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'MEMORANDUM (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.'

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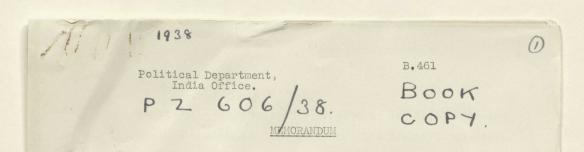


About this record

The file consists of a memorandum in two parts. The first part provides information about the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman in eight sections, entitled, 'Territory', 'Historical', 'Physical Features', 'Climate', 'Population', 'Products and Trade', 'Religion' and 'Government'. The second part describes and gives a brief biography of His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur, and outlines the extent of British influence upon him.



'MEMORANDUM (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.' [1r] (1/10)



(a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman.(b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.

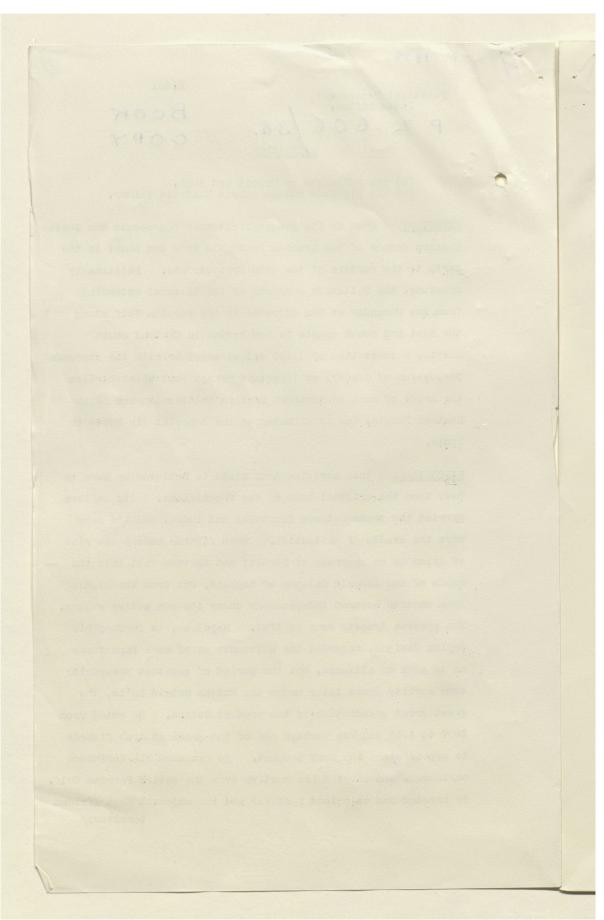
TERRITORY. Oman in its geographical ænse represents the South Eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula from Abu Dhabi in the North to the borders of the Aden Protectorate. Politically speaking, the Sultanate consists of the littoral extending from Ras Musandam at the entrance of the Persian Gulf along the East and South coasts to Ras Fartak in Central South Arabia, a coast line of 1,100 miles, together with the overseas possession of Gwadur, an important Mekran port which handles the trade of much of Southern British Baluchistan and South Eastern Persia, and is situated on the Imperial Air Route to India.

This maritime Arab State is believed by some to HISTORICAL. have been the original home of the Phoenicians. Its sailors carried the trade between Babylonia and India, and its seas were the cradle of navigation. Oman figures before the rise of Islam as an appanage of Persia, and in turn fell into the hands of the Abbasid Caliphs of Baghdad, but from the Middle Ages onwards secured independence under its own native rulers. The present dynasty rose in 1741. Napoleon, to further his Indian designs, regarded the Sultanate as of such importance as to seek an alliance, but the period of greatest prosperity came seventy years later under the Sultan Saiyid Sa'id, the great great grandfather of the present Sultan. He ruled from 1807 to 1856 and was perhaps one of the greatest Arab figures to appear since the Arab prophet. He extended his influence northwards and assorted his mastery over the entire Persian Gulf. He invaded and colonised Zanzibar and the adjacent East African territory/

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'MEMORANDUM (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.' [1v] (2/10)



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'MEMORANDUM (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.' [2r] (3/10)

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territory. He presented a frigate to our Royal Navy and received a handsome yacht, the "Prince Regent", in return. The Sultanate has since then diminished gradually in importance, largely as a result of the influence on Muscat trade of the development of steam navigation and the opening of the Suez Canal. Internal disaffection and rebellion have restricted the authority of the Sultan to the coastal districts. British policy has throughout this later period been chiefly concerned with suppressing (a) the Slave Trade and (b) the Arms Traffic. Both had their centre in Muscat, which derived from them great wealth. Muscat was the slave market for South East Arabia and the armoury for European arms destined to be smuggled across the Persian Gulf for Afghanistan, Baluchistan and the North West Frontier. Both have disappeared largely through the activities of the Royal Navy and the collaboration of the Sultan under Treaty obligations.

