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THE ARABIAN FRONTIER OF THE BRITISH RAJ

Merchants, Rulers, and the British
in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf

JAMES ONLEY

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For my parents

Toni Onley (1928–2004) and Gloria Onley

and grandparents

James Onley (1903–91) and Florence Onley (1907–99)

Winner of

The Leigh Douglas Memorial Prize

Awarded in 2002 by the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

&

The Malcolm H. Kerr Award (Honourable Mention)

Awarded in 2001 by the Middle East Studies Association of North
America

Preface

Maps showing India and Arabia together are rare. When we see one, such as the map on the cover of this book or the map on page 16, we are struck by the closeness of the subcontinents to each other—far closer than we realized. This closeness had a profound influence on Arabia. For over 4,000 years, Arabia fell within the economic and cultural orbit of India. During the British Raj, it also fell within the political orbit of India. Between 1820 and 1947, its political affairs were dominated by the East India Company and its successor, the British Government of India. Arabia was the westernmost frontier of the British Indian Empire: a buffer zone protecting the Raj and its communication lines with Britain from the advances of the Russians, French, Germans, Italians, and Ottomans during the height of the Great Game and the Eastern Question. The British controlled their Arabian frontier in the same way as their other frontiers surrounding British India: through a policy of protectorates.

One of the strongest advocates of this policy was Lord Curzon of Kedleston, the last nineteenth-century Viceroy of India (1899–1905). In 1907, he delivered a famous lecture on the topic at the University of Oxford. He had left Calcutta only two years before and the subject was still fresh in his mind. To a packed Sheldonian Theatre, he explained how

It has been by a policy of Protectorates that the Indian Empire has for more than a century pursued, and is still pursuing, its as yet unexhausted advance. First it surrounded its acquisitions with a belt of Native States with whom alliances were concluded and treaties made. The enemy to be feared a century ago was the Maratha host, and against this danger the Rajput States and Oude were maintained as a buffer. On the North-West Frontier, Sind and the Punjab, then under independent rulers, warded off contact or collision with Beluchistan and Afghanistan, while the Sutlej States warded off contact with the Punjab. Gradually, one after another, these barriers disappeared as the forward movement began: some were annexed, others were engulfed in the advancing tide, remaining embedded like stumps of trees in an avalanche, or left with their heads above water like islands in a flood. ...

With what varied objects these different Protectorates have been established, sometimes political, sometimes commercial, sometimes strategic, sometimes a combination of all these, I have not time here to deal. But [some] curious and exceptional cases may be mentioned: that of the British Somaliland Protectorate ... , and the British Protectorate of the petty Arab chiefships on the Southern shore of the Persian Gulf... (Lord Curzon, *Frontiers*, the 1907 Romanes Lecture, part 4)

'Frontiers', he told his audience, are 'the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations'. 'I wonder, indeed,' he said, 'if my hearers at all appreciate the part that Frontiers are playing in the everyday history and policy of the British Empire. Time was when England had no Frontier but the ocean. We have now by far the greatest extent of territorial Frontier of any dominion on the globe.' Curzon believed the most important, delicate, and diverse frontier in the world to be that of Britain's Indian Empire (Ibid., part 1). Its vast frontier, thousands of miles long, bordered the Italian Empire (in East Africa), the French Empire (in East Africa and Indo-China), the Ottoman Empire (in Arabia and Iraq), Persia, the Russian Empire (in Central Asia), Tibet, the Chinese Empire, and Siam (now Thailand).

This book tells the story of one of the Indian Empire's most forbidding frontiers: Eastern Arabia. The safety of the sea routes connecting India and Britain depended upon the stability and neutrality of the Arabian coast, maintained through the policy of protectorates described by Curzon. Taking the shaikhdom of Bahrain as a case study, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj* shows how heavily this policy of protectorates depended upon the assistance and support of local élites in the states and territories surrounding British India.

Contents

<i>List of Maps, Tables, and Figures</i>	xiii
<i>List of Photos</i>	xv
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xvi
<i>Glossary</i>	xviii
<i>Conventions, Terminology, and Transliteration</i>	xxxi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xxxii

1. Introduction	1
1. The Subject	1
2. The Sources	5
3. Overview	7

I. EMPIRE

2. British India's Informal Empire and Spheres of Influence in Asia and Africa	11
1. British India's residency system in Asia and Africa	12
2. The origins of the residency system, 1613–1763	12
3. The politicization and expansion of the residency system, 1764–1947	14
4. The residency system and Britain's Indian Empire	20
5. Imperialism and the strategy of informal empire	29
6. The Indian Political Service (IPS), 1764–1947	38
7. Early British involvement in the Gulf, 1616–1822	43
8. Britain's Political Residency in the Gulf, 1822–1971	44
9. Britain's Native Agency in Bahrain, c.1816–1900	54
10. Conclusion	57

II. AGENTS OF EMPIRE

3. British India's Native Agency System in Asia	61
1. British India's native agency system in Asia	62

2. British India's native agency system in the Gulf	64
3. British motives for employing native agents	66
4. Robinson's theory of collaboration	71
5. The Indian origins of the native agency system	74
6. The politicization of the native agency system in India and the Gulf	80
7. Early native agents in the Gulf	83
8. The establishment of the native agency system in the Gulf	91
9. Advantages for the British	93
10. Disadvantages for the British	97
11. Advantages and disadvantages for the native agents	100
12. Conclusion	103
 4. The Operation of British India's Native Agency in Bahrain	 104
1. The Agency building	104
2. The Agency's finances and organization	106
3. The Agent's intelligence-gathering duties, c.1816–1900	108
4. The Agent's judicial duties, 1861–1900	119
5. The Agent's political duties, 1872–1900	127
6. The Agent's social duties	132
7. Conclusion	134
 5. British India's Native Agents in Bahrain	 136
1. The <i>Banias</i> , c.1816–34	137
2. The Safar family agents	143
3. Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar, 1834–42	151
4. Hajji Jasim (Hajji Abu'l Qasim), 1842–62	153
5. Hajji Ibrahim bin Muhsin bin Rajab, 1862–4	155
6. Years of abeyance, 1865–71	157
7. Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar, 1872–84	161
8. Hajji Ahmad Khan Safar, 1884–91	164
9. Temporary agents, 1891–3	166
10. Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, 1893–1900	166
11. Hajji 'Abbas bin Muhammad bin Fadhil, 1900	169
12. The Native Agency staff after 1900	172
13. Challenges to the agents, 1834–97	174
14. Conclusion	187

6. The Decline of British India's Native Agency System in Bahrain and the Gulf	189
1. The rift in agent–ruler relations, 1895–1900	189
2. The Agent's Conflict of interest between trade and politics, 1897–9	192
3. The argument for a political agency, 1897–9	200
4. The transition to a political agency, 1899–1900	210
5. Conclusion	213
7. Conclusion: The Arabian Frontier of the Indian Empire	216
Appendix A British India's Residency System in Asia and Africa	225
1. British India's residency system, 1880s	225
2. Persia Agency, 1616–1763	228
3. Basrah Agency, 1763–1914 (responsible for the Gulf during 1763–78)	229
4. Bushire Residency, 1778–1822	230
5. Lower Gulf Agency, 1820–2	231
6. Gulf Residency, 1822–78	232
7. Gulf Residency, 1878–1946, and the Consulate-General for Fars, 1878–1946	234
8. Gulf Residency, 1946–71	236
9. Britain's native agents in the Gulf, c.1758–1958	237
10. Gulf Residency staff, 1834	238
11. Gulf Residency staff (Persian Coast and Islands only), 1869	241
12. Gulf Residency staff budget (Bushire HQ), 1899	248
13. Muscat Agency staff budget, 1901	251
14. Gulf Residency complete budget, 1899	253
15. Graded officers serving in political residencies, 1877	256
16. British military establishments in the Gulf	257
Appendix B Rulers and Residents	260
1. Rulers of Bahrain	260
2. Residents in Bushire	261
3. Agents for the Lower Gulf (Qishm Island)	262
4. Political Residents in the Gulf (Bushire)	263
5. Political Residents in the Gulf (Ras al-Jufair, Bahrain)	267
6. Governors of Bombay	268
7. Viceroys of India	269

Appendix C British India's Native Agents in Bahrain	271
1. Native Agents	272
2. Native Agency staff	274
3. British Indian Steam Navigation Co. Agents (Gray Paul & Co.)	276
4. Gulf Merchant grades	277
Appendix D British Control: Bahrain <i>v.</i> the Indian States	280
Appendix E Anglo–Bahraini Legal Obligations and Rights	281
<i>Bibliography</i>	289
<i>Index</i>	339

List of Maps, Tables, and Figures

MAPS

1. British India, the Indian Empire, and the residency system in the 1890s	16
2. The Gulf Residency (1822–1971) and Fars Consulate-General (1878–1946) in the nineteenth century	22

TABLES

1. Private paper collections in Bahrain (Bushiri Archive)	6
2. Oral histories in Bahrain	7
3. Stations (independent offices) and their corresponding districts in the East India Company	13
4. The East India Company and British Government of India's commercial and diplomatic districts outside India	18
5. The British Indian Empire in the 1890s	25
6. The Gulf Residency's political establishment in the nineteenth century	55
7. British India's native agency system in South-West Asia	63
8. Native agent titles in the Gulf	65
9. Victims of the Gulf climate	69
10. Gulf Resident's monthly political staff budget for 1834 and 1860–1	71
11. Gazetted native political agents in 1884	78
12. Cost of a Native political agency <i>v.</i> a British political agency	95
13. British native agency buildings in Bahrain	105
14. Persian Gulf Division of the Bombay Postal Circle (Bombay GPO)	118
15. Methods of coercion Britain employed in Bahrain and its dependencies, 1820–1900	131
16. Safar family members who served British India	144
17. Sharif family members who served British India	151
18. Agencies and consulates under the supervision of the Gulf Resident in 1899	214
19. Agencies and consulates under the supervision of the Gulf Resident in 1911	215

FIGURES

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| 1. Safar family tree | 148 |
| 2. Sharif family tree | 149 |

List of Photos

1. Gulf Residency headquarters, Bushire
2. *Bait* Safar, Bushire
3. Britain's Native Agency staff in Bahrain *c.*1898–9
4. Shaikh 'Isa Al Khalifah (Ruler of Bahrain 1869–1923)
5. Yusuf bin Ahmad Kanoo, Bahrain
6. Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif, Bushire
7. Britain's Political Agency staff in Bahrain *c.*1929

Abbreviations

APOC	Anglo–Persian Oil Company (established 1909), later British Petroleum
Art.	Artical
Asst.	Assistant
BI Line	British India Steam Navigation Company (1862–1972)
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation (1939–74), formerly Imperial Airways (1924–39), later British Airways (1974–present)
Capt	Captain
Ch.	Chapter
Co.	Company
Comdr	Commander
consltn.	consultation
Cpl	Corporal
Dept	Department
FO	Foreign Office
For.	Foreign
Gen	General
Govr	Governor
Govr-Gen	Governor-General
Govt	Government
GPO	General Post Office
HMG	Her/His Majesty's Government
HMIS	Her/His Majesty's Indian Ship
HMS	Her/His Majesty's Ship (Royal Navy)
HMSO	Her/His Majesty's Stationary Office
IA	Indian Army
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IETD	Indo–European Telegraph Department, Government of Bombay (1862–71), later Government of India (1871–1947)
IMS	Indian Medical Service
IO	India Office, London
IOR	India Office Records, British Library, London
IPS	Indian Political Service
Ks.	Krans (one-tenth of a toman, Persia's principal unit of currency), written <i>qiran</i> in Farsi; replaced by rials in 1932
Lt	Lieutenant
Lt-Col	Lieutenant-Colonel
Maj	Major
mss.	manuscripts
MT\$	Maria Theresa dollars (one of the currencies used in the Gulf until the 1960s)

(N)	Naval rank. A naval lieutenant is equal in rank to an army captain and a naval captain is equal to a full colonel.
n.	footnote or endnote
n.a.	no author
n.d.	no date
NS	new series
offg	officiating
offl	official
os	old series
PA	Political Agent
Pol.	Political
PR	Political Resident
PRPG	Political Resident in the Persian Gulf
qtd	quoted
r.	ruled
RE	Royal Engineers, British Army
reg.	register
repr.	reprinted
Rs.	Rupees (India's principal unit of currency; one of the currencies used in the Gulf until the 1960s)
s.	section
ss.	sections
SCS	Subordinate Civil Service (the lower level of the UCS, established as a separate service in 1892)
Sec.	Secretary
ser.	series
Sgt	Sergeant
SNOPG	Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf (the Commander of the Gulf Squadron), normally a Commodore
Sqn	Squadron
Stn	Station
tr.	translated or translation
UCS	Uncovenanted Civil Service (renamed Provincial Civil Service in 1892)

Glossary

1. GENERAL TERMINOLOGY

<i>Agha</i>	A title. The Persian equivalent to ‘Gentleman’, except that it carries more weight (originally meant ‘Commander’); a title lower than <i>Bey</i> or <i>Bay</i> , but higher than <i>Khan</i> . Used before one’s name.
<i>akbbār nawīs</i>	A locally-engaged news writer in India.
<i>Amir</i>	A title. A ruler, chieftain, prince, or military commander.
Arab Coast	The Gulf coast of Eastern Arabia, from Kuwait to Ras Musandam.
<i>baghlah</i>	The largest make of dhow, used for ocean voyages. Means ‘mule’ in Arabic, a reference to its role as the largest pack mule of the sea. Most <i>baghlahs</i> can carry between 80 and 300 tons of cargo, and have two regular decks, two masts, and a crew of 100 men. For details, see Commander A. Rowand, ‘Sailing Craft of the Persian Gulf’, in Lorimer, <i>Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf</i> , ii. <i>Geographical and Statistical</i> , appendix F, 2321–2; D. A. Agius, <i>In the Wake of the Dhow</i> (2002); idem, <i>Seafaring in the Arabian Gulf and Oman</i> (2005).
<i>Baharinah</i>	Indigenous Shi’i Arabs from Bahrain and Hasa.
Bahraini	Anyone from Bahrain—not an ethnic identity.
<i>Bahrani</i>	The singular of <i>Baharinah</i> .
BI	The British India Steam Navigation Company, which operated a major shipping route in the Gulf during 1862–1972. Represented in the Gulf by Gray Paul & Co. (later known as Gray Mackenzie & Co.).
<i>bait</i>	A mansion or large house. <i>Bait Safar</i> = Safar House.
<i>Bania</i>	An Indian Hindu merchant.
<i>Bey</i> or <i>Bay</i>	A title. Equivalent to Chief or Governor; a higher title than <i>Agha</i> , but lower than Pasha.
bin	Arabic for ‘son of’. Used after one’s given name. Alternative spelling: ibn.
British Government	British officials in India often used the terms ‘British Government’ and ‘Government’ to refer to the central and provincial governments of British India together with Her/His Majesty’s Government (HMG) in London.

- collaboration Either 'working with another' in the case of ruler–Resident relations, or 'working for another' in the case of agent–Resident relations.
- dak* The postal system used by Indian rulers, merchants, and bankers. A typical *dak* consisted of a network of postal stations (*dak chaukis*) with relays of postal runners (*dak dauria*) who travelled by foot between them.
- dak dauria* An Indian postal runner who travelled by foot.
- dhow A generic Western term for any sailing craft from the Indian Ocean region (including the Gulf and Red Sea) with a lateen sail. See *baghlah* above.
- formal empire Territory over which an imperial power exercises full sovereignty, in a word: colonies. Known as 'British Overseas Territory' in the British Empire. See 'informal empire', below.
- gazetted This term comes from the British practice of announcing official appointments in a weekly gazette or bulletin, such as the *Gazette of India* (for the Government of India), the *Bombay Gazette* (for the Government of Bombay), and the *Army and Navy Gazette* (for officers of the Indian armed forces). Appointments were then published in an annual government civil list, such as *The East India Register* (1803–60), *The Indian Army and Civil Service List* (1861–76), *The India List: Civil and Military* (1877–95), *The India List and India Office List* (1896–1906), *The India Office List* (1907–37), *The India Office and Burma Office List* (1938–47), or the *History of Services* (1875–1947).
- godown* A warehouse.
- graded officers In the Indian Political Service, these were British political residents (grades 1–3), political agents (grades 1–4), and political assistants (grades 1–4), whose names and grades appeared on the 'graded lists' of the Government of India's annual *History of Services of Officers Holding Gazetted Appointments in the Foreign Department*.
- Hawalah, Hawlah* Sunni Arabs from Southern Persia who link themselves genealogically to one of the tribes of Arabia. In the nineteenth century many could be described as 'Persianized Arabs'. Also spelt *Hawala*, *Howala*, *Howalah*, *Huwalah*, *Huwalah*. Singular and adjective: *Holi*. See Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*, ii. *Geographical and Statistical*, 754–5; Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain*, 2, 4.

HMG	Her/His Majesty's Government in London, comprising the India Office, Foreign Office, Colonial Office, Home Office, etc.
<i>Holi</i>	The singular and adjective of <i>Hawalah</i> .
Indian	Used in this study to mean 'indigenous to pre-independence India', rather than a single ethnic or national identity.
India Office	The department of HMG in London to which the Government of India reported between 1858 and 1947; located in the same building as the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office. The India Office was the successor to the East India Company's Court of Directors.
Indian Political Service	The IPS was the diplomatic corps of the East India Company, Government of India, and provincial governments, responsible for political relations with the states and territories neighbouring British India. Historians refer to this corps as the IPS even though the name was not officially adopted until 1937.
informal empire	Foreign territories over which an imperial power acquires some degree of suzerainty (or partial sovereignty) by treaty, in other words: protectorates, condominiums, mandates, and protected states. See 'formal empire', above.
<i>kaymakam</i>	An Ottoman district governor of a <i>kaza</i> (district); usually subordinate to a <i>mutasarrif</i> (regional governor).
<i>kaza (qadha)</i>	An Ottoman district governed by a <i>kaymakam</i> (district governor); originally the judicial district of a <i>kazi</i> or <i>qadhi</i> (judge). A <i>kaza</i> was normally a subdivision of a <i>sancak</i> (region). During 1871–1913, the <i>Vilayet</i> of Basrah had four <i>sancaks</i> : (1) Basrah <i>Sancak</i> , consisting of the <i>Kazas</i> of Basrah, Kuwait, Fao, and Qurnah; (2) Hasa <i>Sancak</i> , misleadingly called 'Najd', consisting of the <i>Kazas</i> of Hofuf, Qatif, and Qatar; (3) Munatifiq and Nasiriyah <i>Sancak</i> ; and (4) Amarah <i>Sancak</i> , consisting of the <i>Kazas</i> of Amarah and Duarij.
<i>Khan</i>	A title. The Persian equivalent to 'Esquire' in the nineteenth century. Often hereditary. Originally a Central Asian title equivalent to 'Prince', 'Lord', or 'Shaikh'. Comparable to <i>Agha</i> in the nineteenth century, but carried less weight. It was a far more prestigious title before the nineteenth century. Used after one's name.

<i>Khan Bahadur</i>	A title. Means 'Gallant Gentleman', 'Brave Lord', 'Great Prince', etc. A Mughal title, higher than <i>Khan Sahib</i> , awarded by the Viceroy of India to Muslim employees of the Government of India for long and distinguished service to the British Crown. The title was normally awarded to uncovenanted political assistants, native agents, and <i>dragomans</i> . Used in front of one's name.
<i>Khan Sahib</i>	A title. Means 'Master Gentleman', 'Master Lord', 'Master Prince', etc. A Mughal title, lower than <i>Khan Bahadur</i> , awarded by the Viceroy of India to Muslim employees of the Government of India for long and distinguished service to the British Crown. The title was normally awarded to uncovenanted political assistants, native agents, and <i>dragomans</i> . Used in front of one's name.
<i>khiḷ'at</i>	Robe of honour (also spelt <i>khalat</i> , <i>khalah</i>). For the significance of <i>khiḷ'ats</i> and examples of their use in India, see Stewart Gordon (ed.), <i>Robes of Honor: Khiḷ'at in Pre-Colonial India</i> (2003); Cohn, <i>Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge</i> (1996), 114–15, 117–18; Fisher, <i>Indirect Rule in India</i> (1991), 253, 337, 344, 451–2.
<i>majlis</i>	A court or council; a reception room or sitting room.
<i>majlis al-tujarah</i>	A council of commerce.
<i>majlis al-ʿurf</i>	A council of customary law.
<i>Mirza</i>	A title used by educated men and descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through one's mother. Used only by Shi'ah, especially Persians. Used before one's name.
<i>mutasarriḥ</i>	An Ottoman regional governor of a <i>sancak</i> (region); usually subordinate to a <i>vali</i> (provincial governor). The <i>Vilayet</i> of Basrah had four <i>sancaks</i> : (1) Basrah, (2) Munatifiq and Nasiriyah, (3) Amarah, and (4) Hasa, misleadingly called 'Najd'. The <i>Mutasarriḥ</i> of Hasa resided in Hofuf.
native agency system	See Section 2 below.
ʿOman	This word has two meanings. Politically, it refers to the Sultanate of ʿOman. Geographically, it refers to the south-east corner of Arabia, which encompasses both the Sultanate of ʿOman and Trucial ʿOman (the present-day United Arab Emirates).

Persian	Refers to the indigenous inhabitants of Persia who speak Persian (Farsi), or a dialect of Persian, as their mother tongue, rather than to all the many peoples of Persia (pre-modern Iran) such as the Persians, Arabs, Kurds, Shahsevans, Turkomans, Azeris, Qashqa'is, and Baluchis. For the 'Persian' debate, see Mostafa Vaziri, <i>Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity</i> (1993), 67–70.
Persian Gulf	Although 'Persian Gulf' (<i>Khalij al-Farsi</i>) was the internationally accepted term for the region before the 1950s, it has not been acceptable in the Arab world since then. I use the neutral terms of 'Gulf' (<i>Khalij</i>) and 'Gulf Resident' (<i>Balyuz al-Khalij</i> , <i>Ra'is al-Khalij</i>) in this study, which were also used by the British at the time. For the 'Persian Gulf' debate, see al-Qasimi, <i>Power Struggles and Trade in the Gulf, 1620–1820</i> (1999), 2–3.
Political Department	The term used for the foreign departments of the provincial governments of British India.
PRPG	Political Resident in the Persian Gulf (the official title of the Gulf Resident) whose headquarters were at Bushire. The Residency headquarters were transferred to Bahrain in 1946.
al-Qasimi	The singular and adjective of al-Qawasim (pronounced 'al-Jawasim' in Gulf Arabic). The al-Qawasim were one of the two principal maritime Arab ruling families of the lower Gulf—the other being the Al Bu Sa'ïd of 'Oman. The British called them the 'Joasmees'. See al-Qasimi empire.
al-Qasimi empire	The empire of the al-Qawasim, the ruling family of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah. At the height of their power during the 1750s–1860s, the al-Qawasim controlled the present-day emirates of Sharjah (including Kalba), Ras al-Khaimah, and Fujairah in the UAE; a number of towns along the Persian coast, including Kilat, Johnah, Charak, Mughu, and Lingah; and a number of Gulf islands, including Kish, Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Qishm. Ras al-Khaimah seceded from Sharjah during 1869–1900; when it seceded a second time in 1921, the British Government recognized it as a separate Trucial State. Kalba seceded from Sharjah during 1901–52 and received British recognition in 1936. Fujairah seceded from Sharjah in 1902 and received British recognition in 1952.

al-Qawasim	Pronounced 'al-Jawasim' in Gulf Arabic; the plural of al-Qasimi. See al-Qasimi.
ruler	A head of a ruling family who rules autocratically and exercises administrative authority over a community of people and sovereignty over territory constituting a shaikhdom, emirate, or sultanate.
<i>sancak</i> (<i>sanjack</i>)	An Ottoman region governed by a <i>mutasarrif</i> ; usually a subdivision of a province (<i>vilayet</i>). There were two <i>sancaks</i> in the Gulf: (1) Basrah <i>Sancak</i> , which was subordinate to Baghdad <i>Vilayet</i> during 1546–1699, 1750–1849, and 1880–4; and (2) Hasa <i>Sancak</i> , misleadingly called 'Najd', which was subordinate to Basrah <i>Vilayet</i> during 1871–1913. (Basrah <i>Sancak</i> was an independent <i>Vilayet</i> during 1699–1750, 1849–80, 1884–1914.)
<i>Sayyid</i>	A title. Indicates that one is descended from the Prophet Muhammad through one's father. Used by Shī'ah and Sunnah, Arabs and Persians alike. Used in front of one's name.
Shaikh	A title. A member of a ruling family or a Muslim religious official.
Shī'ah	Members of Shī'i Islam, the principal Muslim sect in Persia and Southern 'Iraq. Forty per cent of Bahrainis and sixty per cent of <i>Hasawiyah</i> (Arabs from Hasa) were Shī'ah in the early twentieth century, according to Lorimer's <i>Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf</i> , ii. <i>Geographical and Statistical</i> (1908).
Shī'i	The singular and adjective of Shī'ah; alternative spelling: Shī'ite.
Shī'i Islam, Shī'ism	The 'partisan' sect of Islam (from <i>Shī'at 'Ali</i> —the partisans or followers of 'Ali), which holds that the descendants of 'Ali (cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, Fourth Caliph during 656–61) are the only legitimate successors to the Caliphate.
South-West Asia	Anatolia, the Fertile Crescent (the Levant plus 'Iraq), Iran, Afghanistan, and Arabia.
SNOPG	The Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf (the official title of the Commander of the Gulf Squadron, who normally held the rank of Commodore or Captain), pronounced 'SNOP-G'. The title was first used in 1830. Before then, he was known as the Senior Marine Officer in the Persian Gulf (1821–30). An alternative title was the Commodore at Bassadore/Basidu (1823–63, 1869–1911). For the sake of clarity, only SNOPG is

	used. The SNOGP reported to both the Gulf Resident and the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies Station (Fleet) in Bombay. See Appendix A16.
Sunnah	Members of Sunni Islam, the principal sect of Arabia and South Asia.
Sunni	The singular and adjective of Sunnah of Sunnah.
Sunni Islam	The 'orthodox' sect of Islam, which holds that legitimate successors to the Caliphate need not be descendants of the Prophet. <i>Sunni</i> derives from <i>sunnah</i> (the practice of the Prophet and the early Islamic community which serves as the exemplary precedent for all Muslims).
<i>suq</i>	A market place. Alternative spellings: <i>souq</i> , <i>souk</i> .
Trucial Coast	The Gulf coast of Trucial 'Oman (present-day United Arab Emirates). 'Trucial' refers to the Perpetual Maritime Truce of 1853, which the local rulers signed with the British Government. The British referred to the area as the 'Pirate Coast' before 1853.
Trucial 'Oman	The area covered by the Trucial States.
Trucial States	The shaiikhdoms of Trucial 'Oman (Abu Dhabi, 'Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Qaiwain); the name of the United Arab Emirates before independence in 1971. Also see al-Qasimi empire, above.
<i>vilayet</i>	An Ottoman province governed by a <i>vali</i> . There were two <i>vilayets</i> in the Gulf region: Basrah (1699–1750, 1849–80, 1884–1914) and Baghdad (1534–1917).
<i>vali</i>	An Ottoman provincial governor of a <i>vilayet</i> (province).
Wahhabis	Members of the <i>Muwahhidun</i> (Unitarian or Puritan) sect of Sunni Islam founded by Shaikh Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92) in Najd; the common term for the Al Sa'ud and their followers who belong to this sect.
<i>wakil</i>	An agent. Spelt <i>vakil</i> in Ottoman Turkish and Farsi.
<i>wali</i>	A governor, spelt <i>vali</i> in Ottoman Turkish and Farsi.
Whitehall	A shorthand term for HMG; the name of the street in London on which the principal offices of HMG are located.
<i>wilayah</i>	An Arab province, governed by a <i>wali</i> (governor); the Arab equivalent to an Ottoman <i>vilayet</i> .

wazir A minister. Spelt *vazier* in Ottoman Turkish and Farsi. In the Gulf shaikhdoms, *wazir* is best translated as 'prime minister' because a ruler rarely had more than one *wazir* in the nineteenth century.

2. POSTS HELD BY NON-EUROPEANS ON THE GULF RESIDENCY STAFF, 1822–1900

bhisti A water-carrier; usually Arab or Persian in the Gulf. The British employed between one and five water-carriers at each post within the Gulf Residency.

broker A position held by subordinate officers (see below). Synonymous with local commercial agent. Many of the Resident's native agents in the Gulf were originally appointed as brokers. As the East India Company's commercial activities declined in the Gulf, its brokers became less concerned with trade and more concerned with intelligence gathering and political representation.

clerk A position held by an uncovenanted or subordinate officer (see below). It was equivalent to a *munshi* (see below), but restricted to administrative duties. Clerks were usually Indian or Armenian in the Gulf. The numbers of clerks varied throughout the nineteenth century. In the early days of the Residency, there was only one; by the end of the century, there were over a dozen stationed at the Residency in Bushire, the Agency in Muscat, the naval depôt at Basidu, and telegraph stations at Rishire, Shiraz, Henjam, Jask, and Chahabar.

confidential agent A position held by subordinate political officers (see below). Confidential agents frequently toured the Gulf on intelligence-gathering missions. They were typically Persian or Arab in the Gulf and were the non-European equivalents to British residency agents. At any given time, there were between one and three confidential agents at the Residency in Bushire.

cossid See *qasid*.

daffadar An Indian cavalry sergeant. In the nineteenth century, there was at least one *daffadar* stationed at Bushire, each in charge of a squad (about ten men) of *sowars*, if not two.

