resolution did not end the problem of Thiyāb's inheritance, as his heirs in Muscat should have appointed an agent to receive and transfer their share of the estate. However, this did not happen because, after the Zanzibar government intervened in Muscat, it turned out that one of the would-be inheritors, 'Alī bin Fayṣal, was mentally ill and had been living in a psychiatric hospital in India for 11 years. He was, therefore, excluded from the inheritance. It was also a problem to establish contact with Taymūr, who abdicated as the sultan in 1932 and was living in India. Eventually, through the British consul in Muscat, the Administrator General sent the funds due to Shihāb. The money for Taymūr was sent to Bombay through the deputy high commissioner there.⁹⁵⁰ The shares belonging to Thiyāb's children were placed under the control of the Zanzibar Public Trustee until they came of age and arrived in Zanzibar. Although, this never happened due to the outbreak of the revolution.⁹⁵¹

British involvement in the affairs of the ruling family, unlike that of other Arab families, was primarily politically motivated. The British sought to control the actions of the Sultan of Zanzibar and his family to ensure that they did not violate the colonial order or undermine British authority. Despite this, many cases were referred to the British by members of the Āl Būsa'īdī family themselves. Colonial officials were responsible for the civil list, travel matters and inheritances under Zanzibari law, and they received numerous petitions and complaints on these issues. In all cases, British intermediation sustained contacts between members of the dynasty in Oman and Zanzibar. By forwarding correspondence, organising travel, and mediating deportation, inheritance, or allowances, the British helped Āl Būsa'īdī family members from both countries stay in contact, visit each other, and settle financial or family matters. The effects of this mediation were limited, however, as the early 20th century saw the legal separation of the two branches of the ruling dynasty and the number of relationships linking the two parts of the Āl Būsa'īdī family diminished.

5.5 Conclusion

The reasons for British involvement in the private affairs of the Arab elites of Oman and Zanzibar were manifold. On the one hand, their involvement resulted from legal and institutional changes in Zanzibar aimed at strengthening British power in the protectorate. These changes are evident in migration and inheritance proceedings. Colonial regulations meant that, in many cases, British officials had to intervene, even if the case involved a woman

⁹⁵⁰ Administrator General to Deputy High Commissioner in Bombay, 29 November 1962; Administrator General to the Political Agent and Consul in Muscat, 29 November 1962, ZNA HC1/4133. Shares of Shihāb and Taymūr were decreased of the Bank commission and stamp fee.

⁹⁵¹ Resolution of the Administrator General from 26 March 1962, ZNA HC1/4133.

from the interior of Oman whose husband had died in Zanzibar and left property there. In many situations, Arabs themselves requested British intervention. The colonial officials in Zanzibar were members of the government and thus obliged to help the Zanzibari Arabs as colonial subjects. A similar approach was applied to Oman despite its formal independence. As a result, Arabs from both countries could rely on the 'good offices' of British colonial officials and consular protection for travel between Oman and Zanzibar. The aristocratic and monarchical character of the British Empire was also influential, prompting colonial officials to support the Arab elites of both countries in their private affairs and problems on the other side of the Indian Ocean.

British intermediation in the affairs of Arab elites did not displace traditional institutions and contacts. Matters relating to inheritance, debt, or family issues were handled by *wakīls*, sheikhs, or family members during the entire period of the two sultanates. However, the bureaucratisation of Zanzibar and the fact that the British had modern administrative tools at their disposal meant that many members of the Arab elite turned to them for intermediation. The British resident in Zanzibar or consul in Muscat was in contact with his colleagues across numerous regional ports and cities and could send a message or money from one shore of the Indian Ocean to the other quickly and without problems. An agent appointed by an heir or lender did not have the same opportunities, especially since, in the age of migration and passport control, agents were subject to restrictions when crossing borders. Moreover, although the *wakīl* was formally appointed before the *qāḍī*, it was often the case that he proved to be an untrustworthy person. Records about the forfeiture of funds or dishonest merchants testify to the problems Arab elites encountered in their transoceanic ventures. In such a situation, the colonial office offered professional services and assistance in enforcing a debt or obtaining an inheritance.

British involvement with Arab elites was thus the result of the success of colonial state-building in Zanzibar and an expression of the political control they exercised in this part of the Indian Ocean. The Arab elites became dependent on the British because of Zanzibar's colonial bureaucracy and the underdevelopment of modern administration in Oman. However, this did not result in a deepening of the separation process between the two countries. On the contrary, British actions facilitated contact between the people of the two countries. The ability to send money quickly and safely from one country to the other, access consular assistance, and receive help with inheritance, debt, and other matters meant that Arabs from Oman and Zanzibar did not have to fear undertaking activities on the other side of the Indian Ocean. This was especially relevant for those who had not lived in their country of origin for a long time, who had lost

contact with their families or whose closest relatives had died. Even in these difficult situations, the colonial administration helped maintain ties which might otherwise have been severed or diminished.

These relations between the Arab elites of Oman and Zanzibar would have functioned without the involvement of the colonial administration. Indeed, many contacts about family matters, trade, business, religious, and intellectual pursuits continued without British interference. Nevertheless, under colonial conditions, when the activity of local elites was subjected to the constraints of imperial authorities, British assistance was an important crack in the process of building political boundaries, divisions, and separations. This activity thus indicates that imperial power was capable of both creating separate political and legal entities out of once-united territories and, in certain circumstances, helping to transcend those boundaries and maintain unity. The uninterrupted migration of Omani Arabs, continuing family and property issues, trade, and cultural and religious links, some of which the colonial power helped to maintain, kept the idea of political cooperation between Oman and Zanzibar alive for almost 60 years after the division of the two countries and allowed it to re-emerge in public discourse with the renewal of the imamate in Oman 1913. The fate of this idea and the imamate's connection to Zanzibar is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Attempts to Renew Political Cooperation between Zanzibar and the Imamate of Oman (1913-1964)

When, in 1868, the supporters of the Ibādī imamate in Oman succeeded in renewing the institution, the issue of Zanzibar and its reunification with Oman was high on the new authority's agenda. The fall of Imam 'Azzān bin Qays's government in 1871 did nothing to change this. Supporters of the imamate, led by Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī Al-Ḥārithī, continued to work toward re-establishing the rule of the imam in Oman and bringing Zanzibar under his authority. The importance of the idea of reuniting Oman and Zanzibar for the imamate party was expressed in the rebellion of 1895 when Ṣāliḥ bin 'Alī and his entourage abandoned their demand for the renewal of the imamate in exchange for the possibility of the Sultan of Zanzibar or his vassal being placed on the throne of Oman and thus a partial reunification of the two countries. However, in 1913, when supporters of the imamate revolted and the institution was restored in Oman for almost half a century, the idea of reuniting both countries was no longer present.

This chapter addresses questions about the reasons for this change by examining the effects of the rebellion's defeat in 1895, the British protectorate of Zanzibar, and the altered geopolitical environment after 1914 on the imamate's stance towards Zanzibar. Furthermore, it explores whether the inability to renew the idea of reunion resulted in a lack of political cooperation between Omani and Zanzibari Ibādīs in other areas. Another relevant point examined is the attitude of Zanzibari Arabs towards the institution of imamate, which operated in Oman for more than 40 years. It considers cultural changes in Zanzibar and the role of Ibādī Islam in relations between the two countries' elites. The chapter also highlights the ties between Zanzibar and the imamate authorities, who were exiled in 1959 due to the sultan's takeover of the interior of the country and sought allies to fight the sultan and the British who supported him. The imamate's efforts coincided with the Arab elite of Zanzibar's aspirations to form an

independent government and decolonise the islands. Consequently, it is worth considering whether the shared aims among the Arab elites of both countries reignited political collaboration between them.

6.1 Revival of the Imamate in Oman

The idea of the Ibādī imamate did not die in Oman with the defeat of the 1895 rebellion and the demise of its leader and ‘temporizing imam’ Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Alī.⁹⁵² The rule of the sultans of the Āl Būsa‘īdī dynasty still lacked legitimacy in the eyes of many tribes and Ibādī scholars. The term ‘sultan’ was introduced by British arbitration and had no previous precedent in Oman.⁹⁵³ Neither it nor the title of ‘sayyid’ guaranteed universal recognition and allegiance on the part of the tribes, as they were not embedded in Oman’s political and religious traditions. The situation was different with the imamate, which functioned as the only political institution in Oman for centuries and was recognised as a legitimate polity according to the Ibādī doctrine.⁹⁵⁴ The position of the Muscat rulers was also complicated by their inability to exercise power in the interior except through subsidies and allowances to the tribal leaders. These payments were a heavy burden on the sultanate’s limited financial resources and, therefore, could not be paid regularly.⁹⁵⁵

The sultan’s dependence on the British was another major source of resentment among the tribes. This sentiment became particularly evident after 1895. Regulations introduced at the insistence of the colonial authorities, such as the restriction of the slave trade, control of the arms trade, and the sale of alcohol in Muscat, were the cause of attacks by Ibādī scholars, who accused the sultans of departing from Islamic values and becoming dependent on infidels.⁹⁵⁶ Not surprisingly, the final catalyst for the tribes’ revolt against the sultan was a plan for a central arms depot in Muscat to reduce smuggling and ensure better control over their trade.⁹⁵⁷ However, the renewal of the imamate had a much deeper basis than mere opposition to British colonialism. The movement’s foremost religious and intellectual authority, Nūr Al-Dīn Al-Sālimī, was in contact with many Muslim scholars, and his work shared many of the postulates of the Arab revival called *Al-Nahḍa*.⁹⁵⁸ As a result, contrary to some descriptions of the imamate as only a ‘fanatically religious, xenophobic, and inward-looking’ institution, it was, in

⁹⁵² McDow, *Buying Time*, 259.

⁹⁵³ The title ‘sultan’ first appeared in the Canning Award’s text of 1861.

⁹⁵⁴ Wilkinson, ‘The Ibādī “Imāma”’, 535.

⁹⁵⁵ Peterson, *Oman*, 170.

⁹⁵⁶ Peterson, *Oman*, 169.

⁹⁵⁷ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 91; Peterson, *Oman*, 170.

⁹⁵⁸ Nūr al-Dīn (arab. Light of the religion) was only his title and his real name was ‘Abdallāh bin Ḥumayd Al-Sālimī.

fact, part of the modern cultural and religious revival movement of the Arab-Muslim world of that time.⁹⁵⁹

Contact between imamate supporters in Oman and the Arab revival in other countries was also made possible by Zanzibar's Arab elite. Scholars there had greater access to books and newspapers published in other Arab countries. They could also travel more easily, thanks to the higher level of development in Zanzibar. Contacts made with Muslim reformers and the new ideas flowing from them were then transmitted to Oman. Both the imamate's chief ideologue, Al-Sālimī, and its first imam, Al-Kharūṣī, corresponded with representatives of the Arab elite in East Africa.⁹⁶⁰ The renewal of the imamate was also influenced by the activities of Arabs who participated in Khālid bin Barghash's rebellion in 1896. Deprived of their property and exiled by the British from Zanzibar to Oman, they joined those supporting the imamate, reinforcing the anti-colonial overtones of the movement.⁹⁶¹

The uprising against the sultan began in May 1913 when Sālim bin Rāshid Al-Kharūṣī⁹⁶² was elected imam in Tanuf and announced the overthrow of Fayṣal bin Turkī. The new imam could count on the support of most of the tribes of the Ghāfirī confederation, led by Ḥimyar bin Nāṣir Al-Nabhānī who was *tamīma* of the Banū Riyām. In addition, prominent among the supporters of the imamate was the above-mentioned Nūr Al-Dīn Al-Sālimī, privately the imam's father-in-law. After the first victories and the seizure of Nizwa and Izki, 'Isā bin Šāliḥ Al-Ḥārithī and his tribe also joined the imamate, which meant that, unlike in the case of 'Azzān bin Qays, Al-Kharūṣī's rule was supported by both confederations of Omani tribes.⁹⁶³ The aim of the combined forces of the Omani tribes was to unite the whole country under the imam.

The British were soon alerted to the success of the imam's troops. At Fayṣal's request, they sent a contingent of the Indian Army to Muscat and warned the imam that they would defend Muscat and Mutrah.⁹⁶⁴ The actions of the British did not discourage the imamate's followers, and Al-Kharūṣī's troops continued their march toward Muscat, taking more places, including the strategically located Wadi Samail. On 5 October 1913, Sultan Faysal died and was succeeded by his son Taymūr. The new ruler was not in an easy position, but his problems

⁹⁵⁹ Peterson, *Oman*, 169; Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 90.

⁹⁶⁰ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 32.

⁹⁶¹ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 28.

⁹⁶² Sālim bin Rāshid Al-Kharūṣī hailed from one of the most influential tribes in Oman. Among his ancestors was the last imam of the second imamate 'Azzān bin Tamīm Al-Kharūṣī (890-893). Politically, he was associated with the confederation of Al-Ghāfirī and Banū Riyām which determined his election as imam in 1913, see more Sa'īd bin Muḥammad Al-Hāshimī, 'Imam Sālim b. Rāshid and the Imamate Revival in Oman', *1331/1913-1338/1920*, PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 1994, 54.

⁹⁶³ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 249.

⁹⁶⁴ Peterson, *Oman*, 171-172.

worsened with the start of the First World War the following summer as German propaganda began to infiltrate Oman and boost the morale of the imam's army by convincing them of Britain's imminent demise.⁹⁶⁵ Finally, in January 1915, the imam's forces struck at Muscat. Al-Kharūṣī succeeded in assembling almost 3,000 soldiers, but the 700-strong contingent of the Indian Army was able to repel their attack on Muscat and inflict significant losses.⁹⁶⁶

The imamate's troops' defeat at Muscat and its internal problems prompted the imam to enter negotiations with the sultan under British mediation.⁹⁶⁷ Time worked in favour of the authorities in Muscat as the Central Powers' defeat buried any chance of undermining the British position and depriving Taymūr of his main support. After the war ended, the sultan, at the inspiration of the British, decided to increase customs duties on dates from the interior from 5 to 25 per cent. The increase was a substantial blow to the region's economy. Furthermore, Ḥimyar Al-Nabhānī died in February 1920, and a few months later, Imam Al-Kharūṣī was assassinated as a result of internal conflicts.⁹⁶⁸ The death of two of the imamate's most important figures strengthened the third leader's position, 'Isā bin Ṣāliḥ, who sought a compromise with the sultanate. The new political situation became apparent when Muḥammad bin 'Abdallāh Al-Khalīlī⁹⁶⁹ was elected a new imam. Just like Sheikh Al-Ḥārithī, he favoured negotiations with the sultan. As a result, talks between the parties resumed under the mediation of the British Political Agent Ronald Wingate. An agreement was reached and confirmed on 25 September 1920 in Sib near Muscat.⁹⁷⁰

The basic premise of the Sib Agreement, the text of which was not made public until the 1950s, was the principle of non-interference in each other's affairs.⁹⁷¹ The sultan agreed not to impose duties of more than 5 per cent on goods from the interior. He also restored freedom of movement between the interior and the coast, guaranteed freedom and security for coastal residents, and agreed to recognise the authority of the imam in the interior. For his part, the imam agreed to refrain from attacking the coast and interfering in the affairs of the sultanate's

⁹⁶⁵ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 249.

⁹⁶⁶ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 249.

⁹⁶⁷ The amir of Bahla, Nāṣir bin Ḥumayd Al-Ghāfirī, stood against the imam. In addition, unrest also occurred in Rustaq, see Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 249-250.

⁹⁶⁸ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 94-95.

⁹⁶⁹ Muḥammad bin 'Abdallāh Al-Khalīlī was the grandson of sheikh Sa'īd bin Khalfān Al-Khalīlī one of the most prominent officials of the Imamate of 'Azzān bin Qays.

⁹⁷⁰ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 251.

⁹⁷¹ The Sib Treaty was not an agreement between the two states and did not formally create a division of Oman as it did not address the issue of sovereignty or create separate allegiances. The agreement was formally concluded between 'Isā bin Ṣāliḥ Al-Ḥārithī on behalf of the Omanis and Sultan Taymūr. Subsequently, successive tribal leaders, including the new imam, approved its provisions. Until 1954, the imamate authorities did not claim sovereignty, and the control of migration or the issuing of passports for the inhabitants of the interior was handled by the authorities in Muscat.

administration and respect freedom of movement and trade between the interior and the coast.⁹⁷² Neither the content of the agreement nor previous negotiations addressed the issue of Zanzibar or the situation of the Ibādīs there – further evidence of the success of the British policy of political separation between the two countries.⁹⁷³

Nevertheless, in the early days of fighting between the imam and the sultan, arms and money were smuggled out of Zanzibar for the imamate. According to Jones and Ridout, these funds enabled the imam's supporters to attack Muscat in 1915.⁹⁷⁴ Moreover, most of the imamate's leaders, including 'Isā bin Ṣāliḥ, had properties in Zanzibar which may have influenced their attitude toward the conflict. Protracted negotiations between these parties meant significant financial losses for them as a British-imposed blockade of the interior resulted in their losing access to these possessions.⁹⁷⁵ Also, the participation of the Ibādī elite of Zanzibar in stimulating contact between the Omani *Al-Nahḍa* and the rest of the Arab world had a significant impact on the development and success of the imamate movement in Oman. Finally, events in Oman reached the Ibādīs in Zanzibar, and information about their assistance to the imamate shows that at least some of the representatives of the elite there were not indifferent to the fate of the struggle between the imam and the sultan.

6.2 Zanzibar and restoring the Imamate

News of the rebellion's outbreak in Oman flowed into Zanzibar with Arabs who arrived there on the next monsoon, with letters from family members and, for the first time, in the pages of the Arab press. *Al-Najāḥ* (The Success), founded in 1911 as the first Arabic newspaper in Zanzibar,⁹⁷⁶ reported that:

Oman is disturbed. The Sultan of Muscat, Faisal bin Turki, has telegraphed to the Sultan of Zanzibar, Khalif bin Harb, that Shaikh Abdullah bin Hamid es Salimi has captured the fort of Nizwa, the strongest in Oman, and that Saif bin Ahmad el-Abu-Saidi the Wali of Nizwa has committed suicide. The telegram however contained no explanation of how Shaikh es Salimi was able to take the fort. [...] we have every confidence that he will be reconciled with Shaikh

⁹⁷² Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 95.

⁹⁷³ The issue of Zanzibar comes up directly in the negotiations only on the topic of travel from the interior of Oman to Zanzibar and India. In additional arrangements after the Sib Agreement, it was specified that the luggage of travellers from India and Zanzibar who arrived at the port of Sur was not subject to the previous customs. Appendix C. Statement showing demands submitted by the imam and rebel leaders at Sib in their written petition, 26 September 1926, IOR/R/15/6/337.

⁹⁷⁴ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 94.

⁹⁷⁵ Report: Situation in Muscat and Oman, November 1919, ROR/L/PS10/827, File 2297/1919.

⁹⁷⁶ *Al-Najāḥ* was the first independent Arabic newspaper in Zanzibar. Previously, only Arabic editions of government newspapers like *The Shamba Journal* and *The Zanzibar Gazette* were published. Sadgrove, 'The Press', 153-170.

es Salimi and the Oman tribes shortly and hand in hand with their advance to reform his country.⁹⁷⁷

The article did not directly take the imamate's side but recognised Omanis' right to rebel. Furthermore, it stressed that the best solution for Oman was an agreement between the two sides. This approach aligned with the ideas that guided the newspaper's editors. *Al-Najāh* was founded in 1911 by a circle of Arab nationalists and opponents of British colonialism who identified themselves as *Ḥizb Al-Iṣlāḥ* (Party of the Reform). Its first editor was Nāṣir Al-Ruwāḥī, better known as Abū Muslim. Nāṣir bin Sulaymān Al-Lamkī edited the paper beginning in 1912. The newspaper's authors sought to revive Arab culture by overthrowing European rule. They believed this could be achieved through the unity of all Muslims and Arabs.⁹⁷⁸

However, initial support for a consensus between the two sides in Oman quickly gave way to support for the imamate's cause. The reason for this shift was the sultan's cooperation with the British. In an article from 26 Jumādā al-Ulā 1332/ 23 July 1914, *Al-Najāh* reported on plans for Muscat to submit to British protection in return for assistance against the imamate.⁹⁷⁹ The authors strongly criticised this idea as they understood Britain's growing role in Oman as a threat to their concept of renewal of the Arab world. As a result, *Al-Najāh*'s editor Sheikh Al-Lamkī turned to the imam with the hope of stemming British influence in Oman, publishing a poem praising Sālim bin Rāshid Al-Kharūṣī in 1914.⁹⁸⁰ The activities of Nāṣir Al-Lamkī and *Al-Najāh* were interrupted by the British with the start of the First World War. Al-Lamkī and his father Sulaymān, a former governor of the German Dar As-Salam, were arrested and later deported from Zanzibar. The colonial authorities accused them of inciting the Arabs against the British in Zanzibar and Oman. Both were alleged to be German agents.⁹⁸¹ Al-Lamkī's exile marked the end of public coverage of events in Oman, as it was not until 1929 that the press organ of the Arab Association, *Al-Falaq*, undertook this again. While media coverage may have ended during this period, interest in the affairs of the imamate in Zanzibar did not.

The news of the renewal of the imamate provoked reactions among some Arabs in Zanzibar. British documents mention at least several attempts to support the imamate by the people of Zanzibar. Sultan Fayṣal's Taymūr son stopped one such approach in April 1913 when

⁹⁷⁷ Excerpt from *Al-Najāh*'s article from 1913, translated and quoted in a letter to the Ministry of the Colonies in Berlin. Governor of German East Africa to Colonial Office in Berlin, 10 July 1913, IOR/L/PS/10/624. File 3784/1961.

⁹⁷⁸ Sadgrove, 'The Press', 168.

⁹⁷⁹ *Al-Najāh*, 26 Jumada al-Awwal 1332/ 23 April 1914, cited in IOR/L/PS/10/624. File 3784/1961.

⁹⁸⁰ Sadgrove, 'The Press', 169.

⁹⁸¹ Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 121.

he arrested men sailing from Zanzibar in a boat carrying arms and money destined for the imam's troops.⁹⁸² Another report of detained Arabs from Zanzibar came in April 1914 when four people, who were said to be 'sympathisers' of Sheikh 'Isā bin Ṣāliḥ, were detained.⁹⁸³ The imam's supporters on both sides of the Indian Ocean maintained contacts and coordinated activities. They must have been aware of British control and mail censorship because they used invisible ink and fictitious names. Nevertheless, colonial officials managed to intercept, read, and identify some letters.⁹⁸⁴

Letters intercepted in early 1915 were written by someone who hid his identity under the name Muṣḥin. It was most likely Aḥmad bin Sa'īd bin Nāṣir Al-Kindī or his brother Yaḥyā. Sons of Sheikh Sa'īd bin Nāṣir Al-Kindī, the brothers had fought for the cause of the imamate. The correspondence was addressed to Abū Hāshim and Abū Mūsā, probably the other sons of Sheikh Al-Kindī, Muḥammad and Ṣāliḥ, who lived in Zanzibar. The letters reported events in Oman, presenting the successes of the imam's forces and heavy British losses.⁹⁸⁵ Although the correspondence was between family members, the use of pseudonyms and the exaggeration of British losses may indicate that the letters were intended to be communicated to a broader audience to encourage support for the imamate cause in Zanzibar. Undoubtedly, another batch of letters intercepted by the British in 1915 served this purpose.