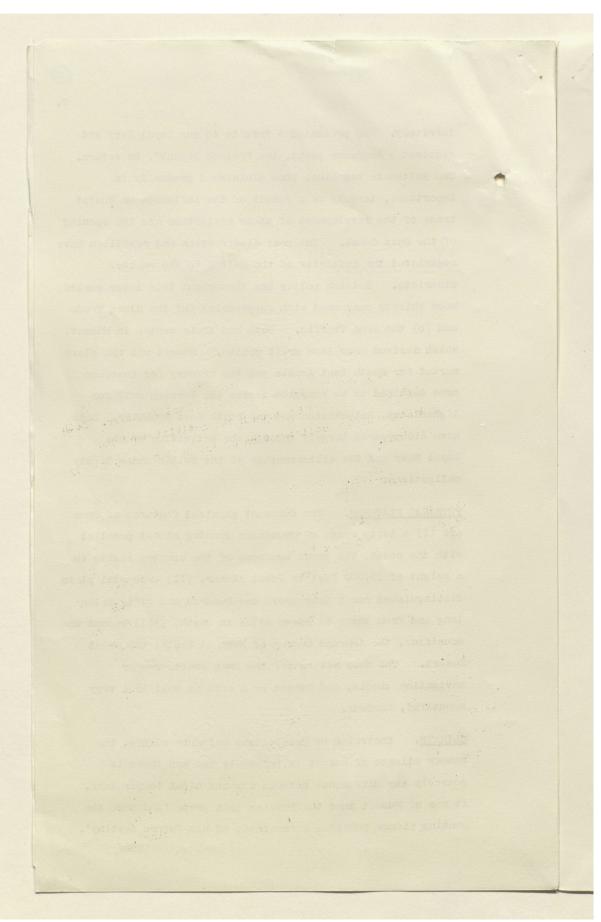
<u>PHYSICAL FEATURES</u>. The dominant physical features of Oman are (I) a lofty range of mountains running almost parallel with the coast, the great backbone of the country rising to a height of 10,000 feet in Jebel Akdhar, (II) a coastal plain distinguished for a date grove one hundred and fifty miles long and from three to seven miles in depth, (III) beyond the mountains, the immense spaces of Ruba al Khali, the Great Desert. The deep waters off the Oman coasts render navigation simple, and Muscat is a safe as well as a very beautiful, harbour.

CLIMATE. Encircled by precipitous volcanic cliffs, the summer climate of Muscat is intensely hot and there is scarcely any difference between day and night temperature. It was of Muscat that the Persian poet wrote 'And here the panting sinner receives a foretaste of his future destiny'. The/

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'MEMORANDUM (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.' [2v] (4/10)



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'MEMORANDUM (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.' [3r] (5/10)

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The average rainfall varies between three and six inches.

<u>POPULATION</u>. The total population of Oman has been estimated at 500,000, representing perhaps 15% of the entire population of the Arabian peninsula. 80% of these are tribal Arabs, there is a considerable pure negro element generally in domestic service, and a less numerous foreign trading element which consists of British Indians, Persians and Baluchis. There is a large admixture of African blood in the population at large, as also in the Ruling Family.

PRODUCTS AND TRADE. The overseas trade is largely with Bombay, Aden and Zanzibar, though America takes a considerable portion of Oman's date grop for her own black population. The fisherics, chiefly shark for export to the Far East, are of second importance to the date industry. The camels of Oman are famous throughout Arabia, but the country is too parched to allow the horse to flourish and very few are bred. Indigo dyeing, copper and brass work and cloth weaving are among other industries, and there is a crude but characteristic variety of gold and silver work, especially used for sheaths and mountings of daggers and swords.