- daftardar* A position held by an uncovenanted or subordinate officer (see below), usually Persian, Indian, Armenian, or Eurasian. It was one of the titles used for bookkeeper, treasury officer, or accountant. Most British political agencies, consulates, and stations in the Gulf Residency had a *daftardar*. In British India, a *daftardar* was the head native revenue officer under the supervision of a collector (district officer). *Daftar* means ‘notebook’, ‘account book’, ‘ledger’, and ‘register’ in Arabic and Farsi. Other titles used were *shroff* and *tahsildar*, below.
- dragoman* Chief *munshi*. A position held by a subordinate political officer (see below). A *dragoman* was a native adviser to the head of mission on local politics, customs, protocol, etc.; the chief native political assistant and interpreter at the Gulf Residency headquarters. Usually Persian or Arab in the Gulf. A *dragoman* was the Middle Eastern equivalent to a *mir munshi* in India. A European who performed the same functions was known as an Oriental Secretary.
- farrash* A uniformed orderly attached to an office; known as a *peon* in South India, a *chaprassi* in North India, and a *puttiwalla* in West India. The British used all four terms interchangeably in the Gulf in the nineteenth century. In the Gulf, *farrashin* were usually Arab or Persian and there were normally two to six *farrashin* at any given post.
- farrashin* The plural of *farrash*.
- ghulam* A mounted messenger or courier in Persia; means ‘servant’ in Arabic and Farsi. The British hired *ghulams* from the Persian Government’s messenger service to carry mail between their Legation in Tehran and their Agencies in Shiraz and Isfahan during 1864–77. Before 1864, the British employed *qasids* (foot messengers) for this duty. After 1877, they used the Persian postal system.
- havildar* An Indian infantry sergeant. In the nineteenth century, there was at least one *havildar* at Bushire, each in charge of a squad of *sepoys* (about ten men), if not two. By the late nineteenth century, there were around five to six *havildars* (each in charge of a squad) stationed throughout the Gulf at Bushire, Muscat, Basidu, Jask, and Chahabar.
- honorary consul An unpaid, locally-recruited consular agent who performs non-political duties.

<i>jemadar</i>	An Indian second lieutenant (a rank without a Queen's or King's commission). Wherever there was a platoon of <i>sepoys</i> or a troop of <i>sowars</i> (about thirty men in each), a <i>jemadar</i> was normally placed in charge of them.
<i>kassid</i>	See <i>qasid</i> .
<i>lascar</i>	An Indian sailor in the Indian Navy and Royal Navy. Around a dozen <i>lascars</i> manned the Resident's launch or steamer, under the command of a British officer from the Indian Navy. Hundreds of <i>lascars</i> served in the Gulf Squadron in the nineteenth century, the exact number depending on the number and size of the ships in the Gulf at any one time.
<i>munshi</i>	A position held by a subordinate political officer (see below). A <i>munshi</i> could be a political assistant, administrative assistant, or interpreter. He was often all three, with his duties ranging from writing letters in a particular language (thus Arabic <i>munshis</i> , Persian <i>munshis</i> , English <i>munshis</i>), to assisting British political officers with their work. <i>Munshis</i> were usually Persian or Arab in the Gulf. At various times, there were between five and twenty-five <i>munshis</i> at the Residency, agencies, consulates, telegraph stations, and naval depots throughout the Gulf. When deputized on intelligence-gathering or political duties away from Bushire, a <i>munshi</i> took the title of confidential agent or confidential news agent.
native agent	A position held by subordinate political officers (see below). A native agent could be a commercial agent, news agent, or political agent. The British used 'native' to indicate that these agents were indigenous to the general region and were, therefore, non-European. Gulf Residents employed mostly Hindu agents until the 1830s, after which time they employed only Muslim merchants—usually Arabs and Persians, whom they appear to have regarded as more suitable for Gulf posts than Indian Muslims. The British replaced the majority of their native agents in the Gulf with British officers between 1900 and 1911.
native agency system	The deployment of native agents as a network, together with the characteristic features of their employment (examined in Ch. 3, ss. 9–11).
<i>natur</i>	A guard or watchman; usually Arab or Persian in the Gulf. Each agency, consulate, and station within the Gulf Residency employed one or more <i>naturs</i> .

- peon* The South Indian term for a uniformed orderly; known as a *puttiwalla* in West India, a *chaprassi* in North India, and a *farrash* in the Gulf. The British used all four terms interchangeably in the Gulf in the nineteenth century. *Peon* was also an antiquated term for *sepoy* (an Indian infantry private). In the Gulf, *peons* were usually Arab or Persian; there were normally two to six *peons* at any given post.
- puttiwalla* The term in West India for *peon* and *farrash*, commonly used by the British in the Gulf in the nineteenth century. Also spelt *puttawalla*.
- qasid* A long-distance messenger or courier in Persia who travelled by foot. Often spelt *cosid* or *kassid* in British records. Known as a *dak dauria* or *harkara* in India. Before the 1870s, Gulf Residents hired *qasids* when needed, paying them a portion of their fee before delivery. The recipient would pay the balance upon delivery. If a *qasid* delivered his consignment before or after the agreed date of delivery, the recipient added to, or subtracted from, the balance owing according to a set daily rate. Before 1864, the British used *qasids* to deliver all mail between their inland agencies and consulates. From 1864 to 1877, they only used *qasids* for the Bushire–Shiraz route. After 1877, they used the Persian postal system for all inland routes in Persia, but still retained the services of *qasids*. At some point in the 1870s or 1880s, *qasids* were made permanent, salaried members of the Gulf Residency staff. Also see *ghulam*.
- residency agent A non-gazetted political agent. There were two types of residency agent: native and British. Native residency agents were the subordinate political officers who ran the native agencies within a residency (see ‘subordinate officers’ below). In the Gulf, they were typically Persian or Arab. At any given time in the nineteenth century, there were around half a dozen native residency agents stationed throughout the Gulf Residency. British residency agents, on the other hand, were British political officers who resided temporarily at their posts in the nineteenth century (in contrast to native residency agents who resided at their posts year-round). In the twentieth century, British residency agents were given the title of political officer.

<i>sepoy</i>	An Indian infantry private. In the nineteenth century, there was at least one squad (about ten men) of <i>sepoys</i> stationed in Bushire, each under the command of a <i>havildar</i> (sergeant). By the late nineteenth century, there were squads of <i>sepoys</i> stationed throughout the Gulf at Bushire, Muscat, Basidu, Jask, and Chahabar. A platoon of <i>sepoys</i> (around thirty men) was normally commanded by a <i>jemadar</i> (an Indian second lieutenant).
<i>shroff</i>	A position held by an uncovenanted or subordinate officer (see below), usually Persian, Indian, Armenian, or Eurasian. It was one of the titles used for treasury officer or accountant. Most British political agencies, consulates, and stations in the Gulf Residency had a <i>shroff</i> . In India, a <i>shroff</i> is a banker or money-changer, a word derived from the Arabic <i>sarraf</i> . Other titles used were <i>daftardar</i> (see above) and <i>tahsildar</i> (see below).
<i>sowar</i>	An Indian cavalry trooper. In the nineteenth century, there was at least one squad of <i>sowars</i> (about ten men) stationed at Bushire, each under the command of a <i>daffadar</i> (sergeant).
subordinate officer	A member of the Subordinate Civil Service (SCS) of India. Subordinate political officers were locally-recruited and non-European and ranked below members of the Uncovenanted Civil Service, who were recruited from all over India. Prior to the creation of the SCS in 1892, its members formed the lower level of the Uncovenanted Civil Service (see below).
surgeon	During the nineteenth century, three surgeons operated surgeries within the Gulf Residency at Bushire, Basidu, and Muscat. A surgeon was a member of the Indian Medical Service (IMS), the medical equivalent of the Indian Political Service. The Residency Surgeon at Bushire was British, but the Agency Surgeon at Muscat was sometimes Indian and sometimes British. Surgeons occasionally performed political duties in the absence of British political officers. The Sub-Assistant Surgeon at Basidu during 1870–82, ‘Abd al-Rahim Hakim, for instance, was both a surgeon and the Political Agent for Basidu. He was later transferred to Bushire, where he served as Assistant Surgeon and Political Assistant during 1882–99.
sweeper	Usually Persian or Arab in the Gulf. The British employed between one and five sweepers at each post within the Gulf Residency.

<i>tahsildar</i>	A position held by an uncovenanted or subordinate officer (see below), usually Persian, Indian, Armenian, or Eurasian. It was one of the titles used for treasury officer or accountant. Most British political agencies, consulates, and stations in the Gulf Residency a <i>tahsildar</i> . In British India, a <i>tahsildar</i> was a subdivision officer who administered a <i>tasil</i> (a revenue subdivision) under the supervision of a collector (district officer). <i>Tasil</i> means 'collection' in Arabic and Farsi. Other titles used were <i>dafiardar</i> and <i>shroff</i> (see above).
<i>tarjuman</i>	Arabic for 'translator'. The British in the Gulf and India preferred the title of <i>munshi</i> .
<i>tindal</i>	A native petty officer (boatswain) in the Indian Navy. There was one <i>tindal</i> on the staff of the Residency launch at Bushire and a land-based <i>tindal</i> at the Gulf Squadron's headquarters at Basidu. The Gulf Squadron also employed one or more <i>tindals</i> onboard each of its gunboats.
uncovenanted assistant	A political post comparable to political assistant (either assistant resident or assistant agent), but of lower grade. It was held by members of the Uncovenanted Civil Service of India (see entry below). In the Gulf Residency, uncovenanted assistants were either Eurasian, Indian, or Armenian. There was one uncovenanted assistant at the Residency in Bushire during 1864–6 and two during 1889–1905.
uncovenanted officer	A member of the Uncovenanted Civil Service (UCS) of India, renamed the Provincial Civil Service in 1892. Members of this service were recruited from all over India and were typically Indian, Armenian, Eurasian, or lower-class European.

Conventions, Terminology, and Transliteration

Only abbreviated references are given; see the bibliography for complete references. Although contemporary British practice was to capitalize all titles, this study only uses capitalized titles—such as Resident or Ruler—when such titles refer to a specific office or person.

Unfamiliar non-English words are italicized, followed by a translation in brackets in the first instance. In the case of infrequently used words, this practice is repeated.

Plurals of commonly used foreign words are indicated by adding *-s*. Thus, *munshis*, *natur*s, *wakils*, etc.

Rupees in amounts over Rs. 99,999 are traditionally expressed in *laks* (units of 100,000) and *crores* (units of 10,000,000). Thus, one *lak* is written as Rs. 1,00,000 and one *crore* (100 *laks*) as Rs. 1,00,00,000. This system is confusing for readers unfamiliar with India. In the interests of clarity, therefore, this study uses standard decimalization.

Place names are spelt according to the most common British usage, then and now. Thus, ‘Adan is ‘Aden, Bandar Bushehr (or Abu Shehr) is Bushire, Bandar Linjah is Lingah, Hanjam is Henjam, Kirman is Kerman, Madinah is Medina, Makkah is Mecca, Mukha is Mocha, Masqat is Muscat, Sharqah is Sharjah, etc.

Family names are spelt according to present use. Thus, Bushehri is Bushiri, Kanu is Kanoo, Yatim is Yateem, etc. *Aal* (the family of) is written as ‘Al’ without a hyphen, while *al* (the) is written as ‘al-’. An author’s first name is spelt according to his or her own use. Thus, ‘Abd Allah is Abdulla, ‘Abd al-Amir is Abdul Amir, Ahmad is Ahmed, ‘Isa is Easa or Essa, etc.

‘Persia’ refers to pre-modern Iran (pre-Pahlavi, pre-1925). ‘Persian Gulf’ is used only in contemporary quotations and in the Gulf Resident’s full title.

The system of transliteration used here is that of *Arabian Studies* (1974–90). ‘*Ain* is indicated as ‘ and *hamzah* as ‘. Words ending in *taa’ marbutah* are transliterated as *-ah*, except in a genitive construction. Ottoman Turkish words are transliterated using the alphabet and spelling of modern Turkish (thus: *qa’im maqam* is *kaymakam*, *qadha* is *kaza*, *sanjaq* is *sancak*, etc.).

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J. O.

University of Exeter, UK

American University of Sharjah, UAE

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1

Introduction

The situation of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf has been well described as unique; for ... she has at no time enjoyed, or even asked for, territorial acquisitions in those regions; she has for generations borne burdens there which no other nation has ever undertaken anywhere, except in the capacity of sovereign; she has had duty thrust upon her without dominion; she has kept the peace amongst people who are not her subjects; has patrolled, during upwards of two centuries, waters over which she has enjoyed no formal lordship; [she] has kept, in strange ports, an open door through which the traders of every nation might have as free access to distant markets as her own.

Foreign Office, 1908¹

Security and peace, England has brought to the Arabs of the Gulf. This, no one doubts. The fruits of security and peace, in navigation and trade, the Arabs now enjoy with little or no discrimination. This, too, is beyond doubt. But what is it costing the Arabs? The Gulf should be renamed: it is neither Persian nor Arabian, it is British.

Ameen Rihani, 1930²

1. THE SUBJECT

Before India and Pakistan's independence in 1947, Britain's political relations with the hundreds of foreign states surrounding or neighbouring British India were managed by either the East India Company (1600–1858), the Government of India (1858–1947), or one of the

¹ Confidential FO memorandum respecting British interests in the Persian Gulf, 12 Feb. 1908, L/P&S/18/B166 (IOR), 5–6.

² Rihani, *Around the Coasts of Arabia* (1930), 300.

provincial governments of British India.³ At any one time, these governments employed hundreds of diplomats called political officers, who resided in or near these foreign states. The British grouped these states into diplomatic districts known as political residencies, each under the supervision of a political resident—see Appendix A1. Most residents employed networks of subordinate political agencies throughout their residencies, each headed by an agent responsible for political relations between the British Crown and the local head of state. Britain's political relations with these foreign states were such that they constituted an informal part of the British Empire; Britain's residents and agents were both political representatives and imperial officials.

These foreign states included the Gulf Arab shaikhdoms, yet Britain maintained the fiction that they were only loosely connected to the British Empire, as the quotations above illustrate. The first was the British Government's official line from London, while the second is the view of a famous Lebanese American writer who visited the Gulf shaikhdoms in 1923. Many British political officers who served in the Gulf, as well as historians of the Gulf, acknowledge that the Gulf was indeed British, even though it was never formally a part of the British Empire.

This is a case study of one of British India's most famous frontier residencies: the Political Residency in the Persian Gulf (1822–1971), headed by the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, who resided in Bushire (Bushehr) on the south-west Persian coast.⁴ Virtually all historical accounts of the Gulf Residency explain British involvement in the nineteenth-century Gulf in terms of the interactions between the handful of British political officers, the local rulers and governors, and the small number of gunboats in Britain's Gulf Squadron.⁵ Such top-down, one-sided explanations still dominate much of the thinking about how imperialism worked on the ground. No historical account has yet examined the infrastructure of the Gulf Residency that enabled the Gulf Resident, with so few resources, to maintain the Pax Britannica on the waters of the Gulf; to protect British interests throughout

³ British officials in India often used the terms Government or British Government to refer to the central and provincial govts of British India together with His/Her Majesty's Govt (HMG) in London.

⁴ Although the name Persian Gulf (*Khalij al-Farsi*) was the internationally accepted name for the region before the 1950s, it has not been acceptable in the Arab world since then. The neutral terms of Gulf (*Khalij*) and Gulf Resident (*Balyuz al-Khalij*, *Ra'is al-Khalij*), which were also used by the British at the time, are used here instead. For the 'Persian Gulf debate', see Bosworth, 'The Nomenclature of the Persian Gulf' (1980), pp. xvii–xxxiv; Mehr, *A Colonial Legacy* (1997), 17–23; al-Qasimi, *Power Struggles and Trade in the Gulf* (1999), 2–3.

⁵ See Appendix B for a list of these British officials and the Rulers of Bahrain.

the region; and to manage political relations with the dozens of rulers, chiefs, and governors in Arabia and Persia as well as he did.

The secret to the Gulf Residency's effectiveness was the Resident's strategy of working *within* the indigenous political systems of the Gulf. Arab rulers in need of protection collaborated with the Resident to maintain the Pax Britannica, while influential men from affluent Indian, Arab, and Persian merchant families served as the Resident's 'native agents' (compradors) in over half of the political posts within the Gulf Residency. The result was a collaborative power triangle between the Resident, his native agents, and the rulers that sustained Britain's informal empire in the Gulf. 'Collaboration' is used here in its neutral sense: either 'working with another' in the case of ruler–Resident relations, or 'working for another' in the case of agent–Resident relations.⁶

An examination of the history of the Gulf shaikhdoms reveals that the rulers, faced by the endless problem of protection, defended their domains in the nineteenth century by entering into culturally sanctioned protector–protégé relationships (the Arabian custom of *dakhlah*). The rulers tried to impose the role of 'protector' (*mujawwir*) on the Resident and the British Government from the very outset of the Gulf Residency with the result that, in time, the Resident came to accept the role of protector and to behave, on the whole, as the rulers expected a protector to behave. This legitimized Britain's presence within the regional political system in terms of Eastern Arabian culture and meant that the Resident's authority in the Gulf was not based solely on treaties. From the rulers' perspective, the Resident was a Gulf ruler himself, except that he was the most powerful and influential ruler they had ever known. They gave him the respectful titles of *Ra'is al-Khalij* (Chief of the Gulf) and *Fakhamat al-Ra'is* (His High Presence the Chief).⁷ Because the Pax Britannica was beneficial to the security and the economy of the Gulf shaikhdoms, it was to a large extent self-enforcing. The norms and obligations of the Arabian protector–protégé relationship continued to define ruler–Resident relations for over a hundred years, until Britain's military withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971. My study of the ruler–Resident relationship has been published separately, but can be read in conjunction with this book.⁸

Examining the agent–Resident and agent–ruler relationships, this book shows how the Resident was able to effectively employ affluent Gulf

⁶ For more on 'collaboration', see the works by Atmore and Osterhammel listed in part 17 of the Bibliography.

⁷ Burrows, *Footnotes in the Sand: The Gulf in Transition, 1953–1958* (1990), 56; Hawley, *Desert Wind and Tropic Storm* (2000), 44.

⁸ See Onley, 'The Politics of Protection in the Gulf' (2004).

merchants as his political agents throughout the region. These agents not only had an extensive knowledge of local cultures, languages, and politics, which anyone recruited from outside the Gulf could not possibly possess, but also could obtain (through their family, social, and business networks) the intelligence the British needed to operate their informal empire in the Gulf. As wealthy merchants, these agents also enjoyed considerable influence with local rulers and governors. The contacts and influence of the agents enabled the Gulf Resident to tap into local political systems to an extent that would have been otherwise impossible, while at the same time the British connection allowed the agents to increase their wealth and political influence.

Today, native agents are known as honorary consuls. For hundreds of years, they played an important role as local mediators in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, yet they are barely accounted for in the history of Western involvement in these regions.⁹ This book addresses that gap by developing the concept of a ‘native agency system’ and considering the history and characteristics of that system, beginning with its origins in India. The British used ‘native’ to indicate that these agents were indigenous to the general region and were, therefore, non-European. Native agents represented the East India Company at the courts of hundreds of foreign states in South Asia until the early nineteenth century, when the Company began to replace them with British political officers. However, native agents continued to represent the Company and, later, the Government of India along the distant frontiers of Britain’s Indian Empire (where life was too arduous for British political officers) as well as in some of the less important Indian states. In the Gulf, native agents were typically Indian up to the early nineteenth century and Arab or Persian thereafter; in India, they were generally Indian and occasionally Persian.¹⁰

The Gulf Residency supervised up to a dozen political agencies and consulates in Arabia and Persia in the nineteenth century, the majority of which were run by native agents. While concerned with the Residency as a whole, this book focuses on one political agency in particular: Britain’s Native Agency in Bahrain (c. 1816–1900)—a case study within a case study. By focusing on the systems of local collaboration and mediation that supported the Gulf Resident, these case studies reveal how the political infrastructure of Britain’s informal empire in Eastern Arabia was largely indigenous. Since Britain’s political residencies, agencies, consulates-general, and consulates

⁹ The only book-length study of native agents in English is Yen-P’ing Hao’s *The Comprador in Nineteenth Century China: Bridge between East and West* (1970). Also see his related articles, listed in part 14 of the Bibliography.

¹⁰ See the definitions of Indian and Persian in the Glossary.

in Egypt, Arabia, Somalia, Zanzibar, Iraq, Persia, Afghanistan, Chinese Turkistan (Sinkiang/Xinjiang), Princely India, and Nepal, were all run by officers from the Indian Political Service using the same basic organization and operating procedures, these case studies of the Gulf Residency and Bahrain Agency also throw light upon the other diplomatic districts surrounding and protecting British India.

2. THE SOURCES

This book draws upon a wide range of primary sources, from oral accounts to archival collections, from private papers to government publications, from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first, and from rainy Britain to sunny Bahrain. But tracing the history of Britain's native agencies in Asia remains a difficult enterprise because records of native agents and assistant agents are extremely scarce.

In the British Library in London, the employment records of local staff in the Gulf consist of periodic Residency staff lists, which often omit the names of local staff, and an inaccurate list of names in John Lorimer's *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf* (1915).¹¹ The only records of the Bahrain Native Agency are some of the agents' intelligence reports on local affairs received by the Gulf Resident, copies of some of the Gulf Residents' instructions to these agents, and the few communications in which the Residents discussed the agents' actions with their superiors in India. In contrast, there is an abundance of information available on those political agencies and consulates in Asia staffed by Britons—from agency building costs to staffing problems, from agency court cases to fortnightly operational reports.¹²

In Bahrain, the only surviving records of the Native Agency are the agents' private papers left to their descendants. Most of these papers were discarded or destroyed in the early to mid-twentieth century. Today, only some of the papers of four agents survive—see Table 1 on page 6. These cover the years 1839–42, 1872–6, and 1893–1900 and amount to a few hundred documents in Arabic, Farsi, and English. They were collected from the agents' descendants in the 1970s–1990s by 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, who now cares for them in a private archive in Manamah, the capital of Bahrain. Bushiri is himself a descendant of a member of the Native Agency staff: 'Ali

¹¹ Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, i. *Historical* (1915), appendix Q: 'British and Foreign Diplomatic, Political, and Consular Representation in the Countries Bordering the Persian Gulf', 2678–9.

¹² Handlists of all records on the Gulf in the British Library can be found in Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency and Agencies in the Persian Gulf: IOR R/15* (1979).

Table 1. Private paper collections in Bahrain (Bushiri Archive)

Private papers	Posts held
Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar	British Agent in Bahrain, 1834–1842
Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Safar	Deputy British Agent in Bahrain, 1834–1842 British <i>Munshi</i> (Assistant) in Bushire, 1842–1871 British Agent in Bahrain, 1872–1884
Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar	British <i>Munshi</i> in Bushire, c.1860–1893 British Deputy Agent in Bahrain, c.1880–1884 (occasionally) British Agent in Bahrain, 1893–1900
Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif	Deputy British Agent in Bahrain, 1893–1900 British <i>Munshi</i> in Bushire, 1900–1904, 1909–1924 Deputy British Agent in Kuwait, 1904–1909

Kazim Bushiri, who served under Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84). Among the native agents' papers are many letters of commendation and statements testifying to the status of the agents as British-protected persons, such as these:

To all whom it may concern,

Certified that Hajee Abdul Nuby [Safar], one of the principal merchants of Bushire and for a long time in the employ of British merchants and a recognized Agent of British houses, as well as of myself in occasional transactions of a public nature, is entitled to the protection of all well wishers of the British Government. This paper, it is hoped, will assure him and his family protection at all times when it may be needed.

Captain Felix Jones (Gulf Resident), 1856

Certified that Hajee Abdul Nubbee bin Mohammed Ali Saffar is actually in the employment of the British Resident in the Persian Gulf and is therefore entitled to British protection.

Colonel Lewis Pelly (Gulf Resident), 1872

I have much pleasure in stating that Agha Mohamed Rahim, son of Hajjee Abdul Nebbee [Safar], Residency Confidential Agent, has been most obliging and paid the greatest attention to any commission and wish I expressed to him. I believe him to be very trustworthy in matters of this sort and always ready to take any amount of trouble. He and his family have been in connection with the Residency for many years and, I believe, always gives satisfaction. I shall always be pleased to hear he is getting on well.

Assistant Gulf Resident, 1883

This is to certify that Agha Mohamed Rahim Saffar is in the service of the British Government and it is requested that his accredited agents in Turkish Arabia may receive any good offices or assistance from the British authorities which Agha Mohamed Rahim's status as a British employee may properly entitle him to.

Colonel Edward Ross (Gulf Resident), 1887

These were valuable documents, for they were the only way the agents could prove their entitlement to British protection when they travelled outside their postings in the Gulf Residency. They are valuable to historians today because they provide a great deal of personal information about the agents.

Today the existence of Britain's native agents in Bahrain is remembered only by the descendants and relatives of just three agents, listed in Table 2, who still maintain oral histories of their important and influential forefathers.

Table 2. Oral histories in Bahrain

Oral histories	Posts held
Hajji Ibrahim Rajab	British Agent in Bahrain, 1862–1864
Hajji Ahmad Safar	British <i>Munshi</i> in Bushire, 1857–1884 British Deputy Agent in Bahrain, 1872–1884 (occasionally) British Agent in Bahrain, 1884–1891
Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif	Deputy British Agent in Bahrain, 1893–1900 British <i>Munshi</i> in Bushire, 1900–1904, 1909–1924 British <i>Munshi</i> and Deputy Agent in Kuwait, 1904–1909

3. OVERVIEW

This book has two parts. Part I (Chapter 2) provides an overview of British India's informal empire in Asia and Africa, and reviews the current debate on imperialism and the nature of informal empire. Part II (Chapters 3–6) considers the history and characteristics of Britain's native agency system in the Gulf, beginning with its origins in India, to show how essential indigenous political representation was for the maintenance of informal empire in the Gulf. The conclusion (Chapter 7) applies what has emerged from this study of the Arabian frontier of the British Raj to the rest of Britain's informal empire surrounding and protecting British India.

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PART I

EMPIRE

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2

British India's Informal Empire and Spheres of Influence in Asia and Africa

Having entered the Indian Civil Service in 1907 and served for eighteen months in the Punjab, I was admitted to the Indian Political Service. This Service, of which the Viceroy was the Head, was concerned with: most of the self-governing States which extended over a third of the area of India and accounted for a quarter of the country's population; with the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan; and with areas beyond the frontiers of India such as Aden, the Persian Gulf, parts of Persia, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. Its personnel of about 150 [British] officers was recruited approximately two-thirds from the Indian Army and one-third from the Indian Civil Service. Although the Department was known in my early days as the Foreign Department and later as the Foreign and Political Department, and later still was divided into two Departments, External and Political, we were always known as Politicals. To a jealous outside world 'a Political' might be a term of abuse. To us it was a term of glory.

Sir Basil Gould, 1957¹

Britain's informal empire and spheres of influence surrounding and protecting British India were divided into a vast array of imperial diplomatic districts, each headed by an officer from the Indian Political Service (IPS). The above memoir of an IPS officer reflects the official view that the IPS was composed only of Britons. But the IPS was much larger than Sir Basil Gould and his colleagues liked to believe, for it included a great number of Eurasian, Indian, Arab, and Persian officers among its ranks—men who have largely escaped the notice of historians. This chapter examines

¹ Basil Gould, *The Jewel in the Lotus: Recollections of an Indian Political* (1957), 3. Also see Hunter *et al.* (eds), *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, iv. *The Indian Empire, Administrative* (1909), 58.

the evolution and organization of the IPS, whose job it was to maintain Britain's informal empire and spheres of influence in Asia and Africa, paying special attention to its unofficial non-European members, the 'native agents'. The history of British India's residency system, especially the Gulf Residency—India's largest and strategically one of its most important residencies, to which remarkably few Britons were posted in the nineteenth century—illustrates how important Britain's native agents were, not only for the intelligence and mediation that only indigenous representatives could provide, but also for making informal empire affordable for the British.

1. BRITISH INDIA'S RESIDENCY SYSTEM IN ASIA AND AFRICA

All of the states and territories surrounding British India, whether independent or under British protection, were eventually incorporated into a vast diplomatic network controlled from British India, represented by Zones B and C on Map 1. The British placed each state or territory into a district known by the mid-eighteenth century as a residency. Originally these residencies were commercial in purpose, but by the nineteenth century they had become entirely political. The number and size of these residencies fluctuated from year to year; Appendix A1 lists the residencies and independent agencies in the 1880s. The head of a residency was usually known as a resident. Each resident reported to the headquarters of the East India Company (until 1858), the Government of India (from 1858 on), or to one of their subordinate provincial governments, as can be seen in Appendix A1.

2. THE ORIGINS OF THE RESIDENCY SYSTEM, 1613–1763

The residency system derives its name from the British representatives—residents—who resided at the courts of foreign heads of state or governors. In Europe, a resident was a diplomatic agent of the third class (known later as a consul-general or *chargé d'affaires*), ranking after an ambassador and minister (or envoy) respectively.² In the early eighteenth century, the

² Satow, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, 5th edn., ed. Gore-Booth (1977), ss. 3, 7, and 17, pp. 83–4, 87.

East India Company adopted the title of resident for one of its levels of office. Originally, the Company had four levels of independent office: president, agent, chief factor, and broker. These offices, known as 'stations', were normally held by a senior merchant, junior merchant, factor, and broker respectively (the last being a locally-recruited merchant, a native agent). The station titles corresponded to the names of the commercial districts within the Company: presidency, agency, factory, and brokerage, as Table 3 shows, which were also the names of the district headquarters where the officers worked. By the early eighteenth century, the title of factor had fallen out of favour and the Company adopted the new title of resident, although a resident's headquarters and district continued to be known as a factory. In the Gulf, this title made its appearance in 1723, when the Company established its Factory in Basrah. The Resident in Basrah was subordinate to the Persia Agent in Bandar 'Abbas, who directed all of the Company's activities in the Gulf region. Appendix A2 has an organizational chart of the Persia Agency. In the 1810s, when the title of agent also fell out of favour, the Company switched the titles of resident and agent. Before the nineteenth century, all the residents took their orders from the headquarters of one of the Company's three presidencies in India: Surat (1616–87³), later Bombay Castle in Bombay; Fort St George in Madras (established 1653); and Fort William in Calcutta, Bengal (established 1698).⁴ The last presidency was the seat of the Governor-General, later Viceroy, who exercised ultimate authority over British India's military affairs from 1773, foreign affairs from 1784, and domestic affairs from 1833.