According to the general staff officer, the British seized at least 20 letters from Oman to Arabs in British East Africa and the Sultanate of Zanzibar in May 1915, which were said to be 'of a hostile nature'.⁹⁸⁶ Most reported German-British and Turkish-British fighting, and a few indicated significant British losses. They also declared a readiness to fight the sultan in Muscat, which was probably an announcement of an attack on Muscat and possibly an attempt to mobilise support in East Africa for this action.⁹⁸⁷

From the residual information provided by British officials and the letters themselves, it is impossible to estimate how much support there was for the imamate in Zanzibar. Nevertheless, several points can be made based on the available information. First, a significant proportion of the addressees lived in Pemba, and among them were representatives of families such as Al-Maskarī, Al-Lamkī, and Al-Mughayrī. This indicates that at the dawn of the 20th century, part of Pemba's Arab elite was still politically linked to Oman and the imamate party.

⁹⁸² Muscat: Rebellion against the Sultan, IOR/L/PS/10/397, File 2698/1913.

⁹⁸³ Political Diary of the Persian Gulf Residency for the Month of April 1914, IOR/L/PS/10/827.

⁹⁸⁴ Resident in Zanzibar to Political Agent in Muscat, 24 February 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

⁹⁸⁵ Letter of 17th Rabi Ath-Thani 1333 from Mohsina to his brother Abu Hashima and Abu Mosa, IOR/R/15/6/45.

⁹⁸⁶ General Staff Officer in Nairobi to Chief of the General Staff in Simla, 13 May 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

⁹⁸⁷ General Staff Officer in Nairobi to Chief of the General Staff in Simla, 13 May 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

As a result, the attempt to subjugate the island to the authorities in Zanzibar, which had been ongoing since Barghash's era, and was significantly strengthened after 1890, could not break these links completely. The origin of this approach was not only Pemba's remoteness from the centre of power in Zanzibar and its lesser degree of modernisation but also the vital role of elders who led the local community, particularly in rural areas.⁹⁸⁸ Some probably remembered how the imamate party opposed attempts to limit the island's autonomy and still supported the institution.

In contrast, few letters were addressed to Arabs on the island of Zanzibar. If the intercepted correspondence is representative, this could indicate less interest in the imamate's revival on Unguja, a greater awareness of British political control of the country, or both. It is impossible to draw a firm conclusion on this matter as the number of letters the British intercepted was small, and how many letters reached their addressees without British interference is unknown. However, the hypothesis that there was less support for the revival of the imamate on the island of Zanzibar is very plausible. Unguja was the seat of government and home to colonial institutions. The Arab elite there was more cosmopolitan, and some actively collaborated with the British and, thus, could not afford to support the anti-British movement in Oman. When the Ottoman sultan declared jihad against the Allies, the Sultan of Zanzibar issued a declaration calling on Muslims in Zanzibar and East Africa to cease support for the Ottomans and remain loyal to the British.⁹⁸⁹ Furthermore, when news reached him of the repulsion of the attack on Muscat in 1915, he sent a telegram to Taymūr bin Fayṣal congratulating him on his victory and expressing his hope that none of Taymūr's relatives had suffered in the fighting.⁹⁹⁰

Another part of the elite saw the conflict in Oman as a fratricidal struggle that weakened the country and divided Omani families. They, therefore, sought an end to the fighting and proposed an agreement between the warring parties. Among those offering to mediate in the negotiations was Sheikh Sulaymān bin Ḥumayd bin 'Abdallāh Al-Ḥārithī, who in 1920 had obtained British permission to travel to Oman for this purpose.⁹⁹¹ Among the members of the Arab elite in Zanzibar, some also supported the imamate in Oman. These were, above all, representatives of pan-Islamic and anti-colonial circles, such as Abū Muslim, who remained in

⁹⁸⁸ Nathalie A. Koenings, 'For Us It's What Came After: Locating Pemba in Revolutionary Zanzibar' in *Social Memory, Silenced Voices, and Political Struggle. Remembering the Revolution in Zanzibar*, ed. William C. Bissel, Marei-Aude Fouéré (Dar As-Salam: Mkuki Na Nyota, 2018), 156-157.

⁹⁸⁹ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 54.

⁹⁹⁰ Telegram from Sultan of Zanzibar to Sultan of Muscat, 15 January 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

⁹⁹¹ Resident in Zanzibar to Political Agent in Muscat, 21 September 1920, ZNA AB88/63.

contact with the imamate leadership and supported them with his writings.⁹⁹² Several of the imamate's followers in Zanzibar were also recruited from families who had recently emigrated to East Africa and whose remaining relatives in Oman were committed to its restoration. Among this group were representatives of the elite and Manga Arabs to whom many of the letters intercepted by the British were addressed.⁹⁹³

Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Manga Arabs were seen as a politically dangerous element to the extent they had been between 1868 and 1871. As explored in Chapter 4, while their influx concerned colonial authorities, it did so as a matter of war security and migration policy, not due to fears of the imamate's revival. The reason for this was the imamate's attitude towards Zanzibar, which, contrary to Imam 'Azzān bin Qays, did not announce plans to invade East Africa and surrender Zanzibar to Oman.⁹⁹⁴ The imamate leadership probably considered the lack of sufficient assistance from Zanzibar to the rebellion in 1895 and decided not to place too much hope in the former 'fountain of money'. More significantly, the imamate's supporters found a much more powerful ally than the British-subjugated Arab elite of Zanzibar in the Germans who were already fighting the British in the First World War.

The imamate saw the Germans as a powerful ally who would defeat or weaken the British so that they would be unable to protect the Sultan in Muscat, enabling the imamate to seize the coast and unite the country. The imam was said to have indicated in one of his sermons that Germany was fighting alongside the Ottoman Empire on the side of Islam.⁹⁹⁵ The alliance was also to the advantage of the Germans. They were able to tie up some British forces in Oman by sustaining the Omanis' will to fight for imamate's cause. British political agents suspected many of the imam's supporters of being German agents. They even reported on a European dressed in Arab attire who travelled around the Omani interior and distributed money and pro-German pamphlets.⁹⁹⁶ Many in Oman also believed that Kaiser Wilhelm II had converted to Islam and that Germany was close to victory in the war against the British.⁹⁹⁷ The British assessed in 1915 that:

⁹⁹² Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 89.

⁹⁹³ General Staff Officer in Nairobi to Chief of the General Staff in Simla, 13 May 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

⁹⁹⁴ Point five of the demands made by the imam and his supporters to the British Political Agent in 1915 related in part to Zanzibar and referred to freedom of movement and trade for Omanis, including freedom of movement to East Africa, although this was not explicitly stated. The political threads were exclusively about Omani affairs. Political Agent in Muscat to Political Resident, 2 March 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

⁹⁹⁵ Telegram from Political Agent in Muscat to Political Resident in the Gulf, 12 January 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

⁹⁹⁶ Political Agent in Muscat to Political Resident in the Gulf in Basra, 4 April 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

⁹⁹⁷ Statement of Nasir bin Sulayman Al-Siaybi of Samail, 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

The movement [of the imamate] under normal conditions would probably have ended in nothing as it has always done before; but the conviction that we were too preoccupied elsewhere to send naval or military assistance and the fact that German influence had been indirectly at work no doubt stimulated the rebels into attempting something more serious.⁹⁹⁸

Reports of the extent and effectiveness of German propaganda were probably exaggerated, as were earlier reports of French intrigues.⁹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the information provided by the Arabs also confirmed the presence of German agents or protégés, and pro-German sentiment in the interior seemed quite strong.¹⁰⁰⁰ The British treated the German infiltration of Oman as a serious matter and another front in their struggle against the Central Powers.¹⁰⁰¹

The imamate's reliance on German support did not mean the complete marginalisation of Zanzibar, as the islands remained an important intermediary point between the imamate and German East Africa.¹⁰⁰² Arabs from the interior contacted the German administration through their relatives and friends in Zanzibar. An example of such intermediation was the activity of Muḥsin bin Hilāl, a German protégé in Oman. He acted as an intermediary between the Germans and supporters of the imamate through his brother Muḥammad in Zanzibar. Eventually, Muḥammad was arrested for brokering contacts with the enemy, and a similar fate probably befell Muḥsin in Oman.¹⁰⁰³

Despite the arrest of Muḥammad bin Hilāl, contact between Oman, Zanzibar, and German East Africa continued. A year later, 'Alī bin Khāmis bin Sālim Al-Kharūṣī sent a letter to German East Africa asking for German help and protection for Arabs in Oman. He originated from Awabi and was a relative of Imam Rāshid bin Sālim Al-Kharūṣī.¹⁰⁰⁴ There is no evidence that 'Alī bin Khāmis's letter was an official request from the imamate. Still, even if it was a private initiative, it is a testament to the considerable hope those supporting the imamate had in the Germans. 'Alī bin Khāmis had travelled for many years between Oman and East Africa. His brother Nāṣir lived in German East Africa, and a second brother, Ḥāmid, in Zanzibar.¹⁰⁰⁵ When hostilities erupted between the imam and the sultan, 'Alī bin Khāmis was living in Oman

⁹⁹⁸ Telegram from Political Agent in Muscat to Political Resident in the Gulf, 12 January 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

⁹⁹⁹ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*, 211.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Translation of a letter from Mahomed bin Ahmed, Qadi of Sur, to Political Agent to Muscat, 18 May 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

¹⁰⁰¹ Political Agent in Muscat to Political Resident in the Gulf in Basra, 14 June 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

¹⁰⁰² The second source of pro-German agents in Oman was Ottoman Iraq. From there, they entered the country via Bahrain, see Political Agent in Muscat to Political Resident in the Gulf, 25 January 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

¹⁰⁰³ Political Agent in Muscat to Political Resident in the Gulf, 16 November, 1915, IOR/R/15/6/43, File XXIX/2.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Political Resident in the Gulf to Political Agent in Muscat, 17 February 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

¹⁰⁰⁵ The British suspected that 'Alī joined the German service during his stay in East Africa. Political Resident in the Gulf to Political Agent in Muscat, 18 February 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

and had sent a letter to his brother in Zanzibar requesting German patronage. His brother was instructed to forward it to German East Africa, probably to Nāṣir bin Khāmis.¹⁰⁰⁶

Contacts between the Germans and the imamate in Oman were not limited to the transmission of correspondence and the spread of German propaganda. Arabs travelling to Oman also passed on funds and weapons to the imam's troops. In 1913, 'Abd al-ʿAzīz Al-Ruwāḥī, a dragoman of the French consulate, made a loan of 4,000 MT to the imam at the request of his brother 'Abd al-Raḥmān, who lived in Zanzibar.¹⁰⁰⁷ It is likely that 'Abd al-Raḥmān not only solicited his brother's financial support but participated in it himself since he came from Zanzibar to Oman for this purpose. The British and the Sultan of Oman attempted to curb smuggling by increasing control over local boats leaving East Africa for Oman. In March 1915, Taymūr bin Fayṣal authorised the seizure of boats carrying rebel letters to deter the captains of dhows from participating in such activities.¹⁰⁰⁸ Moreover, after the Battle of Muscat in 1915, the British came into possession of a notebook by a certain Mabrūk bin Saʿīd, an agent or slave of Sulaymān bin Ḥumayd Al-Ḥārithī from Zanzibar. The information in it indicated that Sulaymān and his son 'Abdallāh were transferring funds to Oman through Khoja merchants.¹⁰⁰⁹ He was said to have been linked to the imamate leadership by their relative 'Issā bin Ṣāliḥ and Sheikh Saʿīd bin Nāṣir Al-Kindī.¹⁰¹⁰ Furthermore, Sulaymān's other son, Muḥammad, was said to have fought on the imam's side and been killed in the attack on Muscat. However, these clues were not enough to conclude that the imam was the intended recipient of the transfer. In the case of Sheikh Sulaymān Al-Ḥārithī, the transfer of funds may have been initiated because he had property and family in Oman.¹⁰¹¹ This indicates considerable difficulty for the British and the authorities of the Sultanate of Oman in controlling the flow of people and money between Oman and Zanzibar in a situation where Omani families had relatives and property on both sides of the Indian Ocean.

Zanzibar's role as an intermediary between imamate supporters in Oman and German East Africa ended with British advances against German forces and the naval blockade of Tanganyika. The extent of this mediation is impossible to determine, but between 1914 and

¹⁰⁰⁶ Foreign Office to Political Agent in Muscat, 28 February 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Muscat: Rebellion against the Sultan, IOR/L/PS/10/397, File 2698/1913.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Political Agent in Muscat to Political Resident, 6 March 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Extracts from Pocketbook of Mabruk bin Said, page 2, this day 18 Jumada Al-Thani 1332/ 14 April 1914, IOR/R/15/6/45.

¹⁰¹⁰ Political Agent in Muscat to Resident in Bushire, 25 January 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45.

¹⁰¹¹ British sources variously gave the name of Sulaymān Al-Ḥārithī's father as Hamid, Hamadi or Humaid. However, all these sources seem to refer to Sheikh Sulaymān bin Ḥumayd Al-Ḥārithī. At the time of Khālid bin Barghash's rebellion, he was exiled from Zanzibar to Oman. He then returned to East Africa. His son 'Abdallāh, later president of the Arab Association, came with him to Zanzibar. Sheikh Sulaymān was probably also behind the offer of mediation in Oman made to the British resident in 1920.

1916, the German propaganda channelled through Zanzibar played a vital role in the mobilisation and functioning of the imamate in Oman. It is worth noting that the intermediation was based on family networks and private contacts. In the case of ‘Alī and Ḥāmid Al-Kharūṣī, it is known that their father died in Oman.¹⁰¹² It can, therefore, be presumed that he did not live in Zanzibar or returned to Oman after his stay there. It follows that Ḥāmid was, at most, the second generation to reside in Zanzibar, and much of his family remained in Oman. ‘Alī was also supposed to have lived in Zanzibar for several years but decided to return to Oman.

The examples of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ruwāḥī and Muḥammad bin Hilāl, whose brothers lived in Oman, show that these family networks of contact and support for the imamate were based on families who had recently migrated to Zanzibar and maintained strong ties to relatives in Oman. This indicates that a section of Zanzibar’s Arab elite, who had lived there for generations, did not support the imamate in Oman. Families in Pemba and individuals with nationalist and anti-colonialist attitudes were the only exceptions to this rule. The paths of the imamate and the latter group also began to diverge after the Sib Agreement when the imamate became in their view a factor in dividing and weakening Oman.

6.3 The Attitude of Zanzibari Arabs towards the Imamate of Oman after 1920

Articles from the Arab press, including *Al-Falaq* (The Dawn) and *Al-Nahḍa* (The Renaissance), provide insights into the opinions of Zanzibar’s Arab elite on the imamate after 1920. *Al-Falaq* was the official press organ of the Arab Association, and it appeared regularly from 1929 until the end of the sultanate.¹⁰¹³ *Al-Nahḍa* was founded by Sayyid Sayf bin Ḥamūd Al Būsa‘īdī in 1955, at a time of political crisis between the Arab elite and the colonial power over the issue of Legislative Council elections. It presented a more anti-colonial stance.¹⁰¹⁴ The newspapers published regular news from Oman from both the imam-ruled interior and the coast under the sultan. In addition, they featured articles addressing important Omani issues, including the question of the imamate.

An example of such an article is the explanation published in *Al-Falaq* in November 1938 of the difference between the role of the sultan and the imam in Oman. Its author, Sheikh Hāshil bin Rāshid Al-Maskarī, mentioned several times in this work, pointed out that:

His Majesty the Sultan defends the country abroad, protecting its independence and securing its freedom. His Excellency the Imam watches over the interior of the country for the comfort of the

¹⁰¹² Political Agent in Muscat to Political Resident in the Gulf, 19 February 1915, IOR/R/15/6/45. British sources give divergent information as to whether ‘Alī’s brother in German East Africa (sometimes referred to as a brother-in-law) was alive at the time the letter requesting German assistance was sent.

¹⁰¹³ Al-Kindī, *Al-Ṣaḥāfa al-‘Umāniyya*, 61.

¹⁰¹⁴ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 134.

Omani people and halts internal conflicts and rivalries between the tribes as well as carries out the sentences made according to the sharī'a [Islamic law] in the territory under his authority.¹⁰¹⁵

Al-Maskarī, well acquainted with the realities of Oman, explained to the readers in Zanzibar in this passage the essence of the country's division by pointing out that the imamate, according to the Sib Agreement, was not a sovereign political entity. It was the sultan who exercised authority over the whole country and held its sovereignty and independence. The imam enjoyed only partial power, mainly in internal affairs, and exercised it only in the country's interior. The importance of this article, however, is far greater than familiarising Zanzibar's Arab elite with the nuances of Oman's internal situation. It was also a declaration that the Ibādīs in Zanzibar did not recognise the authority of the imam in Oman in any way.

Representing the majority of the Arab and Ibādī community in Zanzibar, the Arab Association declared on the pages of its official newspaper that the authority of the Ibādī imam extended only across the interior of Oman and his actions under Muslim law applied only to the people of the region. Although the Ibādī doctrine allowed for a situation where several imams ruled in a state, the ideal condition was the rule of one imam over the entire Omani Ibādī community.¹⁰¹⁶ Furthermore, the imamate was intended to reflect and strengthen the unity of the Omani *umma*.¹⁰¹⁷ The institution, which was renewed in 1913, failed in this regard in both Oman and Zanzibar. In the first instance, this was due to the terms of the Sib Agreement, which restricted the imamate only to the country's interior.¹⁰¹⁸ In the second case, it was decided by the attitude of the Arab elite in Zanzibar, who officially rejected any links with the institution. This rejection can be seen as another manifestation of the separation process between the Omani communities of the two countries.

The reasons for this decision can be traced to the circumstances of the publication of the above article in *Al-Falaq*. On the eve of the Second World War, ethnic frictions were emerging in Zanzibar, and nationalist sentiments were on the rise.¹⁰¹⁹ In addition, this was a time of tightening migration and nationality policies, wherein citizenship status guaranteed important entitlements and privileges, and some representatives of the African and Indian communities were undermining the position of Arabs in Zanzibar. In early 1939, a series of anonymous articles appeared in the *Zanzibar Voice* and *Samachar* newspapers, which questioned the status

¹⁰¹⁵ *Al-Falaq*, 'Muscat-Oman', 513, November 12, 1938, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

¹⁰¹⁶ Wilkinson, 'The Ibādī "Imāma"', 535.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 22-23.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ghazal, *Islamic Network*, 36.

¹⁰¹⁹ Glassman, *War of Words*, 106.

of Arabs from Oman settling in Zanzibar.¹⁰²⁰ The articles indicated that since the Arabs lived in Oman, they were subjects of the Omani authorities and, therefore, aliens in Zanzibar.¹⁰²¹ The author of the article ‘A Pertinent Quarry’ went even further, arguing that most Arabs in Zanzibar were subjects of the imam in Oman because they were Ibādīs and, as such, should be treated as foreigners.¹⁰²² These attacks mainly concerned Manga Arabs, but it is vital to remember the fluidity of this category and the fact that many of the leaders of the Arab elite, including *Al-Falaq*’s editor Sheikh Al-Maskarī, were newcomers too.

Within the context of tightening migration policies under the colonial power, a declaration that Zanzibari Ibādīs were foreigners would have been a substantial blow to the Arab elite and their sense of belonging within Zanzibari society. As a result, *Al-Falaq*, in the article ‘Pursuing the Subject’, again strongly distanced itself from these insinuations and rejected any association with the imam in Oman:

With regard to the question of citizenship or as these respectable correspondents preferred to allude to as the subjects of His Highness the Sultan and the Imam respectively, we would like to make the matter clear to these correspondents [...], that the Imam is the spiritual Head of the Arabs in the interior of Oman [...]. While as far as the political side of the question is concerned, the status of [the] Imam is like that of an Indian Prince in regard to his independence in his state. We all know that the majority of the Indians in this country are subjects of such Native States, are we then to assume that they are not British subjects and therefore not entitled to the privileges enjoyed by the subjects of His Majesty the King-Emperor?¹⁰²³

Representatives of the Arab elite, while refuting the accusations of being subjects of the imam, also belittled the imam’s political role by pointing out that he was the first and foremost a religious authority and only for Arabs from the interior of Oman. Secondly, they referred to the idea of sovereignty, where they gave the example of Indian princes whose subjects also resided in Zanzibar but were primarily subjects of the British Empire as the Native States did not enjoy independence and full political rights like the Imamate of Oman. The Arab Association’s community neither saw in the imamate a universalist religious institution that would unite all Omani Ibādīs nor a sovereign state equal in importance to the sultanate in Muscat. For them, the imamate was only of local importance. They believed it did not and should not affect affairs in Zanzibar.

¹⁰²⁰ *Samachar* and *Zanzibar Voice* were Gujarati weekly newspapers in Zanzibar. The former was the most important, established in Zanzibar in 1901, and then reissued several times. It began to appear regularly beginning in 1916. Both were published in Gujarati and English versions.

¹⁰²¹ *Al-Falaq*, ‘Observations That Can Hold No Water’, 513, January 28, 1939.

¹⁰²² *Al-Falaq*, ‘Pursuing the Subject’, 525, February 4, 1939.

¹⁰²³ *Al-Falaq*, ‘Pursuing the Subject’, 525, February 4, 1939.

Even as they defended their right to live and fully participate in public life in Zanzibar, the Arab elite did not cut themselves off from their Omani origins. Coverage of events in Oman and the explanation of its internal affairs to Arabs in Zanzibar in the Arab press served to uphold this heritage and bring the country of their ancestors closer to those who had left it decades ago. Zanzibari nationalism was based on Islam and Arab identity. Pan-Arab and pan-Islamic ideas not only reached Zanzibar but were also co-formed by the Arabs there.¹⁰²⁴ Nevertheless, the growing ethnic tensions and British institution-building policies of the colonial state led the Arab elite to emphasise their belonging to Zanzibar and reject direct political links with Oman.