RELIGION. The majority of the inhabitants belong to the Ibadhi sect of Islam, which is elsewhere found in Morocco. Fiercely intolerant of other creeds, Oman has been traditionally hostile to foreign penetration, and the Sultan himself, disapproved of for his infidel associations, has never deemed it expedient to visit the interior mountains. The tenets of Ibadhism, in their puritanical narrowness, resemble the Wahabism of Central Arabia.

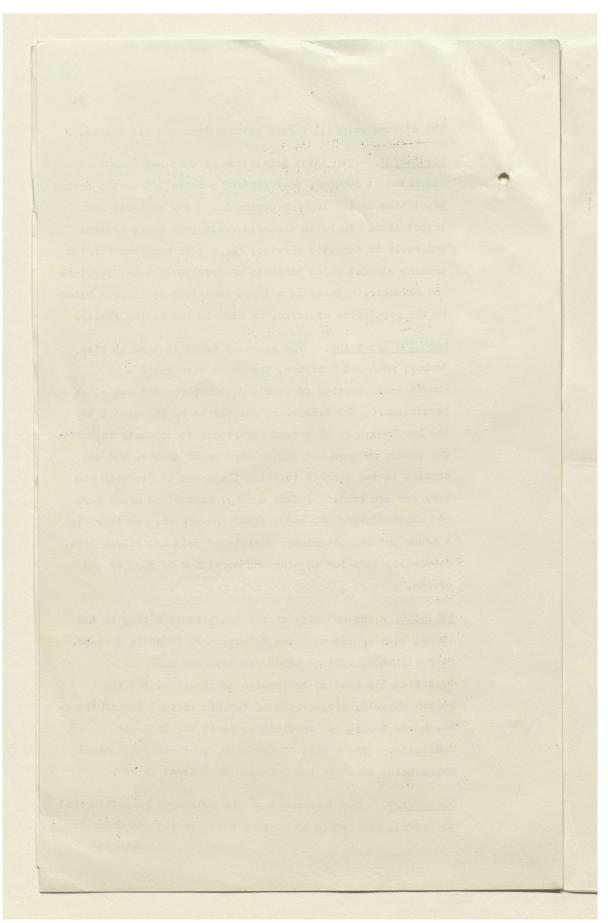
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>. The Government of the Sultanate is patriarchal or feudal, and judged by western bureaucratic standards is without/

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'MEMORANDUM (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.' [3v] (6/10)

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'MEMORANDUM (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.' [4r] (7/10)

without much system or efficiency, but it admirably suits the conditions and needs of the inhabitants. It was formerly a theocracy, but the Sultan now exercises only temporal functions. (4)

(b) HIS HIGHNESS SULTAN SAIYID SAID BIN TAIMUR.

The Sultan succeeded his father, Sultan Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal bin Turki, K.C.I.E.,C.S.I., on the latter's abdication in 1932. He is now 27 years old and is unmarried. He has a pleasant personality, and though short in stature (about 5'2"), bears himself with considerable dignity and is endowed with a quiet sense of humour. He is shrewd and energetic, with a flair for finance, and has a will of his own. He speaks excellent English, which he learnt at the Chiefs' College, Ajmer, where he received part of his education.

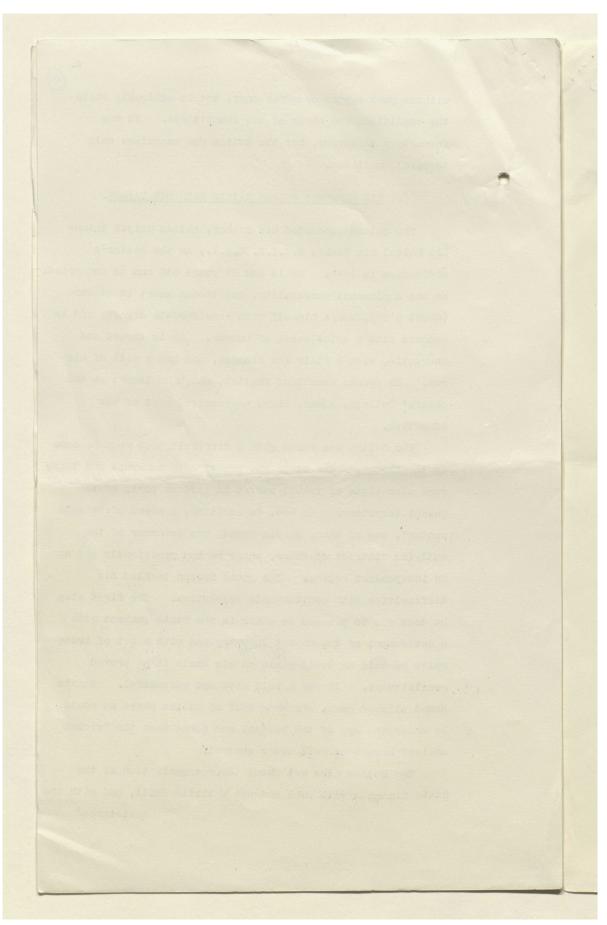
The Sultan was faced with a difficult task when he came to the throne. The State was practically bankrupt and there were also signs of tribal unrest in various parts of the Muscat territory. He had, in addition, a crowd of "wicked uncles", one of whom, Saiyid Hamad, was Governor of the outlying district of Sohar, where he had practically set up an independent regime. The young Sultan tackled his difficulties with considerable resolution. The first step he took was to proceed to Sohar in the State gunboat with a detachment of the Muscat Infantry and with a set of irons which he said he would place on his uncle if he proved recalcitrant. It was a bold move and successful. Saiyid Hamad climbed down, was made Wali of Muttra where he could be under the eye of the Sultan, and since then the "wicked uncles" have been well under control.