Table 3. Stations (independent offices) and their corresponding districts in the East India Company

<i>c.</i> 1610s– <i>c.</i> 1690s	<i>c.</i> 1700s– <i>c.</i> 1800s	<i>c.</i> 1810s–
President of a presidency	Governor of a presidency	Governor of a presidency or province
Agent of an agency	Agent of an agency	<u>Resident</u> of a residency
Chief factor of a factory	<u>Resident</u> of a factory or residency	Agent of an agency
Broker of a brokerage	Broker of a brokerage	Agent of an agency

³ Surat was an agency during 1613–15.

⁴ The Company also briefly maintained presidency headquarters at Bantam in Java (1617–21, 1634–52); Fort Marlborough in Bengkulu [Benkulen], Sumatra (1760–85); and Penang (1805–30), which oversaw the Company's factories in South-East Asia.

3. THE POLITICIZATION AND EXPANSION OF THE RESIDENCY SYSTEM, 1764–1947

As the Company became more involved in the political affairs of Asia, the role of its commercial residents became increasingly political. Commercial residents became colonial administrators in those regions where the Company assumed direct control: the presidencies of Bombay, Madras, and Bengal, which eventually became British India (Zone A on Map 1). In the regions outside the Company's orbit of direct rule, however, commercial residents evolved into diplomats—a change reflected in the eventual use of the title of political resident. After the mid-eighteenth century, the Company's political interests began to expand beyond the regions in which it maintained commercial residents. In 1764, it started to appoint political residents to the governments of important neighbouring states. The first appointments were made in India to the courts of the Nawab of Bengal, the Nawab of Awadh (Oudh), and the Nizam of Hyderabad. These Company officials were the first members of what later became known as the Indian Political Service—the diplomatic corps of the East India Company (1600–1858), the Government of India (1858–1947), and the provincial governments of British India.

From 1764 onward, British India's political residency system grew until, by the 1880s, it came to encompass nearly 45 per cent of South Asia and Burma, roughly 35 per cent of South-West Asia, and even part of East Africa. By the 1890s, it had expanded into Central Asia. Zones B and C show the extent of the residency system. Most residency districts were organized into subdivisions called agencies, which were under the local supervision of British political agents or native political agents. These agents took their orders from a resident who, in turn, took his orders from the Indian Foreign Department in Calcutta or a political department in one of the provincial governments of British India. By the 1880s, South Asia was divided into forty-seven political residencies and independent agencies, as shown in Appendix A1. In a few of these residencies, the chief officer held the title of agent to the governor-general (AGG) or agent to the lieutenant-governor (ALG), rather than resident. For historical reasons, some of the residencies still retained 'Agency' in their titles.

The regions surrounding South Asia were also divided into numerous residencies and independent agencies, as Table 4 shows. Appendix A has organizational charts for residencies and agencies in the Gulf region. The Gulf Resident took his orders from the Governor of Bombay and the Bombay Political Department until 1873, and from the Viceroy of India and the Indian Foreign Department in Calcutta thereafter. In the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries, IPS officers in districts not under British protection were given Foreign Office ranks to reflect their different status (purely diplomatic, not imperial). This was the case for eleven of British India's residents and agents, whose districts are represented by Zone C:

1. The Minister of the Tehran Legation (Northern and Central Persia) in Tehran, 1811–60⁵
2. The Consul-General for Egypt in Alexandria, 1833–70
3. The Consul, later Consul-General, for Zanzibar (East African coast), 1843–83
4. The Consul, later Consul-General, for Turkish Arabia (Ottoman 'Iraq) in Baghdad, 1844–1914
5. The Consul for Chiang Mai (North-West Siam), 1884–1947
6. The Consul-General for Chinese Turkistan (Sinkiang/Xinjiang) in Kashgar, 1891–1947
7. The Consul-General for Fars (Southern Persia) in Bushire, 1878–1946
8. The Consul-General for Khorasan (Eastern Persia) in Mashhad, 1889–1947
9. The *de facto* Consul-General for Tibet in Gangtok (Sikkim), 1904–47
10. The Minister of the Kabul Legation (Afghanistan), 1922–47
11. The Envoy/Minister of the Nepal Legation in Kathmandu, 1923–34/1934–47

These officers reported to both the Indian Foreign Department and the Foreign Office in London, with the Consuls-General for Fars, Khorasan, Turkish Arabia, and Egypt reporting to London indirectly through their Foreign Office superiors (ambassadors) in Tehran or Istanbul. The British Legations in Tehran, Kabul, and Kathmandu were the highest diplomatic post within the IPS—hence the higher titles of minister and envoy, one rank below ambassador. After Tehran was transferred to the Foreign Office in 1860, IPS officers served as Minister on two more occasions (1894–1900 and 1918–20).

The posts of Gulf Resident and Fars Consul-General were held by the same officer in Bushire who, in reality, administered the two districts as one—see Zones D and E on Map 2. This joint administration was a reflection of the fact that political representation in Southern Persia had always been the responsibility of the Resident in Bushire, long before the creation of the Consulate-General in 1878. Before 1878, the Resident represented the East India Company (which reported to the Company's Court of Directors in London) or its successor, the Government of India (which

⁵ The Minister was directly responsible for Northern and Central Persia and oversaw the Consul-Generals in Southern and Eastern Persia.



Map 1. British India, the Indian Empire, and the residency system in the 1890s

- A** British India (formal empire; colonies governed by ICS governors and district officers)
- B** British India's informal empire (protectorates and protected states controlled by IPS residents and agents)
- C** British India's sphere of influence (independent states under the influence of IPS consul-generals and consuls)

A + B = Britain's Indian Empire

B + C = British India's residency system

Note: While officially an independent state, 'Oman was arguably a part of the Indian Empire.



Table 4. The East India Co. and British Govt. of India's commercial and diplomatic districts outside India (Zones B and C on Map 1)

Area	Zone	Dates	District responsible for this area (HQ)
1. PERSIA			
Whole country	C	1616–1623	Persia Agency (HQ: Jask)
	C	1623–1763	Persia Agency (HQ: Bandar ʿAbbas)
	C	1763–1778	Basrah Agency
	C	1778–1811	Bushire Residency
	C	1811–1860	Tehran Legation Mission
Southern	C	1778–1822 ^a	Bushire Residency
	C	1820–1822	Lower Gulf Agency (HQ: Qishm Island)
	C	1822–1878	Gulf Residency (HQ: Bushire)
	C	1878–1946	Fars Consulate-General (HQ: Bushire)
Northern & Central	C	1811–1853	Tehran Legation/Mission ^b
	C	1859–1860	Tehran Legation
Eastern	C	1811–1889	Tehran Legation/Mission
	C	1889–1947	Khorasan Consulate-General (HQ: Mashhad)
2. ARABIA			
Eastern	C	c.1758–1810	Muscat Agency
	C	1810–1820	Bushire Residency
	B	1820–1822	Lower Gulf Agency (HQ: Qishm Island)
	B	1822–1946	Gulf Residency (HQ: Bushire)
	B	1946–1971	Gulf Residency (HQ: Bahrain)
	C	1618–1752	Mocha Agency
Southern		1802–1829	
	A	1839–1932	ʿAden Settlement [the port of ʿAden]
	A	1932–1937	ʿAden Province [the port of ʿAden]
	C	1839–1859	ʿAden Agency
	C	1859–1873	ʿAden Residency
	B	1873–1917 ^c	ʿAden Residency [ʿAden Protectorate after 1890s]
Western	C	c.1802–1870	Jeddah Agency (under Egypt Con-Gen)
	C	1870–c.1918	Jeddah Agency
3. IRAQ			
	C	1635–1657	Persia Agency (HQ: Bandar ʿAbbas)
	C	1723–1763	Persia Agency (HQ: Bandar ʿAbbas)
	C	1763–1778	Basrah Agency
	C	1778–1798	Basrah Residency
	C	1798–1809	Basrah Residency & Baghdad Residency [separate districts]
	C	1810–1812	Turkish Arabia Residency (HQ: Baghdad)
	C	1812–1824	Turkish Arabia Agency (HQ: Baghdad)
	C	1824–1832	Turkish Arabia Agency (HQ: Baghdad, sometimes Basrah)
	C	1832–1844	Turkish Arabia Agency (HQ: Baghdad)
	C	1844–1851	Turkish Arabia Agency & Consulate (HQ: Baghdad)
	C	1851–1914	Turkish Arabia Residency & Consulate-General (HQ: Baghdad)

Table 4. continued

	B	1914–1920	British-Occupied Mesopotamia (HQ: Baghdad)
	B	1920–1932	British Mandate, Iraq (HQ: Baghdad) ^d
4. EGYPT	C	1833–1870	Egypt Consulate-Gen (HQ: Alexandria)
5. EAST AFRICA			
British Somaliland	B	1884–1898 ^c	Aden Residency
Zanzibar	C	1843–1873	Zanzibar Agency & Consulate
	C	1873–1883 ^f	Zanzibar Consulate-General
6. AFGHANISTAN	C	1793–1795	Kabul Agency
	C	1839–1841	Kabul Mission
	C	1856–1878	Kabul Agency
	B	1882–1919	Kabul Agency
	C	1922–1947	Kabul Legation
7. CENTRAL ASIA			
Sinkiang/Xinjiang	C	1891–1947	Chinese Turkistan Consulate-General (HQ: Kashgar)
Tibet	C	1904–1947	Sikkim Office (HQ: Gangtok)
8. NEPAL	B	1816–1923	Nepal Residency (HQ: Kathmandu)
	C	1923–1947 ^g	Nepal Legation (HQ: Kathmandu)
9. BHUTAN	C	1889–1910	Sikkim Office (HQ: Gangtok)
	B	1910–1947	Sikkim Office (HQ: Gangtok)
10. SIAM			
North-West	C	1884–1947	Chiang Mai Consulate ^h

^a The Bushire Residency was established in 1763, but was subordinate to the Basrah Agency until 1778.

^b Established in 1809 by the Foreign Office, transferred to the East India Co. in 1811, transferred back to the Foreign Office in 1860.

^c Transferred to the Foreign Office in 1917.

^d Transferred to the Colonial Office in 1921, but still headed by an IPS officer (except in 1929).

^e Transferred to the Foreign Office in 1898. ^f Transferred to the Foreign Office in 1883.

^g Transferred to the Foreign Office in 1934, but still run by the IPS until 1947.

^h Paid for by the India Office, but staffed by the Foreign Office.

reported to the India Office in London). After 1878, however, the Resident, as Consul-General, also represented the Foreign Office and Her Majesty's Government in London. In this way, Bushire came under the dual authority of Calcutta and London, which resulted in occasional complications before the First World War and frequent complications thereafter.⁶ This division

⁶ For more details, see Blyth, 'Britain versus India in the Persian Gulf' (2000), 90–111; Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa, and the Middle East, 1858–1947* (2003), chs. 2, 8.

of responsibility between Calcutta and London was barely reflected on the ground, however. All the consulates, agencies, and offices in the Fars Consulate-General were staffed by British and native officers from the Government of India. Most of these officers came from the IPS, but a few belonged to the Government of India's Indo-European Telegraph Department, as can be seen in Appendix A7. Administratively and logistically, the British treated the Gulf Residency and the Fars Consulate-General as a single imperial district, part informal empire and part sphere of influence. All references to the Gulf Residency, therefore, include the Fars Consulate-General unless otherwise indicated. A list of Gulf Residents can be found in Appendix B.

4. THE RESIDENCY SYSTEM AND BRITAIN'S INDIAN EMPIRE

The powers British India exercised through its residency system varied considerably. In Egypt, Ottoman Iraq, Persia, Zanzibar, Chinese Turkistan, and Siam—comprising Zone C on Map 1—British political officers held Queen's or King's commissions as vice-consuls, consuls, and consuls-general. These officers were supposed to be nothing more than political representatives, albeit of a world power. In reality, Zone C was a British Indian sphere of influence due to the strong political sway these officers exercised there. In the remaining residencies in Asia and Africa—comprising Zone B—British political officers were both political representatives and imperial officials, for they had the additional duty of enforcing the terms of the treaties that the rulers of the states and chiefdoms within these residencies had signed with the East India Company or the Government of India, placing their domains under British protection and suzerainty. Although these states were still foreign territory and their rulers remained heads of state, their status *vis-à-vis* the British Crown placed them informally within the British Empire. Their status *vis-à-vis* the Governor-General of India (the Viceroy) also placed them within Britain's Indian Empire—an empire within the British Empire, with its own military, civil service, and foreign department. The British Government of India defined the Indian Empire as 'British India together with any territories of any Native Prince or Chief under the suzerainty of Her Majesty exercised through the Governor-General of India'.⁷ While this definition does not differentiate

⁷ Interpretation Act of 1889 and Indian General Clauses Act of 1897, cited in Ilbert, *The Government of India: Being a Digest of the Statute Law Relating Thereto*, 3rd edn. (1915), 291–2.

between the formal and informal parts of the Indian Empire, the areas of British suzerainty around British India were informal empire all the same.

Starting in the late eighteenth century, the rulers of the states and chieftaincies surrounding British India gradually ceded control of their external affairs and defence to the East India Company and British Government of India in return for protection.⁸ Reflecting their protected status, they were known variously as British protectorates, protected states, dependencies, dependent states, states under British protection, and states in exclusive (or special) treaty relations with the British Government. Their sovereignty was conceptualized as divided between the British Crown and the local ruler, but in proportions that varied greatly according to the history and importance of each state. Their relationship with the British Crown was regulated partly by the treaties, or less formal agreements, partly by usage, and ultimately by British policy. Unlike British India and 'Aden Settlement'⁹—Zone A on the map—these territories were not British Overseas Territories, nor were their inhabitants British subjects. Their subjects enjoyed the status of 'British-protected persons' or 'British dependants' outside their own states, giving them the same rights as British subjects—in effect, placing them in the same position as British subjects for international purposes, except that they were not permitted to fly the British flag on their ships before 1892. In the same way, foreign relations between their rulers and foreign governments were conducted through and by the Indian Political Service—in effect, treating these states for international purposes as if they were provinces of British India.¹⁰

For diplomatic and pragmatic reasons, the British Government downplayed and occasionally overplayed the protected status of these states and chieftaincies. It thus referred to the Indian states sometimes as protected states and sometimes as protectorates. Although Bahrain, the Trucial States (as the United Arab Emirates were then known), and Kuwait became British-protected states in the 1880s–90s, followed by Qatar in 1916, the British Government did not publicly proclaim their status as such

⁸ For details, see Aitchison's multi-volume *Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries* (published numerous times between 1862 and 1933), listed in part 11 of the Bibliography.

⁹ 'Aden Settlement (the port of Aden and its environs plus Perim Island—about 80 sq. miles in total) in South-West Arabia was annexed to the Presidency of Bombay, British India, in 1839. It was made a Province of British India in its own right in 1932 and was transferred to the Colonial Office as a Crown Colony in 1937.

¹⁰ For details, see Ilbert, *Government of India*, 165–9, and the works by Aitchison, Lee-Warner, and Tupper listed in parts 11–12 of the Bibliography.



Map 2. The Gulf Residency (1822–1971) and Fars Consulate-General



E The Fars Consulate-General's area of responsibility (HQ: Bushire)

D The Gulf Residency's area of responsibility (HQ: Bushire), which included Persia until 1878.

Underlined locations = posts reporting to Bushire



(1878–1946) in the nineteenth century

until 1949.¹¹ During the First World War, however, the British referred to Kuwait as a 'protectorate'. The British Government never declared 'Oman to be anything more than an independent state in special treaty relations with Great Britain, even though the sultanate had been under informal, conditional British protection since 1809, its Ruler had become dependent on British support by the 1900s, and its foreign affairs had been managed by Britain at the Ruler's request since that time (except for relations with France and America).¹² Many of the states, chiefdoms, and tribal territories of South Arabia (present-day Yemen) had been protected states since 1873 and protectorates since the 1880s–90s. In the early 1900s, the British Government began to refer to the nine protectorates neighbouring 'Aden Settlement as the 'Aden Protectorate'. However, the remaining protectorates to the East of 'Aden (in and around the Hadhramawt) were excluded from the 'Aden Protectorate until 1937, even though the treaties Britain had signed with these states and chieftaincies were identical to those it had signed with the nine around 'Aden.¹³ British India's only dependency in South-West Asia or East Africa whose protected status it proclaimed publicly at the very outset was the British Somaliland Protectorate, established by treaty during 1884–6 and recognized by France the following year.

The official map of the Indian Empire enclosed in *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* and the annual *India Office List* shows British India in pink and British protectorates and protected states in yellow. For diplomatic and pragmatic reasons, this map never conformed to political reality. Ignoring its own definition of the Indian Empire, the British Government maintained the fiction that some of its protected states bordering the territories of other empires did not form part of the Indian Empire and were only loosely connected to the British Empire. Thus, British-protected states, like Afghanistan, which bordered the Russian Empire, were never coloured

¹¹ For details, see the relevant works by Aitchison and Liebesney listed in parts 8–9 of the Bibliography and those by al-Baharna, Balfour-Paul, Kelly, and Roberts in part 13.

¹² For a contemporary discussion of Britain's *de jure* and *de facto* position in the Gulf, see Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of International Rivalry and British Policy in the Persian Gulf, 1872–1905* (1906), 34–5.

¹³ In 1937, the protectorates East of 'Aden were named the 'Eastern 'Aden Protectorate', while those neighbouring 'Aden were renamed the 'Western 'Aden Protectorate'. For details, see Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, xi. *The Treaties, Etc., Relating to Aden and the South-Western Coast of Arabia, the Arab Principalities in the Persian Gulf, Muscat (Oman), Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province* (1933); Robbins, 'The Legal Status of Aden Colony and the Aden Protectorate' (1939); Reilly, 'The Aden Protectorate' (1941). Also see the works by Hunter and Playfair listed in part 10 of the Bibliography.

yellow on official maps of the Indian Empire, while Nepal and Bhutan, which bordered the Chinese dependency of Tibet, were coloured yellow for only ten years (1897–1906). Arabia, which bordered the Ottoman Empire, and British Somaliland, which bordered the Italian and French Empires, were left off the map altogether. Only the Indian states (known collectively as Princely India) were consistently coloured yellow. This means that the Indian Empire was, in reality, much larger than is generally believed.¹⁴ See Zones A and B on Map 1. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was over a quarter larger than the British maintained, as Table 5 shows.

Table 5. The British Indian Empire in the 1890s

Area	Square miles (approx.)
1. Listed on official maps of the Indian Empire^a	
British India (inc. Burma & ^f Aden Settlement)	1,015,000
Princely India (excluding Nepal)	805,000
	1,820,000
2. Not listed on official maps of the Indian Empire^b	
Nepal	54,000
Afghanistan	250,000
Kuwait (Arabia) ^c	6,900
Bahrain (Arabia)	200
Trucial States (Arabia)	32,000
^f Aden Residency, later Protectorate (Arabia)	90,000
British Somaliland Protectorate (Africa) ^d	68,000
	501,100
Actual size of Indian Empire	2,321,100 (27.5% larger)

^a Estimated sizes vary from publication to publication. These sizes are from Chesney, *Indian Polity* (1894), main map. Ceylon was governed by the Colonial Office and did not belong to the Indian Empire.

^b Bhutan (18,200 sq. miles) became a British-protected state in 1910.

^c Added in 1899.

^d Transferred to the Foreign Office in 1898.

The differences between protected states and protectorates, which comprised the informal part of the Indian Empire, are generally misunderstood. In theory, the main legal difference between a protected state and a protectorate was that, while both had signed over their defence and external affairs to the British Crown (represented in the Indian Empire by the Viceroy), only the latter had signed over some of its internal affairs. This distinction is not as clear-cut as it looks. First of all, 'external affairs' was an elastic

¹⁴ For a history of British policy towards the non-Indian parts of the Indian Empire, see Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa, and the Middle East, 1858–1947*.

term that could easily be used to encompass aspects of a protected state's internal affairs, such as the activities of foreign residents and businesses. Secondly, the designations of 'protected state' and 'protectorate' are not reliable indicators of the degree of control the Crown exercised. Before 1937, for instance, the Crown generally had fewer treaty rights to intervene in or control the internal affairs of its protectorates in South Arabia than it had for its protected states in Eastern Arabia, not more as one would expect. There are also countless instances of IPS officers intervening in a protected state or independent state's internal affairs when they had *no* legal right to do so, and of *not* intervening in or controlling a protectorate's internal affairs when they were legally entitled to do so. The rulers of both protected states and protectorates remained sovereign, however: their flags still flew over their government buildings, government was still carried out by them or in their names, and their states maintained a distinct 'international personality' in the eyes of international law (in contrast to states forming part of the British Empire, where the British monarch was the head of every state). Even when the Crown assumed temporary full control of a state during a 'minority period', it did so in trusteeship.¹⁵ In cases like this, the distinction was only a legal and psychological one, for in regard to the degree of control over internal affairs, there was often no real difference between a state under temporary British trusteeship and a British colony. The same can be said for 'colonial protectorates': protectorates over tribal territories where no recognized head of state existed, such as British Somaliland (ruled by IPS officers during 1884–98). Glen Balfour-Paul proposes another, closely related, difference between a protectorate and a protected state. He argues that the British Crown was empowered to make and enforce laws for the 'peace, order, and good government' of its own subjects and dependants in the former, but not in the latter.¹⁶ However, even this distinction does not hold, for the Crown held this and other extra-territorial rights by treaty in both protectorates and protected states, and even in some independent states such as Persia and the Ottoman Empire, and in the 'treaty ports' of China.¹⁷

In Princely India, the British Crown was referred to as the Paramount Power. This position rested upon the Crown's supreme military position in India, the protective role it had assumed over the Indian states, and its inheritance of the Indian Empire from the last Mughal Emperor in

¹⁵ A minority period is a period during which a ruler of a state is a minor, unable to govern on his own.

¹⁶ Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's Relinquishment of Power in her Last Three Arab Dependencies* (1991), 101.

¹⁷ The British Govt issued an order-in-council for each country to regulate the laws and procedures British agents and consuls were to apply to legal cases under their jurisdiction.

1858 (formalized by the proclamation of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India in 1877). As Paramount Power, the Crown claimed a moral responsibility for the behaviour of the Indian rulers it was protecting and representing. Though granted by no treaty, paramountcy was a *de facto* power that could be invoked to justify occasional interventions in, or selective control of, a ruler's domestic affairs whenever IPS officers deemed it desirable to do so. It also meant that an Indian ruler was obligated to heed whatever 'advice' the Paramount Power considered necessary to give on his domestic affairs. Sir Courtenay Ilbert, who served as Law Member on the Council of the Governor-General of India during 1881–6, defined the concept of paramountcy in this way: a Paramount Power

- (1) exercises exclusive control over the foreign relations of the State;
- (2) assumes a general but a limited responsibility for the internal peace of the State;
- (3) assumes a special responsibility for the safety and welfare of British subjects resident in the State; and
- (4) requires subordinate co-operation in the task of resisting foreign aggression and maintaining internal order.¹⁸

In Arabia, the British Crown was referred to as the Protecting Power, but the powers it held in this capacity were no different from those it held as Paramount Power in India. The extent to which it exercised these powers in Arabia is a different matter, for Britain clearly involved itself far more in the affairs of some Arabian states than it did in others. Take, for example, these introductory remarks by Jerome Saldanha in his *Précis of Bahrein Affairs, 1854–1904*, an Indian Foreign Department publication commissioned by Lord Curzon while Viceroy of India (1899–1905): 'The questions will occur frequently when reading this Précis: What is the exact status of Bahrein? What is its international position? What is its relationship with the British Indian Government? What is its position compared with the Native States in India?'¹⁹ Saldanha then quotes Sir Courtenay Ilbert's definition of the four rights exercised by the Paramount Power before continuing:

A perusal of the Précis will show perhaps that all these conditions are satisfied in the case of Bahrein. If then Bahrein is under the suzerainty of His Majesty exercised through the Governor-General of India, does it not come in the same category as any Native State in India and may not its relations to the British Government and other foreign Governments be regulated on the same principles as are applicable to our Native States? If not, what is the exact international status of Bahrein? These important points will have to be borne in view in studying the modern history of Bahrein.

¹⁸ Ilbert, *Government of India*, 166.

¹⁹ Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs, 1854–1904* (1904), preface, pp. 1–2.

But what did British officials on the spot think? Lieutenant-Colonel Malcolm Meade (Gulf Resident 1897–1900), for one, told the Indian Foreign Department Secretary in 1898 that, ‘the treaty engagements entered into between the British Government and the Sheikhs of Bahrein, followed by the more recent closer relations, appear to justify an intimation by the British Government that the status of Bahrein towards the British Government of India is identical with that of protected Native States of India’.²⁰ When Viceroy Curzon toured the Gulf shaikhdoms in 1903, he also made the comparison with the Indian states: ‘To all intents and appearances the State [of Muscat] is as much a Native State of the Indian Empire as Lus Beyla or Kelat [in Princely India], and far more so than Nepal or Afghanistan.’²¹ Although the political status of Gulf shaikhdoms like Bahrain appeared identical to that of the British-protected states of India, the British Government did not publicly acknowledge this until 1949. A comparison of the degree of British control in Bahrain with that in the Indian states can be found in Appendix D, while a listing of Anglo–Bahraini treaty obligations, upon which this control was partly based, can be found in Appendix E.

There is, of course, an extensive literature on the Indian residency system, some of which is listed in the Bibliography (parts 11, 12, and 16). However, the only work providing a complete picture of the residency system’s organization, operation, and evolution is Michael Fisher’s impressive 1991 study, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System*. Fisher is also the only historian of India to have examined the parallels between Britain’s role as Paramount Power in India and its role as Protecting Power in Arabia. He concludes that the British exercised only ‘a limited form of Residency control’ over the Gulf shaikhdoms.²² This is currently the standard view on the subject, a view first put forward by D. A. Low in 1964.²³ At the time Low made his observation—seventeen years after the India Office and Government of India relinquished control of the Gulf Residency to the Foreign Office—the British did indeed exercise a limited form of residency control over the shaikhdoms. This was due, in part, to the fact that very few of the political officers then serving in the Gulf had previous experience as imperial officials. This was not the case when IPS officers ran the Gulf Residency, however. Before 1947, virtually every British political officer in the Residency had previous experience in an Indian residency before his

²⁰ Meade (PRPG) to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 13 June 1898, reg. no. 1044/1898, L/P&S/7/108 (IOR).

²¹ Curzon to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 21 Nov. 1903, Mss. Eur. F111/162 (IOR), 411.

²² Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764–1858* (1991), 463.

²³ Low, ‘Lion Rampant’ (1964), 237–9.

appointment to the Gulf.²⁴ As Appendix D shows, the range of influence and control IPS officers exercised in Bahrain between 1861 and 1947 is almost identical to that of IPS officers in India, excepting only those foreign territories in India that the British ruled directly, such as Indian states during a minority period and the Tribal Territories.

5. IMPERIALISM AND THE STRATEGY OF INFORMAL EMPIRE²⁵

This section addresses two questions about British involvement in the Gulf shaikhdoms: what was the nature of Britain's interests in them before their independence from Britain, and how did Britain protect those interests? These are questions that historians of the Middle East have examined at length, but this examination has taken place completely outside of a wider debate about British imperialism that has occupied historians of Africa, India, Latin America, and China. Historians of the Middle East, and the Gulf in particular, have largely overlooked the theories about the nature of imperialism that these other historians have developed. Peter Sluglett suggests one explanation for this. Middle East historians, he points out, 'see themselves primarily *as such* rather than as historians of part of the British Empire'.²⁶ Nevertheless, Middle East historians could gain new insights from a consideration of the contemporary debate in imperial historiography. What follows is an attempt to link Gulf history to that wider debate.

Explaining British imperialism

The debate about the nature of British imperialism is presently dominated by two theories, one developed by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, and the other by P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins—see Bibliography (part 17). The Robinson–Gallagher explanation emphasizes strategy as the primary motive behind British imperial activity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially the defence of India. In this view, trade followed the flag. British intervention was not normally a result of changed interests, priorities, or policies in London; it was typically a reaction triggered by changes overseas that threatened Britain's global interests. Once the British

²⁴ For an extensive analysis of this, see Rich, *The Invasions of the Gulf: Radicalism, Ritualism and the Shaikhs* (1991).

²⁵ An earlier version of this section was published in the *Journal of Social Affairs*, 22 (Fall 2005), 29–45, and in French in *Maghreb–Machrek*, 187 (Spring 2006), 101–14.

²⁶ Sluglett, 'Formal and Informal Empire in the Middle East' (1999), 422.

intervened, they could not have stayed on without local collaborators and mediators. In order to do this, the British had to operate *within* local political systems—they could rarely do otherwise. The form British imperial activity took in a given area was a reflection of two factors: the concern for economy and the extent of direct control Britain deemed necessary to safeguard its interests. Robinson and Gallagher have summarized this guiding principle of imperialism as ‘informal control if possible, formal control if necessary’. The method of control the British adopted was largely determined by the success they had in attracting local collaborators and mediators. The greater their success, the more indirect their control. Therefore it is the Empire and its periphery, rather than the imperial capital of London, that holds the key to understanding both the timing and the nature of imperialism.

The Cain–Hopkins explanation, on the other hand, asserts that economic factors were the primary concern of British strategists. British overseas economic activity—mainly by the City of London’s finance and service sectors—provided the arena in which British overseas political and military activity took place. British intervention was motivated by the need to protect overseas markets against European rivals: the flag followed trade. Cain and Hopkins agree with the Robinson–Gallagher theory that economy was a key motivating factor in the nature of imperialism and that the guiding principle was ‘informal control if possible, formal control if necessary’. However, the Cain–Hopkins theory holds that it was the financial interests of the City of London in a region that determined the nature and timing of British imperial activity, and not conditions or events in the Empire or its periphery. For example, the Robinson–Gallagher theory explains the timing of British withdrawal from India as a result of a breakdown in the system of local collaboration and mediation, while the Cain–Hopkins theory holds that Britain’s presence there was no longer economically profitable or fiscally viable and that it was the conversion of India’s long-standing debt to the City that determined the timing of the transfer of power in 1947.