An analysis of the arguments used by the Arab elite in rejecting their political and religious ties with the imamate in Oman and the subsequent articles that appeared on the subject in the Arab press demonstrates that this dissociation from the imamate was not only driven by political calculation and the need to defend their internal position in Zanzibar. It was also due to a critical approach to this institution. Arabs affiliated with the Arab Association saw the division of Oman between the imam and the sultan as a significant problem weakening the country. Additionally, they perceived the imamate administration as anachronistic and inadequate, pointing to the lack of political development in Oman. These allegations began to resonate more strongly as the situation in Europe deteriorated and the chances of international conflict increased. A few months before the Second World War, Sheikh Hāshil Al-Maskarī published the first of several articles under the title ‘Oman Swims in Illusion’, detailing the problems that the Arab elite of Zanzibar noticed in the functioning of the imamate in Oman.¹⁰²⁵

The first article of Al-Maskarī’s series began by quoting a letter he received from Oman, which filled him with sadness as it confirmed observations, he had made a year earlier during a visit. The main problem raised in the letter and Al-Maskarī’s commentary was the lack of unity in Oman. The editor of *Al-Falaq* even called on the Sultan of Oman Sa‘īd bin Taymūr to unite the country and named him the ‘Rising Father’ and guarantor of its freedom and independence.¹⁰²⁶ Al-Maskarī did not reject the imam’s authority and stressed that his role was necessary to end the internal fighting and bring peace between the tribes. Even more significant, according to Al-Maskarī, was the role of the tribal leaders of the interior, led by ‘Issā bin Šāliḥ Al-Ḥārithī and Sulaymān bin Ḥimyar Al-Nabhānī. He urged these leaders to reach an agreement with the sultan for the sake of the Omani *umma*. He also stressed that time was pressing as an

¹⁰²⁴ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 106-107.

¹⁰²⁵ Three articles appeared in in *Al-Falaq* under this title over three consecutive weeks from 29 July to 5 August 1939.

¹⁰²⁶ Arab. *Al-Ab Al-Nāhiq*, see *Al-Falaq*, ‘Oman Swims in Illusion’, 552, July 29, 1939.

international crisis was unfolding, and Oman continued to live in the division and the illusion of previous times.¹⁰²⁷

According to Al-Maskarī, the main contributor to the lack of unity in Oman was not the office of the imam but the tribal leaders who represented the imamate and their constant conflicts unfolding in the interior. He developed this theme in subsequent articles under the same title, highlighting the inefficiencies of governance in the Omani interior and the difficulties in modernising them.¹⁰²⁸ On the latter point, he cited the example of the failed mission of Sulaymān Al-Bārūnī in Oman. Sulaymān Al-Bārūnī was an Ibādī from present-day Libya who had studied in Tunisia and Egypt. In Cairo, he founded a newspaper and publishing house. The Ottoman authorities arrested him several times for his pan-Islamic and anti-colonial activities. After the occupation of Tripolitania by Italy, he remained in exile before going to Oman, where he became an advisor to Imam Muḥammad Al-Khalīlī for two years.¹⁰²⁹ Al-Maskarī reported that Pasha Al-Bārūnī gained the imam's and sultan's support for his work, which aimed to modernise the country and develop state institutions in the interior:

[...] the group of the too greedy fanatics in the state were against Al-Bārūnī's modernisation plans and began to promote false propaganda against his projects, and he did not find the way to advance his activities as there was no support for him. [Therefore,] he was forced to resign, so he resigned, and Oman remained in illusion, and the problems are expanding day by day.¹⁰³⁰

The tale of Al-Bārūnī's failed activities in the Omani interior highlighted examples of corruption, intrigue, and inefficiency within the imamate administration. The coverage never attacked the imam himself, however. Instead, tribal divisions and opponents of progress were identified as factors responsible for the problems of the interior.

This state of decay was contrasted with the activities of Sultan Sa'īd bin Taymūr who was described as 'a young, modern and noble man who knows the state of Omani people' and tried to modernise the country.¹⁰³¹ The outbreak of war and Oman's deteriorating internal situation brought the figure of Sultan Sa'īd into even greater prominence in the *Al-Falaq*'s coverage. In the article 'The Omani Land. Entrusted by Allah in the Hands of its Sultan and Leaders', Sheikh Al-Maskarī again praised the ruler's actions in Muscat:

They [other leaders] do not participate in managing its [Oman's] affairs except one, His Majesty Sultan Sa'īd bin Taymūr, who makes a tremendous effort to promote happiness in this country and

¹⁰²⁷ *Al-Falaq*, 'Oman Swims in Illusion', 552, July 29, 1939.

¹⁰²⁸ *Al-Falaq*, 'Oman Swims in Illusion (2)', 553, August 5, 1939.

¹⁰²⁹ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 96-97.

¹⁰³⁰ *Al-Falaq*, 'Oman Swims in Illusion (2)', 553, August 5, 1939, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

¹⁰³¹ *Al-Falaq*, 'Oman Swims in Illusion (2)', 553, August 5, 1939, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

preserve it from others' interference in it [...] to arrange the country and promote culture amongst the people as modern conditions are introduced [...].¹⁰³²

In the same article, the author also described the principles of the imamate and stressed that its functioning was necessary for the prosperity of the Omani people in the interior. Simultaneously, however, he urged its tribal leaders to reach an agreement with the sultan in the interest of national unity.¹⁰³³ *Al-Falaq* also reported on every new venture by Sa'īd bin Taymūr, including constructing a new road and opening a school or a sports club in Muscat.¹⁰³⁴ It was not uncommon for this information to be presented alongside news from the interior, which included details of tribal revolts, military campaigns, and drought.¹⁰³⁵ There is no doubt that Zanzibar's Arab elite supported Oman's modernisation and unification process, and their sympathies were with Sultan Sa'īd bin Taymūr. The elite recognised the imamate's role in the interior. Still, at the same time, they expected it to be deeply modernised and integrated into the fabric of a modern and unified Omani state under the Sultan of Oman.

The disassociation of Zanzibar's Arab elite from the imamate in Oman was thus due to their embrace of modernity and progress, issues that the imamate was unwilling or unable to address. Importantly, this criticism came from pan-Islamic and pan-Arab circles in Zanzibar. Both the Arab Association and Hāshil Al-Maskarī represented an Arab intelligentsia that, as Amal Ghazal points out, could not be described as secular. Although these groups mainly expressed nationalist views, Islam and its associated values remained at the core of their beliefs.¹⁰³⁶ Zanzibari nationalists saw modernity and modernisation as means of strengthening the Arab nation and defeating colonialism. In these beliefs, they referred to ideas that had already appeared in the early *Al-Najāh*'s articles. The source of this attitude was the connections and contacts of the Arab intelligentsia in Zanzibar with the Arab-Muslim world and the ideas circulating in it. With access to the Arab press, books, and the opportunity to study abroad, representatives of the Arab elite benefited from exposure to various visions and plans for reforming the Muslim world. The Arab intelligentsia's support for modernisation was not about embracing westernisation and rejecting Arab-Muslim culture. On the contrary, through

¹⁰³² *Al-Falaq*, 'The Omani Land. Entrusted by Allah in the Hands of its Sultan and Leaders', 638, March 29, 1941, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

¹⁰³³ *Al-Falaq*, 'The Omani Land. Entrusted by Allah in the Hands of its Sultan and Leaders', 638, March 29, 1941.

¹⁰³⁴ For example, the article 'Education in Muscat' from 1941 reported the development of the modern school system in the capital of Oman, *Al-Falaq*, 'Education in Muscat', 638, March 29, 1941.

¹⁰³⁵ In an article on July 3, 1939, a description of Sultan Sa'īd bin Taymūr's modernization efforts were contrasted with information about fighting in the interior and attempts by 'Issā bin Šālīḥ and Sulaymān bin Ḥimyar to consolidate the imamate's authority. *Al-Falaq*, 'Muscat-Oman', 543, July 3, 1939.

¹⁰³⁶ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 92.

modernity, Arab civilisation was to be fortified to fight tribalism, religious ignorance, and backwardness, which were considered significant problems consuming the Arab world.¹⁰³⁷

Among those who extolled this Islam-embracing approach to modernisation was Nāṣir bin Sālim Al-Bahlānī. He was considered the leading supporter of imamate in Zanzibar and, at the same time, a proponent of significant reforms. In a 1920 letter to Imam Al-Kharūṣī, he advocated modernisation in Oman, calling for bringing in a printing press and establishing a modern Ibādī education there.¹⁰³⁸ Both Abū Muslim and Imam Al-Kharūṣī died the year the letter was sent, so the response to it is unknown.¹⁰³⁹ Nevertheless, Al-Bārūnī's mission indicated that attempts were made to modernise the imamate, but, as *Al-Falaq* described, they proved unsuccessful in the face of opposition from conservation circles.

Ghazal writes that Al-Bahlānī had a 'unique mindset in comparison to scholars in Oman' because of his extensive contacts with the Arab and Muslim world and his unparalleled knowledge and intellectual abilities.¹⁰⁴⁰ Without denying Al-Bahlānī's exceptional intellectual credentials, it should also be noted that similar comments and calls for the modernisation of Oman were made by others in the Zanzibari intellectual community. This implies that the difference of opinion between Ibādīs in Oman and Zanzibar ran deeper and wider. Members of Zanzibar's Ibādī community were much more liberal and modern than their counterparts in Oman.¹⁰⁴¹

This difference is also apparent in legal opinions and demands that Ibādī scholars in Oman, led by Nūr Al-Dīn Al-Sālimī, formulated towards Ibādīs in Zanzibar.¹⁰⁴² The picture that emerges from these opinions is one of significant cultural differences and approaches to modernity. For Al-Sālimī, learning European languages, attending Christian-run schools, and adopting some European customs meant a departure from true Islam.¹⁰⁴³ Meanwhile, in the conditions of colonial Zanzibar, members of the elite, even those with nationalist tendencies, mostly attended government schools. Many of them worked in the colonial administration or studied at Western universities.¹⁰⁴⁴

¹⁰³⁷ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 86.

¹⁰³⁸ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 82-83.

¹⁰³⁹ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 85.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 85.

¹⁰⁴¹ On the subject of Zanzibari cosmopolitanism, see Bang, 'Cosmopolitanism Colonized'.

¹⁰⁴² Zanzibari Ibādīs' contacts consisted of enquiries for legal opinions (*fatwa*) from Omani religious authorities. See Ghazal, 'Omani Fatwas', 237.

¹⁰⁴³ Ghazal, 'Omani Fatwas', 243.

¹⁰⁴⁴ An example of such a person was 'Alī bin Muḥsin Al-Barwānī, who studied at the cradle of the colonial elites, the Makerere College in Uganda, and then worked for several years in the administration of the Protectorate of Zanzibar. Barwani, *Conflicts and Harmony*, 178, 211.

Naturally, many Muslim scholars saw adopting patterns of European culture, especially through education, as a threat to Arab identity.¹⁰⁴⁵ The Arab elite was aware of this problem and heavily criticised the colonial authorities for not teaching Arabic in governmental schools.¹⁰⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Al-Sālimī's views left no room for compromise. He saw modernity as the ultimate threat to the Muslim world and advised Zanzibari Ibādīs to reject it and everything associated with it. Zanzibari Ibādīs opposed his recommendations, revealing the growing differences between the two communities.¹⁰⁴⁷ Although the revival of the imamate in 1913 intensified contacts between the Ibādī elites of both countries, the development of these contacts showed the mutual incomprehension and frustration associated with the Zanzibari departure from 'true' Islam, on the one hand, and Omani 'fanaticism' and tribal divisions, on the other.¹⁰⁴⁸

It is also noteworthy that calls for the modernisation of Oman's interior and questions for legal opinions addressed to Omani scholars were made by people with Omani connections who shared pan-Islamic and Arab values. If Sheikh Al-Maskarī's words are to be believed, such individuals constituted a minority of Zanzibar's Arab community. *Al-Falaq*'s editor indicated that the Arab elite generally did not care about their heritage, did not know Arabic, and were not interested in the Arab-Muslim world renewal movement.¹⁰⁴⁹ For this group, the imamate that functioned in a pre-modern way based on traditional tribal divisions and conservative Ibādī Islam must have seemed an anachronistic institution ill-suited to modern times.

The revived imamate in Oman was supposed to bring unity to the Omani Ibādī community, stimulate its development, and weaken British colonialism. However, it revealed considerable cultural differences between the Ibādīs in Oman and Zanzibar. Even the section of Zanzibar's Arab elite supporting the pan-Islamic and Arab values did not regard the imamate as a religious or political authority. Their approach was influenced by both political and identity-related considerations. Zanzibar's Arab elite, although Ibādī and Arab, was more cosmopolitan and modern than the Arabs in the Omani interior. They saw the benefits of modernity and looked forward to modernising the imamate and achieving unity in Oman, but

¹⁰⁴⁵ Among them were: Jamāl al-Dīn Al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rāshid Riḍā, see more Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Al-Falaq*, 'Ingratitude', April 18, 1938.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ghazal, 'Omani Fatwas', 246.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ghazal, 'Omani Fatwas', 237. Amal Ghazal views the fatwas as agents of connectivity between Oman and Zanzibar and postulates that they included Oman in the modern discourse and brought cosmopolitanism there, while, on the other hand, the answers given by Omani muftis to Zanzibar provided them with religious guidance. The lack of reform in Oman's imamate until its collapse in 1954 and the cosmopolitan nature of Zanzibar's Arab elite indicate that the impact of religious contact between the two communities was, however, limited.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 120.

their demands were not implemented in Oman. The dominant elites there were not interested in modernisation and saw modernity as an existential threat to Arab and Ibādī identity. As a result, the contacts between the Ibādīs of the two countries that expanded with the imamate's revival produced more evidence of the growing separation of the two groups than of their unity. Under these conditions, political cooperation was impossible, which was finally confirmed at the time of the imamate's demise.

6.4 The Downfall of the Imamate and Zanzibar

The Zanzibari Arab elite called for reform and modernisation in the Omani interior and was ignored for decades. However, in the 1950s, both Sultan Sa'īd and some leaders of the imamate recognised the need for significant change in the country. The former wanted to unite the country under his authority and sought support from some of the tribal sheikhs associated with the imamate to recognise his nominal authority after Imam Muḥammad Al-Khalīlī's death. At the same time, another section of the imamate elite harboured a different idea for the future of Oman's interior. This faction was headed by Ṭālib bin 'Alī Al-Hinā'ī, who had been in charge of *bayt al-māl* (the treasury) of the imamate since 1950.¹⁰⁵⁰ He and his supporters wanted to transform the imamate into a modern and sovereign state with its own legal and institutional system. Whereas the Arabs of Zanzibar sought to unite Oman and strengthen the country as a whole, the style of imamate modernisation advocated by Ṭālib bin 'Alī only sought to consolidate the independence of the interior and define its rights to possible oil deposits in the area.¹⁰⁵¹

The sultan and some of the leaders of the interior were aware of the opportunities that oil exploitation offered. Neighbouring countries such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia had already discovered oil deposits before the Second World War and demonstrated the considerable revenues associated with its extraction. These new revenues spurred modern state-building processes and strengthened the central governments.¹⁰⁵² In 1925, Sultan Sa'īd bin Taymūr granted the first oil exploration licence in Oman to the D'Arcy Exploration Company, a subsidiary of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.¹⁰⁵³ However, these early concessions yielded no

¹⁰⁵⁰ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 300.

¹⁰⁵¹ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 308, 310.

¹⁰⁵² In Qatar, oil was discovered in 1939 but, due to the outbreak of war, extraction work was interrupted, and it was not until the 1950s that oil began to be exported on a larger scale. Initially, the contract with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company provided for the payment of a fixed sum to the Sheikh of Qatar only later negotiations increased his share of the proceeds. Cristal, *Oil and Politics*, 112-121.

¹⁰⁵³ The choice of the British company was dictated by the agreement that the British made with Said guaranteeing that the ruler of Muscat would not agree to any concession without the approval of the British political agent and consultation and consent of the Government of India. Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 274.

discoveries. It was not until the 1930s that another company, the Iraq Petroleum Company Group, became interested in potential oil deposits in Oman. It obtained further concessions and established Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to find and extract oil. However, as the PDO began to operate, a legal issue arose regarding the interior and scope of exploration. It mainly concerned the Al-Dhahira region and the Fahud area, which geologists considered, rightly it turned out, potential oil sites. Al-Dhahira was not directly subordinate to the imam, but on several occasions, the imamate forces conducted military campaigns there and tried to subjugate the local Bedouins of the Durū‘ tribe to authorities in Nizwa. In 1954, taking advantage of the imam’s death and with British support, the PDO decided to reverse the situation and forced Durū‘ to declare allegiance to the Sultan of Muscat, making geological exploration in the area possible.¹⁰⁵⁴

The imamate elite who wanted the change were not going to watch the sultan strengthen his position and occupy more of the interior under the pretext of seeking oil. As a result, Ṭālib’s brother, Ghālib bin ‘Alī Al-Hinā’ī, was elected as the new imam, and Nizwa’s authorities began issuing passports, declared the imamate’s accession to the Arab League as an independent state and proclaimed the concession to the PDO was invalid.¹⁰⁵⁵ The imamate received support for its new policy from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who also sent money and weapons to the interior of Oman. Therefore, the new imam did not need to seek support for his policy in Zanzibar. Obtaining Zanzibar’s support would have been hampered not only by the British protectorate but by the fact that many of the tribes that had contacts with Zanzibar, like Al-Ḥārithī, were opposed to the new imamate’s policies and collaborated with the sultan.¹⁰⁵⁶

Divisions within the imamate elite and the expansion of the armed forces by Sultan Sa‘īd contributed to a shift in the balance of power between the imamate and the sultanate in favour of the latter. As a result, at the end of 1955, the forces of Muscat’s ruler staged a bloodless coup and occupied Nizwa. The sultan’s troops met little resistance. The imam stepped down and retreated to his hometown, and his brother and some of his followers fled to Saudi Arabia. Most of the tribal leaders, led by Sulaymān bin Ḥimyar, *tamīma* of Banū Riyām, recognised the sultan’s authority.¹⁰⁵⁷ Unlike the proclamation of the imamate more than 40 years earlier, its demise did not stir much controversy in Zanzibar. The Arab elites in Zanzibar had their own

¹⁰⁵⁴ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 311.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 314.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Aḥmad bin Muḥammad Al-Ḥārithī, who took over from his father Muḥammad bin ‘Issā the role of tribal leader in 1947, declared his full loyalty to the Sultan of Muscat in 1954. His uncle, Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Issā, did not support the imam either but tried to make the most of the conflict between the imamate and sultanate for himself. Eventually, Sultan Sa‘īd exiled him from Oman in 1955. Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 304, 314.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 120; Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 315.

problems, as the Arab boycott of the Legislative Council was happening simultaneously. The reason for this political crisis was British proposals for changes to the council's organisation, which were rejected by the Arab elite as inadequate.¹⁰⁵⁸ The British withdrawal of the planned changes cooled the conflict temporarily, and the outbreak of open warfare in Oman brought Omani affairs back to the attention of Zanzibari Arabs.

The unification of Oman that followed the seizure of Nizwa in 1955 proved short-lived. Sultan Sa'īd's efforts to modernise the country were limited by his meagre financial resources and reluctance to go into debt. In addition, in the later years of his reign, he shunned active politics, choosing to spend his time in Salalah. The lack of vigorous and decisive leadership in the interior meant that the sheikhs who had so eagerly pledged their allegiance to the sultan decided to withdraw these declarations.¹⁰⁵⁹ Conflicts began in May 1957 when Ṭālib bin 'Alī, who had returned from Saudi Arabia to Oman, incited a revolt against the sultan.¹⁰⁶⁰ This prompted his brother Ghālib to declare himself imam again. Soon afterwards, the paramount sheikh of Banū Riyām, Sulaymān bin Ḥimyar, announced his support for Ghālib. An open armed conflict ensued. The British rushed to the sultan's rescue and managed to retake most of the interior. The imamate's supporters concentrated their forces in Jabal Akhdar. Hence, the conflict came to be known as the Jabal Akhdar War.¹⁰⁶¹

The outbreak of open conflict alarmed many Arabs in Zanzibar who had a family in Oman on both sides. In 1957, representatives of Zanzibar's Arab elite approached the British authorities with an offer to mediate between the warring parties.

I met on Thursday ten leading representatives of the Arab Association including President of three Hadhramaut communities. Speaking for all the Arabs in Zanzibar they requested that Sultan of Muscat be invited to agree to receive a delegation of Zanzibar Arabs with the object of assisting in peaceful settlement of the present difficulties; in the light of discussion with the Sultan they would be prepared to make contact with the Imam possibly during a period covered by truce. The delegation would be purely private and not (repeat not) representative of His Highness or His Highness' Government.¹⁰⁶²

Unlike attempts at mediation in 1920, led by individual sheikhs from Zanzibar, this time, the Arab elite came forward formally represented by the Arab Association with the participation of other Arab representatives from Hadramawt. This indicates a strong relationship between the Arab community of different origins and functioning pan-Arab ties in Zanzibari society.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Lofichie, *Zanzibar*, 143-144.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'īd*, 92.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 123.

¹⁰⁶¹ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 321.

¹⁰⁶² Telegram from Zanzibar to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 August 1957, FO 371/126882.

According to British accounts, the Arabs regarded their offer of mediation as a duty arising from the historical and current links between Oman and Zanzibar and their family connections. Nonetheless, they prepared to be refused by the Sultan of Oman and to fully accept his decision on the matter.¹⁰⁶³ This shows that, on the one hand, the Arab elite in Zanzibar were still closely following the fate of their country of origin and, on the other hand, did not expect their offer to carry much weight.

Zanzibar's Arab elite must have been aware of the inevitable victory of the British-backed sultan. By offering to mediate, they sought only to avoid bloodshed, not to support the imamate. Nevertheless, their proposal caused some confusion within the ranks of British officials who worried the Sultan of Oman might see it as an attempt to interfere in his country's internal affairs and support his enemies. The Foreign Office believed that 'it would doubtless be provocative even to put this offer [to the sultan]'.¹⁰⁶⁴ Eventually, British officials informally probed Sa'īd about the Zanzibari Arabs' offer, but he declined their help, indicating there was no longer a need for mediation.¹⁰⁶⁵

Despite the sultan's assurance, hostilities in the Omani interior continued for a further two years, resulting in the deaths of many relatives of Arabs from Zanzibar, some of whom also lost property or had properties significantly damaged by British bombardment.¹⁰⁶⁶ Travel between the Omani interior and Zanzibar was also disrupted due to warfare and legal problems. Until 1954, travel documents to Zanzibar for residents of the imamate were issued by the authorities in Muscat, after which the imamate began issuing its own passports. With few exceptions, imamate-issued passports were not recognised.¹⁰⁶⁷ This legal chaos continued after the end of the Jebel Akhdar War. For example, Nāṣir bin 'Issa Al-Ḥārithī¹⁰⁶⁸, who until 1963 held the post of wālī of Samail and previously lived in Zanzibar, wanted to return to Zanzibar but had an invalid passport.¹⁰⁶⁹ He had to apply to the Zanzibar government for a new document. His application was a complicated political matter because, firstly, his brother was the leader of the 'republican' opposition in exile against the sultan, and, secondly, Nāṣir himself

¹⁰⁶³ Telegram from Zanzibar to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 August 1957, FO 371/126882.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Telegram from Foreign Office to Bahrain, 13 August 1957, FO 371/126882.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Telegram from Muscat to Foreign Office, 15 August 1957, FO 371/126882.

