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'El Katr, 1908-1916'

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About this record

Memorandum covering: the status and governance of El Katr [Qatar], relations with His Majesty's Government, and treaties with and affecting El Katr during the period 1908-28.

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INDIA OFFICE B. 402.
P 4804/28.

EL KATR, 1908-16.

1. The El Katr (or Qatar) Peninsula, which is governed by the Sheikhs of the Thani family, lies south of Ojair, in the district of Qatif, the most southernly point to which, with the exception of Koweit, His Majesty's Government prior to the War of 1914 recognised continuous Turkish influence. It lies, on the other hand, north of El Odeid, to which the Trucial Sheikh of Abu Dhabi was allowed to assert his rights of possession in 1878, and which prior to 1916 formed the western boundary of the territories of the Trucial Sheikhs. The status of the Peninsula formed the subject of lengthy discussion in the period prior to 1908, details of which will be found in the Foreign Office Memorandum of 1908.

2. The vexed question of the status of El Katr was finally disposed of in the Anglo-Turkish negotiations of 1912-14. Under the unratified Anglo-Turkish Convention of 29th July 1913, the Ottoman Government renounced all rights to the Peninsula, which was, as in the past, to continue to be governed by the Sheikhs of the Thani family, while His Majesty's Government engaged not to permit the Sheikh of Bahrein to interfere in the internal affairs of El Katr, to threaten its autonomy or to annex it. A supplementary article reserved the rights of the inhabitants of Bahrein to visit the island of Zakhuniyah for fishing purposes, as in the past.

3. A new situation arose with the conquest of Hasa by Ibn Saud in the course of 1913. El Katr, like the Oman coast, formed, in his view, part of his ancestral domains, to which he could therefore prefer a claim as of right.* But the Amir was warned at the end of the year that non-interference with El Katr was a condition of the maintenance of friendly relations with His Majesty's Government,† and no difficulty in consequence arose. The conclusion of a formal treaty between El Katr and His Majesty's Government, which, other considerations apart, was in the immediately pre-war period of much importance in connection with the arms traffic, was postponed‡ until the final ratification of the Anglo-Turkish Convention, and so had not been disposed of on the outbreak of the European War.

* P.A. Bahrein to Pol. Res., Dec. 20 1913, P. 478/14.

† Lr. from Pol. Res. to Ibn Saud, Sept. 11 1913, P. 4184/13.

‡ P. 3749/13, 2698/14.

4. In common with the rulers of the other States in the Gulf, the Sheikh of El Katr was notified by the Political Resident of the outbreak of war with Turkey in November 1914,§ and throughout the period of the war maintained a friendly attitude towards His Majesty's Government.

§ Lr. from Pol. Res. to G. of I. 203, Sept. 1 1914, P. 4140, 4502.

5. Under the treaty concluded between His Majesty's Government and Ibn Saud on the 26th December 1915, the Ruler of Nejd undertook to refrain from aggression on, or interference with, "the territories of . . . the Sheikhs of Katr and the Oman coast, who are under the protection of the British Government, and who have treaty relations with the said Government, and the limits of their territories shall be hereafter determined."

6. The outbreak of the European War, which led to a falling off in the arms traffic in the Gulf, rendered the conclusion of a definitive treaty with El Katr less urgent, and it was not until May 1915|| that the question was revived. Lengthy negotiation proved necessary before a satisfactory agreement could be reached, and it was not until 3rd November 1916¶ that a treaty was finally concluded between the Sheikh and His Majesty's Government. The treaty, the terms of which are summarised in the précis of treaties appended to the present Memorandum, secured to the Sheikh the advantages conferred under the Trucial treaties on the Sheikhs of Trucial Oman, while imposing on him the obligations in regard to piracy, the slave traffic, the arms traffic, the grant of concessions, the cession, sale, gift, lease

|| Viceroy to S. of S. for L. May 6 1915 P. 1700/15.
G. of I. to Pol. Res., May 13 1915, P. 3285/15.
¶ P. 2430/16, 4583/16, 268/17.

or transfer of territory to other Powers, and the maintenance of relations with foreign Powers already accepted by those Chiefs. In order to secure the signature of the Sheikh, it was agreed that the articles of the treaty (7, 8 and 9) which related to the admission of British subjects to Katr for trading purposes and their protection while so engaged, the admission of an Agent on behalf of His Majesty's Government, and the establishment of post and telegraph offices in Katr, should remain inoperative for the present, while a minor concession was made in respect of the retention by the Sheikh and his dependents of negro slaves actually in their possession, on the understanding that they would receive "fair and just treatment."

7. The one respect of importance in which the treaty went beyond the normal type of Trucial treaty was that it contained an undertaking that the good offices of His Majesty's Government should be granted to the Sheikh in the event of unprovoked aggression against him *by land* within the territories of Katr (Article XI). The assurance in question did not, however, in practice impose any very serious liability on His Majesty's Government, as was shown when a tentative appeal was made to it by the Sheikh in 1922 (see para. 9 of Memorandum on the Trucial Sheikhs, 1908-28, on page 5).

8. The treaty was ratified by the Governor-General of India in Council on 28th March 1918.* The history of Katr from the date of its conclusion is dealt with in the Memorandum on the Trucial Chiefs on page 5, but it may be recorded here that the position of its ruler was recognised on the conclusion of the European War by the grant to him of the C.I.E. (3rd June 1919) and of a salute of seven guns—honours of which he is the only recipient among the chiefs of the Trucial Coast.

* G. of I. Desp. 25,
April 19 1918,
P. 2419/18.

INDIA OFFICE,
5th September 1928.

J. G. L.