Britain’s informal empire

The two theories of imperialism also converge on another point: the nature of informal empire. They conceptualize it as Britain’s commercial empire outside of the British Empire. This idea was first advanced by Robinson and Gallagher in ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’ (1953).²⁷ The general argument is that Britain enjoyed informal political influence over those countries that were economically dependent upon Britain. Cain and Hopkins believe it was the finance and service sectors of the City of London

²⁷ *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 6/1 (1953), 1–15.

more than anything else that enabled Britain to exercise informal political influence outside the British Empire. In *British Imperialism* (1993) they suggest that Persia and the Ottoman Empire comprised Britain's informal empire in the Middle East, while they identify Egypt, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, British Somaliland, the 'Aden Protectorate, the Gulf shaikhdoms, the mandates of 'Iraq, Trans-Jordan, and Palestine, and the colonies of Malta, Cyprus, and 'Aden Settlement as belonging to Britain's formal empire.²⁸

British officials at the time, however, saw formal and informal empire rather differently. They viewed the distinction in constitutional terms of sovereignty and suzerainty, or full and partial sovereignty. To them, Britain's formal empire was *British* territory over which Britain exercised full sovereignty, in a word: colonies. Britain's informal empire, on the other hand, consisted of *foreign* territories over which Britain had acquired some degree of suzerainty (or partial sovereignty) by treaty, in other words: protectorates, condominiums, mandates, and protected states. According to this definition, Britain's formal empire in the Middle East was comprised of the colonies of Malta, Cyprus, and 'Aden Settlement, while its informal empire was much larger, consisting of the 'Aden Protectorate, the Gulf shaikhdoms, British-protected Egypt (1914–36), the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, British Somaliland, and the mandates of 'Iraq, Trans-Jordan, and Palestine. Foreign territories over which Britain exercised varying degrees of influence or informal suzerainty—namely 'independent' Egypt (1882–1914, 1936–47/56),²⁹ 'independent' 'Iraq (1932–58), 'independent' Jordan (1946–56), and certain parts of Persia—were not considered by British officials to fall within Britain's informal empire as they defined it; indeed it was in their interest to publicly deny it. They regarded these states instead as spheres of influence. But their constitutional status aside, these states were just as integrated into Britain's imperial system as British-protected states. Their state infrastructures—from their militaries and civil services to their postal offices and schools—were often organized and run along British lines, and their military units and government departments were often advised or run by Britons in the private employ of these states.³⁰

Present-day historians have different views of formal and informal empire. Some view it as described above, while others see no real difference

²⁸ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, i. *Innovation and Expansion, 1688–1914* (1993), 6–9.

²⁹ British forces withdrew from Cairo and Alexandria in 1947 and from the Suez Canal Zone in 1956.

³⁰ See e.g. Elliot, *'Independent Iraq': The Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–58* (1996), ch. 5.

between *de jure* and *de facto* suzerainty, for the end result was the same.³¹ Cain and Hopkins argue, for instance, that 'sorting the empire into different constitutional groups ... leaves untouched the central issue of the degree of control exercised by the centre, for this is not necessarily measured by an index of constitutional standing'.³² Philip Curtin points out that, while 'European empires overseas had increasing administrative power ... an enormous gap could sometimes exist between their claims to authority and the reality of power they were actually capable of exercising'; conversely: 'At other times, Europeans underplayed rather than overplayed the reality of their power.' Here Curtin gives the well-known example of Britain's 'veiled protectorate' over Egypt (1882–1914).³³ For these reasons, historians are faced with a perplexing problem of terminology. One historian's sphere of influence is another's informal empire. Elizabeth Monroe got around the problem by calling it 'Britain's moment in the Middle East'.³⁴ Perhaps the most accurate, inclusive term yet is the one coined by John Darwin: 'Britain's undeclared empire in the Middle East'.³⁵

Despite the remarkable similarities between those states British officials regarded as informal parts of the Empire and those states they regarded as spheres of influence, there was one major difference between the two: the absence or presence of rival imperial influence. Inside Britain's informal empire, rival imperial influence was excluded, while inside Britain's spheres of influence, it was not. Thus, British proconsuls were constrained to varying degrees in Persia, the Ottoman Empire, 'independent' Egypt (1882–1914, 1936–47/56), 'independent' Iraq (1932–58), and 'independent' Jordan (1946–56) by the presence of ambassadors and consul-generals from rival imperial powers. This was not the case in the Gulf shaikhdoms of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Trucial Oman, and the emirates of the Aden Protectorate, where there was no rival imperial presence whatsoever, or even in British-protected Egypt (1914–36) and the British mandates, where the presence of other imperial powers was merely nominal.

If the distinction between formal and informal empire used by Cain, Hopkins, Robinson, and Gallagher (and many others) would not have been accepted by British imperial officials, then how far do the two theories of imperialism explain British involvement in the Gulf?

³¹ For an excellent discussion of this, see Doyle, *Empires* (1986), 30–47.

³² Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, i. 6–7.

³³ Curtin, *The World and the West* (2000), 15–16.

³⁴ Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914–1971* (1981).

³⁵ Darwin, 'An Undeclared Empire: The British in the Middle East, 1918–39' (1999). Also see Sluglett, 'Formal and Informal Empire in the Middle East', 416–36.

Britain's economic motives and methods in the Gulf: The Cain–Hopkins explanation

Britain has always viewed the Gulf as consisting of two separate entities: a northern tier, comprised of Persia and 'Iraq, and a southern tier, Eastern Arabia. Early British interest in the Gulf was wholly economic and restricted to the northern tier. In 1616, the East India Company established its Persia Agency in Jask (later moved to Bandar 'Abbas) to oversee its commercial activities in the Gulf region. The Persia Agency opened a series of factories in Shiraz (1617), Isfahan (1617), Basrah (1635), Bandar Rig (1755), and Bushire (1763), and brokerages in Kerman (c.1720s) and Muscat (c.1758). Since the eighteenth century, Muscat has always been the exception to the rule in Britain's relationship with the Gulf shaikhdoms. Outside of Muscat, the British had no economic interests in Eastern Arabia whatsoever until the early nineteenth century. Before then, British merchants avoided the area because they perceived the threat of piracy to be too great and the commercial prospects to be too small.³⁶ Although British India was of great importance to the Gulf shaikhdoms economically, the economic importance of the Gulf shaikhdoms to British India was small, limited almost entirely to the pearl trade.³⁷ As a result, trade and shipping between the Gulf shaikhdoms and British India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were entirely in the hands of local Arab, Persian, and Indian merchants with trading houses in both India and the Gulf shaikhdoms.³⁸ Although Gulf historians presume the value of this trade to have been relatively small, its exact value is unknown because the annual compilation of trade reports on Eastern Arabian ports did not begin until 1834. These reports were compiled by British agents in the Gulf and published in the Indian Foreign Department's annual *Report on the Administration of the Persian Gulf Political Residency* (1873–1904) and later in its annual *Persian Gulf Trade Reports* (1905–40).³⁹ Trade reports before 1834 on 'Arabia' were not on Arabia at all, but on 'Turkish Arabia'—the British name for Ottoman 'Iraq.

In 1862, the British India Steam Navigation Company (known as the BI Line) established a regular shipping route between Basrah and Bombay. Eventually, it incorporated the Arabian ports of Muscat (1862), Manamah

³⁶ See Rannié, 'An Account of the Winds, Etc. in the East Indies' (c.1757–63), 95; Low, *History of the Indian Navy, 1613–1863*, i (1877), 189.

³⁷ See the works by Durand and Malcolm listed in part 8 of the Bibliography and those by Pelly, Villiers, and David Wilson in part 9.

³⁸ See Bulley, *The Bombay Country Ships, 1790–1833* (2000), ch. 8; Agius, *Seafaring in the Arabian Gulf and Oman* (2005), ch. 6.

³⁹ These were republished by Archive Editions in 1986–7.

(1869), Qatif (1874), Kuwait (1874), Dubai (1904), and Sharjah (1932) into the route.⁴⁰ Before the establishment of the route, British policy had been only to make the Gulf safe for British shipping. As British trade with Eastern Arabia increased after the 1860s as a result of the incorporation of Arabian ports into the BI Line's Gulf route, the Government of India began to actively encourage it. The value of the trade with Manamah, Qatif, Kuwait, and Dubai always remained small, however, and was never in the same league as that of the trade with large ports like Muscat (before the mid-nineteenth century) and Basrah. British economic interests in Eastern Arabia did not become significant in a global sense until the discovery of oil in Bahrain (1932), Kuwait (1938), Qatar (1940), Abu Dhabi (1958), and 'Oman (1964), and the establishment of airfields for Imperial Airways (later British Overseas Airways) in 1932 at Kuwait, Bahrain, Sharjah, and Gwadar, connecting Britain with India and South-East Asia.⁴¹ Oil and airfields had a strong influence on British policy in the Gulf—most notably on Britain's decision to stay on in the Gulf after its withdrawal from India in 1947.

Britain's pre-oil and pre-air commercial interests in the Gulf shaikhdoms are not sufficient in themselves to explain Britain's presence in Eastern Arabia. This may seem unlikely at first glance because British political dispatches between Bushire, Bombay, Calcutta, and London are filled with references to British and British Indian trade with the Gulf shaikhdoms. However, the relatively insignificant value of the Gulf shaikhdoms' trade with the British Empire needs to be kept in mind when reading these dispatches. The British were keen to increase and protect these commercial interests at every opportunity, but this was an economic policy with a political motive. Increasing Arab economic dependency on British India, and later Britain itself, was one of several methods Britain used to increase its political influence over the Gulf shaikhdoms. The British recognized the links between trade and politics in the Gulf and used these to their advantage, but one should not conclude from this that Britain's pre-oil and pre-air commercial interests in the Gulf shaikhdoms were the motive behind its involvement there. While the Cain–Hopkins theory may explain Britain's motives for its initial involvement in Persia and Muscat in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the theory does not explain British involvement in the Gulf shaikhdoms before the 1930s. The strengths of the

⁴⁰ For a history of BI in the Gulf, see the works by Haws, Jones, and Munro listed in part 13 of the Bibliography.

⁴¹ For more about the airfields, see the works by Bentley, Burchall, Keith, and Sassoon listed in part 9 of the Bibliography and those by Higham, Lee, and al-Sayegh in part 13.

theory lie in its emphasis on British economic strategies to exercise political influence and, of course, in its explanation of Britain's decision to remain in the Gulf after its withdrawal from India.

Britain's strategic motives and methods in the Gulf: The Robinson–Gallagher explanation

Britain's original interest in the Gulf shajkhdoms of Bahrain and Trucial 'Oman developed out of a strategic concern for the protection of British shipping between Persia, 'Iraq, Muscat ('Oman), and India. Arab maritime raiders, whose activities between 1797 and 1819 caused the British great concern for the safety of their ships, had their base of operations along the 'Pirate Coast' (as they then called the Trucial Coast—the Gulf coast of the present-day United Arab Emirates). The increasing threat to British shipping eventually prompted the British to dispatch a series of naval expeditions to the Gulf. After the last expedition, it became clear that the stability of the Gulf shajkhdoms was essential for the security of the shipping lanes in and around the Gulf. In 1820, therefore, Britain embarked upon a policy of increasing intervention in Arabian affairs in order to pacify, stabilize, and secure the Gulf region—a policy Britain maintained until 1971. It was for this purpose that the Lower Gulf Agency (1820–2) and its successor, the Gulf Residency (1822–1971), were established. Although located on the Persian coast, their principal role was to maintain political relations with both the rulers of Eastern Arabia and the governors of Southern Persia in order to protect British ships, subjects, and interests in the Gulf region as a whole. The decision to locate in Persia (the Gulf Residency at Bushire and the Lower Gulf Agency on Qishm Island) instead of Arabia was a logical one at the time: for the past two hundred years the main interest of the British had been Persia, not Arabia; the British established their Residency at Bushire in 1763, long before they developed an interest in Eastern Arabia—moving it would be costly; their shipping lanes through the Gulf ran along the Persian coast, within sight of Bushire and Qishm Island, making communications with India easier; and they considered Persia a safer base of operations than the Pirate Coast.

Though the protection of trade was important to Britain, it was a regional strategic concern limited to the Gulf. The Gulf held no global strategic value to Britain until France sent a military expedition to Egypt (1798–1801) and entered into a military alliance with the Shah of Persia (1807–9). Suddenly, British India faced the threat of invasion on its Western flank. Britain quickly adopted the policy of securing Persia and Muscat/'Oman as buffer states against French influence. British envoys were dispatched from India to Muscat and Persia with orders to secure anti-French treaties in return for

promises of British support. A political representative was sent from England to report on French activity in Baghdad. Apart from Muscat, Eastern Arabia remained outside of this diplomatic activity. After Britain defused the French threat, it maintained a buffer state policy towards Muscat and Persia (and later Afghanistan) until its withdrawal from India in 1947. In fact, J. B. Kelly argues that Britain may well have abandoned Persia altogether had France not become involved in Egypt and Persia when it did, as Britain had lost all economic interest in the country by then.⁴² Thus, the Gulf shaikhdoms were important to Britain because of their proximity to British shipping lanes and to important buffer states on British India's western flank.

In the 1860s, the strategic importance of Eastern Arabia to Britain increased dramatically. In 1865–9, Britain established two telegraph lines through the Gulf—one underwater cable and one overland cable, both along the Persian coast—giving Britain instant communication with India. The Gulf had long been used by Britain as a mail route to India, but it was only one of three routes to the East (the others being the Red Sea mail route and the Cape of Good Hope shipping route).⁴³ Now the Gulf became a vital communications corridor and the protection of British telegraph lines and stations along the Persian coast became a global strategic concern for Britain.⁴⁴ The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 also had a significant influence on British strategy for the defence of India. Overnight, the normal shipping time between Britain and India was cut from months to weeks. The security of the surrounding areas—Egypt and Arabia—now concerned British policy-makers in London. The Gulf was moving into the forefront of Britain's global strategic planning.

Shortly after these favourable developments for Britain, the Gulf came under threat from its northern flank. Russia was expanding into Central Asia with an eye to securing a warm-water port somewhere along the Southern Persian coast. In 1868, Russia captured Samarkand, in 1873 it took Khiva, and in 1884 it occupied Merv. By 1885, Russia had a common frontier with Persia, from the Caspian Sea to Afghanistan, and Russian influence was spreading throughout Northern Persia.⁴⁵ From this point on, British policy in Persia was largely concerned with excluding that

⁴² See Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1795–1880* (1968), 61.

⁴³ For details, see Hoskins, *British Routes to India* (1928).

⁴⁴ For more about the Indo–European Telegraph Dept's operations in the Gulf, see the works by Goldsmid, Simpson, and Wills listed in part 9 of the Bibliography and those by Ahmadi, Brobst, Harris, Rubin, and Shahvar in part 13.

⁴⁵ See map in Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Asia* (1999), 118–19.

influence—a continuation of the same buffer state policy Britain adopted in 1798 to exclude French influence.⁴⁶ If a major rival like Russia were to establish a naval base in the Gulf, it would pose a serious maritime threat to India. This policy was most famously articulated in 1903 by Britain's Foreign Secretary at the time, Lord Lansdowne: 'we should regard the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified port in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it with all the means at our disposal'.⁴⁷ In this way, the Persian side of the Gulf became a frontier in the 'Great Game' between Russia and Britain that dominated strategic thinking in India for over a century.

While these developments unfolded in Persia, there were also unfavourable developments on the Arab side of the Gulf. In 1871–2, the Ottoman Army occupied Hasa and Qatar over the courses of eight months, annexing them to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman presence cut off a large portion of Eastern Arabia from British maritime policing with destabilizing results. Pirates sought refuge in Ottoman waters from British gunboats. In the 1880s, the British feared Ottoman annexation of the remainder of Eastern Arabia: Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, 'Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, and Ras al-Khaimah—territories forming a *de facto* part of the British Indian Empire. From this point on, British policy on Eastern Arabia was concerned with the prevention of further Ottoman expansion in the Gulf—and was thus tied up with the 'Eastern Question' (about the future and integrity of the Ottoman Empire) that dominated Euro–Ottoman relations before the First World War. Towards this end, the Government of India signed Exclusive Agreements with the Rulers of Bahrain (in 1880 and 1892), and Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, 'Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ras al-Khaimah (in 1888 and 1892), turning them into British-protected states, although Britain did not clarify their status in this regard until 1949. The Government also signed a limited Exclusive Agreement with the Ruler (Sultan) of Muscat and 'Oman in 1891, which prohibited him only from ceding, selling, or leasing his domains to any foreign government or person, except the British Government. From the 1900s onward, the Government managed Muscat's foreign affairs at its Ruler's request, except for countries with which Muscat already had treaty relations (mainly France and America). In 1899, the Ruler of Kuwait signed an Exclusive Agreement with the Government of India to exclude German influence and involvement from his shakhdom.

⁴⁶ For more about British policy on Persia, see the works by Lorimer and Saldanha listed in part 8 of the Bibliography and those by Allen, Brobst, Ellos, Greaves, Ingram, Oberling, Sabahi, Thornton, Tandon, and Yapp in part 13.

⁴⁷ Lord Lansdowne, Persian Gulf declaration, *The Times* (6 May 1903), 8.

The Ruler of Qatar followed suit in 1916 after the withdrawal of the Ottoman garrison at Dohah the previous year. These agreements bound the rulers into exclusive political relations with, and ceded control of their external affairs to, the British Government. This was the final step in the Gulf shaikhdoms' formal incorporation into the Indian Empire. They formed a part of what Frauke Heard-Bey aptly describes as 'the screen of semi-independent states and principalities ... right across the British Indian Empire's Northern frontiers and Western seaboard and along its vital communication lines with Europe'.⁴⁸ The Exclusive Agreements legitimized Britain's exclusion of Ottoman influence—and later German, French, and Russian influence—from strategic parts of Eastern Arabia, allowing Britain to establish a cordon sanitaire to protect British India. This strategic frontier, like all the other regions surrounding British India, was overseen by the Indian Political Service.

6. THE INDIAN POLITICAL SERVICE (IPS), 1764–1947

The Indian Political Service, which managed political relations between British India and the independent states neighbouring it, traces its history back to 1764, when the East India Company appointed the first purely political residents to the courts of the Nawab of Bengal, the Nawab of Awadh, and the Nizam of Hyderabad. To handle the correspondence between the Company, the residents, and the rulers, the Company created the post of Persian Translator at its headquarters in Calcutta (Persian being the language of diplomatic correspondence in India at the time). Out of this post grew the Secret and Political Department, established in 1783. The department was under the supervision of a secretary to Government, who for many years was known as the Persian Secretary. In 1843, the department was renamed the Foreign Department. Such were the responsibilities of the department that Lord Curzon dubbed it 'the Asiatic Branch of the Foreign Office in England'.⁴⁹ In 1914, the department was reorganized into two sections and renamed the Foreign and Political Department, each with its own secretary. In 1937, the department was reorganized as a Government service and renamed the Indian Political Service (IPS). Political relations with neighbouring states and tribal areas were not the sole responsibility of the Government of India, however. The provincial governments

⁴⁸ Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*, 2nd edn. (1996), 294.

⁴⁹ Lord Curzon, Indian Council speech on foreign affairs (25 Mar. 1903).

also maintained foreign departments, known as political departments. The Bombay Political Department, for instance, was responsible for relations with East Africa, Arabia, Ottoman Iraq, and Persia for much of the nineteenth century. Historians refer to the diplomatic corps of both levels of government collectively as the Indian Political Service, even though this name was not officially adopted until 1937.

Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice, standard reading in the Foreign Office since the early twentieth century, describes a public servant employed by his government to manage political relations with a foreign government as a 'diplomatist'.⁵⁰ Those employed by the East India Company and the Government of India in this capacity in Asia and Africa were classified as 'political officers'. Use of the term was limited to Britons, however, even though many non-Europeans and Eurasians performed the same functions. When the term is applied to *all* the men the IPS entrusted with political duties, a more realistic picture of how British India managed its political relations in Asia and Africa emerges. In the nineteenth century, the IPS was composed of, not one, but three categories of political officer.

The first category of political officer consisted of 'graded officers': commissioned officers from the Indian Army and Navy, and 'covenanted' civil servants from the Honourable East India Company's Service, later known as the Indian Civil Service.⁵¹ The 'covenant' was the terms of service one was required to sign before joining the service.⁵² It had the effect of conferring official authority on the signatory, like a commission in the Army. Indian Medical Service (IMS) doctors attached to political residencies or agencies also performed political duties on occasion, but their official title was always surgeon.⁵³ Commissioned officers and covenanted civil servants normally came from upper middle-class or upper-class families in Britain. Their ratio in the IPS varied over the years, from 86:14 (military–civilian) in 1877, to 62:38 in 1890, to roughly 70:30 in the twentieth century. Appendix A15 has details from 1877. The reason for recruiting greater numbers of military officers into the IPS was a practical one: they were more numerous and cheaper to employ than covenanted civil servants.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Satow, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, ch. 1, s. 14, p. 7.

⁵¹ For accounts of these services, see the works by Barua, Beaumont, Blunt, Dewey, Gilmour, Hastings, Lt Low, Mason, Misra, O'Malley, Potter, Seton, Sharma, Sikka, and Spangenberg listed in part 16 of the Bibliography and that by Kirk-Greene in part 17.

⁵² For details, see Hejeebu, 'Contract Enforcement in the English East India Company' (2005), 500–6.

⁵³ For more about the IMS, see the books by Crawford and MacDonald in part 16 of the Bibliography.

⁵⁴ For details, see Aberigh-MacKay, *The Native Chiefs and Their States in 1877*, 2nd edn. (1878), 69–72; Ruthnaswamy, 'The Indian Political Service', part 1 (1976), 56,

There were three ranks of graded political officer in the IPS: political resident, political agent, and political assistant (either assistant resident or assistant agent). Grades were later introduced, resident having three classes, agent and assistant each having four. The list of commissioned officers and covenanted civil servants in the Government of India's annual *History of Services of Officers Holding Gazetted Appointments in the Foreign Department* was subsequently known as the 'graded list', hence 'graded officer'. Residencies and agencies were also assigned grades, to which the rank and grade of the chief officer corresponded. The Gulf Residency, for instance, was graded as a second-class residency in the nineteenth century, while the Hyderabad Residency was always a first-class residency. In line with this grading, the Gulf Residency was generally considered to be one of the less desirable postings within the IPS, whereas the Hyderabad Residency was considered one of the most desirable. Some of the graded officers posted to the Gulf Residency can be seen in Photos 4, 6, and 7.⁵⁵

The second category of political officer came from British India's Uncovenanted Civil Service, known as the Provincial Civil Service after 1891 (divided into the Bombay Civil Service, the Bengal Civil Service, the Madras Civil Service, and so on), although the term 'uncovenanted' remained in use for many years. Uncovenanted civil servants were recruited from India, rather than Britain, and were typically Indian, Armenian, Eurasian, or lower-class European.⁵⁶ There were two main ranks of uncovenanted political officer in the IPS: uncovenanted assistant and extra uncovenanted assistant—the civilian counterparts to *subadar* and *jemadar* (first lieutenant and second lieutenant in the Indian Army, ranks held by Indians without a Queen's or King's commission). Members of the Uncovenanted Civil Service were listed under 'other officers' in the Government of India's annual *History of Services of Officers Holding Gazetted Appointments in the Foreign Department*, alongside the graded categories of Indian Civil Service, military officers, and medical officers. Uncovenanted civil servants accounted for a substantial minority of appointments in the Bombay Political Department and the Indian Foreign Department. Of the eighty-three graded officers in the IPS in 1877, for instance, nine

59; Creagh-Coen, *The Indian Political Service* (1971), 5; I. Copland, *The British Raj and the Indian Princes* (1982), 73.

⁵⁵ For more about graded officers in the IPS, see the works by Blunt, Copland, Creagh-Coen, Fisher, Hogben, Ruthnaswamy, and Trench listed in part 16 of the Bibliography and that by Kirk-Greene in part 17.

⁵⁶ For studies of the Uncovenanted (Provincial) Civil Service, see Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 349–52; Misra, *The Bureaucracy in India* (1977), 139–51; Seton, *The India Office* (1926), 128–30; Frykenberg, *Guntur District, 1788–1848: Local Influence and Central Authority in South India* (1965).

were uncovenanted, of whom five were Eurasian or non-European—see Appendix A15. Of the 290 officers holding ‘gazetted’ (official⁵⁷) appointments in the Indian Foreign Department in 1898, eighty-seven were uncovenanted, of whom sixty-two were non-European.⁵⁸ Not all of these were political officers, however. Many held non-political posts such as assistant surgeon, sub-assistant surgeon, second magistrate, treasury officer, chief clerk, inspector of police, assistant district superintendent of police, superintendent of jails, chief judge, and sub-judge. The last five appointments were to the governments of various Indian states. Unlike graded officers, most uncovenanted officers usually remained long in their postings. As a result, they often had a better grasp of the local languages, cultures, and politics of their residency’s district than their covenanted or commissioned superiors. In residencies where the turnover of graded officers was high, uncovenanted officers were important for the maintenance of institutional memory. Some of the uncovenanted civil servants posted to the Gulf can be seen in Photo 7.

The third category of political officer—and the focus of this study—came from the Subordinate Civil Service. Originally the Subordinate Civil Service formed the lower level of the Uncovenanted Civil Service. In 1892, it became a separate service. Unlike uncovenanted civil servants, who were recruited from all over India, subordinate civil servants were recruited from a residency’s own district and were rarely, if ever, posted outside it. Subordinate civil servants held a variety of posts in British India and the residencies, from administrative to political. Political posts were reserved for members of the local socio-economic élite, whose knowledge of the district’s languages, cultures, and politics far surpassed that of the district’s graded and uncovenanted officers. Within British India, local élites held the political posts of *tahsildar* (subdivision officer), *na’ib tahsildar* (deputy subdivision officer), and *munshi* (political assistant and interpreter). Within the residencies, they held the posts of native agent (known as a residency agent in the twentieth century) and *munshi*. Whereas all uncovenanted political officers held gazetted appointments in the Bombay Political Department and the Indian Foreign Department, few subordinate political officers did. Appointments to the office of native agent were not gazetted, and so do not appear in the annual *History of Services of Officers Holding Gazetted Appointments in the Foreign Department*. Appointments to *mir munshi* (chief political assistant and interpreter) and

⁵⁷ The term ‘gazetted’ comes from the British practice of announcing official appointments in a weekly gazette or bulletin. See Glossary for details.

⁵⁸ Govt of India, *History of Services of Officers Holding Gazetted Appointments in the Home, Foreign, Revenue and Agricultural, and Legislative Departments* (1898), 129–382.

dragoman (the Middle Eastern equivalent to *mir munshi*), however, were gazetted in some residencies. Chapter 3 will examine these posts in greater detail. Detailed descriptions of these posts can be found in part 2 of the Glossary.

The most comprehensive study of uncovenanted and subordinate political officers in the IPS is by Michael Fisher, who devotes a whole chapter to the subject in *Indirect Rule in India*. Fisher's ground-breaking study of non-Europeans in the IPS points out how Indian historiography provides an incomplete picture of the residency system:

In virtually all analytic pictures of the Residency hitherto published, the British Resident alone fills the page, to the exclusion of his Indian staff. Nevertheless, while the Resident headed the delegation, his Indian staff carried out most of the work of indirect rule and, in so doing, determined to a large part how the Residency actually functioned. British accounts at the time and recent scholarship alike have given these Indian assistants, clerks, 'intelligence writers', accountants, and treasurers only passing mention at best. Nevertheless, only when we have come to understand who these subordinates were and how they functioned will we have a clear picture of the Residency system as a whole.⁵⁹

Sir Terence Creagh-Coen, whose *Indian Political Service* (1971) is still the standard work on the IPS, devotes only two pages to these men. Despite the scant attention he gives them, his remarks are also revealing:

The [graded] Service was assisted by a number of officials outside it whose work we must briefly record. A great many of the inferior posts, and occasionally some of the superior, were at times held temporarily by officers outside the cadre of the [graded] Service. This was particularly frequent in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, where there was a shortage of political officers. Extra Assistant Commissioners, as members of the Provincial Civil Service (who were practically always Indians) were called, were often put in to act in their posts. The importance of the role played by such officers cannot be over-stressed. For good and for ill, their power was great. They were mostly local men, with vast knowledge of the customs and politics of the tribes. The Political Agents, too often frequently transferred, would have been as blind leaders of a blind and distant Government without the skilled advice of their Muslim and Hindu assistants.⁶⁰

Creagh-Coen and Fisher do not distinguish between uncovenanted political officers (who were recruited from all over India) and subordinate political officers (who were recruited locally).⁶¹ But the distinction is an important one, for subordinate political officers were the ones upon whom the residency political staff depended most for an understanding of local

⁵⁹ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 316.

⁶⁰ Creagh-Coen, *Indian Political Service*, 56–7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*; Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 316–74.

politics, cultures, and languages. It was a subordinate political officers' extensive family, social, business, and political networks throughout his residency's district that sustained his residency's operations. These were networks that a political officer recruited from outside a residency could not possibly possess. Some of the subordinate civil servants attached to the Gulf Residency can be seen in Photos 3, 5, 6, and 7.