¹⁰⁶⁶ The Jabal Akhdar region was subjected to intensive air strikes and bombing by the British which not only resulted in the destruction of forts and military facilities but also targeted farmland, houses, and irrigation systems. Telegram from Bahrain to Foreign Office, 23 March 1958, PREM 11/2402.

¹⁰⁶⁷ In the 1960s, imamate passports allowed entry to Dubai, in addition to being recognised by Bahrain and Qatar. Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 175.

¹⁰⁶⁸ He was a son of former *tamīma* of the Al-Ḥārithī tribe and one of the leaders of the imamate, 'Issā bin Ṣālīh (d. 1946).

¹⁰⁶⁹ Minutes of the Arabian Department, 11 September 1963, FO 371/168689.

had fled Oman for Abu Dhabi. In the end, he abandoned his plans to travel to Zanzibar. Other members of the former imamate elite likely had similar problems.¹⁰⁷⁰

The Omani-British victory in the Jabal Akhdar War did not immediately end the imamate and its contacts with Zanzibar. Imam Ghālib bin ‘Alī continued his activities in exile, travelling from one Arab capital to another. To gain the support of the newly formed republics of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, as well as other Arab countries, he sought to present the imamate issue as part of a pan-Arab struggle against colonialism and underdevelopment.¹⁰⁷¹ In an interview with *Nizwa*, a newspaper published in Lebanon, the imam stressed that ‘the Omani cause will succeed because of its National [arab. *qawmiyya*] and Arab character, the cause of Arab unity from the Gulf to the Ocean’.¹⁰⁷² The imam referred to the Atlantic Ocean, but this does not mean that he overlooked the Indian Ocean and East Africa in his political plans. On the contrary, the imamate leadership was aware of the Ibādī community in that region.

‘Abdallāh Al-Ghazālī, imamate’s acting foreign minister, represented the imam at the 3rd Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Conference held in Moshi, Tanganyika, in February 1963, which brought together opponents of colonialism and Western imperialism.¹⁰⁷³ After the conference, imamate representatives were supposed to travel through Africa, including visits to Zanzibar and Pemba, where the ‘delegation would hold meetings with the leaders of these communities with [the] object of obtaining material and moral support for the struggle of their brethren in Oman’.¹⁰⁷⁴ Likely, this trip did not happen as ‘Abdallāh Al-Ghazālī went on a tour of Arab capitals the following month in search of support for the imamate.¹⁰⁷⁵ It is also hard to imagine that the protectorate government would have allowed the entry of a representative of an authority that was openly opposed to British colonialism and probably wanted to incite the Arab and Ibādī community against British rule.¹⁰⁷⁶ The Arab elites were also likely uninterested in contacting representatives of the imamate, given the list of discrepancies between them and this institution that appeared between 1920 and 1954 and Zanzibari Arabs’ non-hostile attitude

¹⁰⁷⁰ After the renewal of the imamate in 1957, Šāliḥ bin ‘Issā did not join the movement but remained in exile and represented secular opposition to the sultanate by establishing the Omani Republican Office in Baghdad. See Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 326; Telegram from Abu Dhabi to Foreign Office, 22 September 1963, FO 371/168689.

¹⁰⁷¹ Jones, Ridout, *Modern Oman*, 131.

¹⁰⁷² *Nizwa*, ‘Nuqāt ‘alā ḥurūf fī ḥadīth’, 1963, FO 371/168689, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

¹⁰⁷³ *Free Oman*, April 1963, vol. 1, no. 3, FO 371/168687.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Free Oman*, April 1963, vol. 1, no. 3, FO 371/168687.

¹⁰⁷⁵ British Embassy, Damascus, to Arabian Department FO, 18 June 1963, FO 371/168688.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Al-Ghazālī was also accused by the British of financial crimes allegedly committed during his work in Qatar, see Brown to the Arabian Department FO, 13 April 1963, FO 371/168687.

to the British with whom they had already negotiated the process of handing over power and independence to Zanzibar.¹⁰⁷⁷

Despite the lack of Al-Ghazālī's visit to Zanzibar, the imam again referred to the support of the East African Ibādīs during his stay in Morocco a few months later. There, he told the press that the Omani community in Dar As-Salam numbered an estimated 80,000, and the imamate planned to open a political office there.¹⁰⁷⁸ By appealing to Ibādīs in East Africa, the imam hoped to obtain financial assistance and support in the international arena. No political plans or claims over Zanzibar were formulated. In the same interview in Morocco, the imam addressed the issue of Omani reunification. He had indicated that Oman, freed from the rule of the sultan and the British, would not only consist of the interior and the coast but also include the areas from Abu Dhabi to Ras Al-Khayma. He argued that British colonial policies had led to the division of the Arabs there and the creation of sheikhdoms. In his vision, they would be united with Oman in the event of the imamate victory.¹⁰⁷⁹ He sought to annex lands that had either never been under the rule of Omani rulers or had seceded from it in 1820 when Britain made treaties with the local sheikhdoms establishing Trucial Oman.¹⁰⁸⁰ These areas were not inhabited by Ibādīs and were linked to Oman only by loose historical ties and cultural and geographical proximity.

In the case of Zanzibar, which seceded in 1856 and was still inhabited by the Ibādī elite, the imam only planned to open an office there, as in other Arab and African countries. This reveals that the imamate party did not attribute importance to political activities in Zanzibar. It acknowledged the presence of Ibādīs there, but they were treated instrumentally as sources of support and presented in the propaganda as proof of the size and strength of the community in the region. This dimension of the imamate's interest in Zanzibar was also evidenced after the fall of the Sultanate of Zanzibar when Imam Ghālib announced that he had taken in 50 homeless Arab refugee children from Zanzibar.¹⁰⁸¹ The imam's action was meant to show his support for the Omani community of Zanzibar and demonstrate that he was different from the Sultan of

¹⁰⁷⁷ From 1961 there was already a semi-autonomous government in Zanzibar with the participation of an Arab elite and in 1963 the process of handing over further powers by the British in Zanzibar was to begin, ending with the declaration of Zanzibar's independence in December 1963.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Review of the Press, British Embassy, Rabat, 25 October 1963, FO 371/168690.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Review of the Press, British Embassy, Rabat, 25 October 1963, FO 371/168690.

¹⁰⁸⁰ The treaties signed in 1820 by the British with the sheikhs of Ras Al-Khayma, Sharjah, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwaim and later Bahrain were the consequence of a British expedition the previous year which bombarded Ras Al-Khayma and destroyed most of the fleets of these sheikhdoms. The British justified the expedition by the piratical activities of the local tribes, above all Al-Qasimi. Bhacker, *Trade and Empire*, 91.

¹⁰⁸¹ Telegram from Muscat to Foreign Office, 19 August 1964, FO 371/178271.

Muscat, who refused to offer asylum to Zanzibari refugees. However, the Red Cross's stated that the imam had taken no such action. His announcement was pure propaganda.¹⁰⁸²

This approach by Imam Ghālib bin 'Alī resulted from the disunity between the imamate and Zanzibar elites described earlier and the current political situation. Between 1959 and 1964, the imamate authorities in exile sought to arouse interest in the Omani problem among anti-colonial African and Middle Eastern governments and societies and to call for a struggle against Britain. At the same time, Zanzibar's Arab elite negotiated British withdrawal from their country and focused their energies on electoral efforts with the Afro-Shirazi Party.¹⁰⁸³ Joining the Arabs of Zanzibar in the imam's anti-colonial activities was not only unnecessary for them but could have been detrimental to their political interests as it would have antagonised the British and exposed the Arab elite to renewed accusations of being foreigners. Moreover, a return to power of the imam in Oman would have meant another civil war and dismemberment of the country, things that the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic circles of the Arab elite certainly did not want. Imamate supporters in exile, on the other hand, saw a more significant political advantage in cooperating with the anti-colonial elites of independent Egypt or Iraq than with their cosmopolitan relatives in British Zanzibar. Consequently, in the last years of the Sultanate of Zanzibar and the Imamate of Oman, the two sides remained only in sporadic and marginal contact as their political paths diverged completely.

6.5 Conclusion

The renewal of the imamate in 1913 did not bring back the idea of reuniting Oman and Zanzibar. This was due to an awareness of British control of Zanzibar, disillusionment with the attitude of Zanzibar's Arab elite in 1895 and, above all, the new geopolitical situation in which Germany and later Saudi Arabia and Egypt were much more valuable allies. Nevertheless, the renewal of the imamate institution restored political contacts between Arab elites on both shores of the Indian Ocean to a scale comparable to that of 1893 to 1896. Arab scholars from Zanzibar were in contact with imamate leaders and provided a link between them and Muslim reformers in other countries. Moreover, part of the Arab elite in Pemba continued to be loyal to the imamate party, and Zanzibar was used as an intermediary point between the imamate's partisans and German East Africa. Some Arabs from Zanzibar were also involved in smuggling arms and money for the imam's fighting troops.

¹⁰⁸² Telegram from Foreign Office to Bahrain, 20 August 1964, FO 371/178271. Nevertheless, passports issued by the imamate authority allowed many Arabs of Zanzibar to leave for the Arabian Gulf countries when the Sultan of Oman did not accept them as foreign refugees. Mathews, 'The Zinjibari Diaspora', 175.

¹⁰⁸³ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 207.

Although the revived imamate proved to be an enduring institution, political cooperation between the Omani and Zanzibari Arabs who supported it was short-lived. The Arab elite in Zanzibar after 1920 became increasingly critical of Oman under the imamate's leadership. This was firstly due to political considerations that caused Arabs to distance themselves from the imamate, not wanting to be perceived as outsiders in Zanzibar by other ethnic groups there. In addition, under the Sib Agreement, the imamate divided Oman and weakened the country rather than uniting the Ibāḍī community. These processes were unacceptable to many in the pan-Arab circles of the Zanzibari elite. They called on the leaders of the interior to talk to the sultan, unite the country, and modernise it, but their appeals went unheeded. The lack of support for the imamate institution was also due to cultural and religious differences. The Arab elite in Zanzibar, even the nationalist ones, were cosmopolitan and had a more liberal approach to Islam. These views distinguished them sharply from the conservative beliefs held by most of the imamate leadership.

Consequently, the fall of imamate in Oman did not cause a stir in Zanzibar, and it was only the outbreak of open civil war that prompted the elite there to attempt mediation. Even then, they did so more out of a sense of duty than a real desire to influence events in Oman. Moreover, when the imamate authorities were exiled, they sought support from the anti-colonial governments of Egypt and Syria rather than from the Ibāḍī elite in Zanzibar. The Arabs in Zanzibar also did not regard the imamate as a cooperative partner because its anti-colonial approach did not correspond to their strategy of negotiating Zanzibar's independence with the British. In addition, Zanzibar's Arab elite was preoccupied with their political rivalry with the Afro-Shirazi Party, which accused Arabs of being outsiders in Zanzibar. Under these circumstances, cooperation with the imamate could have only weakened the position of Zanzibar's Arabs.

The history of political cooperation between the Ibāḍī elites of Oman and Zanzibar also points to the declining impact of British colonialism on the ties between the two countries. When the Omani tribes re-established the imamate in Oman in 1913, British authorities decided to get directly involved on the side of the sultan and send additional armed forces to Oman. British aid to Muscat increased when the First World War broke out, and German agents sought to establish cooperation with the imamate authorities. During this period, the British tracked Arabs' contacts between Oman, Zanzibar, and German East Africa and obstructed communications, arms, and money transfers between the territories. However, with the end of the war, the hostile attitude of the British towards the imamate ceased, and they supported negotiations between the two centres of power in Oman. After the Sib Agreement in 1920, the

British did not interfere in relations between the Ibādīs of Oman and Zanzibar as they no longer posed any threat to their imperial policy.

This period also saw the emergence of a new wave of British involvement in Oman in the form of support for oil exploration by European oil companies. This reignited the dispute between the imamate and the sultanate, in which the British again sided with the sultan. British support to the sultan in his struggle against the imamate was of great consequence for Oman and the sultan's consolidation of power. However, in Omani-Zanzibar relations, the political role of Britain continued to diminish. The imamate leadership turned to Arab states and international organisations in their search for allies against the sultan and the British. It took an interest in Zanzibar and East Africa purely for propaganda purposes. The lack of political cooperation between the imamate's elite and the Arabs in Zanzibar, which would have been detrimental to British interests, meant that there was no reason for British intervention in Omani-Zanzibari relations. In effect, the termination of such political contact between the two countries' elites translated into the end of British political influence on Oman-Zanzibar ties. This does not imply that British colonialism ceased to determine the separation process between the two countries, because it also influenced the process culturally, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Identity Factors in the Separation Process: The Role of British Colonialism and the Arab Revival

The rift between the Ibādīs in Oman and Zanzibar that became apparent with the revival of imamate and the resistance to its modernisation was part of a wider and deeper process of cultural divergence between the two countries' elites. This division began even before 1856 when different geographical, economic, and cultural conditions began to affect the Omani Arabs who had settled permanently in East Africa. The monsoon climate influenced their diet, dress, and architecture. Contact with Swahili culture and the cosmopolitan nature of Zanzibar led Omani Arabs to develop new customs, and the Swahili language spread among them. Moreover, the development of clove plantations, driven by slave labour, increased the wealth of Arabs in East Africa and ushered in new lifestyles.¹⁰⁸⁴

After 1890, the British protectorate increased the speed of these changes. British colonialism reduced the power of the sultan and the Arab elite and brought the construction of colonial systems and institutions along the lines of those in Europe: a capitalist economy, secular education, and modern civil service.¹⁰⁸⁵ These latter elements began to significantly transform Zanzibar's Arab elite in the early 20th century. Arabs of Omani origin graduated from schools in Zanzibar where the main languages of instruction were Swahili and English, then continued studying at English-speaking universities and finally started working in the protectorate's British-controlled administration. For most of their lives, they were influenced by European culture and, as a result, adopted some of its patterns.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸⁴ Żbik, 'Wybrane przykłady zmiany kulturowej', 105-140. With access to cheap labor and high incomes from clove plantations, a new leisure culture began to develop among Omanis in East Africa. Thus, hitherto unknown forms of entertainment such as card games, fireworks display, and alcohol consumption emerged.

¹⁰⁸⁵ The origins of capitalism in Zanzibar date back to pre-colonial times when the development of the caravan trade and clove plantations introduced the first elements of a capitalist economy. Under the British, this process accelerated significantly.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Heather, J. Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism. Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (California: University of California Press, 2003), 305.

While Zanzibar was undergoing significant changes during this period, Oman remained a country of traditional social and economic relations. This was not only true in the country's interior but also the parts ruled by the sultans. Although Sultan Sa'īd bin Taymūr attempted to modernise Oman between 1932-1970, financial constraints and his aversion to the outside world meant that his changes were mainly political and did little to bring modern institutions to Oman.¹⁰⁸⁷ As a result, the Arab elites of Oman and Zanzibar grew apart. The former retained a traditional tribal structure and a conservative identity and values. The Arabs of Zanzibar, however, became more cosmopolitan, open-minded, and influenced by European culture. These cultural changes did not work in a one-sided manner, though. While there was migration between the two countries, Arabs arriving from Oman kept traditional Arab heritage alive in Zanzibar. In addition, the Arab identity of the Arabs of Zanzibar was reinforced by the Arab revival and associated pan-Arab ideas.

This chapter analyses the shifting identities of the Arab elites of Oman and Zanzibar in the context of the cultural impact of British colonialism and the Arab revival on the separation of the two countries and elites. It considers the influence of colonial modernisation, education in colonial schools and employment in the British administration on the attitudes and conduct of Zanzibari Arabs and how these things translated into their relations with their Omani kin. The chapter also explores the consequences of different levels of development in Oman and Zanzibar on the relationship between their elites. Moreover, the chapter deals with the cultural implications of movements opposed to British colonialism; Arab revival and Zanzibari nationalism. It shows the extent to which pan-Arab ideas shaped ties between the elites and examines the importance of Oman for Zanzibari nationalists.

7.1 20th Century Development in Zanzibar and Oman

One of the most significant elements of British colonialism that shaped the identity of the Arabs in Zanzibar was education. Sultan 'Alī bin Ḥamūd initiated the establishment of the government education system in 1903 when he asked the Egyptian government to send teachers for a new school in Zanzibar.¹⁰⁸⁸ Sultan 'Alī was the first ruler of Zanzibar to receive a Western education. Contrary to some British accounts, he did not shun his Arab and Islamic heritage but remained keenly interested in Arab culture. He corresponded with its prominent representatives at the time and maintained close contact with the Ottoman Empire, bringing Zanzibar into the

¹⁰⁸⁷ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 152.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 194.

centre of the Islamic world for the first time since the reign of Barghash.¹⁰⁸⁹ ‘Alī’s initiative should be seen as an attempt to strengthen Arab identity in Zanzibar by constructing a modern education system as an alternative to missionary schools backed by colonial powers.¹⁰⁹⁰

However, despite ‘Alī’s intentions, government education in Zanzibar did not become a centre for teaching Arabic language and culture. In 1907, the Department of Education was established under the conditions of the British protectorate, meaning that state schools were subordinate to the British and their aims. As a result, Swahili became the dominant language taught in Zanzibari primary schools, while English was used in secondary education. Arabic was only an additional language, and the teaching of the Qur’an and Arabic culture was also limited.¹⁰⁹¹ This state of government education in Zanzibar provoked opposition from the Arab elite. The Arab Association, in talks with colonial officials and the press, repeatedly criticised the government for marginalising Arabic and Arab culture in schools. The elite representatives accused the colonial authorities of wanting to deprive new generations of Arabs of their identity. Arab clerks working in the Department of Education were even accused of betraying national interests.¹⁰⁹²

In response, British officials were ready to increase hours of Arabic in schools but refused to make more fundamental changes.¹⁰⁹³ The colonial authorities did not want Zanzibari schools to foster Arab nationalism and anti-colonial sentiment, as in other dependent territories and colonies.¹⁰⁹⁴ Ultimately, however, the primary reason for maintaining Swahili and English as the dominant languages in the school curriculum was a practical one. The British regarded education as a cradle to foster loyal cadres for the colonial administration.¹⁰⁹⁵ In their view, a future civil servant needed Swahili, Zanzibar’s primary language of communication. Clerks also needed English to communicate with their British superiors and continue their education in Europe.¹⁰⁹⁶ Thus, learning Arabic, the Quran and Islamic civilisation was of limited value to the British authorities.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 53-54.

¹⁰⁹⁰ People in Zanzibar did not want to send their children to schools run by missionaries. McMahon, *Slavery and Emancipation*, 142.

¹⁰⁹¹ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 195.

¹⁰⁹² Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 121.

¹⁰⁹³ Crofton to the Secretary of the Arab Association, 28 July 1927, ZNA AB88/24.

¹⁰⁹⁴ An example here can be Palestine, where Arabs teacher in a government school passed on sympathies for Arab nationalism to their pupils, see Bernard Wasserstein, “‘Clipping the Claws of the Colonisers’: Arab Officials in the Government of Palestine 1917-1947”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 13:2, (1977), 179.

¹⁰⁹⁵ This was a common phenomenon in colonial times. A similar attitude accompanied the Ottoman Empire and later France in the organisation of education in Lebanon and Syria, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 78.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Provincial Commissioner to Chief Secretary, 4 August 1933, ZNA AB 86/288.

Initially, state education was unpopular with the Arab elite in Zanzibar, and most Arabs sent their children to traditional Quranic schools, which, especially in rural areas, only offered a basic level of education.¹⁰⁹⁷ The richest could send their children to Arab schools in Egypt or Iraq.¹⁰⁹⁸ However, as investments in government schools increased and the Zanzibari administration grew, so did the number of Arab pupils. Moreover, in 1927 girls' schools began to operate.¹⁰⁹⁹ In 1946, there were 54 primary schools, three secondary schools, and two teacher training centres, one for women and one for men, in the protectorate.¹¹⁰⁰ Despite these numbers, only about 26% of school-aged children attended government schools during this period. The vast majority of attendees were boys.¹¹⁰¹ Subsequent government development plans should have further expanded education and increased the rate of school attendance, but these plans were barely realised. In 1959, only 35% of all boys and 22% of girls attended school.¹¹⁰²

Although the colonial administration failed to create access to education for most of Zanzibari society, the graduation of thousands of Zanzibaris from state schools brought about significant cultural changes in the population. It is worth noting that Arab and African pupils attended schools at higher rates than their Indian counterparts, who preferred private schooling.¹¹⁰³ Much of Zanzibar's Arab elite thus graduated from colonial schools, despite their vocal criticism of the Zanzibari education system. Among the graduates of Zanzibar's public schools were leading Arab politicians like 'Alī bin Muḥsin Al-Barwānī and civil servants like Sa'ūd bin Aḥmad Al-Būsa'īdī and Muḥammad bin Hilāl Al-Barwānī.¹¹⁰⁴ Many recalled their school years as a turning point in their careers. 'Alī bin Muḥsin and others were especially fond of a British teacher named Lawrence W. Hollingsworth, who, as Al-Barwānī put it,

... was unrivalled. A dull student was to him a challenge. He would often declare: "I am not going to be defeated by a fool like you; you must understand." He would then try every method to explain until the dullest student understood. It was an experience to hear him teach.¹¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁹⁷ McMahon, *Slavery and Emancipation*, 141.

¹⁰⁹⁸ In 1939, Sheikh Sālim bin Sayf Al-Ma'amarī travelled to Egypt with his son, his brother-in-law's son, and his nephew's son to Egypt, where the three boys were undertaking their studies. *Al-Falaq*, March 11, 1939.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 226.

¹¹⁰⁰ Annual Report of the Zanzibar Protectorate, 1939-1946, ZNA AB86/36.

¹¹⁰¹ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 243.

¹¹⁰² The plan for 1946-1955 was to raise participation in primary education in Zanzibar to 55% of all those of school age, see Annual Report of the Zanzibar Protectorate, 1939-1946, ZNA AB86/36; Bennett, *Arab State*, 245.

¹¹⁰³ Bennett, *The Arab State*, 226.

¹¹⁰⁴ Sa'ūd bin Aḥmad Al-Būsa'īdī started his work in administration in Tanganyika as Assistant Liwali in Dar As-Salam, but in 1946, he moved to Zanzibar where he became Town Mudir. In 1953, he was promoted to District Commissioner with the rank of Administrative Officer. Muḥammad bin Hilāl Al-Barwānī worked in administration from 1935, serving successively as Mudirial Officer, Administrative Officer and then Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, in 1963 transformed into the Ministry of Communications and Labour, see ZNA AB86/274 and AB86/286.

¹¹⁰⁵ Barwani, *Conflicts and Harmony*, 71.