The Sultan also set about the reorganisation of the State finances with zeal and not a little skill, and with the assistance/

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'MEMORANDUM (a) The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. (b) His Highness Sultan Saiyid Said bin Taimur.' [5r] (9/10)

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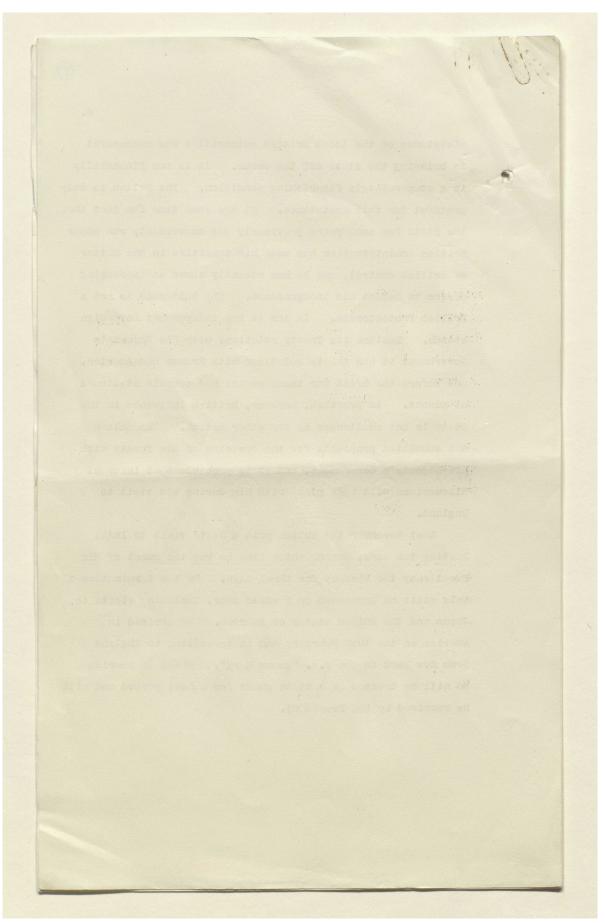
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assistance of the local British authorities was successful in bringing the State off the rocks. It is now financially in a comparatively flourishing condition. The Sultan is duly grateful for this assistance. At the same time the fact that the State for some years previously was unavoidably run under British administration has made him sensitive in the matter of British control, and he has recently shown an increasing desire to assert his independence. The Sultanate is not a British Protectorate. In law it has independent sovereign status. Besides its Treaty relations with His Majesty's Government it has treaty relations with France and America, and before the Great War these powers had consuls stationed at Muscat. In practice, however, British influence in the State is not challenged by any other nation. The Sultan has submitted proposals for the revision of his Treaty with His Majesty's Government, and it is probable that informal discussions will take place with him during his visit to England.

Last November the Sultan paid a State visit to India lasting ten days, during which time he was the guest of His Excellency the Viceroy for three days. On the termination of this visit he proceeded on a world tour, including visits to Japan and the United States of America. He arrived in America on the 10th February and is travelling to England from New York in the s.s. "Queen Mary". While in America he will be treated as a State guest for a short period and will be received by the President.

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