Fisher explains how, today, historians can only trace the existence of non-European officials 'through the aggregation of thousands of isolated references drawn from the day to day records of each Residency'.⁶² Perhaps this is why only a few historians have written on the subject.⁶³

7. EARLY BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN THE GULF, 1616–1822

At the time of the Gulf Residency's establishment in 1822, the East India Company had been involved in the region for over two hundred years. The Company established the Persia Agency, its first agency in the Gulf region, at Jask on Persia's Makran Coast in 1616, three years after it established its first agency at Surat on the north-west coast of India. The following year, the Persia Agent established subordinate factories in Shiraz and Isfahan. A few years later, in 1622, the Company helped Shah 'Abbas of Persia evict the Portuguese from Gombroon, eighty-five miles up the coast from Jask at the entrance to the Gulf. After the successful completion of the operation, the Shah permitted the Company to establish a trading post at this superior port, which he had renamed Bandar 'Abbas (Port 'Abbas). The Persia Agent moved his headquarters to Bandar 'Abbas the following year. The port remained the centre of the Company's activities in Persia for the next 140 years. In 1635, the Persia Agent established a subordinate factory in Basrah. The factory operated only during the trading season until around 1643, when it was made a permanent establishment. It operated for fourteen years until the Governor of Basrah seized it in 1657. It was re-established sixty-six years later, in 1723, under the direction of a resident (the new title for factor). The Persia Agent established a factory in 1755 on the south-west Persian coast at Bandar Rig, but this factory was unsuccessful and it was closed the following year. The Persia Agent also maintained a number of brokerages throughout the region run by native brokers, but very little is known about them. In

⁶² Ibid. 316.

⁶³ See the works by Basu, Marshall, Nandy, Onley, Pearson, and White listed in part 14 of the Bibliography and those by Bayly, Frykenberg, Gupta, Marshall, and Jules Stewart in part 16.

1759, during Britain's global war with France, a French military expedition occupied Bandar 'Abbas and destroyed the Persia Agency headquarters. The Company re-established the Agency not long after, but the port was now in decline. In 1763, therefore, the Company decided to close the Persia Agency and move its Agent to the more prosperous port of Basrah. The same year, the new Basrah Agent established a subordinate factory in Bushire headed by a resident, who was responsible for the Company's relations with Persia. In 1778, the Company reduced the status of the Basrah Agency to that of a residency and confined its jurisdiction to Ottoman 'Iraq. Thereafter, Persia and the Gulf were the sole responsibility of the Bushire Resident, who now reported directly to Bombay.⁶⁴ In the nineteenth century, the Company changed its use of titles, making agent subordinate to resident. Charts showing the organization and development of the Persia Agency, Basrah Agency, and Bushire Residency can be found in Appendices A2–A4.

As in India, the Company's activities in the Gulf were originally commercial. As the Company became more powerful and more involved in local affairs, the role of the residents and agents became increasingly politicized. In 1773, Parliament passed the Regulating Act, which forbade the Company's administrative and political officers in India to engage in private trade. Although the Bushire Resident continued to direct the Company's trade in the Gulf, the growing political nature of the post prompted the Company to apply the Regulating Act to the Gulf in 1822.

8. BRITAIN'S POLITICAL RESIDENCY IN THE GULF, 1822–1971

British India's initial interest in Eastern Arabia grew out of a need to protect its ships and subjects in Arabian waters, as briefly explained in Section 5. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the Strait of Hormuz was controlled by the al-Qawasim family (singular al-Qasimi) of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah. Much of the al-Qawasim's revenue came from tolls, which they levied on all shipping in and out of the Gulf. Partly out of misunderstanding, partly out of arrogance, the British refused to pay these tolls.⁶⁵ In response, the al-Qawasim raided British shipping—an act the British considered piracy. British hegemony in the Gulf dates from the winter of 1819–20, when the authorities in British India sent a devastating naval expedition

⁶⁴ For more about British involvement in the Gulf before the 19th cent, see the works by Lorimer and Saldanha listed in part 8 of the Bibliography and those by Amin, al-Qasimi, Standish, and Tuson in part 13.

⁶⁵ For details, see Onley, 'Politics of Protection'.

against the al-Qawasim and the 'Pirate Coast' (the Gulf coast of the present-day United Arab Emirates). Upon the conclusion of the expedition, the British imposed an anti-piracy treaty—known as the General Treaty of 1820—on all the rulers and governors of the 'Pirate Coast'. The co-Rulers of Bahrain, who wished to avoid maritime toll-paying, were admitted to the treaty at their request. To manage British India's relations with these rulers, supervise the enforcement of the General Treaty, and protect British India's ships and subjects in Arabian waters, the British created the post of Political Agent for the Lower Gulf, headquartered on Qishm Island in the Strait of Hormuz. Two years later, in 1822, the British transferred this post to Bushire on the south-west Persian coast and amalgamated it with the much older post of Bushire Resident (established fifty-nine years earlier). The new post of Resident in the Persian Gulf—Political Resident in the Persian Gulf (PRPG) after the 1850s—was responsible for Britain's relations with the entire Gulf region. To support the Resident in his role, the British assigned a naval squadron to the Gulf to patrol its waters—a practice known as 'watch and cruise'. The Gulf Squadron consisted of five to seven ships-of-war in the age of sail and two to four gunboats in the age of steam (from the 1860s onward).⁶⁶ The squadron was under the command of the Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf (SNOPG, pronounced 'SNOP-G'), who reported to both the Gulf Resident and the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies Station (Fleet) in Bombay.⁶⁷ The squadron had a series of temporary headquarters around the Strait of Hormuz until 1823, when a permanent naval depot at Basidu on Qishm Island was established. The depot was later moved to neighbouring Henjam Island in 1911.⁶⁸ When Riza Shah began to reassert Iranian sovereignty over the Persian coast and islands in the 1930s, the squadron's headquarters were moved to Ras al-Jufair on the north-east coast of Bahrain in 1935, where a naval base was constructed. After British forces withdrew from the Gulf in

⁶⁶ For the Squadron's strength through the years, see Low, *History of the Indian Navy, 1613–1863*, i. 536–41; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis on Naval Arrangements in the Persian Gulf, 1862–1905* (1906), 1–10; Preston and Major, *Send a Gunboat!* (1967). For Britain's naval presence in the Gulf in general, see Parry, 'The Royal Navy in the Persian Gulf' (1930); Sridharan, *A Maritime History of India*, 2nd edn. (1982); Ingram, 'A Scare of Seaborne Invasion: The Royal Navy at the Strait of Hormuz, 1807–1808' (1982); Burdett (ed.), *Persian Gulf and Red Sea Naval Reports 1820–1960* (1993); Tuson, 'Some British Views of Bahrain: The Work of the Bombay Marine and Indian Navy, 1785–1863' (1993); Hastings, *The Royal Indian Navy, 1612–1950* (1988).

⁶⁷ The title of SNOPG was first used in 1830. Before then, he was known as the Senior Marine Officer in the Persian Gulf. An alternative title was the Commodore at Bassadore (Basidu). For the sake of clarity, only SNOPG is used.

⁶⁸ For more about Basidu and Henjam naval depots, see HM Govt, Cabinet Office, 'Historical Summary of Events ... Affecting the British Position in the Persian Gulf, 1907–28' (1928), 108–22.

December 1971, the base became the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet. Britain also maintained a number of infantry units in the region at Qishm Island (1820–3), Muscat (1913–21), Sharjah (1951–71), and Bahrain (1961–71), as well as a string of RAF airfields, later stations, in Basrah (1915–59), Kuwait (1940–5), Bahrain (1932–71), Sharjah (1932–71), and ‘Oman (1932–77). See Appendix A16 for details.

Britain’s Political Resident in the Gulf took his orders from the Bombay Political Department for fifty years until January 1873, when the Indian Foreign Department assumed responsibility for the Gulf Residency in the wake of the Ottoman occupation of Hasa (1871–1913) and Qatar (1872–1915). After Indian independence in 1947, the Foreign Office assumed responsibility for the Gulf Residency. The Residency headquarters was located in Bushire until 1946, then moved to Ras al-Jufair in Bahrain where it remained until Britain’s withdrawal from the Gulf twenty-five years later.⁶⁹ To supervise his vast charge, the Gulf Resident maintained a network of agents throughout Eastern Arabia at Muscat, Sharjah, Bahrain, Kuwait, and, after 1947, at Dohah, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi. In his capacity as Consul-General for Fars (1878–1946), he maintained a second network of agents, consuls, and officers throughout Southern Persia at Muhammarah (now Khoramshahr), Shiraz, Kermanshah, Lingah, Basidu, Jask, Chahabar, and Gwadar, and, in the twentieth century, at Bandar ‘Abbas, Kerman, and Ahvaz, and, briefly, at Bam (1901–10) and Dizful (c.1919–21).⁷⁰ A chart of these networks can be found in Appendix A9.

After the imposition of the General Treaty of 1820, the rulers consented to other treaties over the next one hundred and fifty years. The most important of these were the Maritime Truces, which established the Pax Britannica in the Gulf. The first Maritime Truce, signed in 1835 by the rulers of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, ‘Ajman, and the al-Qasimi empire (see Glossary), was an experimental ban on maritime warfare during the pearling season. The truce was a great success and a second truce was arranged the following year, which the newly independent Ruler of Umm al-Qaiwain also signed. After a series of annual twelve-month truces and a ten-year truce in 1843, the rulers signed a Perpetual Maritime Truce in 1853. In recognition of the shaikhdoms’ membership in the Maritime Truce, the British referred to them as the ‘Trucial States’, to the area as ‘Trucial ‘Oman’, and to the coast as the ‘Trucial Coast’. In time, the British invited the

⁶⁹ See Farah, ‘The Question of the Transfer of the British Residency’, MA thesis (1970).

⁷⁰ See Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians during the Qajar Period, 1787–1921* (1977), 62–93; Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 2–8, 43–7, 127–8, 133–5, 151–5.

rulers of other Gulf shaikhdoms to join the truce: Kuwait in 1841 (for one year only), Bahrain in 1861, and Qatar in 1916. Under the terms of the truce, the rulers gave up their right to wage war by sea in return for British protection against maritime aggression. This arrangement, known as the 'Trucial system', cast Britain in the roles of protector, mediator, arbiter, and guarantor of settlements. Later on, the rulers also signed Exclusive Agreements—Bahrain in 1880 and 1892, the Trucial States in 1888 and 1892, Kuwait in 1899, Najd and Hasa in 1915 (annulled in 1927), and Qatar in 1916—that bound them into exclusive political relations with, and ceded control of their external affairs to, the British Government of India.⁷¹ The Ruler of Muscat and 'Oman entered into treaty relations with Britain in 1798 and his state had enjoyed informal, conditional British protection at various times since 1809. In 1891, he signed a limited Exclusive Agreement, which prohibited him only from ceding, selling, or leasing his domains to any foreign government or person except the British Government. By the 1900s, he had become dependent on British support and the British Government was managing his foreign affairs at his request, except for countries with which he already had treaty relations (mainly France and America).

Despite British hegemony in the Gulf, the Residency did not simply impose a foreign system of order on the region. After the devastating 1820 expedition, Britain's expanding role in regional relations was the result of negotiation and compromise on both sides. In time, the Residency came to operate *within* the regional and local political systems of the Gulf, serving the interests of both the rulers and the British remarkably well. This was the main reason for the Pax Britannica's longevity in the Gulf.⁷²

That said, the Pax Britannica is perceived as a foreign system of order—for which the British receive all the credit. A possible reason for this is that most historical accounts of the Gulf Residency were written by British political officers who served in the Gulf and/or Princely India: namely John Lorimer, Sir Rupert Hay, Sir Bernard Burrows, Sir Donald Hawley, Glen Balfour-Paul, Sir Denis Wright, Sir Terence Creagh-Coen, and Charles Chenevix Trench.⁷³ John Lorimer's monumental *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman, and Central Arabia* (1908, 1915)—commissioned by Viceroy Curzon after his 1903 tour of the Gulf—is still considered the greatest single work ever written on the history of the Gulf, let alone

⁷¹ For details of the treaties and the resulting status of the Gulf shaikhdoms, see the relevant works by Aitchison and Liebesney listed in parts 8–9 of the Bibliography and those by al-Baharna, Balfour-Paul, Kelly, and Roberts in part 13.

⁷² See Onley, 'Politics of Protection'.

⁷³ Their works are listed in parts 8–9, 13, and 16 of the Bibliography.

the Gulf Residency.⁷⁴ Those works on the Gulf Residency not written by British civil servants were written by historians relying entirely on British sources, namely: J. B. Kelly, Penelope Tuson, Briton Cooper Busch, John Standish, Paul Rich, Simon Smith, and Miriam Joyce. One can add to this the much larger body of work on British involvement in the Gulf in general, which focuses on British policies and actions instead of the Gulf Residency itself.⁷⁵ Studies of Gulf society and politics during the era of British hegemony make use of local sources and, as a result, direct attention to local agency in the maintenance of the Pax Britannica, but not to the same extent as this book.⁷⁶ Nearly all accounts of Britain's political residencies in the Gulf and India portray the Indian residency system and the resulting Pax Britannica as if they had been maintained by a handful of Britons. British India has been portrayed in the same way: three hundred million people administered and policed by just a few thousand Britons from the Indian Civil Service and Indian Police.⁷⁷ British Africa, too, is portrayed like this.⁷⁸ The literature presents an image of a solitary British officer, doing it all himself. This popular image is a misleading Eurocentric stereotype of imperial achievement.

In reality, the majority of British agents in the nineteenth-century Gulf were Indian, Persian, or Arab. Despite this, published accounts of Britain's native agents there are few and far between. The first appears to be in William Palgrave's *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia, 1862–63* (1865).⁷⁹ Palgrave visited Sharjah in February 1863, where he caught a brief glimpse of Hajji Ya'qub (Sharjah Agent 1850–66), but only from a distance. Despite this, Palgrave has a great deal to say about the Agent, all of it critical and clearly based on hearsay. 'Really

⁷⁴ For part of the story of its compilation, see Hunter, 'Reminiscences of the Map of Arabia and the Persian Gulf' (1919). For a review, see Bidwell, 'A British Official Guide to the Gulf: Review' (1972).

⁷⁵ These works are listed in part 13 of the Bibliography.

⁷⁶ See the works by Abu Hakima, Alghanim, Bhacker, Farah, Fattah, Heard-Bey, Mai Al Khalifah, Khuri, Kostiner, Lienhardt, al-Naqeeb, Peterson, Rizzo, Rumaihi, Taryam, Vassiliev, Winder, Zahlan, and al-Zayyani listed in part 13 of the Bibliography.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of this point, see Cohn, 'The Initial British Impact on India' (1987); Marshall, 'Britain and the World in the Eighteenth Century: Part III, Britain and India' (2000).

⁷⁸ A recent study by Heather Sharkey provides a much-needed corrective to the dominant, Eurocentric view of colonial Sudan. In it she shows how Sudanese members of the colonial administration played important roles in the governance of their country. Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (2003).

⁷⁹ Palgrave, *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia, 1862–63*, 1st edn. (1865), 302–3. Palgrave's comments on native agents are excluded from the subsequent abridged editions of his book.

my countrymen might find a better use for their money than lining this gentleman's pockets', he tells his readers. 'His official occupation is to prevent the import and sale of slaves. But Yakoob, while pocketing the English coin bestowed on him for philanthropic ends, thinks it wisest, for many reasons, to remain good friends with all parties.' Palgrave then goes on to explain how he believed the Agent told the slave traders to trade in private so that he would not have to report them to the Gulf Resident. In return for this arrangement, he received 'suitable gratitudes' from the slave traders. Palgrave was of the opinion that Hajji Ya'qub 'is only a specimen of an entire class—one of five hundred, or five thousand, who in the Far East gather round the Union Jack to pick up its golden fruit, and make a mock of the tree that bears it'. Palgrave concludes his remarks by suggesting that 'half-a-dozen tight cruisers would be more to the purpose than sixty Yakoobs, and shot would be better bestowed than sovereigns'.

Nearly eighty years passed before the next published account appeared, in the 1940s. Raymond O'Shea was stationed at the RAF base in Sharjah during the Second World War. After returning to England, he wrote *The Sand Kings of Oman: The Experiences of an RAF Officer in the Little-Known Regions of Trucial Oman, Arabia* (1947). Britain's Residency Agent (Native Agent) in Sharjah, Khan Bahadur Sayyid 'Abd al-Razzaq Razuqi (1936–45), features prominently in his book. O'Shea's opinion of the agent stands in stark contrast to Palgrave's. He tells his readers how

The Khan Bahadur rendered invaluable service to the British Empire during the many years that he held office as Residency Agent and, apart from his successful efforts to eradicate enemy influence in the peninsula and ensure the loyalty of the tribes, he has always been a beneficent influence and has won respect and admiration for the Crown. His retirement from office in 1945 was a great loss to British interests in [Trucial] Oman, and there are many amongst those who were familiar with his work and influence who consider that his selfless service to the British Government should have been recognized by the honour of a knighthood.⁸⁰

O'Shea recounts many positive stories of the Agent's activities: from representing the interests of the Government of India, advising the rulers, and gathering intelligence through his vast network of agents, to defending the human rights of the local peasantry (although this was not one of his official duties) and preventing war between the shaikhdoms.⁸¹

⁸⁰ O'Shea, *The Sand Kings of Oman: The Experiences of an R.A.F. Officer in the Little-Known Regions of Trucial Oman, Arabia* (1947), 71.

⁸¹ Ibid. 17, 58, 61, 70–2.

In the 1970s, Britain's native agents again received some attention, this time in a series of academic works on the Gulf. The first of these was Sir Donald Hawley's *The Trucial States* (1970), which was the first comprehensive history of the seven shaiikhdoms. Like O'Shea and Palgrave, Hawley comments on the Sharjah agents. Hawley, who himself served as Political Agent in the Trucial States (1958–61), points out how the careful and detailed intelligence reports received from the Sharjah agents were invaluable to the Government of India. He criticizes Palgrave's remarks, pointing out that Palgrave clearly 'had little idea of what the Residency Agent was supposed to do, and placed undue emphasis on his duties in connection with the slave trade'. In reality, Hawley says, 'British interests were adequately served by the presence of the Residency Agent and the occasional visit of the Political Residents.'⁸² Hawley also provides a useful list of the Sharjah agents in his appendices.

Seven years later, in 1977, Sir Denis Wright published *The English Amongst the Persians during the Qajar Period, 1787–1921*. Wright is the first to write at any length about Britain's native agents in the Gulf. Although his comments amount to just two pages, he is the first to identify all the main characteristics of native agent employment in Persia.⁸³ It was the East India Company, he notes, that began the practice of using 'locally recruited agents to protect their interests and report on local events' in Southern Persia. Wright explains how, as 'British interest in the country increased, the system was extended so that, in the course of time, these Native Agents (also known as Mission News Writers) were to be found in all the more important Persian towns'. There was never any official recognition of the status of native agents, he notes. Despite this, Wright believes that Britain's system of employing unofficial agents throughout Persia 'was of convenience to both countries'. He explains that 'Native Agents were selected by [Britain's] Tehran Legation or the Resident in Bushire from well-known local figures, preferably with a British connection'. He provides sketch histories of the Shiraz, Isfahan, Mashhad, Lingah, and Kermanshah agencies, most of which remained in the hands of the same well-known families for generations. The protection, status, and privileges bestowed upon these agents benefited them considerably in their private and business affairs, he observes, and appear to have been their reason for serving as British agents.

A year after Wright's book, Rosemarie Said Zahlan published *The Origins of the United Arab Emirates: A Political and Social History of the Trucial States* (1978). Like Palgrave, O'Shea, and Hawley, she only comments

⁸² Hawley, *The Trucial States* (1970), 166.

⁸³ Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians*, 77–8.

on the native agents in Sharjah, but her account of them has remained the most detailed study of native agents in the Gulf until now.⁸⁴ Zahlan explains how 'the role played by certain individuals, such as the Political Resident and the Residency Agent in Sharjah, was central to the fulfilment of imperial interests'.⁸⁵ She identifies most of the characteristics of native agent employment that Wright does, but provides far more detailed examples. She focuses, in particular, on the career of one agent, Khan Bahadur 'Isa bin 'Abd al-Latif (1919–35).⁸⁶ Zahlan explains how his role 'was central to the political structure of the area'.⁸⁷ He appears to have been more powerful than any of the rulers of the Trucial States, being in virtual control of the entire Trucial Coast.⁸⁸ His commercial interests overlapped with his role as agent, which enabled him to amass a large personal fortune.⁸⁹ Zahlan notes that his duties were similar to those of a British political agent and that the Sharjah Agency had been in 'Isa's family for generations,⁹⁰ like the native agencies in Persia, which were also family enterprises. She also includes a list of the Sharjah agents in her appendices.

A year after Zahlan's book, Penelope Tuson published her *Records of the British Residency and Agencies in the Persian Gulf: IOR R/15* (1979), which contains a brief overview of all the native agencies in the Gulf.⁹¹ Most of her comments, however, are concerned with the native agencies in Bahrain and Sharjah. Tuson's brief sketch of the Bahrain Native Agency, which amounts to just a few sentences, is the only history of the Agency ever published before this study.⁹² In contrast, Tuson has considerably more to say about Sharjah, providing a one and a half page overview of the 126-year history of the Agency.⁹³ Tuson explains how, after the Agency was established, the Ruler of Sharjah came to resent the supervision he had been placed under and completely ignored the first agent, Riza 'Ali Khan (1823–7). The second agent, Mullah Husain (1827–49), was also ignored by the Ruler, although he was able to maintain friendly relations with the Ruler's brother. Not until the 1850s, Tuson notes, did the Agency become 'well established as the means of communications between the Resident and the Trucial Shaikhs'. Having examined all the Sharjah Agency reports in the Gulf Residency records, Tuson observes that 'for most of the nineteenth century, reporting from the

⁸⁴ Zahlan, *The Origins of the United Arab Emirates: A Political and Social History* (1978), 23, 28–30, 40–1, 46–8, 62–4, 92–8, 121, 132, 152, 156, 158, 160, 164–72, 190, 208 (n. 28), 221 (n. 69), 231 (n. 26), 248–9.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 92.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 28, 167–72.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 28.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 167.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 167, 231 (n. 26).

⁹⁰ Ibid. 167, 172.

⁹¹ Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 2 (n. 15), 6, 12, 43, 43 (n. 10), 127–8, 127 (n. 7, n. 9), 128 (nn. 10, 12, 18).

⁹² Ibid. 43, 43 (n. 10), 44.

⁹³ Ibid. 127, 127 (n. 9), 128, 128 (nn. 10, 12, 14, 18).

Coast was regular and detailed and, even allowing for some variations in the ability of individual Agents, served the interests of the Governments of India and Bombay adequately'.⁹⁴ She provides a detailed list of all the Sharjah native agents in her appendices, but no list of the Bahrain native agents.

The seventh and most recent published account of native agents in the Gulf is in Frauke Heard-Bey's *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates* (1982, 1996, 2004).⁹⁵ She explains how, in 1823, 'the Government of Bombay appointed a Native Agent to reside in Sharjah and to represent British interests, in the same way as such Native Agents were appointed elsewhere on the fringes of the empire'.⁹⁶ Although the Resident was responsible for supervising and enforcing the treaties along the Trucial Coast, Heard-Bey explains how, 'In practice, control was exercised by the Residency Agent living in Sharjah. He communicated with the Rulers on many day-to-day matters, sent reports back to Bushire and received instructions on how to handle each particular problem.'⁹⁷ Supporting the Agent 'was the authority of the Political Resident with naval power at his disposal'.⁹⁸

As the above accounts suggest, non-Europeans played a prominent role in the Indian residency system. So much so that Britain's political residencies in Asia are best described as multinational collaborative operations in which the British were very much the minority. Very few British political officers served in the IPS—as Appendix A15 shows—with the result that only a handful were stationed in a given residency at any one time. Before the 1860s, the Gulf Residency normally had just two British political officers: the Resident and his Assistant, both in Bushire, plus the SNOGP in Basidu. In the 1860s, this number was increased to five. By the late 1890s, there were seven, half of whom belonged to the Indo-European Telegraph Department (IETD) and were charged with political duties:

1. The Gulf Resident in Bushire (IPS)
2. The First Assistant Resident in Bushire (IPS)
3. The Political Agent and Consul in Muscat (IPS)
4. The Vice-Consul in Muhammarah (seconded from the IETD)
5. The Assistant Political Agent for the Makran Coast (the Director of the Persian Section of the IETD), headquartered in Karachi
6. The Station Manager in Jask (Superintendent of the local IETD Station), who performed political duties

⁹⁴ Zahlan, *The Origins of the United Arab Emirates: A Political and Social History* (1978), 128.

⁹⁵ Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*, 2nd edn. (1996), 49, 89, 212–16, 287, 290–2, 299, 309, 437 (n. 2), 460 (nn. 21–4), 461 (n. 37), 475 (n. 38), 476 (n. 41).

⁹⁶ Ibid. 287.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 292.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 297.

7. The Station Manager in Chahabar (Assistant Superintendent of the local IETD Station), who performed political duties

There were also two Eurasian political officers:

8. The Uncovenanted Assistant Resident in Bushire (IPS)
9. The Extra Uncovenanted Assistant Resident in Bushire (IPS)

These nine officers depended upon just three Royal Navy gunboats to enforce the Trucial system, patrol against contraband trade, and represent the naval power upon which British hegemony in the Gulf was based. Standard accounts of the Gulf Residency present the Pax Britannica as being upheld by a few British officers backed by a small naval force. The reality is somewhat different, for the vast majority of British employees in the Gulf were non-European or Eurasian. These nine officers, for instance, were guarded by around a hundred Indian soldiers (*sepoys*) from the Indian Army. The gunboats were manned by around two hundred Indian sailors (*lascars*) and the Political Resident's launch (the HMIS *Lawrence*) was operated by around seventy more. Most of the Residency's daily work was conducted by eight native agents; five *munshis*; a few Indian, Armenian, and Eurasian clerks; four dozen Indian, Persian, Arab, and Eurasian members of the Indo-European Telegraph Department; eight Persian, Arab, and Eurasian employees of the Indian Post Office; an Indian surgeon from the Indian Medical Service; dozens of Persian and Arab orderlies (*farrashin*), guards (*naturis*), couriers (*qasids*), boat crew; and over a hundred servants and manual labourers, such as cooks, houseboys, water-carriers (*bhistis*), sweepers, and gardeners. The total number of non-Europeans and Eurasians employed by the British in the daily operation of the Gulf Residency at any given time was always in the hundreds. In the summer of 1869, for instance, there were 101 British Government staff along the Persian Coast between Bushire and Bandar 'Abbas, of whom eighty-four were non-European or Eurasian, sixteen were British, and one was German. The British employed ninety-four servants and labourers, all non-European or Eurasian but three. The Gulf Squadron (disbanded in 1863, re-established in late 1869) had a compliment of 150 officers and crew, around 138 of whom were Indian.⁹⁹ Non-Europeans and Eurasians accounted for the vast majority of Gulf Residency employees throughout the nineteenth century. Detailed staff listings can be found in Appendices A10 and A14. While the power and influence of British political officers in the Gulf

⁹⁹ Lt-Col Pelly, 'Return of British Subjects and British Protected Persons on the Persian Coast and Islands' (1869), appendix E, 119–47; Preston and Major, *Send a Gunboat!* (1967), 205.

Residency may have heavily depended on the presence of British gunboats, neither the gunboats nor the Residency could have carried out their daily work without the support of their employees recruited from India and the Gulf.

A related misperception of the Indian residency system—and the focus of this book—was that it entailed a relationship only between British political officers and local rulers. While the Gulf Residency did come to fit this pattern in the twentieth century, prior to that, it did not. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Gulf Resident, like the other British residents in South and South-West Asia, relied on the knowledge and advice of non-European political assistants from both the Gulf and India. In the absence of British political agents from the IPS, the Resident relied heavily on local intermediaries to act as his political representatives. The Resident generally visited the local rulers and governors only once a year. Additional visits were paid by him or his Assistant only if the local situation demanded it (an infrequent occurrence). In the interim (around 360 days out of the year), native agents acted as intermediaries between the rulers or governors and the Resident—that is to say, between the local governments and the Government of India. In those shakhdoms or towns where the Resident maintained no native agent, he would dispatch a Residency *munshi* as a ‘confidential agent’ from time to time to investigate matters or convey messages between himself and the local ruler or governor.

Consider Table 6 on the next page, which summarizes by category the Gulf Residency’s political establishment over the course of the nineteenth century. As can be seen, non-Europeans and Eurasians comprised the majority of the Gulf Residency’s political staff. Yet this is not reflected in Gulf historiography. Only Palgrave, O’Shea, Hawley, Wright, Zahlan, Tuson, and Heard-Bey have commented on the last category of political officer, although they devote no more than a few pages to the subject. These exceptions aside, political officers from the last two categories receive almost no mention in Gulf historiography. The result has been, not surprisingly, a persisting belief that British political representation and the protection of British interests in the Gulf was largely, or even entirely, in British hands.

9. BRITAIN’S NATIVE AGENCY IN BAHRAIN, c.1816–1900

Bahrain first came to the attention of the East India Company in 1613, the same year the Company established its first agency in India, at Surat. That year, the Company’s Agent in Surat wrote to his superiors in London

Table 6. The Gulf Residency's political establishment in the nineteenth century*

Officer categories and positions held	Dates held
Graded political officers (British)	
1. Political Resident	1822–1971
2. 1st Assistant Political Resident	1822–1971
3. 2nd Assistant Political Resident	1866–1879, 1905–1971
4. Political Agent, Muscat	1840–1843, 1861–1971
5. Political Agent, Makran Coast, Gwadar	1863–1880
Political Agent, Makran Coast, Karachi	1880–1931
6. Consul, Muhammarah	1890–1952
Unofficial political officers (British)	
8. Naval Station Agent (SNOPG), Basidu**	1823–1834, 1858–1860
9. Telegraph Station Manager, Jask**	1880–1931
10. Telegraph Station Manager, Chahabar**	1880–1931
Uncovenanted political officers (Indian, Eurasian, or Armenian)	
11. Uncovenanted Political Asst., Bushire	1864–1866, 1889–1905
12. Native Agent/Asst. Surgeon, Basidu	1870–1882
Native Asst./Asst. Surgeon, Bushire	1882–1899
13. Extra Uncov'd Political Asst., Bushire	1893–1905
Subordinate political officers (Indian, Arab, or Persian)	
14. Native Agent, Shiraz	1800–1903
15. Native Agent, Muscat	1810–1840, 1843–1861, 1866–1867
16. Native Agent, Bahrain	1816–1900
17. Native Agent, Sharjah	1823–1949
18. Native Agent, Lingah	1830–1910, 1924–1929
19. Slave Agent, Basidu**	c.1860–1874
20. Coal Agent, Basidu**	c.1860s–1935
21. Native Agent, Gwadar	1880–1958
22. Native Agent, Kuwait	1899–1904
23. 1st <i>Munshi</i> , Bushire/Confidential Agent	1822–1971
24. 2nd <i>Munshi</i> , Bushire/Confidential Agent	1822–1971

* New posts created after 1900 are not listed.