L. W. Hollingsworth was a teacher and then the first principal at the teacher training school and the government secondary school. In 1927, he founded *Mazungumzo ya Walimu* (Teachers' Conversations) magazine as a forum for exchanging ideas between teachers of Zanzibari schools and a means of improving their knowledge of English and Swahili.¹¹⁰⁶

Under Hollingsworth's influence and that of other teachers, Zanzibari students learned about the idea of the nation, the role of the intelligentsia and the need to modernise Zanzibar. The teachers aimed to create an elite who would lead the modern nation.¹¹⁰⁷ This was a long-term objective, as the British teachers did not want to undermine the colonial system immediately. On the contrary, their role was part of a colonial civilising mission to enlighten a 'backward' people, prepare them to cooperate with the colonial power and later lead the nation on terms set by the British. In effect, the colonial school introduced concepts of nationhood, modernity, and civil responsibility, understood in a European way, laying the foundations of a Zanzibari intelligentsia and a national identity. Naturally, the school was not the only institution that shaped future Zanzibari nationalists. Still, it was the first stage of British colonialism's cultural influence on young representatives of the Zanzibari elite.¹¹⁰⁸

Graduation from governmental schools opened the way to higher education abroad and employment in the colonial administration. The two were linked because promotion in the civil service was reserved for those who had completed courses or studies abroad. Becoming a clerk was attractive to the representatives of the Arab elite for several reasons. First, it represented the realisation of the idea of a citizen, co-responsible for maintaining the state, modernising the country and solving its problems. With the emerging conflict between the Arab minority and the African majority in Zanzibar, working in the civil service also offered an important opportunity for Arabs to influence the state. Financial considerations were equally significant; the civil servant's salary and numerous allowances and subsidies were an essential source of income for many Arabs whose clove plantations were insufficient to maintain a lifestyle appropriate to their liking.¹¹⁰⁹

Although the Arab elite saw working in the Zanzibari administration as fulfilling a civic duty, this does not change the fact that until 1963 it was a colonial administration operated according to British models and rules. As Heather J. Sharkey points out, using the example of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudanese administration, local officials were shaped by working in

¹¹⁰⁶ Glassman, *War of Words*, 81.

¹¹⁰⁷ Glassman, *War of Words*, 81.

¹¹⁰⁸ Above all, Arab scholars, the leaders of the Arab Association and the ideas promoted by representatives of the Arab revival shaped the attitudes of those forming nationalist circles. Glassman, *War of Words*, 82.

¹¹⁰⁹ Bissell, *Urban Design*, 33.

colonial institutions, even if they did so out of a sense of duty and remained resentful of their colonisers.¹¹¹⁰ In Zanzibar, administrative work reinforced the importance of English because it was the language of British superiors, and a good command of it was a basis for promotion and a higher salary. Administrative work also promoted European culture among Arab officials. In 1927, Muḥammad bin Sayf Al-Ma'awalī, a clerk at the HBM Court in Chake Chake, was described as having 'an exemplary character during his nine years of service, but [lacking] one essential qualification for a Court clerk, namely, a good knowledge of English'.¹¹¹¹ This attitude brought about a shift in how Arabs approached English and British culture.

Sa'ūd bin Aḥmad Al-Būsa'idī, a *mudīr* of Zanzibar and an administrative officer beginning in 1951, mentioned in his biography how important it was to him and his wife that his children receive an English education:

As Samira was a teacher in the government secondary school, some people asked us why we sent our children to St. Joseph's school instead of government school. The answer was that the medium of instruction in government school was Swahili, and our children needed to study in English, because, even before they were born, we were planning to send our children abroad for their later education. Applicants to the excellent overseas schools that we had in mind were required to be proficient in the English language.¹¹¹²

This paragraph shows the fundamental change occurring among some representatives of the Arab elite in Zanzibar. Not only did they stop criticising the education system for its lack of Arabic, but through their work in administration and the development of a clerical ethos, they began to complain about the inadequacy of English teaching. As a result, for many young Arabs in Zanzibar, Arabic was no longer relevant, and English took its place. Knowledge of English guaranteed them career opportunities, scholarships abroad, and improved living conditions.¹¹¹³

European cultural influences on Arab clerks were reinforced during studies abroad and training trips. Zanzibar did not have a university, and those who wanted to pursue higher education went abroad, including to the Makerere College in British Uganda, which served as the primary training ground for native cadres of the British colonial administration in East Africa.¹¹¹⁴ Zanzibaris studying at Makerere College were educated according to colonial and European models, which were then reinforced during their work in the protectorate's administration. The Zanzibar government funded overseas study in colonial institutions for

¹¹¹⁰ Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism*, 305.

¹¹¹¹ H.B.M Court Registrar to Senior Commissioner, 1927, ZNA AB86/291.

¹¹¹² Al-Busaidi, *An Omani Gentleman*, 78.

¹¹¹³ *Al-Falaq* criticised the lack of knowledge of Arabic among Arabs in Zanzibar on several occasions, for example, in the article 'Our Professors and Arabic Language', *Al-Falaq*, 640, 21 April 1941.

¹¹¹⁴ Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism*, 7.

select public school graduates in return for their promising to work in the protectorate's administration later. These exchanges increased graduates' dependence on British colonialism and its cultural influence.¹¹¹⁵ In addition, the colonial administration funded training trips for local officials through its resources and colonial welfare programmes. These training trips most often occurred in Britain.¹¹¹⁶ For many Arab officials, such a trip not only improved their professional skills but further Europeanised their behaviour and identity.

Hilāl bin Muḥammad Al-Barwānī expressed his hope to broaden his horizons and embrace a 'beneficial' British cultural influence in his application for a second trip to London, having already visited once earlier in his career:

The advantage of broadening up one's mind in the United Kingdom cannot to be underestimated by the fact that opportunities available at various quarters such as those obtained in cultural clubs, societies and debating rooms and so from the daily topics and newspapers, as well as through reading a number of good literature which would form part of discussions among my acquired friends, are plentiful. These amenities do lack a great deal in these parts of the world. ¹¹¹⁷

Hilāl Al-Barwānī, an administrative officer, wanted to win the favour of his British superiors and their approval of his move to Britain, so his argument did not necessarily reflect his true feelings. Nevertheless, the fact that such themes also appeared in the writings of other Arab officials speaks to the success of British colonialism in redirecting the attention of a section of the Arab elite towards their career development and linking career development with the adoption of European cultural patterns. These new connections are most clearly evidenced by the story of Hilāl's relative, Muḥammad bin Sālim Al-Barwānī, who spent a total of 16 years on various courses and trips abroad before returning to Zanzibar as an engineer.¹¹¹⁸

Years spent in a colonial school, abroad, and in the structures of the British-led administration transformed the thinking and manners of Muḥammad and other representatives of the Arab elite in Zanzibar. In addition to the rise of English and the weakening of Arabic, British influence was also visible in changes in dress, attitudes toward modernity and mobility, and the improved position of women in public life. A consequence of the opening of girls' schools in 1927 was that women could receive an education and take up employment. These

¹¹¹⁵ For example, Muḥammad bin Sa'īd Al-Barwānī made a deal with the government of Zanzibar in 1948 whereby the administration paid for him to study in Entebbe, Uganda, and all related fees in return for serving 5 years in the civil service. See Agreement between Muhamad Said Abdulla Barwani and Zanzibar Government, 04 February 1948, ZNA AB86/353.

¹¹¹⁶ The Colonial Development Act was passed in 1929, marking the beginning of the Colonial and Development Scheme's existence. The growth of the British colonies received regular income for the first time through this sort of arrangement. E. R. Wicker, 'Colonial Development and Welfare, 1929-1957: The Evolution of a Policy', *Social and Economic Studies*, 7:4 (1958), 170–192. Bissel, *Urban Chaos*, 185-186.

¹¹¹⁷ Hilal bin Muhammad Al-Barwani to Chief Secretary to the Government, 28 February 1955, ZNA AB86/274.

¹¹¹⁸ Director of Public Works to Chief Secretary to the Government, 11 May 1960, ZNA AB86/353.

new opportunities allowed them to take on social and public roles hitherto reserved exclusively for men. Women became civil servants, teachers, doctors, and social committee activists. When general elections to the legislative council began in 1957, women were also given the right to vote.¹¹¹⁹

Shamsa bint Muḥammad Al-Muhāshamīyya highlighted colonial education's role in East African women's emancipation in her memoirs. Shamsa was a political activist in Mombasa. She was born in 1919 to an Omani family that had lived in East Africa for over three centuries.¹¹²⁰ In her time, Mombasa and the coast of Kenya were British protectorates and formally part of the Sultanate of Zanzibar.¹¹²¹ Shamsa's father studied in Egypt for four years, and Shamsa wrote that this experience made him want to provide education for all his children, including his daughter. Therefore, Shamsa was enrolled in the Church Missionary Society school, where her father insisted she be taught English.¹¹²² Drawing on her education and the experience of her mother, who was active in women's organisations, Shamsa became involved in social activities and founded the Muslim Women's Institute in 1957. She also participated in founding the Coastal People's Party alongside her husband.¹¹²³

Educated Arab women in Zanzibar were also active politically and professionally. Examples included Faṭḥiyya bint Ḥāfidh Al-Būsa'idiyya and Samīra bint Sālim Al-Ma'mariyya. The former represented Zanzibar at the First Afro-Asian Women's Conference in Cairo in 1961.¹¹²⁴ Samira was one of two Zanzibari civil servants to achieve the superscale position in 1960.¹¹²⁵ As women took up new roles, they met and worked alongside men daily, weakening the traditional gender separation and liberalizing social relations.¹¹²⁶ An expression of these changes was some women's preference for suits and dresses instead of *ḥijābs* and *buibuis*¹¹²⁷. At a time when dress determined identity and social position, these changes were

¹¹¹⁹ Lofichie, *Zanzibar*, 186.

¹¹²⁰ *Three Swahili Women. Life Histories from Mombasa, Kenya*, ed. Sarah Mirza and Margaret Strobel, (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 94.

¹¹²¹ It was only in 1963 that the British protectorate covering the Kenyan coast was officially incorporated into Kenya, Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's Flag', 858.

¹¹²² The missionaries refused Shamsa's father's request, explaining that the authorities did not allow girls to learn English. *Three Swahili Women*, 97.

¹¹²³ *Three Swahili Women*, 109-110. The Coastal People's Party (CPP) was one of several political parties representing the interests of the people of Mombasa and the coast. It advocated stronger ties with Zanzibar than mainland Kenya.

¹¹²⁴ *The First Afro-Asian Women's Conference, Cairo, 14-12 January 1961. Reports, Messages, Speeches, Resolutions*. (Cairo: Amalgamated Press of Egypt, 1961).

¹¹²⁵ Procedure for Employment of Local Staff, ZNA AB82/43.

¹¹²⁶ Nafla S. Kharusi, 'Identity and Belonging among Ethnic Return Migrants of Oman', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 19 (2013), 429.

¹¹²⁷ *Hijāb* – a headscarf covering a Muslim woman's hair, ears and neck. *Buibui* – a long black fabric worn by ladies in East Africa to conceal oneself.

significant and indicative of an evolution in the culture of the Arab elite.¹¹²⁸ However, it should be emphasised that the emancipation of women and, more broadly, the adoption of European values by the Arab elite did not mean the complete westernisation of this class and the abandonment of traditional values. Instead, the elites adopted progressive aspects of European culture while preserving the most fundamental elements of Arab culture.

British colonialism was not the sole cause of cultural changes in Zanzibari society during this period. Similar transformations were also taking place elsewhere in the world due to the general dominance of European culture and the Eurocentrism of many African and Asian elites.¹¹²⁹ The Arab cultural revival, which drew on both the achievements of European civilisation and the accomplishments of the Arab world in its heyday, also played a significant role in supporting the emancipation of women and the introduction of modern education, as will be discussed in more detail below. Nevertheless, the pace and extent of these changes in Zanzibar were driven by British presence and the cultural patterns they directly or indirectly transmitted to Zanzibari society.

While significant changes were ongoing in Zanzibar, the situation in Oman was drastically different. Sultan Sa'īd bin Taymūr tried to modernise his country but mainly did so by expanding the army and administration. He only implemented development and civilian projects to a limited extent and rejected many British proposals for modernising projects. The reduced scope of development projects in Oman was firstly due to the sultanate's limited financial resources. Unlike his predecessors, Sultan Sa'īd did not want to go into debt and thus become dependent on the British. The fact that most of Oman's modernisation projects were initiated by the British was another factor that decreased Sa'īd's support for civilian development. He feared that with the implementation of these projects, he would lose control over the affairs of the state to British officials and specialists. In addition, the sultan pointed out that Oman was a tribal country, and the population, especially the sheikhs, did not desire any radical changes. Thus, any new projects had to be implemented carefully and slowly so as not to cause internal friction.¹¹³⁰

Under these conditions, Oman's modernisation process was severely constrained. In 1941, the first state primary school in Muscat (*al-madrassa al-sa'īdiyya*) was opened. By 1961,

¹¹²⁸ Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, 64.

¹¹²⁹ Examples of countries that chose to modernise along European lines were Turkey and Japan, see *Political modernization in Japan and Turkey*, eds. Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

¹¹³⁰ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 154-155.

further schools were set up in Matrah, Sur and Salalah.¹¹³¹ In 1958, a British-led Development Department was established, which planned to create a secondary school for graduates of *al-sa'īdiyya* schools and a teacher training centre to train local educational staff. However, Sultan Sa'īd disrupted these plans as he saw further development of education as a threat. He feared that foreign teachers would spread revolutionary ideas that would undermine the stability of his rule. Moreover, he saw no need to develop a mass education system in a tribal state based on the patrimonial power of sheikhs and the authority of religious leaders.¹¹³² It is worth noting that the sultan's remarks were not without merit, as the opening of the first *al-sa'īdiyya* school in Muscat was met with unfavourable reactions. One writer in *Al-Falaq* claimed in 1941, for example, that 'the instructions by some of the teachers to the students are unconventional and not laudable in the country which begins with the absorption of the modern sciences'.¹¹³³

In other areas, progress was more noticeable. In terms of agricultural modernisation, the government introduced new cultivation techniques and modern irrigation in some areas. Agricultural exhibitions and model farms promoted new ways of organising farming and encouraged the purchase of agricultural machinery.¹¹³⁴ Among the successes of the Development Department, building the foundations of a modern health system should also be mentioned. Until the 1960s, there were only two hospitals in Oman, both run by the American Mission, and they usually lacked sufficient doctors and medicines. With the support of the sultan, who saw the benefits of expanding modern medical care differently from education, several clinics managed by Pakistani or Indian doctors were opened outside Muscat.¹¹³⁵ Progress was also made in road construction, linking, for example, Muscat to Quriyat and Nizwa to Bahla.¹¹³⁶

While these developments extended the central government's authority and built a direct link between the people and the state, they did not change the tribal and traditional character of the state. Access to clinics, agricultural innovations and modern roads only marginally altered the traditional lifestyles of Omanis and did not disturb the foundations of Omani society, which remained based on the role of the sheikh, kinship groups and a pre-capitalist economy.¹¹³⁷

¹¹³¹ Nasser, 'Educational Reform in Oman'.

¹¹³² Rabi, *Oman under Sa'īd*, 156.

¹¹³³ *Al-Falaq*, 'Education in Muscat', 638, March 29, 1941.

¹¹³⁴ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'īd*, 160.

¹¹³⁵ The sultan supported the development of medical care in Oman because of humanitarian needs and political calculations. It is understood that before 1960 the infant mortality rate was almost 50 per cent, and numerous epidemics ravaged Omani society. Politically, improving access to health care increased the authority of the Sultan and reduced the importance of medical institutions run by Christian missions, see Rabi, *Oman under Sa'īd*, 163.

¹¹³⁶ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'īd*, 163.

¹¹³⁷ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'īd*, 165.

Moreover, modernising changes in Oman only began in the 1960s. The most influential projects were not completed until the end of Saʿīd's reign.¹¹³⁸ So, in effect, throughout the first half of the 20th century, the level of development between Oman and Zanzibar was drastically different.

The degree of state development significantly affected the conduct and attitudes of elites in both countries, but education and culture were the most significant factors in the separation process. The differences between Oman and Zanzibar were even more apparent in these cases. The Sultan of Oman, like the imamate elite, feared modern education. He saw it not as an opportunity for Oman's people but as a threat to the nation's independence and identity. This stood in stark contrast to the attitude of the authorities and the Arab elite in Zanzibar, who improved access to education in the 20th century, including promoting studies and internships abroad. When the first government-run modern school opened in Muscat in 1941, more than a dozen such institutions were already operating in Zanzibar, including some for girls. The rudimentary nature of modern education in Oman meant that the Omani elite had fewer opportunities to continue their education abroad and experience the outside world. The inflow of new ideas, including those from the Arab world representing pan-Arab and reformist views, was also limited. While Arabs in Zanzibar were becoming cosmopolitan and Europeanized, those in Oman represented a traditional and conservative worldview. This divergence weakened ties between the groups, bred misunderstandings and accelerated the separation between the two countries.

7.2 Cultural Distinctions between the Arab Elites of Oman and Zanzibar

As Oman and Zanzibar developed along different lines, Arabs in Zanzibar grew critical of the situation in Oman. Their criticism applied not only to the imamate but also to the Sultanate of Oman. Although the Arab elite supported the modernisation efforts of Sultan Saʿīd and applauded every initiative to bring at least a modicum of modernity to Oman, they also pointed out the mistakes and problems that, in their view, plagued the country. The growing cultural rift between the two elites erupted in 1944 when a sugar smuggler died in custody in Muscat. The smuggler had been arrested for attempting to bribe government officials to allow him to transport a huge cargo of sugar across the border without payment of customs duties.¹¹³⁹ Following his arrest, the smuggler was imprisoned and died at Muscat Fort. *Al-Falaq* described the event as follows:

¹¹³⁸ Peterson, *Oman*, 205.

¹¹³⁹ *Al-Falaq*, 'News of Muscat and Oman', 883, March 25, 1944.

[...] the death of the accused of in the case of smuggling sugar from Gwadar has happened in the fort of Muscat due to the harsh and horrible condition of [the fort], and this made an impact on the on the public itself as this situation is contradictory to democracy by its atrocity in this 20th century, the century of science, enlightenment. It is incompatible with the spirit of Islam and Arab character.¹¹⁴⁰

Later in the article, the author highlighted that the government doctor had concluded that the prison conditions were poor, and the inmate was seriously ill. Therefore, he should have been released, but doctor's report was rejected.¹¹⁴¹ The references to democracy and scientific standards are striking in the quoted passage, as is the positioning of these values on equal footing with Islamic and Arab values. According to the newspaper, none of these had been upheld in the case. The article indicates the different ethical standards held by the Arab elite, for whom the conditions in the fort and the attitude of the Muscat administration were unacceptable according to Muslim values and modern humanitarianism.

The sugar smuggler's death is not the only example of a case that spurred criticism from Zanzibari Arabs towards the government in Muscat, revealing the different cultural positions of the two elites. Another source of disappointment was the personnel policy in the Muscat administration. The dismissal of officials who enjoyed popularity and a good reputation aroused negative comments in the Arab press in Zanzibar. The administration's tendency to favour Indians for new positions also attracted unfavourable comments from Zanzibar's Arabs. When Sultan Sa'īd appointed an Indian as a director of customs in Muscat in 1939, *Al-Falaq* commented that it 'did not expect this from His Majesty the Sultan'.¹¹⁴² *Al-Falaq* was surprised by the sultan's decision, as a few months earlier, a case of embezzlement had been revealed in the department, and the sultan had dismissed all non-Arab officials. *Al-Falaq* hoped the dismissal of non-Arab officials would begin an Arabisation of the administration in Muscat and suggested that Arabs from Zanzibar were ready to assist and take up employment in Oman.¹¹⁴³ The sultan, however, continued to use Indian officials and only hired people from other Arab states as teachers but did so very cautiously and reluctantly, fearing the radicalisation of Omani society by Arabs from other countries.¹¹⁴⁴

¹¹⁴⁰ *Al-Falaq*, 'News of Muscat and Oman', 884, April 1, 1944, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

¹¹⁴¹ *Al-Falaq*, 'News of Muscat and Oman', 884, April 1, 1944. After the death of the accused sugar smuggler, the money that was taken from him was returned to his wife, and the case was closed. Although a correspondent in Muscat reported that the government was hiding some of the facts of the case. See *Al-Falaq*, 'News of Muscat and Oman', 887, April 29, 1944.

¹¹⁴² *Al-Falaq*, 542, May 27, 1939.

¹¹⁴³ *Al-Falaq*, 534, April 8, 1939.

¹¹⁴⁴ Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 156.

The disparities in attitudes towards pan-Arab ideas and modernisation between Omani and Zanzibari elites also differentiated the countries. As shown in the previous chapter, the Arab elite in Zanzibar was heavily influenced by the Arab revival and supported the ideas of Arab and Muslim unity. The opinion of their Omani cousins and the sultan towards these issues was ambivalent. Oman participated in political projects such as meetings of Arab world leaders and pan-Arab conferences. However, in the 1950s, due to the imamate-related international crisis, the sultan adopted a strongly isolationist stance and distanced himself from the activities of the Arab League and other international forums promoting Arab unity. Sa'īd bin Taymūr is said to have told British officials in 1962 that 'Arab nationalism [...] was very dangerous and [a] different thing'¹¹⁴⁵ than patriotism. This was in sharp contrast to the views of Zanzibar's Arab elite, who fervently upheld the ideas of Arab revival and, considering the limited flow of these ideas to Oman, demanded that Zanzibari Arabs travelling there should make their Omani counterparts aware of the most important problems of the Arab world.¹¹⁴⁶

The Arab elite's criticism of Oman also revealed the different political cultures of Oman and Zanzibar. The former remained a tribal state where the sultan's power was attenuated by influential sheikhs and members of his own family. However, with the army's expansion and the imamate's defeat, the ruler's power significantly increased, and those who criticised or disagreed with him often were forced to leave the country.¹¹⁴⁷ The situation was different in Zanzibar, where the colonial power tolerated a certain amount of public debate, especially with the start of Legislative Council elections and the formation of political parties in the 1950s. Arabs in Zanzibar were, therefore, accustomed to expressing their opinions, criticising the colonial authorities, and fighting for their political rights. Despite being colonial subjects, they felt like citizens of Zanzibar and wanted to participate in its governance.¹¹⁴⁸ These feelings were alien to most of the Omani elite who functioned in a tribal system where 'civil' identity was defined by tribal affiliation, region of origin and traditional rivalries. There was no consultative body in Oman, and criticism of the ruler, especially after 1954, ended in (self)exile, and the only form of contestation of government policies was a tribal rebellion.¹¹⁴⁹

Cultural differences between Oman and Zanzibar in the 20th century also extended beyond political concerns to the lifestyles of both elites. Zanzibar's economic position and

¹¹⁴⁵ Philips to British Residency in Bahrain, cited in Rabi, *Oman under Sa'id*, 157.

¹¹⁴⁶ *Al-Falaq*, 479, March 19, 1938.

¹¹⁴⁷ Sultan Sa'īd's half-brothers Ṭāriq and Fahr, who, despite their position and education, were left on the margins of political affairs in the country, decided to leave Oman. Peterson, *Oman*, 63.

¹¹⁴⁸ Sa'ūd Al-Būsa'īdī motivated his desire to work in the administration by his 'burning ambition to keep improving [...] ability to serve the government.' Al-Busaidi, *Omani Gentleman*, 80.

¹¹⁴⁹ Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition*, 316.

colonial development programmes meant that the Arab elite on the islands had access to technological advances and civilisational progress that the elite in Oman did not. Availability of medical care, electricity, telephones, sports, and cinema varied. When Oman was struggling with the rise of smallpox in 1944 and modern hospitals outside Muscat were still only in the planning stages,¹¹⁵⁰ Zanzibar had four modern hospitals, the largest of which had 173 beds.¹¹⁵¹ The telephone network was also developing during the same period. In 1944, 400 telephones were in use on the island of Zanzibar, mainly for administration and business. Over 100 new lines were scheduled to be connected by the end of 1951.¹¹⁵² The service was so popular that applicants for telephone installation had to wait, as there was not enough line capacity to connect all applicants at once.¹¹⁵³

Arabs in Zanzibar also had access to entertainment and various forms of modern culture. Zanzibar and neighbouring Tanganyika were among the few places in the region where cinema and moviegoing developed on a vast scale. This was due to the high level of urbanisation in the country, the openness to new trends on the part of the Zanzibari society, and the presence of merchants who imported the nation's first film projectors.¹¹⁵⁴ At the beginning of the 20th century, Indian merchants organised the first irregular film screenings in Zanzibar. As early as 1921, a cloth trader named Hassanali Adamjee Jariwalla established the first permanent cinema: The Royal, later renamed the Majestic.¹¹⁵⁵ Other cinemas were later built in the sultanate, and there were already three such institutions just in Pemba a decade later. In 1932, the latest films began to be shown with sound, following world cinema trends.¹¹⁵⁶

The growth of the cinema industry in Zanzibar did not only provide new means of entertainment. Moviegoing also contributed to significant cultural and social changes in Zanzibari society. Zanzibar's cinemas screened Indian, Egyptian, European, and American films. Indian films were particularly popular. Audiences in Zanzibar also enjoyed the best productions from Europe and the United States, unlike in many colonies where only inferior English-language films were made available.¹¹⁵⁷ The stories in Indian and European movies showed a diverse world with different societies, traditions, and customs. As the films were consumed and discussed outside the cinema, sometimes for weeks, they influenced the

¹¹⁵⁰ *Al-Falaq*, 'News of Muscat and Oman from our Correspondent', 883, March 25, 1944, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

¹¹⁵¹ Annual Report of the Zanzibar Protectorate, 1939-1946, ZNA BA83/8.

¹¹⁵² Memorandum No. EM/T.22/37, 13 July 1951, ZNA AB46/8.

¹¹⁵³ Chief Acting Secretary to the Government to Sheikh Ali Muhsin Barwani, 1 April 1952, ZNA AB46/8.

¹¹⁵⁴ Laura Fair, *Reel Pleasures: Cinema Audiences and Entrepreneurs in Twentieth-century Urban Tanzania* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2017), 3.

¹¹⁵⁵ Fair, *Reel Pleasures*, 43-44.

¹¹⁵⁶ Fair, *Reel Pleasures*, 51.

¹¹⁵⁷ Fair, *Reel Pleasures*, 86.

audience's attitudes and understanding of the world.¹¹⁵⁸ Moviegoing was also a unifying experience for Zanzibari society as both the elite and lower strata enjoyed this form of entertainment. It was also one of the few opportunities for unmarried men and women to mingle.¹¹⁵⁹ It thus reinforced the liberalisation of customs, women's right to participate in public life, and the cosmopolitanism of Zanzibaris. It should also be remembered that although the cinemas were private ventures, they operated in a colonial reality where the British resident and censors decided what could be shown and how, influencing the broadcast offered to Zanzibari audiences.¹¹⁶⁰

Social clubs and societies played a similar role as cinemas in the early 20th century. In addition to entertaining, these spaces promoted new cultural patterns in Zanzibar. In 1938, the Arab Club was founded, which provided a space for discussion and a social meeting place for the Arab elite.¹¹⁶¹ Moreover, benevolent and social associations served as forums for Arabs and colonisers' cooperation because European officials and their wives patronised many such initiatives. These associations also counted Arab women among their members. Their husbands often supported their participation. 'Abdallāh bin Sa'īd Al-Khārūṣī, a district commissioner, wrote in 1955 to the British resident that his wife:

[...] has been taking interest in public affairs like assisting in public relation activities and later, with Mrs. Maultrie and Mrs V. Davis, the present Women Welfare Officer in Social Welfare matters. She has also been in other public bodies like Juvenile Offenders and now she is in Girl Guide Executive Committee.¹¹⁶²

Joint activities within associations strengthened ties between the European and Arab elites and encouraged Arab women to adopt a greater role in public life.

Sports clubs also influenced the culture of Arabs in Zanzibar. Sports in the form of field hockey, cricket and football emerged in Zanzibar in the 19th century thanks to foreign missionaries and workers of the Eastern Telegraph Company, who installed the cable connecting Zanzibar to Aden and Europe. Missionary schools also included sports in their curriculums.¹¹⁶³ At the beginning of the 20th century, colonial authorities developed a keen interest in sports, especially football, hoping to make Zanzibaris more active and dedicated

¹¹⁵⁸ One example of a film that gained immense popularity and influence on Zanzibari society is 'Awara' from 1951. It was an Indian melodrama telling the love story of Raj and Rita, a poor thief and an upper-class woman. It touched on many social themes including rejecting the vision of class-based relationships. See Fair, *Reel Pleasures*, 120.

¹¹⁵⁹ Fair, *Reel Pleasures*, 132.

¹¹⁶⁰ Fair, *Reel Pleasures*, 90.

¹¹⁶¹ *Al-Falaq* 'A Brilliant Function', 882, March 18, 1944.

¹¹⁶² Abdulla bin Said al-Kharusi to Resident, 19 June 1955, ZNA AB86/288.

¹¹⁶³ Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, chap. 5, 354-354.

subjects through physical activity. Contrary to the intentions of the British, however, the sport did not become another tool of colonial control. Instead, it became an expression of the Zanzibari people's aspirations and one of their most popular pastimes. When local teams beat European teams, it reinforced a sense of local pride and helped foster a common identity for spectators and participants alike.¹¹⁶⁴

The sports clubs also became a source of contact and cooperation between ethnic groups in Zanzibar. Founded by two Arabs in the early 20th century, the New Kings Club was led by a Swahili and supported by people from different communities of the Zanzibari society.¹¹⁶⁵ As political tensions rose in Zanzibar, clubs based on ethnicity were formed, and the struggle between Arabs and Africans spread into stadiums. Nevertheless, the trans-ethnic element remained important in Zanzibari sports. These activities brought 'men and women from a range of class and ethnic backgrounds together to share their leisure hours'.¹¹⁶⁶ As a result, playing and supporting sports teams broke down barriers that separated the Arab elite from the rest of society, accelerated their process of Swahilisation and fostered a sense of common Zanzibari identity among them.

Another significant factor that facilitated the process of the emergence of a Zanzibari identity was the performances of Siti binti Saad and her band. Siti binti Saad was born in Zanzibar at the end of the 19th century to a poor African family, but with her voice and musical talent, she pioneered a new approach to *taarab* music.¹¹⁶⁷ Before the Siti era, *taarab* was reserved for male performers who sang in Arabic. Initially, *taarab* performances were held at the sultan's court. By the turn of the 20th century, however, the genre had become more accessible, and performers entertained gatherings of the upper classes.¹¹⁶⁸ Siti binti Saad brought another breakthrough. Although she did not abandon Arabic compositions, she performed most of her songs in Swahili. Siti thus transformed the *taarab* from a form reserved exclusively for Arabs, which upheld the identity and distinctiveness of the Arab elite, to an element of Zanzibari popular culture combining Arab, African, and Indian influences. The popularity of Siti binti Saad and the fact that she also performed among the lower strata of

¹¹⁶⁴ Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, chap. 5, 363.

¹¹⁶⁵ Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, chap. 5, 360.

¹¹⁶⁶ Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, chap. 5, 404.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Taarab* is a type of music that originated in Egypt. It is thought to have arrived in Zanzibar because of Sultan Barghash. *Taarab* music consists of instruments such as the flute, qanun, tambourine, drum, and mandolin, see Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, chap. 4, 273.

¹¹⁶⁸ Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, chap. 4, 273.

society contributed to an emerging Zanzibari identity, encompassing both Arabs and the other social groups of the islands.¹¹⁶⁹

The adoption of new cultural patterns and the progressive Swahilisation of the Arab elite occurred when Oman remained an exclusively Arab country. Non-Arab ethnic groups lived on the margins of Omani political and cultural life, and the country underwent a limited and slow process of modernisation.¹¹⁷⁰ Admittedly, one sports club was opened in Muscat in 1944, but until 1970, all discussion and socialising took place during the traditional *majlis* attended separately by men and women.¹¹⁷¹ The ways of spending time, the social roles of men and women, and forms of economic activity also remained traditional.¹¹⁷² With vastly different social and cultural lives, the Arabs of Zanzibar began to differ enormously from their Omani relatives. These growing cultural differences deepened mutual misunderstandings and criticism of Arab elites in both countries and reduced contact between them. These changes were especially apparent among Arab officials of the protectorate who, rather than travel to Oman, opted for courses and studies in Europe because of their growing affinity for European culture and desire for advancement. Among the dozen available requests for leave and travel by Arab officials, only one concerned Muscat.¹¹⁷³

With financial resources, education, and English language skills, Zanzibar's Arab elite had ample opportunities to travel abroad. The trip of Sheikh Sulaymān bin Nāṣir Al-Lamkī, a member of the Protectorate Council, who travelled to Europe and the Middle East in 1925, provided a prime example of these possibilities. During his tour, he visited Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.¹¹⁷⁴ With so many other travel opportunities, visiting Oman became an activity reserved mostly for those with an estate or close family there. The harsh climatic conditions and lack of basic amenities in Oman, such as cars or electricity, discouraged many Arabs from journeying to their ancestral land.¹¹⁷⁵ As a result, Oman remained unknown to successive generations of Arabs born in Zanzibar. Some families mentioned Oman only as a warning to their children, threatening that if they did not study, they would be sent to Oman, where they would have to work hard.¹¹⁷⁶

¹¹⁶⁹ Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, chap. 4, 277.

¹¹⁷⁰ Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 139.

¹¹⁷¹ *Al-Falaq*, 'News of Muscat and Oman from our Correspondent', 884, April 1, 1944.

¹¹⁷² Peterson, *Oman*, 24.

¹¹⁷³ Data is based on a collection of personal documents from the officials of the Protectorate (ZNA AB86).

¹¹⁷⁴ *Supplement to Official Gazette for Zanzibar*, No. 719, 5 January 1925, ZNA BA104/46.

¹¹⁷⁵ The available memories of Arabs from Zanzibar indicate that prior to 1964 they had not travelled to Oman and knew their country of origin only from the stories of ancestors who had emigrated from it.

¹¹⁷⁶ Interview with Nayla Ar-Ruwāḥīyya, Muscat, 8 February 2019.

Another obstacle to travel and contact with Oman on the part of the Arabs of Zanzibar was the poor knowledge of Arabic in many circles of the Arab elite, resulting from the rise of English in public education and the dominance of Swahili in everyday communication.¹¹⁷⁷ In Oman, however, Swahili was only known among people who had previously visited or lived in East Africa. *Al-Falaq* recognised this problem and pointed out that if a person who did not have a good understanding of Arabic went to Oman, he would struggle to communicate.¹¹⁷⁸

Another major problem that limited the frequency of travel and contact between Zanzibar's Arab elite and their country of origin was the network of connections available in Zanzibar. Passengers in Zanzibar had access to steamship transport which reached ports in East Africa, Egypt, and India. In addition, from the 1930s, air transport began to develop in Zanzibar. First, Imperial Airways began operating flights. Then, in 1939, Imperial Airways was replaced by the British Overseas Airways Corporation.¹¹⁷⁹ After the Second World War, air travel became even more vital, and access to air travel improved when East African Airways, in which the colonial government of Zanzibar had a small stake, was established in 1946.¹¹⁸⁰ These airlines offered flights to East African cities like Dar As-Salam, Nairobi and Entebbe and from there to Cairo, the main hub for flights to Europe or other African and Asian cities. The Arab elite used these connections for their trips to Egypt, the UK and Iraq.¹¹⁸¹

This network of sea and air links was designed to serve colonial interests, connecting Zanzibar to other British colonies and dependent territories. As a result, no modern transport line directly linking Oman and Zanzibar was established until the fall of the Sultanate of Zanzibar. This was due to both the underdevelopment of Oman and British policies that tied Zanzibar to other British possessions in East Africa. Oman had had an airfield in Ruwi, part of today's Muscat, since the 1930s, but it was mainly used for military purposes and PDO.¹¹⁸² Thus, for many years, the only direct connection to Oman for Arabs from Zanzibar was the dhow journey during the monsoon. This mode of transport, however, came to be considered unsafe, and, in many ways, it did not meet the requirements of the modern means of travel to

¹¹⁷⁷ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 120.

¹¹⁷⁸ According to the authors of *Al-Falaq*, the problem was the inability to communicate with Omanis about serious issues in the Arab World in Arabic (e.g., the Palestinian cause). There was insufficient knowledge of these issues in Oman due to the country's backwardness, see *Al-Falaq*, 479, March 19, 1938.

¹¹⁷⁹ Robin Higham, *Speedbird: The Complete History of BOAC* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 6.

¹¹⁸⁰ Ben. R. Guttery, *Encyclopedia of African Airlines* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1998), 90.

¹¹⁸¹ For example, Fathiyya bint Hāfidh, daughter of the President of the Arab Association, travelled from Egypt to Zanzibar by plane in 1940. *Al-Falaq*, 607, 1940.

¹¹⁸² Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 409.

which the Arab elite of Zanzibar grew accustomed in the 20th century.¹¹⁸³ Consequently, it was easier for an Arab from Zanzibar to travel or send correspondence to Dar as-Salam, Cairo or even London than to Muscat.¹¹⁸⁴

The orientation of communication towards the other colonies, dependent countries and the metropolis contributed, along with other factors, to limiting Zanzibar's Arab elite's contact with their country of origin. The select development of communication and transport channels reveals the self-serving characteristics of modernisation and development carried out under a colonial administration. As Elizabeth Thompson shows with the example of the French mandates of Syria and Lebanon, colonial social programmes and modernisation projects 'were the meager fruits of a paternalistic bargain with landed, bourgeois, and religious elites'.¹¹⁸⁵ These endeavours aimed to secure the elites' loyalty and attachment to the colonial power, which was meant to be understood as the sole source of progress and modernity.

Colonial modernisation, although declaring a will to bring progress and rationality to hitherto 'backward' and 'disordered' areas, rarely served the interests of the local population. Many of the modernisation projects in Zanzibar were only partially realised, and some of those implemented involved the worsening of the position of the local people, especially the underprivileged groups. Indeed, modernisation served to justify the colonial presence and was intended to enable more efficient and effective governance by the colonisers.¹¹⁸⁶ The actions of the colonial authorities in Zanzibar thus served to provide them with loyal and European-educated cadres. The British authorities did not aim to deepen the separation process between Oman and Zanzibar. However, as with restrictions on migration and new citizenship policies, the further division of the two countries' elites was among the consequences of British development policy.

7.3 *Al-Nahḍa* and Renewal of Interest in Oman

There was never a complete rupture between the two countries' elites, as some remained united by family ties, inheritance, and financial issues. In addition, the Arab cultural renaissance provided an important impetus for maintaining and consolidating these relations. In the 19th century, the Arab revival movement, *Al-Nahḍa*, began with the aim of renewing Arab culture

¹¹⁸³ *Al-Falaq*, 'To the Government of Muscat', March 4, 1939, 529. In this article, *Al-Falaq* criticised the conditions of dhow travel from Oman to Zanzibar, particularly the lack of potable water during the journey and restrictions on baggage transport.

¹¹⁸⁴ In 1949, the public telegraph network did not include Oman, while connections to many other countries dependent on Britain were included such as Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, and Palestine. Table showing rates to be charged at Zanzibar and Pemba Island, 1 January 1949, ZNA AB42/35.

¹¹⁸⁵ Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 155.

¹¹⁸⁶ Bissel, *Urban Design*, 187.

and the unity of the Arab world by combating Ottoman and then European influences. The Arab revival took place on various levels. It started with education and culture, then moved to literature. It was also reflected in theological and political trends like pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism. At this level, emphasis was placed on the need to return to the Qu'ran as the foundation of Muslim unity, to purify Islam from misinterpretations, and further national liberation struggles, first against the hegemony of the Ottoman Empire, which had occupied most Arab countries since 1517, and then against European colonial powers.¹¹⁸⁷

Although *Al-Nahḍa* spoke out against European domination from the 20th century onwards, its origins and inspirations also lay in Western culture. The French expedition to Egypt under Napoleon in 1798 and the modernising reforms of Muḥammad 'Alī (1805-1848), who developed an Egyptian administration and education system on a European model, were essential starting points for the cultural and political awakening of the Arab world.¹¹⁸⁸ *Al-Nahḍa* also drew on native traditions and referred to the times of Arabian splendour when the Arab caliphate stretched from Spain to the borders of Persia, and Arab literature and science were unrivalled. In addition to Egypt, Lebanon and Syria were centres of the Arab revival. In the Levant, Christian communities with intensive contact with Europe played an essential role in the movement.¹¹⁸⁹ From these countries, the ideas of the revival reached further into the Arab world through books, newspapers, and personal contacts.

In Zanzibar, the development of the Arab revival began even before the First World War. Sultan 'Alī bin Ḥamūd made a vital contribution to the movement through his work, mentioned earlier, to expand modern education and maintain intensive contact with the Ottoman court and Arab writers.¹¹⁹⁰ Another stage in the Arab revival in Zanzibar was the founding of *Al-Najah* magazine in 1911, the first independent newspaper in Arabic, which promoted Arab nationalism and Arab unity. After its closure, as described in the previous chapter, its role as a promoter of Arab values was taken over by *Al-Falaq*, founded in 1929 as the press organ of the Arab Association, which had been operating since 1923. Both *Al-Falaq* and the Arab Association were crucial sources for spreading Arab values and pan-Arab ideas in Zanzibar.¹¹⁹¹

¹¹⁸⁷ Martin Kramer, *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival. The Politics of Ideas in the Middle East* (New York: Routledge, 2017), chap. 1, 54.

¹¹⁸⁸ Afaf L. Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Year, 1984).

¹¹⁸⁹ Stephen P. Sheehi, *Foundation of Modern Arab Identity* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2004), 19.

¹¹⁹⁰ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 54.

¹¹⁹¹ Al-Kindī, *Al-Ṣaḥāfa al-'Umāniyya*, 79-80.

The movement to revive Arab culture, modernise it and unite Arabs in the struggle against European domination was also crucial for the contacts between the elites of Zanzibar and Oman. Contrary to British colonial policy, which saw Zanzibar as part of East Africa, Zanzibar's Arab elite positioned themselves within the Arab world. The Zanzibari Arabic press reported on major issues from the Middle East, and representatives of the Arab Association spoke out against attempts to exclude Zanzibar from the pan-Arab movement.¹¹⁹² The idea of Arab unity particularly concerned Oman as the country of origin of the Arab elite.

The criticism of Oman's internal situation in *Al-Falaq* was not only a manifestation of the cultural differences between the two countries' elites but also an expression of the Zanzibari Arabs' concerns about their country of origin. The previously cited articles by Sheikh Hāshil bin Rāshid Al-Maskarī, which highlighted Oman's lack of unity, tribal conflicts, and the need to modernise the country, drew attention to what the Zanzibari elite believed to be Oman's most urgent problems. Despite the challenges and differences between the Arab Association and the Omani elite, Arabs in Zanzibar still appreciated Oman's independence. They wanted their former homeland to prosper and improve the lives of its people. In a 1941 article, Sheikh Al-Maskarī explicitly declared:

It concerns us, as well as most of the inhabitants of this country [Zanzibar], what happens (both good and bad) in the free Omani land. That land is not dominated by foreigners but entrusted by Allah in the hands of its Sultan and leaders.¹¹⁹³

In line with this declaration, the Arab press in Zanzibar regularly reported on events in Oman, criticised the misguided decisions of the imamate and the authorities in Muscat, called for reform and unity in the country and praised initiatives intended to modernise their country of origin. The Arab press also gave space to the opinions of the Omani people themselves.

A few years after the report on the hiring of Indian workers in Oman's administration, which drew criticism from the authors of *Al-Falaq*, the newspaper published another article complaining about the employment of non-Arabs in Muscat. This time the tone was even harsher. The article was written by a 'special correspondent' from Muscat, who described the problem mentioned thus:

Muscat and Oman are for the Muscatis and Omanis only. We are not content that someone from India is brought to them over the first citizens. With our highest voice, we demand to exchange them as soon as possible for Arab clerks. We are currently developing towards Arab unity, not Indian unity. Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon are ready to send us clerks and teachers [...] In our

¹¹⁹² *Al-Falaq*, 'Closer Arab Union', 886, April 15, 1944.

¹¹⁹³ *Al-Falaq*, 'The Omani Land. Entrusted by Allah in the Hands of its Sultan and Leaders', 638, March 29, 1941, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

hearts are appreciation and affection, but this affection will not remain in our hearts if this policy, which is not in the interest of the country, is not cancelled.¹¹⁹⁴

This correspondent's identity is unknown, but he referred directly to events in Muscat and presented them as a member of the Omani elite. The commentary is interesting in many respects. Firstly, it was not only a criticism of the actions of the Omani authorities but also pointed to solutions in the form of hiring Arabs from other Arab countries in the absence of suitably qualified candidates among the local population. In addition, the author warned that the continuation of the current policy by the Muscat authorities may have resulted in a lack of support for them on the part of the elite. Naturally, the employment of Indian officials in the Omani administration was only part of a more extensive problem—the absence of a commitment to Arab nationalism and integration into the Arab world among the authorities in Muscat.