** Not a political officer, but occasionally performed duties of a political nature.

about the possible benefits of trading with Bahrain.¹⁰⁰ Nothing came of his recommendation, however, and it was not until the early eighteenth century that the issue was raised again. This time, the Company's Persia Agent in Bandar 'Abbas suggested transferring the Agency to Bahrain, but the Company rejected his proposal. In 1750, growing political instability in

¹⁰⁰ Aldworth to Company, 9 Nov. 1613, E/3/1 (IOR), 198–9.

Southern Persia prompted another Persia Agent to recommend the transfer of the Agency to a better port. He, too, suggested Bahrain. This time the Company approved the transfer, but the Agent died of disease in 1751 before the transfer could be made. His successor did not consider Bahrain a suitable port and recommended Qishm Island instead. However, he died of disease in 1752 before his proposal could be implemented. His replacement thought the Agency should remain where it was and the matter was dropped.

In early July 1816, the Company's Resident in Bushire, Lieutenant William Bruce, received a letter from one of the co-Rulers of Bahrain, Shaikh 'Abd Allah Al Khalifah, about a rumour that the Company was supporting the Ruler of Muscat in a plan to attack Bahrain and that the Company had closed its Indian ports to Bahraini ships. Bruce sailed to Bahrain aboard HMS *Favourite* to personally assure Shaikh 'Abd Allah that the rumour was untrue. He arrived on 19 July and called on the Shaikh the next morning. Although the East India Company had been trading in the Gulf region for two hundred years by this time, Bruce was the first British political representative to visit Bahrain. As a demonstration of Britain's goodwill towards Bahrain, Bruce drew up an agreement of friendship guaranteeing continued access for Bahraini ships to British Indian ports in return for reciprocal access and for Shaikh 'Abd Allah's protection of British Indian ships visiting Bahrain.¹⁰¹ Also included in the agreement was the provision that, 'if the British Government should wish to establish an Agent or Broker at Bahrain, they are at liberty to do so, and no person is to interrupt the Agent in his mercantile, or any other, concerns that he may have'.¹⁰² In his subsequent report to Bombay a few days later, Bruce commented that,

Should hereafter the British Government deem it desirable to establish a settlement in this quarter as a check upon Persia, Turkey, and the Arab States (which, it is not at all unlikely, we may be obliged to adopt sooner than we at present suppose), no place can be better calculated for forming an establishment than Bahrain. It is by far the finest Island in the Gulf and one which would repay its charges to Government with profit.¹⁰³

Bruce's superiors concurred with his assessment and, at some point over the next two years, Bruce appointed a native agent to Bahrain. The exact date is unknown, but an allusion to Britain's first agent in Bahrain was made eight months later. In March 1817, Bruce reported to Bombay that

¹⁰¹ For more details of this first meeting, see Warden, 'Historical Sketch of the Uttooabee Tribe of Arabs (Bahrein), 1716 to 1817', 361–72; Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 146. Warden confuses his dates, placing Bruce's visit in 1814–15.

¹⁰² Art. 6, Agreement of 20 July 1816, enclosed in Bruce to Bombay, 31 July 1816, P/SEC/BOM/41 (IOR), 1427.

¹⁰³ Bruce to Bombay, 31 July 1816, *ibid.* 1422.

'The Sheikh of Bahrein, as I have ascertained from *sure and confidential communication*, is continuing to afford the fullest and most effective aid in his power in grain and stores of all kinds to the Juwasims [Qawasim], who hourly frequent the ports of the Island'.¹⁰⁴ A year and nine months later, in December 1818, Bruce made a second allusion to the Agent in another report:

My Correspondent [in Bahrain] also writes me that Ibrahim Pasha [the Commander of the Egyptian Army then occupying Hasa] was preparing a force for an attack on Rasel Khaima and the Pirate Ports, and that he had received letters from Abdulla ben Ahmed, the Shaikh of Bahrain, offering what vessels might [be of use] for the transport of [his] Troops against those ports.¹⁰⁵

The earliest surviving report in which the Agent himself is mentioned dates from 1819—two and a half years after Bruce's visit to the island. On 11 February 1819, Captain Francis Loch of the Royal Navy paid a visit to Bahrain on board HMS *Eden*. In his report to Bombay about the visit, Loch made several references to 'the Company's Broker' on the island and to the Broker's intelligence-gathering duties.¹⁰⁶ Subsequent reports by other officials reveal the Broker to have been a man named Sadah Anandadas, an Indian Hindu merchant whom Bruce had recruited locally.¹⁰⁷ Sadah was the first in a long series of native agents employed in Bahrain until 1900.

Over the course of seventy-eight years, at least fifteen locally-recruited men served as Britain's native agents in Bahrain. Their duties changed over time from those of a broker and news agent to those of a political agent. It was their work, together with the work of the other native agents of the Gulf Residency, that supported Britain's informal empire in the Gulf. The history of the Native Agency in Bahrain included in this book (Chapters 4–6) is the first history of any native agency under the East India Company or the Government of India. It provides a series of snapshots of native agents in action as well as some idea of the problems they encountered as they worked for the Resident to secure the Arabian frontier of the British Raj.

10. CONCLUSION

This chapter has set the stage for a closer look at what happened in the Gulf during the nineteenth century. The British achieved hegemony in

¹⁰⁴ Bruce to Bombay, 6 Mar. 1817, *ibid.* 1468; italics added.

¹⁰⁵ Bruce to Sir Evan Nepean (Govr of Bombay), 24 Dec. 1818, R/15/1/20 (IOR), 240.

¹⁰⁶ Loch (Bahrain) to Bombay, 17 Feb. 1819, P/384/43 (IOR), 2643–9.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce to Bombay, 26 Feb. 1819, *ibid.* 2663–8; Watson to Bruce, 10 May 1819, R/15/1/19 (IOR), 185.

the region by three main strategies: the Trucial system that established the Pax Britannica, the presence of the Gulf Squadron to ensure compliance, and the use of a native agency system to provide essential intelligence and mediation. The remainder of this book focuses on the third strategy, showing how the British used it in India and the Gulf.

PART II

AGENTS OF EMPIRE

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3

British India's Native Agency System in Asia

It is desirable that you should suggest a plan for securing authentic intelligence of the proceedings of the several Chiefs on the [Arab] coast and a ready communication with them should they appear of a questionable character. You will adopt the plan at once if not attended with much expense.

Governor of Bombay to Gulf Resident, 1822¹

The practice of imperial powers employing 'native agents' in distant lands is as old as imperialism itself. During the modern age of imperialism (from the sixteenth to twentieth century), Western governments and companies employed native agents to represent them throughout Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The Portuguese adopted the practice shortly after Vasco da Gama's arrival in India in 1498.² In time, the Spanish, British, Dutch, French, Belgians, Russians, Germans, Italians, and Americans recruited native agents of their own. No imperial power employed native agents more extensively, or for as long, as did Britain. The East India Company relied heavily on native agents throughout its trading empire, from the Red Sea to the Yellow Sea. After the demise of the Company in 1858, the British Government of India continued the practice. In the same way, Britain's Foreign Office and Colonial Office employed native agents within their own jurisdictions around the world. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office still employs hundreds of foreign nationals as 'honorary consuls', although

An earlier, condensed version of this chapter was published in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 24/1 (2004), 129–37.

¹ Elphinstone (Govr of Bombay) to MacLeod (PRPG), 12 Nov. 1822, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853* (1906), 150.

² See the works by Scammell listed in part 16 of the Bibliography.

these men and women no longer wield the influence and power of agents of empire.³

Even though Britain's native agents played an important role as mediators in Asia for hundreds of years, they are barely accounted for in the history of British involvement there. This chapter addresses that gap by examining the history and features of Britain's 'native agency system' in India and the Gulf region, beginning with the system's origins in India. It thus provides a wider context and historical framework for the remaining chapters.

1. BRITISH INDIA'S NATIVE AGENCY SYSTEM IN ASIA

The deployment of native agents as a network, together with the characteristic features of their employment (examined in Sections 9–11 below), constituted a 'native agency system'. The British employed this system extensively throughout the territories surrounding British India—in Egypt, East Africa, Arabia, Iraq, Persia, Afghanistan, Chinese Turkistan (Sinkiang/Xinjiang), Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Princely India, and Siam. The first British native agent in India was appointed not long after the establishment of the East India Company's Agency at Surat in 1613. Thereafter, Britain continued to employ native agents as imperial officials for about 350 years until its withdrawal from the 'Aden Protectorate in 1967. Britain still employs local representatives, but not as imperial officials, and continues to rely upon local political assistants in its embassies and consulates around the world, just as it did in the days of empire. Consider the overview of British India's native agency system in South-West Asia in Table 7. Because the records of native agents are so fragmentary, it has not been possible at this time to produce a complete list of native agencies, but even from an incomplete list it is apparent that native agents filled the majority of British political posts in South-West Asia before the twentieth century. Appendix A9 has a chart of Britain's native agency system in the Gulf region.

³ In 2005, for instance, the FCO employed 290 honorary consuls. For details, see HM Govt, Auditor General, *The Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Consular Services to British Nationals* (2005), 1, 4, 30, 69.

Table 7. British India's native agency system in South-West Asia

Name of district (area of responsibility)	Native agency	Dates of operation
1. Persia Agency	Kerman	c.1720s–1737, ?–1761
2. Muscat Agency	Muscat	c.1758–1800
3. Bushire/Gulf Residency (S. Persia & E. Arabia)	Bushire	1798–1803
	Shiraz	c.1800–1903
	Muscat	1810–1840, 1843–1861, 1866–1867
	Bahrain	c.1816–1820, 1822–1900
	Qatif	1822–1823
	Mughu	1823–1830
	Sharjah	1823–1949
	Basidu	c.1860–1935
	Lingah	1830–1910, 1924–1929
	Kermanshah	c.1840–1903
	Kharg island	c.1840s
	Gwadar	1880–1958
	Kuwait	1899–1904
	Bampur	1901–1904
	Bam	1904–1906 (moved from Bampur)
4. Lower Gulf Agency	Qatif	1820–1822
	Bahrain	1820–1822
5. Tehran Legation (N., C., & E. Persia)	Isfahan	1840s?–1889
	Yazd	1840s?–1893
	Mashhad	1840s?–1889
	Kerman	c.1840s–1895
	Astarabad	c.1880s
	Hamadan	1880s?–1890s?
	Birjand	1910s?–1938
	Sari	c.1927
	Shiraz	1929, 1932, 1933
6. Basrah Agency, <i>later</i> Turkish Arabia Residency (Ottoman 'Iraq)	Baghdad	1781–1798
		1824–1832 (intermittently)
	Basrah	1822–1832 (intermittently)
		1832–1851
	Mosul	1839–1887, 1893–1908
	Karbala	c.1850–1914
	Kadhimain	1850s–1903 (now a suburb of Baghdad)

Table 7. (continued)

Name of district (area of responsibility)	Native agency	Dates of operation
7. Mocha Agency	Mocha	c.1710s, c.1725–1752?
8. Aden Residency (S. & W. Arabia)	Mocha	c.1829–c.1856
	Lahej	c.1839–1967
	Hudaydah al-Abr	1840s?–1900s? 1940s?–1967
9. Egypt Con-Gen	Jeddah	1833–1870
	Suez	c.1830s
10. Jeddah Agency	Jeddah	c.1802–1833, 1870–c.1918
11. Kabul Agency (Afghanistan)	Kabul	1793–1795, 1856–1878, 1882–1919
	Kandahar	c.1856–1878, c.1882–1919
	Herat	c.1882–1919

2. BRITISH INDIA'S NATIVE AGENCY SYSTEM IN THE GULF

In November 1822, the British Governor of Bombay instructed the first Gulf Resident, Captain John MacLeod, to 'suggest a plan for securing authentic intelligence of the proceedings of the several Chiefs on the [Arab] coast and a ready communication with them should they appear of a questionable character'. MacLeod was to 'adopt the plan at once if not attended with much expense'.⁴ Upon arriving in the Gulf in December 1822, MacLeod discovered a solution already existed: the small number of native agencies in Persia and Arabia that had been established by his predecessors, the Bushire Resident (1763–1822) and the Lower Gulf Agent (1820–2). MacLeod reorganized these agencies into a single network controlled from Bushire. Section 8, below, will examine this process in greater detail. Successive Gulf Residents continued to employ local agents until 1958, although the systematic employment of such agents ceased after the first decade of the twentieth century, as Appendix A9 shows. For 136 (1822–1958) of the Gulf Residency's 149 years (1822–1971),

⁴ Elphinstone (Govr of Bombay) to MacLeod (PRPG), 12 Nov. 1822, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853*, 150.

these native agents provided a constant stream of intelligence to the Gulf Resident, keeping him routinely apprised of local developments, enabling him to take timely action if required. Over the course of the nineteenth century, these native agents evolved into unofficial political representatives.

The agents were known by over twenty different titles, depending on the period in question, the extent of their responsibilities, and who was addressing them—see Table 8. Not surprisingly, there is some confusion over the precise meaning of these titles. Residency staff and present-day historians have used them sometimes to mean native political agent (political representative), sometimes to mean native news agent (informant), and sometimes to mean native broker (commercial agent), without distinguishing between the three functions. Because of this ambiguity, the only way to avoid confusion now is to use the more precise titles of political agent, news agent, and commercial agent or broker whenever distinctions in function are needed.

Table 8. Native agent titles in the Gulf

British titles	Indian titles	Arab titles
1. Agent	1. <i>Wakil</i> (political agent, deputy)	1. <i>Wakil</i> (political agent, deputy)
2. British agent	2. <i>Dubash</i> (agent, translator)	2. <i>Wakil al-Biritaniyah</i> (British agent)
3. Native agent	3. <i>Gomastah</i> (agent, factor, appointed one)	3. <i>Wakil al-balyuz</i> (resident's agent)
4. Native broker	4. <i>Dallal</i> (broker)	4. <i>Wakil al-dawlah</i> (govt agent)
5. Residency agent	5. <i>Mohussil</i> (special agent)	5. <i>Mu^f atamad</i> (political agent, appointed one)
6. Residency <i>mirza</i>	6. <i>Akhbar Nawis</i> (news writer)	6. <i>Mu^f atamad al-Biritaniyah</i> (British agent)
7. Government agent		
8. Confidential agent		
9. News writer		
10. News agent		
11. Residency news agent		
12. Govt news agent		
13. News agent		

It is surprising how little native agents appear in correspondence between the Gulf and India in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Were they under-valued by the British? Possibly. Or perhaps the British constructed their reports in such a way as not to appear reliant upon these local agents. Unless they were the subject of a dispatch, the agents were rarely mentioned at all before the 1830s. Take the Native Agent at Bahrain,

for example: 'I have received information on ...' was the preferred phrasing of the Residency's British staff for the first ten years of the Bahrain Agency, placing the emphasis on the receiver while virtually ignoring the existence of the sender. Not until 1827 do residents begin to include the phrase 'our Agent at Bahrain reports that ...' on a regular basis in their dispatches to India. Only from the 1840s onward do we find the Residency's British staff referring to the Bahrain Agent by name in their official correspondence. This is significant insofar as it suggests the attitudes of the Residency's British staff towards native agents. For example, Captain Samuel Hennell (Assistant Resident 1826–38, Resident 1838–52) appears to have had a greater regard for native agents than his predecessors. But even Hennell's attitude seems to have improved during his time in office. He usually referred to Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar (Bahrain Agent 1834–42) only by title, while he always referred to Hajji Jasim (Bahrain Agent 1842–62) by name, suggesting a better regard for the latter. On the whole, there appears to have been a general improvement in attitude by the Residency's British staff towards native agents in Bahrain during the first twenty years of the Gulf Residency.

3. BRITISH MOTIVES FOR EMPLOYING NATIVE AGENTS

The Government of India employed native agents throughout Asia and Africa to compensate for a lack of British political officers to fill the posts. In the Gulf region, the British lacked officers for two reasons, the most significant being the harsh and debilitating environment of the Gulf. Between June and September the climate of the Gulf is unbearably hot and humid by European standards. The comments of John Lorimer of the IPS in his *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*, intended for British political officers posted to the Gulf, warn of what to expect: 'The hottest month at Bushire is August and ... in summer the thermometer has been known to rise to 115.5°F in the shade, the moistness of the atmosphere rendering this temperature much more trying than in other places'. 'From the middle of June to the end of September the heat [in Bahrain] is oppressive.' 'The climate [of Muscat] is ... extreme, the heat in the sun rising to as much as 189°F [if measured by a black-bulb solar thermometer] and the temperature on the house roof at night in June occasionally remaining at 106°F.' 'The climate of Bandar 'Abbas is notorious for its heat and unhealthiness ... The summer heat is almost intolerable'.⁵ Sir Arnold Wilson, a fellow IPS officer

⁵ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, ii. *Geographical and Statistical* (1908), 9, 236, 343, 1186.

and contemporary of Lorimer, estimated the maximum *shade* temperatures to be 108.2°F (42.4°C) in Bahrain, 114.3°F (45.8°C) in Muscat and 115°F (46.1°C) in Bushire. The worst humidity in the Gulf, he observed, was to be found at Bahrain.⁶ The impressions of Lord Curzon, later Viceroy of India and head of the IPS during 1899–1905, describe one of the most inhospitable environments on earth:

I have been told that under the awning on the deck of a Gulf steamer the thermometer has stood in the morning at 120° Fahrenheit [49°C], while on shore at Muscat a black-bulb solar thermometer has registered 187° [86°C] in the sun. The intense heat is aggravated rather than relieved by the extreme humidity of the atmosphere and by the dust which the slightest wind raises in clouds from the Arabian desert and blows in an opaque yellow pall across the sea and land. The hot weather causes the skin irritation known as prickly heat, from which every one suffers; nor is the torment of the day redeemed, as it is further North at Baghdad, by the coolness of the night ...⁷

A medical report on Bahrain written in 1871 by the Residency Sub-Assistant Surgeon, 'Abd al-Rahim Hakim, tells of horrible living conditions; widespread malaria, dysentery, rheumatism, cataracts, and ulcers; and the occasional epidemic of cholera or smallpox.⁸ Twenty years later, an American missionary doctor, James Cantine, called at the Residency headquarters in Bushire to enquire about living conditions in Bahrain:

I thought I could find all that [the Gulf Residency staff] knew about the possibilities of Bahrain as a residence for Anglo-Saxons. The medical files were placed before me and I read that, owing to high temperatures and great humidity, together with ever present malaria and occasional cholera, the island of Bahrain was judged [to be] the most unhealthy place in all the areas coming under the preview of the writer. This did not seem a very promising place for pitching our tent ...⁹

The comments of Arnold Kemball (Assistant Resident 1841–52, Resident 1852–5) on Bahrain from 1845 are perhaps the most unsettling of all:

The climate of the island is bad, and the inhabitants suffer more than those of other places when any contagious disease appears in the Gulf. The ravages of cholera when it breaks out are very much greater there than in any other towns on the Arabian or Persian Coasts. The Gulf fever is also prevalent at certain seasons, and strangers sleeping on shore are liable to suffer from its deadly effects.

⁶ Wilson, *The Persian Gulf* (1928), 7. Numbers have been rounded.

⁷ Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, ii (1892), 466.

⁸ 'Abd al-Rahim Hakim to Pelly (PRPG), 7 Dec. 1871, L/P&S/9/19 (IOR), 483–6, 488.

⁹ Cantine and Zwemer, *The Golden Milestone: Reminiscences of Pioneer Days Fifty Years Ago in Arabia* (1938), 43.

Upon the whole, with the exception of Muskat, Kishm [Qishm], and Bassadore [Basidu], Bahrain may be considered the most unhealthy place in this quarter of the globe.¹⁰

The Gulf's extreme climate and poor living conditions, and the resulting health problems and epidemics, claimed hundreds of lives amongst the British naval squadron and the two short-lived army garrisons (1820–3, 1856–8) in the nineteenth century. During a period of just fifteen years between 1826 and 1842, for instance, the Gulf Squadron's officer corps alone suffered thirty-two fatalities from the climate and disease: four squadron commanders, eleven lieutenants, two pursers, and fifteen midshipmen.¹¹ The climate also claimed the lives of many British agents and agency staff, as Table 9 shows. This death toll earned the Gulf a reputation as a white man's grave, with understandable consequences. As Lord Curzon aptly observed after touring the region in 1889: 'political officers on the list of the Indian Foreign Office, or ships' officers in the service of the companies that navigate the Indian seas, hear with horror that they have been commissioned to what is spoken of, with a sort of grim personification, as "the Gulf"'.¹² Every political officer assigned to the Gulf suffered seriously from ill health at some point during his assignment. It was hard to find many men who were willing to go to the region, which explains, in part, why so few British political officers were assigned to the Gulf Residency in the nineteenth century.

Had the British Government tried to post more political officers throughout the Gulf in the nineteenth century, it would certainly have encountered problems. When Curzon, as Viceroy of India, began his attempt to do so in 1899, he complained that 'the best men will not go to so disagreeable a station, and such as go clamour till they are taken away'.¹³ The Gulf Resident expressed the same difficulty two years later, when he was attempting to find officers for the Bahrain Agency:

The conditions of service at Bahrein must ... be taken into consideration. The climate for several months of the year is, on account of its extreme moisture, exceedingly trying to the European constitution: the work is hardly sufficient to keep an officer fully employed and there is an entire absence of any of those amenities of existence which make life endurable in some of the more solitary of Indian stations. I believe that, if a gazetted officer is appointed to the post, he will

¹⁰ Kemball, 'Memoranda on ... the Tribes Inhabiting the Arabian Shores of the Persian Gulf' (1845), 106.

¹¹ Low, *History of the Indian Navy*, ii. 109–10.

¹² Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, ii. 466.

¹³ Curzon (Viceroy) to Godley (Perm. Under-Sec. of IO), 23 Mar. 1899, Mss. Eur. F111/158 (IOR), 48a.

Table 9. Victims of the Gulf climate

Died	Agent or agency	Name	Died	Agent or agency	Name
1617	Jask Agent	Edward Connock	1753	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Capt Wm. Sedgwick
1617	Jask Agent	Thomas Barker	1755	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Parsons
1617?	Jask Agent	Edward Monox	1755	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Secker
1630	Bandar 'Abbas Agent	Capt William Burt	1756	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Pompert
1637	Bandar 'Abbas Agent	Mr Gibson	1758	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Holmes
1656	Bandar 'Abbas Agent	William Weale	1759	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Capt Crichton
1661	Bandar 'Abbas Agent	Mr Foster	1760	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Nash
1695	Bandar 'Abbas Agent	Capt Brangwin	1760	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	most of the British soldiers
1705	Isfahan Agent	Mr Owen	1761	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	W. Douglas
1737	Basrah Resident	Martin French	1762	Basrah Resident	James Stuart
1739	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Dacres	1800	Muscat Agent	Surgeon A. H. Bogle
1740	Bandar 'Abbas Surgeon	Mr Rose	1805	Basrah Resident	J. Law
1743	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Ensign MacKenzie	1808	Muscat Agent	Lt Watts
1745	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Jones	1809	Muscat Agent	Capt David Seton
1746	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Science	1809	Muscat Agent	Mr Bunce
1747	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Ross	1821	Baghdad Agent	Claudius Rich
1747	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	a British gunner	1823	Gulf Resident	Capt John MacLeod
1750	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Dalrymple	1841	Assistant Gulf Resident	Lt T. Edmunds
1752	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Went	1871	Assistant Gulf Resident	Maj Sidney Smith
1752	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Mr Perceval	1889	Basrah Agent	P. J. C. Robertson
1752	Bandar 'Abbas Agency	Ensign Martin Burrage			

Source: Saldanha, *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, appendix I, 456–7; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical* 123–4, and appendix Q, 2673–90.

not be content to remain in it for any length of time and we shall have a constant change of officers which cannot but be prejudicial to the interests of the place.¹⁴

British trading firms in the Gulf experienced the same problem.¹⁵ In the face of these observations, Briton Busch's argument that 'The Gulf Residency was not a disagreeable appointment for an Indian officer (generally of colonel's rank)' is unconvincing.¹⁶ Few Britons found the Gulf agreeable and willingly served there. Men like Sir Arnold Wilson, who spent twenty years in the region and could say 'The climate of the Persian Gulf, as a whole, has an unenviable but undeserved reputation', represent a minority view.¹⁷ The comment of Sir Rupert Hay (Gulf Resident 1941–2, 1946–53), 'I suspect that in the past there has been a tendency on the part of those serving in it [the Gulf] to exaggerate its terrors in order to obtain or retain compensatory allowances', must be taken in context.¹⁸ When Hay served in the Gulf, electric fans, air conditioning, refrigeration, telephones, radios, and rapid transportation were available to all British political officers. Britons serving in the nineteenth century had only *punkahs* (hand-pulled ceiling fans) and few other amenities. Furthermore, while the climate remained the same, officers serving in the twentieth century did not have to worry about poor living conditions, except on the Trucial Coast.¹⁹ They also had vaccines and medicine to protect them against malaria, typhoid, and cholera.

The second reason for the low number of British political officers in the Gulf was financial: the British Governments of Bombay and India were not willing to spend much of their revenue on political representation there, or anywhere for that matter. In contrast to the provincial and district governments of British India, political residencies had no tax base or other means of generating revenue to fund their operations and were, therefore, always run on a tight budget. It was in this context of financial constraint, illustrated by the Governor of Bombay's instructions to the first Gulf Resident in 1822 quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that the British practice of employing local men on small salaries evolved. At a fraction of the cost of employing Britons, successive Residents employed Indians, Arabs, and Persians to act as their agents in the unhealthy ports of the Gulf. British trading firms in the Gulf also followed this practice.²⁰ For the salary of one junior British political officer—Rs. 500 per month in the mid-nineteenth century—the

¹⁴ Kembell (PRPG) to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 16 Aug. 1901, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 53b–54b.

¹⁵ Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947* (2000), 101.

¹⁶ Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894–1914* (1967), 7.

¹⁷ Wilson, *The Persian Gulf*, 7.

¹⁸ Hay, *The Persian Gulf States* (1959), 4.

¹⁹ For a political officer's vivid description of the poor living conditions at the Trucial States Political Agency in the 1950s, see Walker, *Tyrol on the Trucial Coast* (1999), 8–10.

²⁰ Markovits, *Global World*, 101.

Resident could employ five or six local men to do essentially the same job, as Table 10 makes clear. Appointing native agents was the only possible way to cover a large territory without a large budget. Further cost-effectiveness was achieved by relying entirely on local staff and servants to run the Residency headquarters in Bushire, and by requiring native agents to pay for their own employees. Residency staff lists in Appendices A10–A14 show the Resident's heavy reliance on local support throughout the nineteenth century. The various roles played by local staff and servants are described in Section 2 of the Glossary. See Photo 7 for an illustration of this point.

Table 10. Gulf Resident's monthly political staff budget for 1834 and 1860–1

Officer	ID	Salary (rupees)	
		1834	1860–1
Resident, Bushire	British	2,400	2,400
Assistant, Bushire	British	500	500
	SUB-TOTALS	2,900	2,900
<i>Munshi</i> , Bushire	Persian	122	122
<i>Munshi</i> , Bushire	Arab	122	122
Native Agent, Shiraz	Indian	—	122
Native Agent, Sharjah	Arab	120	120
Native Agent, Bahrain	Arab	80	80
Native Agent, Lingah	Arab	50	50
	SUB-TOTALS	494	616

Notes: List compiled from Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of the Affairs of the Persian Coast and Islands, 1854–1905*, 69; idem, *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853*, 312–13. The Muscat agency is not listed because it maintained a separate budget.

4. ROBINSON'S THEORY OF COLLABORATION

Ronald Robinson has developed a theory of indigenous collaboration that also explains Britain's employment of native agents.²¹ He uses the word 'collaboration' in its original, neutral sense of 'working jointly with another'. His intention is to explain the non-European foundations of European imperialism, not to imply a value judgement.

Robinson explains how Europeans in imperial bureaucracies and supporting institutions overseas were expensive for the European imperial powers to employ. In order for empire to be affordable and sustainable for

²¹ See the works by Robinson listed in part 17 of the Bibliography as well as those by Atmore and Louis.

the imperial metropolises, costs had to be either reduced or passed on to the colonized. Most European powers maintained a policy that 'if empire could not be had on the cheap, it was not worth having at all'. Because imperial governments were reluctant to commit metropolitan resources to their empires, European proconsuls such as the Gulf Resident had fairly limited means with which to operate. They had relatively small military forces at their disposal and imperial governments were reluctant to send reinforcements, the need for which was regarded as a sign of administrative incompetence. Coercion was expensive and regarded as counter-productive, except in case of emergencies. The less proconsuls interfered with traditional authority and institutions, therefore, the safer they were. The scarcer the imperial resources and the less formal the imperial arrangements, the more the proconsuls had to work within indigenous political systems to achieve imperial ends, and the more they depended upon local intermediaries.²²

Robinson argues that the form and extent of imperialism was determined as much by non-European collaboration and resistance as it was by European activity and Europe's political economy. He sees it as a 'political reflex action' between two European and one non-European components: (1) the economic drive to integrate newly colonized regions into the industrial economy as markets and investments; (2) 'the strategic imperative to secure them against rivals in world power politics'; and (3) 'indigenous collaboration and resistance'. Much of imperial historiography is unbalanced, he believes, because it has traditionally focused on only the first two components. By giving full recognition to the non-European elements of imperialism, Robinson aims to replace the traditional Eurocentric or metropole view with what he calls the ex-centric (peripheral, non-metropole) approach. Imperialism's controlling mechanism, he explains, was made up of relationships between the European agents of external expansion on the one hand, and indigenous agents of internal collaboration on the other. Without the voluntary or enforced collaboration of the élites within a local indigenous society, 'economic resources could not be transferred, strategic interests protected, or xenophobic reaction and resistance contained'. It was the collaboration of indigenous élites in the invaded countries themselves that provided the imperial administrations with their military and administrative muscle. Imperialism's central mechanism was the system of local mediation integrating imperial interests with indigenous politics, achieving a balance between the two.²³

²² Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration', repr. in Louis (ed.), *The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (1976), 131, 142–3.

²³ *Ibid.* 130–1.

Imperial actors and historians have downplayed the extent to which imperialism depended upon the work of local collaborators. Historians have long portrayed Britain's Indian Empire, for instance, as an empire run by Britons rather than an empire run by Indians for Britons—a type of misportrayal Robinson calls the 'grand illusion'.²⁴ The more limited an imperial power's resources, the more extensive its dependence on indigenous collaboration. In the Gulf, the British were so light on the ground that they had no alternative but to rely heavily on local agents and staff, as Photo 7 illustrates. Yet this reliance is not reflected in Gulf historiography. The reason for such omissions, Robinson believes, is that historians have placed too much emphasis on the formal European aspects of imperial activity. For example, most historians writing on imperial administrations, such as the Gulf Residency or the Government of India, tend to take a top-down approach. They examine how imperial administrations imposed themselves on regional politics, ignoring the important role regional politics played in assisting them. The result is a tendency to focus only on Europeans, ignoring the majority of the people within the imperial administrations. Appendices A10 and A14 reveal how minuscule the Gulf Residency's British staff was in relation to its non-European staff.

What determined how imperialism worked in a given location was not the metropole, Robinson asserts, but 'the indigenous collaborative systems connecting its European and Afro-Asian components'. All systems of local mediation consisted of two sets of relationships: the relationship between the Europeans and the indigenous élites, and the relationship between these élites and local interests and institutions. This is why Robinson believes 'the choice of indigenous collaborators, more than anything else, determined the organization and character of colonial rule'. Without collaborators to mediate locally, imperialism was unsustainable.²⁵

From the perspective of the collaborators, the imperial powers were an alternative source of wealth and power. Association with an imperial power enabled the collaborators who worked as mediators to increase their personal wealth, prestige, and influence. In unstable and insecure environments, such as the Gulf, association with an imperial power could also secure much-needed protection and assistance. These were key factors in attracting

²⁴ Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism', 129. For a discussion of this point, see Cohn, 'Political Systems in Eighteenth Century India' (1962); Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia* (1998), 57–66; Marshall, 'Britain and the World in the Eighteenth Century: Part III, Britain and India' (2000).

²⁵ Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism', 132, 147.

indigenous collaborators. Systems of collaboration were normally ones of interdependence and mutual interests.²⁶

5. THE INDIAN ORIGINS OF THE NATIVE AGENCY SYSTEM

The Western practice of employing native agents as mediators was originally developed in India by the Portuguese and the British in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Britain's subsequent employment of native agents in the Gulf was heavily influenced by Indian precedents. Michael Fisher, for example, observes that the Gulf Residency's 'administrative and personal connections to India are directly demonstrable'. The Gulf Residency, he points out, was directly 'administered by the British Government of India. Because of the continuity in personnel and the administrative heritage that [it] shared with India, the system of indirect rule established in the Persian Gulf ... clearly had roots in Indian experience.'²⁷ An examination of Britain's use of native agents in India will lead, therefore, to a better understanding of why and how Britain used a native agency system in the Gulf region.

From the outset of the East India Company's operations in the early seventeenth century, its officials in Asia realized that local brokers were an indispensable part of doing business.²⁸ Soon after each factory's establishment, therefore, an Indian broker was kept permanently on its staff. David White, among many others, has written extensively on the role of these brokers in Company service. He explains how the early European traders needed the expertise and local connections of Indian merchants:

These merchants served as contacts with the local political structure, were sources of information, and provided access to markets and supplies. Consequently, the Europeans had to choose their operatives with care. Individuals with the wealth and connections necessary for such a position might challenge the Mughal political structure. ... Alternatively, a minor merchant would not be taken seriously. The choice demanded an individual who could speak to the necessary authorities and who would not discredit the Europeans in this highly status-conscious society.²⁹

²⁶ Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism', 131, 143.

²⁷ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 461.

²⁸ See Pearson, 'Brokers in Western Indian Port Cities: Their Role in Servicing Foreign Merchants' (1988).

²⁹ White, *Competition and Collaboration: Parsi Merchants and the English East India Company in 18th Century India* (1995), 60.

White explains how these brokers chose to serve European companies, not because of the salaries, but because of the financial, social, and political opportunities such service presented.³⁰ In his *Competition and Collaboration: Parsi Merchants and the English East India Company* (1995), White provides an extensive analysis of an Indian merchant family that had three members serve in the Company's Surat Agency.³¹ Rustum Manock, an affluent Parsi Indian merchant, served as the Company's Chief Broker during 1700–5 and 1712–21. White explains how

Rustum was responsible for ... promoting Company affairs with the Mughal government, serving as the Company's representative at the Court of Surat. In return, the Court recognized Rustum as the Company's ambassador, calling on him to convey its information, requests, and demands to the Company. Rustum's position thus enabled him at times to manipulate the Company and/or the government.³²

Two of Rustum's descendants also served as Chief Broker after his death: his son, Nowros Rustumji (1721–2), and grandson, Manock Nowrosji (1737–8).³³ In 1738, the Company abolished the post of Chief Broker, believing it to be no longer necessary, and created the new post of *Wakil* (Political Agent). Transferred to this new post, Manock Nowrosji continued to serve as the Company's political representative at the Surat court until his death in 1743.³⁴ The Company continued to use brokers as *wakils* throughout Asia into the nineteenth century.

Fisher identifies two additional categories of local officers who, after the establishment of the political residency system in India in 1764, came to play important political roles in the Company: *munshis* (secretaries, political assistants, linguists) employed at a residency's headquarters and *akhbar nawis* (news writers) posted throughout a residency's district. *Munshi* comes from the Arabic verb *insha*, 'to compose' a written document as well as 'to educate' a youth—hence the variety of positions *munshis* held in the East India Company: from writers, secretaries, political assistants, and advisers to interpreters, translators, and language instructors.³⁵ The Company recruited *munshis* from the affluent traditional service families that had dominated the political life of the Mughal Empire for centuries. Members of these elite families were typically Muslim, the most noble being Shi'i Persians. They had been trained extensively by their fathers in the

³⁰ Ibid. 5, 44–9, 53–4, 59, 128–9, 116, 138–9, 141, 148–9.

³¹ Surat was reduced to an agency in 1687 after the British moved their Presidency headquarters for Western India to Bombay.

³² White, *Competition and Collaboration*, 53.

³³ Ibid. 57, 68–9, 79–84, 116–20, 136, 148–50, 172–3.

³⁴ Ibid. 119.

³⁵ Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words*, 2nd edn. (1903), 581.

Persian court language, ceremonials, and conventions of Mughal political life.³⁶ Fisher explains that, as the Company became more directly involved in Indian politics in the eighteenth century and began posting political residents to the courts of Indian rulers from 1764 onward, 'the Residents needed a personal guide through the intricacies of Indian court life'. The British created a special office, known as the Persian Department, within each residency and placed it in the charge of a *mir munshi* (chief *munshi*) recruited from an élite Indian service family. The *munshi* supervised, translated, and delivered all correspondence between the resident and the local ruler. He also assisted and advised the resident on Mughal political practice and acted as the resident's chief of native staff. The *mir munshi*, Fisher explains, 'provided the link between the Resident and the Ruler and his court on the one hand, and between the Resident and the Residency establishment on the other'.³⁷

Members of élite service families were willing to transfer their services to the Company because of declining opportunities for their employment with Indian rulers from the mid-eighteenth century onward.³⁸ The attraction of British service was not the meagre salary, which averaged only Rs. 200–250 per month in the early nineteenth century,³⁹ but rather the opportunity it created to make considerably more than that. As the Company became a major power in India, British service also offered personal prestige and influence. These are the same motivating benefits as those identified by Ronald Robinson in his ex-centric theory of imperialism.⁴⁰

Fisher identifies two important patterns of *munshi* employment. The first is that *munshis* often lobbied their resident to hire their relatives. A *munshi's* replacement upon retirement often came from his own family. In this way, certain families became entrenched within certain residencies over generations.⁴¹ The second pattern Fisher identifies is that

many of the *Munshis* had relatives and colleagues serving in equivalent positions in the administrations of other regional Rulers. These informal linkages were used by some Residents to gain information from or establish contacts with those courts. Often negotiations between the Company and a Ruler came through unofficial correspondence between friendly or related *Munshis* in the respective services.⁴²

In the early days of the Indian residencies, Company *munshis* enjoyed considerable autonomy of action because of the residents' lack of language

³⁶ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 320, 363. Also see Subrahmanyam and Alam, 'The Making of a Munshi' (2004).

³⁷ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 319, 323.

³⁸ Fisher, 'The Office of Akhbar Nawis: The Transition from Mughal to British Forms', *Modern Asian Studies*, 27/1 (1993), 64.

³⁹ This equates to Rs. 2,400–3,000 per year. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 336.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 320–1, 326, 338–9.

⁴¹ Ibid. 332, 336–7.

⁴² Ibid. 326.

skills and their ignorance of Mughal political culture. As a result, residents were highly dependent upon their *munshis* for the smooth handling of political relations with local rulers. The question of investing *munshis* with political authority was a commonly debated one, however. Many early residents thought highly of their *munshis*, trusting them completely, and granted them considerable authority and autonomy. Others, motivated by an attitude of racial superiority, viewed their Indian *munshis* with contempt and kept them under close supervision. The trend after the late eighteenth century was increasingly towards this latter pattern. During the early years of the residency system, from the 1760s to the 1820s, *munshis* frequently served their residents as nearly autonomous political agents. Residents dispatched them to regional courts on specific missions to act on behalf of the Company. While at a ruler's court, these *munshis* took the title of *wakil* and were given considerable authority to represent and protect the Company's interests. Fisher observes that residents made regular use of *wakils* until the 1820s, after which they continued to use *wakils* only 'beyond the frontier of British control'. As British power in India increased in the mid to late eighteenth century, *wakils* acted not only as representatives, but as advisers and counsellors.⁴³

After the 1820s, however, residents made less use of *wakils* and greater use of British officers.⁴⁴ The residents believed the rulers, like themselves, would resent the advice and influence of the *munshis* and *wakils*. By the early nineteenth century, status-conscious Indian rulers increasingly preferred to deal directly with British officers. Lord Wellesley (Governor-General in Calcutta⁴⁵ 1798–1805) was of the opinion that 'it was not consistent with the dignity of the British Government to employ any native of this country at a foreign court and that the British interests could not with any degree of safety be confided to any person of that description'.⁴⁶ Such views resulted in Indians being withdrawn from most of the independent political positions in the IPS for nearly a century, from the 1830s to the 1910s. Indians remained on the political staffs of residencies and agencies, but usually as assistants to British political officers, under their supervision.⁴⁷ Native agents were still appointed, usually to less important states, but their titles often concealed their true status as political agents. In 1884, for example, there were 107

⁴³ Ibid. 322–31, 363; Fisher, 'Office of Akhbar Nawis', 50.

⁴⁴ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 324–5.

⁴⁵ The Govr-Gen of Bengal in Calcutta was made the Govr-Gen of India in 1833 and Viceroy (Crown representative) in 1858, but he had exercised ultimate authority over British India's military affairs since 1773 and foreign affairs since 1784.

⁴⁶ Wellesley qtd. in Ruthnaswamy, 'The Indian Political Service', part 2 (1977), 52.

⁴⁷ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 324–30; Copland, *The British Raj*, 75–6.

‘gazetted’ (officially appointed⁴⁸) political representatives in the IPS; only nine of these were native agents, as Table 11 shows. As native agents were rarely gazetted, there would have been far more ungazetted native agents in British service that year. When the Government of India attempted to Indianize the IPS after the First World War and employ a greater number of Indians as gazetted *wakils*, the old racial arguments against this were put forward by both Indian rulers and members of the IPS.⁴⁹

Table 11. Gazetted native political agents in 1884

Office/title	Officer
1. British Agent, Kabul	Lt-Col Sirdar Muhammad Afzal Khan
2. Political Agent, Shahpur	Fateh Sher Khan Tiwanah
3. Assistant Political Agent, Hill Tipperah	Umakant Das
4. Assistant Political Agent, Jath State	Rango Ramchandra Bharde
5. Political Assistant, Maunpur	Pundit Sarup Narayan
6. Native Assistant Agent, Harnai	Hak Nawaz Khan
7. Superintendent, Boani	Maulvi Karamat Husain
8. Superintendent, Sarila	<i>Munshi</i> Shamlal
9. Superintendent, Chatarpur	<i>Munshi</i> Chandi Parshad

Source: HM Govt, *The India List: Civil and Military*, July 1884, 45, 72a, 110, 156.

The second category of local officer Fisher identifies is the *akhbar nawis* (news writer). The *akhbar nawis* tended to come from the same elite service families as the *munshis* and to transfer their services to the Company for the same reasons. This becomes all the more evident when one considers that the British paid their *akhbar nawis* even less than their *munshis*, if they paid them at all. Originally, the Mughal Emperor alone reserved the right to appoint *akhbar nawis* to reside at the courts of subordinate rulers within his Empire. When Mughal central control began to wane in the eighteenth century, these Indian rulers started appointing their own *akhbar nawis* to each others' courts in an assertion of their growing autonomy from Delhi. There were two types of *akhbar nawis*. The first merely reported court news in newsletters known as *akhbarat*, which he sent regularly to his ruler. The second submitted less frequent, but more commentarial, reports and functioned as a *wakil*. In the early days of the residencies, residents simply imitated the *akhbar nawis* system and recruited men

⁴⁸ The term ‘gazetted’ comes from the British practice of announcing official appointments in a weekly gazette or bulletin. See Glossary for details.

⁴⁹ Hogben, ‘An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianization of the Indian Political Service’ (1981), 757–9.

who had served as *akhbar nawis* in regional courts. Residents appointed *akhbar nawis* to every important court or town within their residency's district.⁵⁰

Fisher shows how the adoption of the *akhbar nawis* system enabled residents to develop 'a web of newswriters who reported regularly about events and rumours of future events, from the local court, from other courts involved with that state, and from beyond the frontiers of [the] Company and its allies'. Each residency commanded a network of news writers that provided the resident with regular intelligence from the courts and towns within his area of responsibility. Residents created an 'intelligence office' at their residency headquarters to translate, record, and assess the intelligence reports of their *akhbar nawis*, and to dispatch important information to Company headquarters in Calcutta for further analysis.⁵¹

C. A. Bayly explains how the *akhbar nawis* system was comprised of two sets of relationships: one between the British resident and his news writer, the other between the news writer and the 'autonomous networks of social communication' within Indian society. The news writer maintained his own informal network of informants and contacts throughout the district, which he drew upon to the benefit of the resident. It was in this sense that he was acting as an 'information broker' between the resident and his district. This corresponds to Ronald Robinson's explanation of how local mediation worked. Collectively, the two sets of relationships comprised an 'information order', which sustained the British Raj in India.⁵²

Fisher explains how the 'fundamental aspects of the transition from the Mughal to the British Empires' were reflected in the transformation of the role of the Company's *akhbar nawis*. As the Company's role became increasingly political, the role of its news writers was constantly debated. Central to the debate was the old question of how much authority Indians could be trusted with, as discussed above. And, as with the *munshis*, Fisher identifies a general corresponding politicization of the duties performed by the Company's *akhbar nawis*. As with the *munshis*, the level of authority delegated to an *akhbar nawis* varied from resident to resident. Some *akhbar nawis* served only as news writers, while others served as *wakils*, an office later known as residency agent (if held by a non-European) and political agent (if held by a Briton). As with the *munshis*, the British employed

⁵⁰ Fisher, 'Office of Akhbar Nawis', 45–82; Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 353.

⁵¹ Fisher, 'Office of Akhbar Nawis', 70–1; Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 352–3.

⁵² Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (1996), 62, 132, 366; Bayly, 'Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India' (1993), 42.

fewer and fewer of their *akhbar nawis* as *wakils* after the 1820s for the same reasons of racial mistrust. In their place, residents appointed British political agents.⁵³

6. THE POLITICIZATION OF THE NATIVE AGENCY SYSTEM IN INDIA AND THE GULF

Fisher and Bayly do not account for the politicization of the native agency system beyond an observation that it corresponded to the politicization of the Company itself. This section offers one possible explanation. The position of *wakil*, or native political agent, in both India and the Gulf appears to have evolved out of three different offices: brokers, news writers, and *munshis*. The earliest *wakils* were Company brokers, as discussed above. Because the Gulf was such an unhealthy posting for Europeans, the Company recruited *Banias* (Indian Hindu merchants) who resided in those towns where it wanted to have commercial representatives. In this way, the Company was able to establish brokerages in Kerman sometime in the 1720s, Muscat around 1758, Shiraz around 1800, and Bahrain around 1816. British residents also employed news writers in distant parts of their residencies from the beginning of the residency system in the mid-eighteenth century, as Fisher and Bayly have shown. In the nineteenth century, these news writers were given the title of news agent. While residents in India simply adopted a pre-existing system of intelligence-gathering, however, the Bushire Resident (1763–1822) had no such option available to him. In the absence of an equivalent to the *akhbar nawis* system, the Bushire Resident had to somehow create his own intelligence network. There were no élite service families in Eastern Arabia for the Resident to recruit from, and the élite service families of Persia, unlike their counterparts in India, had no interest in transferring their services to the Company. The Resident therefore used his brokers in Muscat, Shiraz, and Bahrain for this purpose. Because the Resident was headquartered in Bushire—one of the Gulf's most prosperous ports for much of the nineteenth century—he was also able to establish social relationships with some of the Gulf's most affluent Persian and Arab Muslim merchant families who commanded great networks of family and business relationships throughout South-West Asia. By the early nineteenth century, the Resident was able to recruit a few of these families into Company service, as Chapters 4–6 will show. Thus, he still managed to tap into an indigenous intelligence network, albeit

⁵³ Fisher, 'Office of Akhbar Nawis', 45, 58–9, 65–6; Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 363.

of a different nature from the one British residents in India tapped into. The Gulf Resident (1822–1971) inherited this network from the Bushire Resident in 1822.

As in India, the politicization of the native agency system in the Gulf was a natural outcome of Britain's increasing involvement in the political affairs of the region. Residents slowly began to entrust some of their brokers on the spot to do more than trade (as White has explained) and to ask their news agents to do more than write reports (as Fisher has shown). But how did this come about and why did residents entrust some brokers and news agents with political duties and not others? It seems likely that, if the ruler of a state or chiefdom within a residency required the resident's attention, a resident would have been faced with two options: either visit the ruler himself, or dispatch one of the British political officers on his staff. If the residency was short-staffed, as was often the case, the resident would be hard-pressed to send someone. Under these circumstances a third option of entrusting his broker or news agent on the spot to look after minor matters would have presented itself. If his agent was trustworthy, competent, and respected as a man of status by the ruler, deputizing him to handle minor political issues would have seemed a reasonable solution.

The same scenario would explain the deputizing of *munshis* on the resident's staff. Fisher explains that 'the Company occasionally sent Indian agents on independent missions to regional courts. Sent with either a detailed set of instructions or only a general purpose, these early missions conformed to similar missions that had historically been sent between Indian princes.'⁵⁴ But why did residents make use of these missions in the first place and how did they work? It seems likely that a resident would have dispatched a senior *munshi* to deal with a minor political issue at a ruler's court only if such a step was acceptable to that ruler. The *munshi's* social status, therefore, would have been an important factor in the resident's decision to delegate political duties to him, as White has explained. In the nineteenth century, *munshis* sent on special missions were usually given the titles of confidential agent or confidential news agent, but these titles were not always applied consistently. If a ruler or his state within a residency increased in importance to the extent that the resident needed to communicate with the ruler on a regular basis, the resident would likely have made greater use of these arrangements. In states or chiefdoms where a news agency already existed, the agency would have increased in importance accordingly. If, at some point, the social status of the agent became incongruent with the increasing responsibilities of the office, the resident would have felt compelled to replace him with someone of higher

⁵⁴ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 323.

social standing and ability. If a news agent had not been previously assigned to the state or chiefdom in question, the resident may have decided to send a senior man to reside there—possibly one of his confidential agents.

Fisher has explained how the deputization of Indian *munshis* in Indian residencies declined after the 1820s.⁵⁵ In their place, residents assigned British political agents. The decision not to use Indians as political agents was also made in the Gulf, but for a different reason. Residents in the Gulf initially appointed Hindu merchants as agents, but when some members of the Al Khalifah in Bahrain objected to this in 1834, the Residents stopped employing Hindu agents throughout the Gulf. Because British political agents were unavailable, Residents appointed Muslim merchants—usually Arabs and Persians. The only exceptions appear to be two Jewish Arabs and one Christian Arab who served as agents in Muscat. As the century progressed, the Residents entrusted their native agents with greater responsibilities. The result, paradoxically, was an expanding political role for non-Europeans in the Gulf Residency at a time when the role of non-Europeans in the Indian residencies was diminishing. The families of these Muslim merchants had long-standing connections with the Gulf Residency for the same reasons Fisher gives for the élite service families in India. A number of these local merchants had served on the Residency staff in Bushire as confidential agents before their appointment as native residency agents in Arabia and Persia. As the Gulf greatly increased in importance to Britain from the late 1890s onward, the Government of India began to replace its Muslim native agents in the Gulf Residency with British political agents. The Native Agent in Bahrain, for instance, was replaced in 1900 with a gazetted political officer of Anglo-Indian descent from the Uncovenanted Civil Service. He, in turn, was replaced in 1904 by a graded political officer of British descent from the Indian Army. The religious and ethnic transition of the Bahrain agents—from Indian Hindus, to Arab and Persian Muslims, to an Anglo-Indian Christian, and finally to British Christians—reflects a religious and racial hierarchy in the IPS that prevailed during the early nineteenth to early twentieth century. As Bahrain's importance to Britain increased, the British raised the social status of the Agent according to this hierarchy.

If the Gulf Resident considered the political situation within a shaikhdom or town to be serious enough, he would temporarily dispatch a British political officer from the Residency headquarters to reside there. Such temporarily assigned officers were given the title of residency agent in the nineteenth century. On the rare occasions when they were dispatched, they resided at their posts for only a few months during the cold weather season (November

⁵⁵ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 324–5, 328–9, 361, 363.

to March). British political officers permanently assigned to these posts normally held the title of political agent. As the British increasingly entrusted native agents with political duties in the Gulf, they came to refer to them as residency agents as well. Yet native residency agents were never given the title of political agent, even though they occupied their posts year-round. The reason for this was that they were informal appointments from Bushire rather than gazetted appointments from Bombay or Calcutta. Of course, they were not gazetted in the first place because of a British reluctance to appoint non-Europeans officially to political posts within the Company or Government of India. The Ottoman and Persian governments refused to recognize native residency agents in Bahrain partly because of their non-gazetted status. When Lieutenant-Colonel Meade (Resident 1897–1900) wanted to increase Britain's political presence in Bahrain in order to discourage Ottoman claims to the island, the informality of the Native Agent's political status worked to his disadvantage. He tried to reinforce the Native Agent's position by suggesting the British Government 'inform the Turkish Government that the representative we maintain at Bahrein ... is a Residency (Political) Agent under the Government of India'.⁵⁶ The Government of India ignored Meade's suggestion and, less than two years later, Meade replaced the Native Agent with a gazetted political officer from the Uncovenanted Civil Service.

If the Resident sent a British residency agent to a town where a native residency agent already resided, the British residency agent normally moved into the agency building and assumed temporary charge of the native agent's office and duties. The native agent became the assistant residency agent for the duration of the British residency agent's stay. This happened in Bahrain five times during 1871–4 and 1879, and in Sharjah ten times during 1937–47, and will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

7. EARLY NATIVE AGENTS IN THE GULF

As explained in Section 2 above, the first Gulf Resident inherited the foundation of the native agency system in the Gulf from his predecessors, the Bushire Resident (1763–1822) and the Lower Gulf Agent (1820–2). This section looks at the history of the system's foundation and should be read with referral to the charts in Appendices A2–A9, especially the last chart.

⁵⁶ Meade (PRPG) to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 13 June 1898, enclosed in Elgin (Viceroy) to Hamilton (Sec. of IO), 27 Oct. 1898, reg. no. 1044/1898, L/P&S/7/108 (IOR).

The earliest recorded instance of a British native agent employed in a semi-political capacity in the Gulf was Narottam Ramachandar Joshi/Raoji (usually spelt 'Narrotam Ramchunder Jossy' or 'Norottum Ramchunder Rowji' in British records), described by the Governor of Bombay in 1763 as 'the English Broker at Muscat, having on many occasions been very serviceable in transmitting intelligence'.⁵⁷ Narottam was a Gujarati Brahmin *Bania*, whom the East India Company had recruited from the local merchant community—a standard British practice before the twentieth century.⁵⁸ The Company had employed him as its broker in Muscat since 1758, if not earlier, but by the 1790s the post had become politicized as Britain took a closer interest in the affairs of Muscat.⁵⁹ In 1797, the Governor of Bombay stated his duties to be that of 'promoting the Hon'ble Company's and English interests at Muscat and ... opposing by every means in [his] power the proceeding of their enemies such as the French and Dutch during the present war'. The Governor instructed Narottam to 'endeavour by every means in your power to prevent these Nations' ships sailing to and from Muscat under Arab and particularly the [Ruler's] color' and to 'join with the Company's Officer who Commands the present ship [at Muscat] in procuring suitable answers in compliance with my suggestions on this important subject'.⁶⁰ Narottam took his orders directly from the Governor of Bombay, although he also sent reports on an information-only basis to the Company's senior officer in the Gulf at Bandar 'Abbas (1622–1763), Basrah (1763–78), and finally Bushire (1778–1946). Narottam was clearly more than a broker, for he was tasked with some of the duties of a residency agent. These duties had evolved out of his *de facto* responsibilities as a news agent, which in turn had evolved out of his *de jure* status as a commercial agent. But unlike a residency agent, Narottam performed his political duties in an unofficial, almost secret, capacity. The Governor of Bombay was most anxious that the French and Dutch not learn of Narottam's political duties.⁶¹

Narottam was dismissed in 1798 when it was discovered he was in fact working for the French and the Dutch as well as cheating the Government

⁵⁷ Crommelin (Govr of Bombay) to Agent, Basrah, 2 Feb. 1763, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 164.

⁵⁸ For more about the *Bania* community in Muscat, see Allen, 'The Indian Merchant Community of Masqat' (1981).

⁵⁹ The earliest record of the Broker is in Bombay Public Dept diary no. 31 (1758), entry for 28 Feb. 1758, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 124. The diary refers to 'the Broker at Muscat', who, in subsequent pages (164, 335), is identified as Narottam Ramachandar Joshi.

⁶⁰ Duncan (Govr of Bombay) to Narottam Ramachandar Joshi (Muscat), 25 Mar. 1797, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 336.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 336–7.

of Bombay.⁶² He was replaced by Vishandas Bashidu, who was given the same monthly salary as Narottam: Rs. 100, which was one-fifth of what a Briton received for doing the same job.⁶³ Vishandas was referred to variably in Government correspondence as the Broker, the Native Agent, the *Dallal* (Broker), or the *Gomastah* (a British Indian term for native agent or native factor).⁶⁴ Vishandas was a Bhattia (a Hindu merchant caste) from either Sindh, Kutch, or Gujarat. The British had recruited him from the Ruler's customs administration in Muscat. In fact, they permitted him to continue working for the Ruler so long as it did not lead to a conflict of interest. In 1800, the Governor of Bombay appointed a British Resident, Archibald Bogle, to Muscat to better stave off France's growing influence there, but Vishandas stayed on as Broker and *de facto* Assistant Resident in Muscat for many years.⁶⁵ When Britain's special envoy to the Shah, Captain John Malcolm, called at Muscat in 1800 (en route to Tehran) to negotiate some outstanding issues with the Ruler, Vishandas acted as his interpreter and political assistant. In Malcolm's subsequent report to Bombay, he praised Vishandas's services: 'The native Broker at Muscat has conducted himself much to my satisfaction and will, I have no doubt, be a useful man to Mr Bogle or any gentleman that may in future reside at that port.'⁶⁶

A similar example of a native agent employed in a political capacity is the case of Khojah Marcar, an Armenian Christian merchant who served as Britain's Native Agent in Baghdad (1781–95). For fourteen years, Khojah Marcar conducted the Company's business at the court of the Ottoman Governor of Baghdad and forwarded 'intelligence and packets' to the Basrah Resident, his immediate superior, for which he received Rs. 100 per month.⁶⁷ He was later succeeded by Khojah Petrus, another Armenian

⁶² Mahdi 'Ali Khan (Muscat) to Duncan (Govr of Bombay), 7 Oct. 1798; Resolution of the Govr-in-Council, 29 Oct. 1798, *ibid.* 344–5. Narottam died before the instructions for his dismissal reached Muscat (see p. 348).

⁶³ Duncan to Narottam, 25 Mar. 1797; Duncan to Bogle (Resident designate, Muscat), 16 Dec. 1799, *ibid.* 336, 373–4.

⁶⁴ Mahdi 'Ali Khan (Muscat) to Duncan (Govr of Bombay), 7 Oct. 1798, *ibid.* 344; Mahdi 'Ali Khan to Duncan, 14 Oct. 1798, *ibid.* 346–7; Resolution of the Govr-in-Council, 29 Oct. 1798, *ibid.* 345; Duncan to Bogle, 16 Dec. 1799, *ibid.* 373; Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 304, 384.

⁶⁵ Duncan to Bogle, 16 Dec. 1799, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 373; Risso, *Oman and Muscat: An Early Modern History* (1986), 192. Risso believes Vishandas (Vishu Das) stayed on until 1803, but he was still working for the East India Company in Muscat in 1808.