One other thing is also very significant about this article. Namely, it appeared in a newspaper in Zanzibar. Unlike Al-Maskarī, who admittedly had a home and family in Muscat but was equally connected to Zanzibar, 'the special correspondent' probably lived permanently in Oman and presented his opinion as part of an internal discussion within the elite there. This meant that *Al-Falaq* was a platform for Omanis to share moderate criticism of their government and formulate demands for reform. This was not an isolated case as 'the special correspondent' published regularly in Zanzibar without shying away from expressing his opinions on intra-Omani issues. For example, he also took umbrage at the dismissed *wālī* of Liwa, who, in his opinion, was 'one of the most devoted governors to the ruler' and asked the sultan to show him his favour suggesting, presumably, his reinstatement.¹¹⁹⁵

The importance of such articles was immense, given that Arabs from Zanzibar took *Al-Falaq* issues to Oman and circulated them there. As a result, demands for reforms and ideas of Arab nationalism reached a wider audience in Oman.¹¹⁹⁶ These issues included not only the discussion of the Omani situation but also others important to Arab nationalists, such as the occupation of Palestine, the development of Arab culture and education, and the fight against colonialism. Zanzibar's Arab elite, through their press, wanted to promote in Oman the aspirations of *Al-Nahḍa*, the idea of pan-Arabism and support for modernisation. In addition, by publishing articles written by a member of the local elite, the Zanzibari elite also sought to influence the current policies of the government in Muscat. The spread of these ideas in Oman

¹¹⁹⁴ *Al-Falaq*, 'From Our Special Correspondent', 887, April 22, 1944, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

¹¹⁹⁵ *Al-Falaq*, 'From Our Special Correspondent', 887, April 22, 1944, trans. Sebastian Žbik.

¹¹⁹⁶ Al-Kindī, *Al-Ṣaḥāfa al-'Umāniyya*, 46.

was not limited to the publication of articles. Arabs from Zanzibar, who travelled to Oman, discussed themes of the Arab revival in conversations with their relatives and other Arabs.¹¹⁹⁷ Consequently, almost a century after the partition of Zanzibar and Oman, the Zanzibari Arab elite continued to politically influence the internal situation on the other side of the Indian Ocean. Naturally, their means of influence were different than in the 19th century. In the 20th century, they no longer transferred money or weapons but reform ideas in the Arab press. The purpose of their activities also changed, as the aim was no longer to destabilise Oman but to modernise and strengthen it.

The Arab Association agreed to publish articles advocating for change in Oman, and its members took an active role in spreading the ideas of Arab nationalism there because part of the Zanzibari Arab elite did not accept the prevailing situation in their country of origin, its underdevelopment and remaining outside the mainstream of the Arab world. A sense of community with Oman, ideas of Arab unity and pan-Ibādīsm certainly played an essential role in these activities. This attitude also grew from the personal connections of the association's most important leaders. In addition to Sheikh Hāshil bin Rāshid Al-Maskarī, the Arab Association's president, Sheikh 'Abdallāh bin Sulaymān Al-Ḥārithī, and another member of the Association's Committee and later editor of *Al-Nahḍa* newspaper, Sayyid Sayf bin Ḥamud Āl Būsa'īdī, were born in Oman.

Sheikh 'Abdallāh Al-Ḥārithī arrived in Zanzibar in 1905 at the age of 21. He said that he did not feel like an outsider in Zanzibar because 'we Oman Arabs regard Zanzibar as our second homeland, the land which our forefathers spent their lives'.¹¹⁹⁸ He made this statement at the Arab Association's annual meeting in 1944. Even 39 years after he emigrated to Zanzibar, Sheikh Al-Ḥārithī continued to emphasise that he was an Arab from Oman, showing that his ties to his country of birth remained very strong.¹¹⁹⁹

The presence of people born in Oman and in regular contact with it among the leadership of the Arab Association resulted in *Al-Nahḍa* in Zanzibar, contributing to both the re-emergence of Arab culture there and the strengthening of interest in Oman among Arabs in Zanzibar. A regular column on Omani affairs in the Arab press offered Arabs in Zanzibar current news from their country of origin. This column was the first source of regular information about their ancestral homeland for families with no property or close relatives in Oman. In addition to

¹¹⁹⁷ *Al-Falaq*, 479, March 19, 1938.

¹¹⁹⁸ *Al-Falaq*, 'Annual General Meeting of the Zanzibar Arab Association from the speech of the President', 879, February 26, 1944.

¹¹⁹⁹ Sheikh 'Abdallāh bin Sulaymān Al-Ḥārithī left Zanzibar after the 1964 revolution and settled in the United Arab Emirates, where he died in 1972, see Al-Riyami, *Shakhsyat*, 414.

information about conflicts, droughts and problems in Oman, newspapers also conveyed news of weddings, births, and deaths of members of the ruling family and other key figures. Among them were distant relatives or members of the tribes from which most of Zanzibar's Arab elite came. Consequently, the press allowed Arabs in Zanzibar to follow events in their hometowns and the fate of their kinsmen, connecting them with their ancestral country. Moreover, information about members of the Arab elite travelling from Zanzibar to Oman also contributed to the promotion of voyages to the old country despite differences in culture and development between the two states.

Increased interest in the fate of Oman can also be seen in the wills and *waqfs* founded by the Arab elite in Zanzibar. As mentioned in the Chapter 5, maintaining an estate in Oman as an owner in Zanzibar without family or a trusted *wākil* in Oman to look after it posed a serious challenge. Most often, in such a situation, the Arabs of Zanzibar decided to sell such properties. Others preferred to donate their private wealth to local communities, distant relatives, or public causes. For example, in his will in 1907, Sa'īd bin Muḥammad Al-Ma'awalī bequeathed 50 Omani qirshes to improve the Al-Wākhī falaj in his family's home village of Afī in Wadi Maawil. He bequeathed a further 150 Omani qirshes to renovate two mosques, including one in the same village.¹²⁰⁰ During the same period, an Arab resident of Zanzibar donated land to construct a new hospital in Muscat.¹²⁰¹ Others made comparable bequests and endowments in later years. However, those registered between 1930 and 1950 differed from the previous ones.

Firstly, in the bequests and endowments made between 1930 and 1950, a greater share of the support was allocated to the poor. Alongside founding mosques, bequests to the family, and support for holy cities, support for the poor was the fourth traditional purpose of legacies made in Muslim wills.¹²⁰² Between 1930 and 1950, Arabs in Zanzibar supported the needy in Oman in various ways. In 1939, Ḥamad bin Muslim Al-Ghanaymī made his palm grove a *waqf* whose proceeds were used to prepare meals for those fasting during Ramadan at the mosque in Al-Nabā, Al-Sharqiyya.¹²⁰³ Five years later, Jūha bint Nāṣir Al-Maskarīyya allocated 350 Zanzibari shillings in her will to purchase property in the same region of Oman. She specified

¹²⁰⁰ Will of Said bin Muhammad bin Said Al-Ma'awali, 1907, ZNA AM12/6.

¹²⁰¹ Clarke to the Political Agent in Muscat, 22 January 1909, ZNA AC2/88. The construction of the hospital was to be carried out from social contributions involving the sultan himself and the ruling family. Donations were also made by the Government of India and the European and Indian communities of Muscat. The construction likely concerned one of the hospitals of the American Mission Association, which began operations in Oman in the early 20th century, providing modern medical services and building the nation's first modern clinics, see more Majid R. Al-Maqbali, et al. 'The Nursing Profession in Oman: An Overview', *Nursing Science Quarterly* vol. 32, 4 (2019): 322-325.

¹²⁰² *Held in Trust*, 2.

¹²⁰³ *Al-'Alāqāt al-tārīkhīya*, vol. II, 24.

that the property's income should finance meals for those fasting at the mosque her grandfather 'Alī bin 'Amr Al-Maskarī had founded.¹²⁰⁴

The *waqfs* cited above were created during the Second World War, which did not directly affect Oman as the country was not involved in the fighting. However, warfare in Europe and the Middle East significantly disrupted the already very frail Omani economy.¹²⁰⁵ Under worsening conditions, the Arabs of Zanzibar sought to assist the struggling Omani community through their wills and *waqfs*.

Wartime problems were not the only motivations Zanzibar's Arab elite had as they supported Oman and the Arabs there. In 1943, Mahrūn bin Sulaymān Al-Riyāmī bequeathed 100 Omani qirshes to build a stone wall around the village of Maqqazaḥ.¹²⁰⁶ In 1954, Khalfān bin Ḥamūd Al-Shaybānī bequeathed 100 Zanzibar shillings for his relatives to mourn his death in Oman.¹²⁰⁷ In both cases, these testamentary legacies went beyond the traditional framework for supporting poor and mosques. Al-Riyāmī's will reflected his desire to help the village from which his family came. There was no fighting in Oman in the 1940s, so he was not driven by an immediate concern for the safety of Maqqazaḥ but rather by a desire to serve the people there and make their lives more secure. Al-Shaybānī's will, on the other hand, shows that it was important to him that his death be announced and properly commemorated in his country of origin. Thus, we are dealing with individuals who lived in Zanzibar and registered their wills there but wished to assist their homeland or have their legacy upheld there. The Second World War and the harsher-than-usual situation in Oman spurred some of these bequests, but they were also influenced by family ties and the elites' memories of their hometowns. Pan-Arab ideas and a renewed interest in Oman in Zanzibar were likely also among the reasons for these bequests.

It is impossible to accurately determine the 'success' of the Arab revival in Zanzibar and its implication in halting the separation process between the two countries. Certainly, among *Al-Nahḍa*'s achievements in Zanzibar was the re-emergence of Oman and its problems in the public space of the protectorate. Zanzibar's Arab elite attempted to influence the domestic situation in Oman by allowing internal discussion of Omani issues in the Zanzibari press and promoting the ideas of revival in Oman. *Al-Nahḍa* also slowed the ongoing Europeanisation and Swahilisation of Arabs in Zanzibar, as Arab press, books, and the activities of Arab

¹²⁰⁴ *Al- 'Alāqāt al-tārīkhīya*, vol. II, 184.

¹²⁰⁵ Landen, *Oman since 1856*, 107.

¹²⁰⁶ *Al- 'Alāqāt al-tārīkhīya*, vol. II, 136.

¹²⁰⁷ *Al- 'Alāqāt al-tārīkhīya*, vol. II, 386.

revivalists brought Arab and Omani issues into the public discourse. The role of Arabic and Islamic teaching also increased, as evidenced by the establishment of the Muslim Academy.¹²⁰⁸

It is also difficult to discern from the available sources what proportion of the Arab elite followed the ideas of the Arab revival and maintained or resumed their contacts with their country of origin. A clear indication of these trends is hampered by the ambiguity of attitudes that prevailed among Arabs in Zanzibar. An Arab educated in a colonial school and working in the protectorate administration could be a staunch supporter of the Arab revival and modernisation of Oman. On the other hand, a person who had just emigrated from Oman could be uninterested in the fate of his former homeland.

7.4 Zanzibari Nationalists and Oman

This diversity and inconsistency of views among Arabs in Zanzibar are best evidenced in the example of Zanzibari nationalists and their attitude to Oman. The Arab revival in Zanzibar also spurred the development of Zanzibari nationalism. The movements were closely linked and represented by the same circle of the Arab elite. Before the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) was formed to represent the Zanzibari nationalist community, the Arab Association was the leading advocate of nationalist ideas.¹²⁰⁹ ‘Alī bin Muḥsin Al-Barwānī, de facto leader of the ZNP, mentioned in his biography that:

The turning and deciding point of the Arab Association came when its highly respected president, Sheikh Abdulla bin Suleiman Al Harthi, embraced completely the ideals of Zanzibari nationalism with all its implications.¹²¹⁰

Ghazal emphasizes the close relationship between the two movements, writing that the Zanzibari nationalists aimed to liberate Zanzibar from colonial rule and maintain its ties with the Arab world and its Arab and Islamic identities.¹²¹¹ However, this did not mean that the demands of the Arab revivalists and the Zanzibari nationalists were completely aligned. On the contrary, the two groups’ approaches diverged on many issues as the political situation in Zanzibar developed. These differences also affected the relationship of the Zanzibari nationalists with Oman.

Although Zanzibari nationalism was founded and led by representatives of the Arab elite, it was intended to be a universal and multi-racial movement. The movement’s leaders

¹²⁰⁸ For details on this institution, see chapter 5.

¹²⁰⁹ The Zanzibar Nationalist Party was formed from the transformation of the National Party of the Subjects of Sultan, founded in 1955 by a group of peasants. Nationalist representatives led by ‘Alī bin Muḥsin Al-Barwānī joined and took control of it, changing its name and character to a national party in 1957, see Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 147-153.

¹²¹⁰ Barwani, *Conflicts and Harmony*, 211.

¹²¹¹ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform*, 108.

aimed to counter racial divisions that Zanzibari nationalists recognised as a legacy of colonial rule and unite all Zanzibaris in the struggle against colonialism. They advocated for constructing a new, uniquely Zanzibari national identity and engaged in nation-building processes using slogans about unity, patriotism, and the struggle for Zanzibari independence.¹²¹² The result of their approach could have been the gradual integration of African and Arab communities into a single Zanzibari society combining elements of many cultures and placing Zanzibar's affairs at the centre rather than those of Oman or the interior of Africa. Had the Zanzibari national movement been successful, the Arab elite of Zanzibar would have become the Zanzibari elite, and the separate Omani and Zanzibar nationalities would begin to function not only in sultan's decrees but also in reality.

A similar process occurred in the case of Brazil and Portugal. Although they are culturally and geographically very distant from Zanzibar and Oman, the issue of the separation process reveals many similarities between them. Brazil, like Zanzibar, remained a dependent territory for a long time. Then in 1807, during the Napoleonic Wars, Rio de Janeiro became a temporal capital of the Portuguese Empire by giving refuge to the ruling family and part of the elite who fled the occupied metropolis.¹²¹³ As in the case of Zanzibar, moving the capital aroused political aspirations among the local elites who would soon seek freedom from their rulers abroad. After the fall of Napoleon and the return of the Portuguese court to Lisbon, Brazilian elites did not want to be ruled again from the European metropolis. They wished to continue having a direct say in government, as they had when the empire's seat of power was in their backyard from 1808-1821. Therefore, in 1822, Brazil declared independence under the Portuguese Braganza dynasty. Nation building in Brazil accelerated among various groups, ranging from the Portuguese elite to the descendants of enslaved Africans.¹²¹⁴ The independent nature of the state and the different geographical and cultural conditions meant that, unlike in Zanzibar, this process succeeded, and a Brazilian nation emerged. While many Zanzibaris likewise wished to establish an independent nation, rather than continuing to be ruled from Oman after 1856, the island would follow a much different trajectory than that of Brazil.

In Zanzibar, a Zanzibari nation was not formed despite cultural factors conducive to the creation of a common Zanzibari identity. This process failed for several reasons. First, the

¹²¹² Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 155.

¹²¹³ Kirsten Schultz, *Tropical Versailles: Empire, Monarchy, and the Portuguese Royal Court in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1821* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹²¹⁴ Edward Burns, *Nationalism in Brazil: A Historical Survey* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1968); Anthony W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

African majority of Zanzibari society did not trust Arab politicians' plans to build a multi-racial state and society. They suspected that behind this project was a desire to maintain the political and economic predominance of Arabs in an independent state, preserving social inequality and the state's Arab character. Moreover, a section of Zanzibari society saw itself as part of the African world and tied its future to African nationalism. Zanzibari nationalism also did not have time to take root in society as the movement was established too late to gain stable support before independence in 1963.¹²¹⁵

Ethnic divisions supported by the colonial authorities and the groups themselves, including some Arabs, also stood in the way of the nation-building process in Zanzibar. For example, the Arab Association saw Zanzibar as an Arab country and a rightful participant in the Arab integration process. Thus, in 1944 when the Egyptian government organised a meeting of Arab representatives to spur cooperation among Arab countries, and Zanzibar was not invited, it provoked the displeasure of *Al-Falaq*. The magazine responded, '[...] we cannot excuse His Excellency Mustapha Nahas Pasha [Egyptian Prime Minister] who knows our Sultan very well for having ignored this oldest Arab Sultanate in Africa'.¹²¹⁶

The fact that the formation of a Zanzibar nation did not occur does not invalidate the importance of the idea within the Arab elite. The Zanzibari nation-building project to which the ZNP's policies aspired, even if motivated by a desire to maintain the Arab elites' dominance in Zanzibari society, marked a significant cultural shift among some Zanzibari Arabs. They saw their future in Zanzibar as its citizens and, unlike some members of the Arab Association, were prepared to abandon the principles of Arab unity and pan-Arab cooperation if political circumstances and the interests of Zanzibar demanded it. An example of this approach was Zanzibar's decision to relinquish its right to the Kenyan coast, which had formally been part of the sultanate since 1895, and refuse to assist Arabs there in their aspirations for autonomy or incorporation into Zanzibar.¹²¹⁷

¹²¹⁵ Lofchie, *Zanzibar*, 157.

¹²¹⁶ *Al-Falaq*, 'Closer Arab Union', 886, April 15, 1944.

¹²¹⁷ After the Second World War, with plans to decolonise Kenya and create a unitary state comprising the coast and the interior, the problem of the former's status arose. Its Arab and Swahili inhabitants declared allegiance to the Sultan of Zanzibar and expressed a desire to join Zanzibar or gain autonomy within the Kenyan Government. The movement was called *mwambao* (in Swahili, 'the coastline'). Leaders of the Arab Association and ZNP initially supported the aspirations of the Kenyan coastal people. However, the support of Zanzibar's Arab politicians ended in 1960 when ZNP announced that Kenya's coastal affairs should be resolved by their own people, and it would not interfere. The reason for this radical change of attitude was the political situation in both Kenya and Zanzibar. In the former, all African parties came out unequivocally and strongly against *mwambao*, significantly reducing the movement's chances of success. The political situation in Zanzibar was also not conducive to supporting the Kenyan Coast's cause. ZNP's support for *mwambao* could have undermined its multi-racial rhetoric and given ASP another argument against Zanzibar nationalists. See Brennan, 'Lowering the Sultan's Flag', 844-859.

A similar line of thinking among Arab politicians was evident in their attitude towards Zanzibar's relationship with Oman. Even before the formation of the autonomous government headed by Muhammad Shamte in 1961, British intelligence reported that Al-Barwānī knew of Zanzibar's need for cooperation with surrounding East African countries and a common foreign and defence policy. The ZNP leader is said to have recognised that Zanzibar was too small to function independently on the international stage.¹²¹⁸ Oman was absent from these considerations as Al-Barwānī did not recognise it as an international partner for Zanzibar.

Zanzibari Arab politicians betrayed their disinterest in including Oman in Zanzibar's foreign affairs in a document defining the objectives of an independent Zanzibar in external relations prepared by the ZNP and ZPPP government a month before the British protectorate ended.¹²¹⁹ The plan for Zanzibar's foreign policy stated that 'Zanzibar must be realistic and accept the facts of geography and history. These make Zanzibar an indissoluble part of East Africa'.¹²²⁰ The Zanzibar government considered joining the planned East African Federation, although it pointed out several problems with this idea, including Zanzibar's limited control of trade and the potential influx of immigrants. The document also described Zanzibar's possible position in the federation, highlighting Uganda as an essential ally to protect against of Tanganyika and Kenya's potential domination. Zanzibar's planned foreign policy partners also included India, Indonesia, and Malaysia for commercial reasons. Commonwealth affairs figured prominently in Zanzibar's foreign relations' plans because the sultanate was to become a member of the Commonwealth of Nations after independence.¹²²¹ Despite such wide-ranging agendas for the foreign policy of the independent state, Oman was absent from the list of countries with which Zanzibar planned to develop relations.

Zanzibar's foreign policy proposal also included a plan to establish diplomatic representations of Zanzibar. The country was to have four diplomatic outposts: one each in New York, London, Cairo, and Jakarta. A diplomatic post in London was a natural choice because Zanzibar was meant to become a member of the Commonwealth after independence. The embassy in New York would represent Zanzibar before the United Nations.¹²²² The selection of Jakarta as the next post was prompted by the clove trade and Zanzibar's interests in India

¹²¹⁸ Central Intelligence Committee, Monthly Report, Zanzibar, February 1960, CO822/2068.

¹²¹⁹ The Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party (ZPPP) was the third and smallest political party in Zanzibar after the Afro-Shirazi Party and the Zanzibar Nationalist Party. It mainly represented the Shirazi population in Pemba. From 1961 until the fall of the sultanate, it was a coalition partner of the ZNP and co-founded the government with it.

¹²²⁰ Foreign Policy of Zanzibar, Cabinet Paper no. 109, 1 November 1963, CO 822/3205.

¹²²¹ Foreign Policy of Zanzibar, Cabinet Paper no. 109, 1 November 1963, CO 822/3205.

¹²²² Wilson to Campbell, 22 November 1963, CO 822/3205.

and the Far East. The Cairo embassy would represent Zanzibar's affairs in the Middle East.¹²²³ The decision to establish only four diplomatic missions was due to a shortage of officials qualified to work in diplomacy and financial considerations. As early as 1963, there were plans to add another post in India, presumably because as state institutions grew, the number of representative offices would be increased.¹²²⁴ Until then, Zanzibar's interests in other countries would be represented by the United Kingdom.¹²²⁵

In foreign policy, at least in the period immediately following independence, Arab politicians saw no room for developing official relations with Oman. The government of Zanzibar, whose Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade was 'Alī bin Muḥsin Al-Barwānī, was aware of the internal and external threats that awaited the small state. For this reason, it sought allies and tried to defuse tensions by deepening relations with its East African neighbours. In this political situation, Oman, as a poor country plagued by internal war and on the margins of international affairs, could not be a partner to Zanzibar. At the same time, Arab politicians did not abandon their ties with the Arab world, as evidenced by the placement of one of Zanzibar's four embassies in Cairo. Thus, not establishing official relations with Oman may have been an expression of ZNP pragmatism, the limited capacity of the new state and the current geopolitical situation.

On the other hand, Zanzibar and Oman shared more than just a common history and ruling dynasty. British colonial officials mediated many issues that arose from the migration and settlement of Arabs between the countries. The failure to establish official relations and a diplomatic post in Oman created a situation where contacts between the two countries continued to be made privately or through British diplomats. It is possible, therefore, that in the political imagination of Zanzibar's Arab politicians, these contacts were of little importance. Perhaps they saw Oman as a distant country not only in terms of politics and geography but also in terms of culture. Zanzibar nationalism was influenced not only by Islam and Arabism but also by colonial education and Western ideas. Consequently, ZNP politicians may not have seen a need to establish relations with a distant and underdeveloped state like Oman.

Not all Arabs in Zanzibar supported the foreign policy vision formed by the ZNP and ZPPP government. *Al-Nahḍa*-centered community remained interested in Omani affairs and urged the two countries to work together in the spirit of pan-Arab and Islamic unity. Sheikh Hāshil bin Rāshid is even said to have thought of forming a confederation of the two states after

¹²²³ Woods to Butler, 12 November 1963, CO822/3232.

¹²²⁴ Woods to Butler, 12 November 1963, CO822/3232.

¹²²⁵ Spencer to Woods, 29 November 1963, CO 822/3205.

the declaration of Zanzibar's independence.¹²²⁶ The details of his plans or support for them among Zanzibar's Arab elite are unknown. Nevertheless, the existence of two visions of relations between Oman and Zanzibar in the second half of the 20th century indicated the presence of different attitudes among Zanzibar's Arab population and the influence of contradictory cultural influences of colonialism and European culture, on the one hand, and the Arab and Islamic revival, on the other.

The confrontation of these visions did not occur because Zanzibar's foreign policy did not have the opportunity to develop. A month after the announcement of the termination of the British protectorate, a revolution overthrew the sultanate and prompted or forced most non-African communities to leave Zanzibar. On April 24, 1964, Zanzibar entered a union with Tanganyika creating Tanzania, which sealed its African character and ended its direct ties with the Arab world and Oman.

7.5 Conclusion

British colonialism influenced Oman and Zanzibar's separation process and the relationships of their elites politically, legally and culturally. The structures of the modern colonial state in Zanzibar and the growth of education based on European models significantly transformed the identity of Zanzibar's Arab elite. This precipitated the spread of English and Swahili at the expense of Arabic. It also spurred the development of a national work ethic, a sense of civic duty and a willingness to work in the colonial administration. Employment in the colonial administration further deepened cultural change among the Arab community in Zanzibar. Arabs who worked for the colonial administration were inevitably shaped by it. The emphasis on the English language, participation in foreign courses and trips funded by the Zanzibar government or colonial modernisation programmes meant that members of the Arab elite adopted some European cultural models. Women who took up professional work and new activities became more visible and involved in public life. The rules of social life were liberalised, and men-women contacts became more common. Changes were also visible in fashion, which began to follow European trends.

Two significant sources of cultural change among Arabs in Zanzibar were the technological progress and new forms of entertainment. Going to the cinema, attending Siti binti Saad's concerts, or supporting a football team were not only forms of leisure but also factors which integrated the Zanzibari society. As a result, the Arab elite opened to other groups

¹²²⁶ Interview with Hāshil bin Rāshid's son, 'Abdallāh, Muscat, 4 February 2020.

and social strata, laying the foundations of a Zanzibari identity. Moreover, access to the technological advances of the time enabled the Arabs of Zanzibar to easily and quickly communicate and travel to other British colonies and Europe. These elements significantly weakened the Arab identity of the elite and their links with their country of origin.

At the same time, Oman, despite several reforms by Sultan Saʿīd, remained a country with traditional social and political relations. Saʿīd bin Taymūr feared that modernising the country, particularly reforming education, would lead to an influx of radical ideas, destabilising the internal situation and undermining his authority. A section of the Omani elite was also opposed to reforms because they saw the development of education and the introduction of modernity as threats to Islamic and Arab identities and social relations. As a result, despite some changes, Oman remained a country with a pre-capitalist economy and a traditional social structure based on the paternalistic authority of the sultan and the sheikhs until 1970.

Zanzibar and Oman's divergent 20th-century development trajectories caused the countries' elites to also diverge in terms of identity and culture. Conflicts and misunderstandings arose between them due to their different approaches to modernity and pan-Arab ideas. The poor knowledge of Arabic in Zanzibar, the lack of a direct modern link to Oman and the country's backwardness meant that many Zanzibari Arabs did not want to maintain contact with their country of origin.

Still, Oman and Zanzibar did not experience a complete severance of contacts. The Arab cultural revival that began to reach Zanzibar in the early 20th century played a major role in their continuing ties. This movement limited the changes resulting from the development of the English language and culture in Zanzibar and the Swahilisation of the Arab elite. The activities of Arab scholars, writers and the press made Arabs in Zanzibar interested in the affairs of the Arab world, including the fate of Oman. In addition, Zanzibar's Arab elite, following pan-Arabist ideas, supported the modernisation processes in Oman and gave space in the Zanzibari press for Omani Arabs to advocate for changes in Muscat. Zanzibari Arabs' growing interest in Oman was also evident in their travels to Oman and their wills and *waqfs* dedicated to the needs of Omanis.

While the Arab revival limited the process of separation between the two countries, it did not stop it. Many of Zanzibar's Arab elite who adhered to the ideas of Zanzibar nationalism saw no place for special contact with Oman. In their vision, a Zanzibari nation composed of both Arab and African elements should emerge in Zanzibar. Although they emphasised links with the Arab world, they saw no need to establish relations with Oman or an embassy there after independence. However, Arab politicians did not have the opportunity to realise their

plans, as a month after the British protectorate ended, a revolution broke out in Zanzibar, which overthrew the sultanate and forced most of the country's non-African inhabitants to flee. This revolution constituted the final act in the long saga of Oman and Zanzibar's separation.

Conclusion

This thesis analysed the relationships between Oman, Zanzibar, and their Arab elites from the succession crisis of 1856 to the fall of the Sultanate of Zanzibar in 1964, identifying which bonds endured, changed, or were severed during this period. The study examined the impact of two distinct centres of power, one in Oman and the other in Zanzibar, as well as the influence of British colonial policies on the relationship between these two states and their elites. The research focused partly on geographic differences between the states and how these affected each region's social, economic, and political environments. The study also concentrated on the role of British colonialism, detailing the actions of lower-level colonial officials, identifying conflicts and differences of opinion within the administration, and exploring the varied approaches taken towards Oman and Zanzibar.

The thesis examined various links between Oman and Zanzibar, including political relations between their rulers and elites, their private contacts, and cultural bonds. Notably, the most significant changes occurred in the political ties between the two states, as most relations were severed during the period. A similar fate also befell relations within the ruling family. However, the personal contacts of the remaining members of the Arab elites of both countries survived until the collapse of the Sultanate of Zanzibar in 1964. While cultural bonds underwent a significant transformation during the period, family contacts and the 20th-century Arab revival slowed the process of change. These contacts and the Arab revival ensured that, to a considerable extent, cultural ties between the two countries persisted.

The political break between Oman and Zanzibar was primarily the result of British colonialism and its impact on both countries. When Britain took on the responsibility of enforcing and upholding the Canning Award in 1861, it aimed to preserve the distinctiveness of Oman and Zanzibar and actively opposed any attempts to undermine their separation. The British effectively prevented the rulers and elites of both countries from interfering politically, ultimately contributing to the demise of the idea of reunification. Additionally, institutional changes inspired by the British in Oman and directly implemented by them in Zanzibar led to the emergence of two separate dynastic branches. As a result, contacts within the ruling dynasty decreased in the 20th century.

British policy on the political relationship between Oman and Zanzibar was often conducted in inconsistent and haphazard ways. Many issues, like the problem of succession in both countries, were contentious among colonial officials. Moreover, some British actions helped maintain political ties between the two countries. The best example of this is the Zanzibar subsidy arranged by the Canning Award, which tied the two countries together for more than a decade. Significantly, the British measures that resulted in severing successive political ties between the two countries were not introduced at once but occurred gradually and at intervals. More than half a century passed between the announcement of arbitration and the introduction of the first permanent passport and visa regulations. Many of these measures were also poorly or unevenly implemented and, as in the case of travel regulations, did not function as intended for many decades. Furthermore, the degree of British interference varied between countries. During this period in Oman, the British could only advise and urge the sultan to take certain actions. The British administration's lack of real power in the nation limited its influence on that side of the separation process, whereas, in Zanzibar, it intervened more directly.

It is crucial to note that not all actions the British took were meant to deepen the divide between the two countries. Despite implementing policies on Zanzibari nationality and immigration, the British administration's intention was not to sever the links between the two nations and their elites. Instead, it aimed to strengthen British control over Zanzibar, ensure stability in the protectorate, and restrict the influx of migrants from the Arabian Peninsula. It is worth mentioning that even though imperial interests underlay the decisions of colonial authorities in Zanzibar, officials also recognised to some extent the 'traditional ties' between Oman and Zanzibar and made provisions for Arabs travelling between the two regions. While the institutional and legal changes made in the Zanzibar Protectorate limited contact between Oman and Zanzibar, there is no evidence to suggest that this was the objective of British policy.

British policy was not consistently focused on supporting the separation of Oman and Zanzibar, and not every political relationship between the two countries was perceived as a threat necessitating a response. The British mainly sought to maintain the formal separation of the two countries and to pre-empt and counteract any conflict between them. In addition, colonial officials fought against any movement or action they felt could threaten Britain's position in the region. After 1920, political tensions between Oman and Zanzibar waned, and the British stopped interfering directly in the relationship between the two countries and their elites. However, this did not mean that all political ties between the two nations were wholly

broken, as the Arab Association and *Al-Falaq* magazine continued influencing Omani politics and the consciousness of the elites there.

The political break between Oman and Zanzibar cannot be solely attributed to British colonialism. The Arab elites also played a significant role in this process due to tribal divisions that resulted in escalating succession conflicts after 1856 and contributed to the collapse of the Omani uprising of 1895. The rulers of both countries also took part in weakening political ties. The Sultan of Zanzibar, Mājid, introduced the first restrictions on migration from Oman. His brother, Thuwaynī, divided the Omani elite into subjects of Zanzibar and Oman. Additionally, between 1932 and 1964, the Sultan of Oman, Saʿīd bin Taymūr, implemented a sovereigntist policy that established visas to Oman, restricted the mobility of members of the ruling dynasty, and distanced himself from his dynastic heritage in Zanzibar. Although the policies of the rulers and elites of both countries had a lesser impact on the separation process than British colonialism, it is evident that some Arab elites were uninterested in maintaining ties between Oman and Zanzibar.

Despite the severance of most political ties between Oman and Zanzibar, personal contacts between Omani Arabs from both sides of the Indian Ocean endured. One of the primary factors that contributed to this was continuous mobility between the two countries. Although the rulers of Zanzibar introduced temporary migration restrictions from Oman or the British implemented immigration policies in Zanzibar, travel between Oman and Zanzibar was still possible. The British-imposed migration controls in Zanzibar only affected the arrival of Manga Arabs. They did not prevent the Arab elite from travelling to Zanzibar, owning land, or conducting business there, despite their lack of Zanzibari nationality.

While the nature of administrative and legal regulations allowed migration between Oman and Zanzibar, the most significant driving factor in Arab travel between the two countries was the level of economic and social developments in Zanzibar. Despite its status as a British protectorate, Zanzibar was a developing country with public services, access to technological advancements, and greater income opportunities than pre-1970 Oman. As a result, Omani Arabs of all classes migrated to Zanzibar in search of better living conditions. There was also movement from Oman to Zanzibar, including those returning to their homeland after years of emigration, visiting relatives or old friends. Furthermore, Oman's Arab identity and the presence of an influential group of Ibādī scholars also drew some Zanzibari Arabs to enhance their knowledge of religion and the Arabic language.

Seamless movement between Oman and Zanzibar allowed for families, businesses, and cultural ties to remain strong between the two countries. When some family members migrated

from Oman to Zanzibar, it created a network of connections, including inheritance, finances, and marriage. Additionally, the migration of Omanis to Zanzibar ensured that the Arab community remained in touch with their roots and culture. The Arab elite in Zanzibar, a minority in the society, were at risk of losing their Arab identity due to the prevalence of Swahili culture and intermarriage with the African population. However, the arrival of Arabs from Oman helped to limit these processes.

The maintenance of personal contacts by the two Arab elites between 1856 and 1964 took place not only despite British control of relations between the two countries but partly thanks to the activities of colonial officials. British clerks in Zanzibar and Muscat played an influential role in managing some private contacts between the two Arab elites by mediating travel, inheritances, or debt issues. The involvement of British officials in the personal affairs of Omani and Zanzibari Arabs shows the imperial bureaucracy's dominance in the region and the dependence of local elites on it. Still, British involvement enhanced contacts between Omani families on both sides of the Indian Ocean.

Although personal and family ties between the Omani and Zanzibari elites were not severed, these relationships still experienced significant change. Some families who migrated from Oman to Zanzibar before 1970 did not attempt to contact or visit their ancestral country. Additionally, there were tribes in Oman that did not have a tradition of travelling to East Africa and, therefore, had no connections to Zanzibar. As a result, some groups emerged in both countries that considered the other distant and foreign and saw no need for contact. This divide existed before 1856, but the years between 1856 and 1964 contributed to the deepening of these differences within the Omani elites, leading to two opposing attitudes towards Omani-Zanzibari relations. One aimed to maintain contact between Omanis on both sides of the Indian Ocean, while the other was indifferent or even hostile toward their distant cousins. These conflicting attitudes point to the significance of cultural factors in shaping relations between the two countries.

The cultural connections between Oman and Zanzibar survived until the collapse of the Sultanate of Zanzibar in 1964 but were significantly transformed in the leadup. A considerable number of Zanzibari Arabs became Swahilised and started to identify as Zanzibaris. The influence of European culture also grew due to colonial education and administration, resulting in many Zanzibari Arabs losing their intimate connections to Arab culture. These changes led to a reduction in bonds with Oman and growing criticism of the conservative worldview of their Omani cousins. However, the migration of Omani Arabs to Zanzibar and the Arab revival helped to re-develop Arab culture. The ideas of *Al-Nahḍa*,

activities of the Arab Association, and the Arab press also helped renew the connection of many Zanzibari Arabs to Oman.

The severing of ties between Oman and Zanzibar took on different forms for each connection, but the long-standing nature of these bonds is evident in all the examples discussed in this thesis. Despite most political relations being broken, the process of separation spanned decades. Even half a century after the division of Oman and Zanzibar, Arab elites still felt a sense of belonging to a united political community and attempted to reunite the two countries. Meanwhile, migration and cultural ties persisted throughout the entire period of the two sultanates, indicating their enduring nature.

The analysis above confirms assertions Fernand Braudel made in his classic article on *long durée*.¹²²⁷ Braudel posits that the foundations of long-term history are rooted in enduring structures such as geography, climate, biology, and culture, which humans have little influence in changing. These factors play a crucial role in determining the longevity of trade routes, cultural ideas, and the boundaries of civilizations for centuries to come.¹²²⁸ In the case of Oman and Zanzibar, it is the maritime environment that contributed to maintaining a connection between these remote areas. The monsoon winds, the economic opportunities in East Africa and the tradition of Omani travels to that region ensured that links between these two parts of the Indian Ocean survived despite the political or cultural changes in both states.

Furthermore, Braudel argues that the process of modernization is not a sudden and sweeping revolution that transforms the lives and fortunes of individuals and nations in a rapid and profound manner. It is a product of earlier periods and that even the most radical changes, such as the French Revolution or the advent of capitalism, had their roots in earlier eras. Braudel contends that these changes did not immediately displace all the elements of previous systems but rather represented a transition from one order to another while maintaining continuity between both.¹²²⁹

The period spanning from 1856 to 1964 witnessed substantial technological, political, and cultural transformations across the Indian Ocean region, which had a considerable impact on Zanzibar. However, traditional structures and ties were not fully replaced by these processes. Even with the advent of steamships and airplanes, dhows continued to be used for

¹²²⁷ The theoretical concept of *long durée* was first published by Ferdinand Braudel in the article in 1958 on the pages of the *Annales*. See Ferdinand Braudel, 'Histoire et sciences sociales. La longue durée', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 13, no. 4 (1958).

¹²²⁸ Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, 'History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée', *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center), 2009, Vol. 32, No. 2, 'Commemorating the Longue Durée', 178-179.

¹²²⁹ Fernand Braudel, *On History*, transl. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 210.

transportation between Oman and Zanzibar. Moreover, while Arab elites in both countries gained access to new ideas and institutions, previous intellectual traditions were not displaced, as modern pan-Arab and pan-Islamic concepts drew on the traditional Ibādī thought.

Undoubtedly, Braudel's notions of modernity and long duration are not without their significant constraints. As Olivia Harris has noted, Braudel's perspective on modernity disregards those who were most impacted by its consequences, such as workers and the middle class in the context of capitalism. This limitation can be attributed to Braudel's reliance on examples and inspiration from the Mediterranean region, particularly its rural areas.¹²³⁰ However, it is not accurate to claim, as Harris does, that Braudel's concept is only relevant to the centres of civilization and not applicable to their peripheries due to the continuous conflicts and instability in these regions.¹²³¹ On the contrary, the example of Oman and Zanzibar shows that their peripheral status only strengthened the persistence of traditional relationships and institutions.¹²³²

British colonial officials in Zanzibar were not interested in bringing comprehensive civilisational change and social progress to the country they governed. Instead, the modernization process they pursued in Zanzibar primarily served colonial interests and was limited and conservative in nature. Although the Arab elite in Zanzibar lost its tribal character, it retained its paternalistic attitude towards the Manga Arabs and its links with its country of origin. The British policy of racial division further prevented Arabs who settled in Zanzibar from renouncing their links with Oman, as they were always referred to as Arabs in documents. Additionally, the peripheral status of Oman and the limited possibilities of its authorities in reforming the country meant that migration to Zanzibar continued, and traditional relations, despite some changes in Zanzibar, persisted between the countries.

The long persistence of some links between Oman and Zanzibar and the severance of the others had also significant consequences for Zanzibar's Arab community after 1964. When Zanzibari Arabs fled or were deported from the country after the fall of the sultanate, they sought refuge in their ancestral country. However, the Sultan of Oman, Sa'īd bin Taymūr, announced that he would welcome only Arabs with Omani citizenship into his country. He

¹²³⁰ Olivia Harris, 'Braudel: Historical Time and the Horror of Discontinuity', *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 57, Spring 2004, 167.

¹²³¹ Harris, 'Braudel: Historical Time', 168.

¹²³² These findings exemplify how Braudel's concepts need not be limited to civilisation centres but can also provide valuable insights beyond them, which may contribute to the ongoing discussion on a return to the *long durée* concept in historical research. See for example, David Armitage, Guldi Jo, 'The Return of the Longue Durée: An Anglo-American Perspective', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales - English Edition* 70, no. 2 (2015): 219–47.

argued ‘that [his] country[’s] relationship of substance [with Zanzibar] ceased in 1860’.¹²³³ His statement acknowledged that the political bonds between the two countries had ended decades ago, and he perceived most Zanzibari Arabs as foreigners. Consequently, he did not want to accept all Arabs fleeing persecution in Zanzibar. Naturally, his stance was also influenced by other factors, mainly the outbreak of the rebellion in Dhofar in 1963.¹²³⁴ The sultan feared that the uncontrolled influx of Arabs from Zanzibar would destabilise his already weakened government. Nevertheless, the argument of severed legal relations with Zanzibar allowed Sa‘īd to block the arrival of many Zanzibari Arabs who were forced to seek refuge elsewhere.¹²³⁵

This policy underwent a significant shift when Sa‘īd’s son Qābūs ascended to power in 1970 and proclaimed a comprehensive strategy aimed at modernising the nation. In one of his first addresses, he called on Omanis who remained outside the country to return to their homeland and participate in constructing a modern Oman. A substantial number of Arabs who had departed Zanzibar in 1964 and stayed in adjacent Arab states or Europe responded favourably to this plea and returned to their ancestral country.¹²³⁶ This is further evidence that a substantial proportion of Zanzibari Arabs possessed a sense of Arab identity and personal ties to Oman. However, many decades of separation between Oman and Zanzibar also had significant consequences in this regard.

Several members of Zanzibar’s former Arab elite decided to remain in other countries or return to Oman many years later. For example, ‘Alī bin Muḥsin Al-Barwānī lived a long period in Dubai and only moved to Oman ten years before he died in 2006.¹²³⁷ His decision may have been influenced by practical issues, as Zanzibaris who had lived abroad for an extended period had established their lives, obtained citizenship, and found work. In these situations, starting anew in Oman would have been challenging. However, the lack of connection with their ancestral country and a strong sense of Zanzibari identity may have also played a crucial role in their decision not to return. The relevance of cultural issues is confirmed by Sa‘ūd bin Aḥmad Āl Būsa‘īdī, who returned to Oman after 1970 but mentioned in his

¹²³³ Confidential Telegram from Muscat to Foreign Office, 16 February 1964, FO 371/178270.

¹²³⁴ More on the Dhufari rebellion see, Abdel Razzaq Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman, 1965-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹²³⁵ At first, the Omani authorities had a lenient stance towards the lack of necessary documentation among refugees from Zanzibar. They allowed relatives or sheikhs to identify new arrivals, resulting in few rejections. However, with subsequent waves of refugees and the changing situation in Dhufar, the Omani administration altered its policy and began to prioritize the need for proper documentation. Confidential Telegram from Zanzibar to Muscat, 29 June 1964, FO 371/178270.

¹²³⁶ Marc Valeri, *Oman. Politics and Society in the Qaboos State* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2009), 128.

¹²³⁷ P.J.L. Frankl, ‘Obituary: Ali Muhsin al-Barwani’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 33, no. 2, 2006, 265.

autobiography that he only felt at home in Oman when the country opened to tourism and ‘reassert[ed] its character as a cosmopolitan civilization.’¹²³⁸ To this day, individuals born in Zanzibar who arrived in Oman after 1970, known as *Zinjibaris*, differ in many ways from the rest of the Omani population.¹²³⁹

The impact of the old cultural and geographical ties is not only evident among the Omanis of Zanzibar origin but also in the relationship between modern Oman and Zanzibar, which is now part of the United Republic of Tanzania. Both nations hold regular governmental meetings and actively engage in scientific and cultural collaboration, particularly in preserving Omani historical heritage in Zanzibar.¹²⁴⁰ Furthermore, a growing number of Omanis are returning to Zanzibar, purchasing properties and spending several months there each year.¹²⁴¹ While the history of both countries and the subject of revolution remain sensitive topics in Omani-Zanzibari relations, a shared sense of cultural and ancestral roots endures among Zanzibaris of Arab descent and Omanis hailing from Zanzibar.¹²⁴² Therefore, more than 150 years after the creation of the separate Zanzibari state, the two nations still share many ties, albeit different from those between 1856 and 1964. The separation process no longer influences the relationship between them, which is instead shaped by the building of mutual understanding and joint projects in culture and economics.

¹²³⁸ Al-Busaidi, *An Omani Gentleman*, 183

¹²³⁹ Kharusi, ‘Identity and Belonging’, 429.

¹²⁴⁰ Examples of this type of collaboration include the digitisation of documents from the Zanzibar National Archives by the Omani National Records and Archives Authority, or the funding of the restoration of Bayt Al-Ajaib by the Government of Oman, see <https://www.muscatdaily.com/2020/12/19/oman-supports-ongoing-renovation-work-of-beit-al-ajaib-in-zanzibar> [access 20 May 2023]

¹²⁴¹ Limbert, *In the Time of Oil*, 175-176.

¹²⁴² The most recent publication describing the issues of remembering the revolution in Zanzibar is *Social Memory, Silenced Voices, and Political Struggle. Remembering the Revolution in Zanzibar*, ed. William C. Bissel, Marei-Aude Fouéré (Dar As-Salam: Mkuki Na Nyota, 2018).

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OM.NRAA.A.2.1.10 ‘ahd Sa‘īd bin Taymūr (1932-1970)

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AA Consular Records
AB Secretariat
AC Zanzibar Protectorate
AM General Deeds Register
AQ Sultan
BA Official Publications
HC Court Files

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