⁶⁶ Malcolm to Duncan, 4 Feb. 1800, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 378.

⁶⁷ Saldanha mistakenly lists Khojah Marcar's salary as Rs. 100 per year. Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Turkish Arabia Affairs, 1801–1905* (1906), 95.

Christian merchant.⁶⁸ In early 1798, when France's war with Britain began to threaten India, the Company replaced its native agent in Baghdad with a British officer in an attempt to counterbalance the growing French presence in the region.⁶⁹ Two Arab Christian agents of note were Christian Rassam, who served as Britain's Honorary Vice-Consul at Mosul (1839–72), and his younger brother Hormuzd Rassam, who served as Assistant Political Agent at 'Aden (1854–69) and acting Agent at Muscat (1860–1).⁷⁰ The only Jewish Arab merchants who served as British agents in the Gulf appear to be Khojah Rubin and Khojah Hiskal, consecutive agents in Muscat between 1843 and 1860.

But what were the first instances of the British employing Muslims as native agents in the Gulf region? In Basrah, the East India Company employed a local merchant 'of great respectability' named Akan Muhammad Nabi.⁷¹ The Company's Basrah Resident, Samuel Manesty (1786–1810), deputized him on numerous occasions to meet and negotiate with Ottoman officials throughout Southern Iraq. In Shiraz, a prominent Muslim merchant family from India, the Nawab family, ran the British Agency for over a hundred years, from c.1800 to 1903.⁷² The first British agent in Qatif (c.1820–3) and Sharjah (1823–7) was a Persian merchant named Riza 'Ali Khan—see Appendix A6.⁷³ The first British agent in Mughu (1823–7) was another Persian merchant named Mullah Husain, who later succeeded Riza 'Ali Khan in Sharjah (1827–49).⁷⁴ The Company's first Muslim agent in Bahrain was an affluent merchant named Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar (1834–42), who came from a Shi'i Arab family originally from Iraq.⁷⁵ His

⁶⁸ For more about Armenians in Company employ, see Ferrier, 'The Armenians and the East India Company' (1973).

⁶⁹ Tuson, *G/29 Handlist: Persia and the Gulf*, 76, 78; Yapp, 'The Establishment of the East India Company Residency at Baghdad, 1798–1806' (1967); Ingram, 'From Trade to Empire in the Near East, III: The Uses of the Residency at Baghdad, 1794–1804' (1978).

⁷⁰ For details, see Wright, 'Hormuzd Rassam, 1826–1910' (2004).

⁷¹ Manesty (PR in Basrah) to Govr-Gen (Calcutta), 27 Nov. 1799, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 358. 'Akan' may be an incorrect transcription of 'Agha'.

⁷² For details, see Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians*, 78.

⁷³ Also spelt Reza/Ruzza 'Ali Khan. See Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 204. Lorimer incorrectly lists Mullah Husain (1827–49) as the first native agent at Sharjah in *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, appendix Q, 2678. Tuson also has incorrect dates for both agents: *Records of the British Residency*, 185.

⁷⁴ Lorimer incorrectly lists Mullah Husain as beginning in 1829. See Wilson (PRPG) to Mullah Husain (Sharjah Agent), 3 May 1827; Wilson to Mullah Husain, 29 Sept. 1827, R/15/1/38 (IOR), 79–80, 114.

⁷⁵ Safar family tree by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S /7/112 (IOR).

son, Hajji 'Abd al-Rasul Safar, was the Company's first Arab Muslim agent to serve in Mocha (c.1829–c.1856).⁷⁶

But unquestionably, the most significant instance of Britain employing Muslims in the Gulf is the case of Mirza Mahdi 'Ali Khan Bahadur.⁷⁷ From 1798 to 1803 Mahdi 'Ali Khan served as Britain's first and only Native Resident in Bushire and Envoy to the Persian court. Mahdi 'Ali Khan began his career with the East India Company twelve years before when he joined the staff of the Political Residency in Benares under Jonathan Duncan. He served initially as a *munshi* and later as the Native Agent in Ghazipur. In 1795, the Company appointed Duncan Governor of Bombay and Mahdi 'Ali Khan went with him.⁷⁸ When Duncan appointed Mahdi 'Ali Khan Resident in Bushire in 1798, he invested him with the full authority and responsibility held by all previous Residents. Largely because of the recent outbreak of war with France, Duncan gave him unprecedented political duties as well. In part, Duncan instructed him to

take at all times the utmost care of the Company's credit and of the English reputation, and of the safety of the property under your charge, cautiously avoiding the entering into disputes with the Country Government, and preventing the people and *sepoys* at the factory either from having anything to do with, or from being injured by, the natives, and hoisting the flag at such times as has always been usual, and in short acting in all things in conformity to the Hon'ble Company's Rules and privileges at Bushire and in the other parts of Persia, ... the several heads of which you have [been] informed, but which we [leave] to you to attend to the peaceable improvement of [as] circumstances may admit.⁷⁹

'The great object of your appointment', Duncan told Mahdi 'Ali Khan, 'is the extension of the Company's European imports into Persia, and the improvement to the highest possible degree of their selling prices ... we repose the greatest reliance on your zeal, and desire you to distinguish yourself in the trust reposed in you to raise the selling prices to the highest standard ...' Mahdi 'Ali Khan was also to propose new items the Company could sell there, to report on Russia's trade in the north, and to suggest ways of 'preventing the spread of the French influence in Persia'.⁸⁰ In this,

⁷⁶ Gavin, *Aden under British Rule, 1839–1967* (1975), 24, 45–6, 48, 64, 73, 132, 366; Kour, *The History of Aden, 1839–72* (1981), 124–5.

⁷⁷ Indian titles like *Khan Bahadur* and *Khan Sahib* normally went in front of one's name. Mahdi 'Ali's title always appeared after his name, in the Persian and Ottoman fashion, often omitting *Bahadur*.

⁷⁸ Cohn, 'The Initial British Impact on India', 324.

⁷⁹ Govr of Bombay's instructions to Mahdi 'Ali Khan for guidance as Resident at Bushire, 3 Sept. 1798, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 342.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 340–1.

Duncan was clearly taking a risk. Would a Persian and a Muslim, albeit a Company employee and a British-protected person, be able to represent British interests in Persia? How would Mahdi 'Ali Khan handle conflicting loyalties? What if he had to resort to force in protecting British interests in Persia?⁸¹ Persians and Muslims might regard him as a traitor. While there were precedents of Britain appointing foreign nationals as British political representatives within their own states, and of foreign states appointing Britons as their political representatives within Britain, the most important diplomatic posts were not given to native agents.⁸² These were uncharted waters.

On his way to Bushire, Mahdi 'Ali Khan was to call at Muscat to hold negotiations with the Ruler. Duncan told him 'to ascertain [the Ruler's] real disposition respecting the French and to do all in your power to dissuade him from assisting them' and, if possible, 'to exclude all Frenchmen from his dominions during the war with Great Britain'. Duncan instructed him to investigate the rumours of a French agent in Muscat and French ships visiting Muscat regularly. He was to pressure the Ruler to dismiss the French doctor in his employ and to accept a doctor from Bombay. He was also to seek permission for the Company to replace its brokerage in Muscat with a factory. Finally, he was to report 'on the demeanour of Norottum Ramchunder Rowji, the Company's Broker there, and whether he be trustworthy or otherwise.'⁸³

Never before had the Company entrusted such important duties to a native political officer in the Gulf. Duncan's decision proved to be a wise one. Mahdi 'Ali Khan's four and a half years as Britain's chief political representative in Persia and the Gulf were well-spent. While in Muscat he negotiated the first Anglo-Omani treaty with the Ruler.⁸⁴ He discovered that Norottum had been dealing secretly with the French and Dutch, as well as cheating the Bombay Government, and recommended Norottum's dismissal.⁸⁵ He was unable to obtain the Ruler's consent to establish a Company factory in Muscat, but he convinced the Ruler to allow the Company to re-establish its old factory at Bandar 'Abbas (a port then under

⁸¹ As Resident, Mahdi 'Ali Khan commanded a small guard of *sepoys* in Bushire and could call upon the assistance of East India Company warships.

⁸² Satow, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, ch. 12, ss. 12–17, pp. 92–3.

⁸³ Govr of Bombay's instructions to Mahdi 'Ali Khan for guidance as Resident at Bushire, 3 Sept. 1798, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 340.

⁸⁴ Engagement of 1798, in Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, xi. *The Treaties, Etc., Relating to ... the Arab Principalities in the Persian Gulf, Muscat ...* (1933), 287–8. See Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 66, for a detailed account of the events that led to the signing of this treaty.

⁸⁵ Mahdi 'Ali Khan (Muscat) to Duncan (Govr of Bombay), 7 Oct. 1798, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 344–5.

the Ruler's control), which the Company had closed thirty-five years earlier because of the port's economic decline at the time.⁸⁶ Responding to these achievements, Jonathan Duncan told the Governor-General in Calcutta that 'the success of Mehdi Aly's negotiations has, considering the short time that has been consumed in them, so far exceeded our expectations that we cannot now speak too highly in commendation of his merits'.⁸⁷

After arriving in Persia, Mahdi 'Ali Khan was able to secure promises from the Shah that Frenchmen found on the South Persian coast would be arrested while Britain was at war with France. During his time as British Resident in Bushire, Mahdi 'Ali Khan made a number of recommendations to the Government of Bombay about affairs in the Gulf, which were implemented successfully. Unfortunately, his career ended in disgrace. When a Persian envoy was accidentally killed by a *sepo*y guard in Bombay in 1802, he lied about the incident to the Shah, for which he was dismissed from his post and made to retire from Company service the following year. After his dismissal, the Governor-General in Calcutta, Lord Wellesley (1798–1805), wrote to Mahdi 'Ali Khan expressing a 'favourable opinion of [his] general zeal and exertions for the promotion of British interests' and acknowledging 'that the public service had occasionally derived considerable benefit from [his] energy and ability ... in the discharge of the duties which had been assigned to [him]' during his tenure as Resident. Wellesley granted him a generous monthly pension of Rs. 800 and a monthly stipend of Rs. 500 to his two sons, to be passed on to their survivors. Mahdi 'Ali Khan died in Bombay fifteen months later.⁸⁸

The reaction of the outgoing Bushire Resident, Nicholas Hankey Smith (1792–8), to Mahdi 'Ali Khan's assumption of office in November 1798 provides a good illustration of the potential controversy surrounding native agent employment. Smith reluctantly handed over charge of the Bushire Residency to Mahdi 'Ali Khan, but he refused to hand over the British flag. He could not believe that Jonathan Duncan would permit a Muslim to use the flag, even though Duncan's instructions were fairly clear on this matter. Smith wrote to Duncan that he was surprised that 'the British Flag should be so unprecedentedly and strangely appropriated' to a Muslim, who would surely 'make it subservient to his pride or interest, and subject it to insult with impunity to the dishonor of the British Nation'. He argued that the British flag should only be flown by Britons and Christians, because only

⁸⁶ Mahdi 'Ali Khan (Muscat) to Duncan (Govr of Bombay), 14 Oct. 1798, *ibid.* 346.

⁸⁷ Duncan (Govr of Bombay) to Wellesley (Govr-Gen, Calcutta), 29 Oct. 1798, *ibid.* 349.

⁸⁸ Paraphrase of Wellesley (Govr-Gen) to Mahdi 'Ali Khan, 28 Apr. 1803, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853*, 76.

they could be relied upon to treat it with respect. Duncan did not realize, he implied, that a true Muslim is 'commanded by the tenets of his religion to despise it as the Flag of infidels and can mentally have no other respect for it than to serve his own views'. Smith argued that, even if Mahdi 'Ali Khan were to treat the flag with due respect, he would be looked down upon by his fellow Muslims for doing so. This would reduce his status and influence in Bushire, which would in turn hinder him in the performance of his duties. Smith did not believe a native agent would have the 'ability or pretensions to support the British Flag, much more to guard its dignity so sacred to every English subject'. It would be 'repugnant to the honor of the British Nation' and 'disgraceful to the name of the Englishmen to deliver the British Flag to the will of a Mussulman', he declared. He would not, therefore, hand over the flag without express orders from the Governor.⁸⁹ In so arguing, Smith was gambling that Duncan would consider more than the flag. Smith's underlying argument is that native political officers should not be appointed as residents because only Britons could be trusted in such important posts. Of course he could not question the Governor's orders directly, so he was brandishing the flag as a way of protesting Mahdi 'Ali Khan's appointment.

Duncan's reaction is revealing, for Smith had forced him to choose between a native political officer, albeit one he regarded highly, and a fellow Briton. Duncan met with his Council to discuss Smith's stand and decide what action to take. The resolution they subsequently passed states that they could 'scarcely reconcile [Smith's] present conduct with a perfect state of sanity'. They asserted that Mahdi 'Ali Khan was 'the Company's lawful representative at that settlement and [was] to be considered as such to the fullest extent of the appellation'. They instructed the commander of the Bombay Marine's next monthly ship to Basrah to call at Bushire and to take Smith on board, by force if necessary, but first to demand that Smith hand over the flag. As a precaution, the commander was to take two extra flags with him to Bushire, which were to be handed over to Mahdi 'Ali Khan. A flag-raising ceremony was to be held 'with all the solemnity due to the occasion' over which Mahdi 'Ali Khan was to preside. The commander was to provide 'as many of the Officers of his vessels as can be spared ashore' for a guard of honour.⁹⁰ To emphasize the fact that Mahdi 'Ali Khan was to be considered no different from a British resident, the commander was instructed

to hold himself as being in all respects as much subordinate to and subject to the orders and requisitions of the present Native Resident, Mehdi Ali Khan, as according

⁸⁹ Smith to Duncan (Govr of Bombay), 1 Nov. 1798, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 350–1.

⁹⁰ Resolution of the Govt of Bombay, 23 Nov. 1798, *ibid.* 351–2.

to the rules and usages of the service he would be to any European Resident, being a Company's Civil Servant ... and attentive to shew every respectful observance in his intercourse with Mehdi Ali Khan ... with [a] view to impress on the minds of the Natives at Bushire a full conviction of the sentiments of Government, and of their decided determination to support Mehdi Ali Khan in the station he now holds, and to guard against the sacrifice of the important objects of his mission to the unjustifiable caprice of an individual.⁹¹

The Governor of Bombay's appointment of Mahdi 'Ali Khan as Bushire Resident raises the question of what role his nationality and religion played in the appointment. Here was a curious case of the British sending a Persian to represent Britain in the then highest British political office in Persia. Did the Governor believe that only a Persian and Muslim could achieve the 'great object' of extending British trade and influence in Persia and the Gulf? Possibly. Jonathan Duncan explained that it was Mahdi 'Ali Khan's 'experienced talents as a negotiator [that] pointed him out [to be the] best qualified person that could be employed to undermine the interest and footing which [Britain's] European enemies' had in Muscat and Persia.⁹² But it was likely his intimate knowledge of the languages, customs, and political culture of Persia and the Gulf that gave him this edge over other candidates for the post. Did Mahdi 'Ali Khan's success influence the British to recruit other men from the Gulf region for political posts in the Gulf? This, too, is possible. What is clear is that, by the 1830s, the British routinely employed Muslims in the majority of their political posts in the Gulf—a practice they continued until the end of the nineteenth century.

8. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIVE AGENCY SYSTEM IN THE GULF

The first British political officer in the Gulf responsible for political relations with members of the General Treaty of 1820 and for supervising the maritime peace was Captain Perronet Thompson, who had served as Arabic interpreter at the signing of the treaty.⁹³ He was headquartered on Qishm Island in the Strait of Hormuz, where he headed the newly created Agency for the Lower Gulf from 1820 to 1821.⁹⁴ Responsibility

⁹¹ Ibid. 351–2.

⁹² Duncan (Govr of Bombay) to Wellesley (Govr-Gen, Calcutta), 29 Oct. 1798, in Saldanha (ed.), *Selections from State Papers, 1600–1800*, 349.

⁹³ For more about Thompson and his background, see Johnson, *General T. Perronet Thompson 1783–1869* (1957); Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 175.

⁹⁴ 95 For a history of the Lower Gulf Agency, see Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 175–9, 197–9.

for the Native Agency in Bahrain was transferred to Thompson from the Bushire Resident. It is unclear whether Thompson also inherited the Native Agency at Qatif or established it himself. There was also a Native Agency in Muscat, under the direct authority of Bushire, which reported to Thompson on an information-only basis. In 1822, the British transferred the post of Lower Gulf Agent to Bushire and amalgamated it with the much older post of Bushire Resident. The new post of 'Resident in the Persian Gulf' — 'Political Resident in the Persian Gulf' (PRPG) after the 1850s—was given responsibility for Britain's relations with the dozens of rulers and governors throughout the entire Gulf region. See Appendix A4–A7.

The first British officer appointed to this new post was Captain John MacLeod (1822–3) of the Bombay Engineers. Before MacLeod's departure for the Gulf, the Governor of Bombay issued him instructions. Once in the Gulf, MacLeod was to 'suggest a plan for securing authentic intelligence of the proceedings of the several Chiefs on the [Arab] coast and a ready communication with them should they appear of a questionable character'. He was to 'adopt the plan at once if not attended with much expense.'⁹⁵ When MacLeod arrived in Bushire in December 1822, he discovered a solution already existed: the native agencies in Shiraz, Qatif, Bahrain, and Muscat that he had inherited from his predecessors. MacLeod would need to reorganize these agencies into a single network controlled from Bushire and expand the network to encompass the lower Gulf—see Appendix A4–A6). A few weeks later, in mid-January 1823, MacLeod set off on a tour of the Arab coast from Ras Musandam to Bahrain to meet with the 'treaty chiefs' and his native agents. He also instructed the Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf (SNOGP), then headquartered at Mughu, to investigate where a native agent would be most usefully appointed to provide 'information, assist in procuring occasional supplies [for the Gulf Squadron], and also act as interpreter when required'. The SNOGP suggested Mughu.⁹⁶ After returning to Bushire in early February, MacLeod submitted his recommendations to Bombay:

I have not been able to make any arrangements for establishing a channel of communication at the pirate ports; it would, however, I think, be very desirable to have a native agent with [Shaikh] Sooltan bin Suggur [at Sharjah] and I shall endeavour to procure a person for the purpose. Perhaps our agent at Kattiffe might with advantage be transferred to Sharjah. In the meantime, the man whom I

⁹⁵ Elphinstone (Govr of Bombay) to MacLeod (PRPG), 12 Nov. 1822, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853*, 150.

⁹⁶ MacLeod (Basidu) to Capt Faithful (SNOGP, Mughu), 10 Jan. 1823; Faithful to Superintendent of Bombay Marine, 13 Feb. 1823, *ibid.* 152–3.

propose sending to Mogoo will be very [suitable] because he will be able to give information of the proceedings of the Arabs both on this side of the Gulf & also on the Pirate Coast, through the channel of Lingaa, which is near Mogoo and is subject to a near relation of Sooltan bin Suggur, who has constant communication with Sharjah.⁹⁷

MacLeod died in September 1823 after only ten months on the job, a victim of the climate. It was left to MacLeod's successor, Colonel Ephraim Stannus (1823–7) to complete MacLeod's plans for the reorganization and expansion of the agency network. By 1825, there were native agencies in Bahrain, Muscat, Shiraz, Mughu, and Sharjah (moved from Qatif)—all reporting to Bushire. That year, the Governor of Bombay informed his superiors in London that

The Resident has succeeded in placing his Agents at almost all the Ports where they appeared to be required, and they must at all times prove useful auxiliaries in observing and controlling the seeds of dissension in the Gulph. The station of Sharga, the chief residence of Sultan Bin Suggur [al-Qasimi], seemed to demand the presence of a person of more than ordinary talents and respectability, and Ruzza Ali Khan was accordingly selected by Colonel Stannus for this duty with a superior salary of Rupees 150 per mensem.⁹⁸

Successive Residents established additional native agencies in Lingah, Kermanshah, Basidu, Gwadar, and Kuwait—see Appendix A9. The establishment dates of many of the early (pre-1830) agencies are unknown, as the records are far from complete. For example, historians have taken 1827 and 1829 as the likely years for the establishment of the Native Agency in Bahrain.⁹⁹ However, the earliest evidence of a Native Agent in Bahrain dates from early March 1817, as discussed in Chapter 2. This places the establishment date of the Agency some time between July 1816 (when one of the co-Rulers of Bahrain agreed to the Agency's establishment) and February 1817.¹⁰⁰

9. ADVANTAGES FOR THE BRITISH

Once the native agency system was established in the Gulf, there were three main reasons for its continued use by successive Gulf Residents during the

⁹⁷ MacLeod (Bushire) to Warden (Bombay), 27 Feb. 1823, R/15/1/30 (IOR), 53–4.

⁹⁸ Elphinstone to Board of Control (London), 2 July 1825, L/P&S/6/177 (IOR).

⁹⁹ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, appendix Q, 2678; Tuson, *Records of the British Residency*, 43 (n. 10).

¹⁰⁰ Agreement of 20 July 1816, enclosed in Bruce (PR in Bushire) to Bombay, 31 July 1816, P/SEC/BOM/41 (IOR), 1427; Bruce to Bombay, 6 Mar. 1817, *ibid.* 1468.

nineteenth century. The first, and perhaps most obvious, was economic. With a very small budget, the Resident was responsible for maintaining contact with dozens of rulers and governors and for staying informed about events throughout the region. Native agents were a cost-effective answer to his problem. Table 10 on page 71 reveals that non-Europeans accounted for around three-quarters of the Gulf Residency's political staff in 1834 and 1860–1, yet their salaries consumed just 14.5 per cent of the political staff budget in 1834 and 17.5 per cent in 1860–1. Appendix A14 lists the Residency expenses for 1899. It shows that 69.5 per cent of the political staff within the Gulf Residency were Arab, Persian, Indian, or Eurasian, yet their salaries accounted for only 27 per cent of the political staff budget. If one includes the Residency's support staff, then Arabs, Persians, Indians, and Eurasians accounted for 90 per cent of those staffing the Gulf Residency's headquarters in Bushire and its eleven agencies and consulates throughout the Gulf, yet their salaries accounted for only 40 per cent of its total staffing costs. The cost-effectiveness of the native agency system and the extensive use of non-European and Eurasian support staff also meant that the cost of maintaining and staffing the Residency headquarters and the agencies and consulates was only 23 per cent of the Gulf Residency's overall operating cost. Appendices A10–A14 have staff lists of other years, also showing a similar heavy reliance on non-Europeans.

An agency run by a native agent cost the Indian Foreign Department, on average, less than 10 per cent of the cost of an agency run by a British political officer. Compare the annual cost of maintaining the Native Agency in Bahrain in 1899 with the Gulf Resident's estimate of the cost of the Political Agency that later replaced it in 1900, listed in Table 12. Native agents in the Gulf were not given a separate agency operation allowance. A native agent had to pay his staff salaries, travel costs, building maintenance, and other expenses out of his own pocket. Funds were provided for special projects, but only if the Resident was convinced of their necessity. The annual operation expenses of a native agency seem to have been always in excess of a native agent's salary. The expenses of Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84), for example, were four and a half times his salary. Why native agents were willing to accept this arrangement is explained in Section 11 below.

The second main reason for the continued use of the native agency system was the effectiveness of the native agents. The Resident was responsible for maintaining contact with dozens of rulers and governors in Arabia and Persia, for enforcing the treaties, for staying informed about events throughout the region, and for protecting British interests. Native agents were not only willing to work for small salaries, totally incommensurate with the value of their services, they were also well-suited to help the

Table 12. Cost of a native political agency *v.* a British political agency (in rupees)

ID	Officer	Location	Annual salary	Operation allowance	Staff salaries	Total
Arab	Residency agent	Bahrain	1,200	0	0	1,200 ^a
British	Asst. political agent ^b	Bahrain	7,200	4,876	4,500	16,576 ^c

^a 'Tubular Proposition Statement', by Meade, 24 Sept. 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 39–43a.

^b The Proposal was for a 2nd-class political assistant, the lowest grade (and lowest paid) political officer permitted to take charge of a political agency.

^c This is exclusive of the anticipated Rs. 20,200 for the construction of a new agency and barracks for *sepoys*, and the purchase of office furniture, tents, a boat, books, etc.

Resident with these duties. They generally had extensive social and business contacts throughout the Gulf and beyond. Most had relatives with whom they were in regular touch handling the family business in many of the region's ports and market towns: Baghdad, Basrah, Muhammarah, Bushire, Shiraz, Isfahan, Lingah, Bandar 'Abbas, Manamah, Muscat, 'Aden, Mocha, and Bombay. The Safar family, one of the wealthier merchant families in the Gulf in the nineteenth century, had family members in eight of these towns. The top merchant families in the Gulf still operate in this way.¹⁰¹ Families like the Safars were well placed to be the eyes and ears of the Gulf Resident. They knew the region better than the British, spoke the languages of the Gulf better, and had better local and regional intelligence networks. It was only by tapping into the regional mercantile networks of the Gulf that successive Gulf Residents were able to maintain political contacts, stay informed, and protect British interests as well as they did in the nineteenth century. Chapters 4–6 will examine this in detail.

Wealthy Gulf merchants enjoyed a high status within Gulf society and a resulting influence with local rulers and governors that was independent of their association with the British Government. By employing men of this calibre, the Resident was able to take advantage of their influence with these rulers and governors. Jill Crystal and Fatma al-Sayegh have studied this sphere of influence in Kuwait, Qatar, and Dubai, but the patterns they identify can be seen in Bahrain, the Trucial States, and 'Oman, and in the Arab-ruled ports and islands of Southern Persia—in Muhammarah, Bandar Dilam, Bandar Rig, Bushire, Kangun, Chiru, Bandar Charak, Kish (Qais) Island, Mughu, Bandar Lingah, Bandar Kong, Qishm Island,

¹⁰¹ See e.g. Field, *The Merchants: The Big Business Families of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States* (1984), 16–18, 126, 162, 218, 248, 280; Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (1990), 38.

Henjam Island, Bandar 'Abbas, Hormuz Island, Larak Island, and Gwadar (see Map 2).¹⁰² Crystal argues that merchant influence stemmed from the Gulf rulers' economic dependence on the merchants. A substantial portion of the rulers' revenues came from the merchants through the customs duties and other taxes that flowed from a prosperous entrepôt economy.¹⁰³ Gulf rulers also depended upon occasional loans from the wealthiest merchants. Beyond this, pearl merchants also had economic control over large portions of the local population through employment and indebtedness. All this gave the wealthiest merchants considerable political influence with the rulers, which meant that the rulers could not afford to ignore their opinions. A wealthy merchant's status ensured him regular, predictable access to his ruler's *majlis* (court) and gave him input to decision-making. The merchants' access to decision-making, Crystal notes, 'was primarily informal. Their influence on the policies of the ruler was casual and left no written record. The most common kind of informal influence was proximity: the influence of those with everyday access to the ruling family through marriage, friendship, and court presence.'¹⁰⁴ The political dynamics of a given issue could see a merchant united with his ruler against other merchants, or united with other merchants against his ruler. Politically, the power relationship between the rulers and the merchants was one of counterbalance; economically, it was one of interdependence.¹⁰⁵ The result, says Crystal, was a political structure consisting of 'a ruling Shaikh, whose pre-eminence was secure, but constrained by the merchant élite, tied to the economy of pearling and trade'.¹⁰⁶ By employing wealthy merchants as local agents, successive Gulf Residents were able to tap into the political relationship between the merchants and the rulers. The result was overlapping traditional and utilitarian relationships in a dynamic power triangle between Resident, agent, and ruler that formed the core of the infrastructure of informal empire in the Gulf.

The third main reason for the continued use of the native agency system was the political flexibility it gave the Resident. Native agents were informal appointments from Bushire rather than officially gazetted appointments from Calcutta, as noted above. They were rarely, if ever, invested with official power, that is to say, the authority to make undertakings binding on

¹⁰² Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 4, 9, 13, 21, 26, 56–7; al-Sayegh, 'Merchants' Role in a Changing Society: The Case of Dubai, 1900–90' (1998), 90–1.

¹⁰³ See Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 33–7.

¹⁰⁴ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 56.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 57.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 26.

the British Crown,¹⁰⁷ but they were usually allowed to use their discretion as to how they mediated, as long as they achieved the results desired by the Resident. This informality enabled the Gulf Resident to disavow the actions of a native agent if it was politically expedient to do so, giving the Resident a measure of flexibility in the conduct of political relations without appearing dishonest. In short, the Resident had deniability because he could use his native agents as convenient scapegoats.

10. DISADVANTAGES FOR THE BRITISH

There were four main disadvantages, however, to employing local merchants as native agents in the place of British political officers. The most obvious was the possibility of a conflict of interest between an agent's official duties and his private business pursuits. In 1773, Parliament passed the Regulating Act, which forbade the East India Company's administrative and political officers in India to engage in private trade—an indication of how the Company's involvement there had become more political and less commercial. In late August 1822, a few months before the Gulf Residency was established, the Company issued an order extending the Regulating Act to the Gulf. British policy generally was that trade and politics should not be mixed. Indeed, the Governor of Bombay removed one Gulf Resident, Captain Felix Jones (1855–62), when he discovered that the Resident had, among other things, engaged in private trade at Bushire.¹⁰⁸ However, native agents were permitted to trade because their high status and influence depended upon a personal wealth derived from trade. A ban on private trade would have undermined the very qualities that made these men useful to the Resident. Furthermore, there would have been little incentive for Gulf merchants to work as native agents if their association with the Company or the Government of India did not benefit their business interests. The British admitted that the salaries they paid native agents did not reflect the true value of their services. Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis Pelly (Resident 1862–72), for example, considered Rs. 80 per month 'a small salary' for the Bahrain Agent in 1871.¹⁰⁹ Certainly, Rs. 80 was a pittance compared to the Rs. 1,000 per month a British residency agent received for doing the same

¹⁰⁷ Satow, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, ch. 8, s. 8, p. 58.

¹⁰⁸ For details, see Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 566–75.

¹⁰⁹ Pelly to Bombay Govt, 28 Jan. 1871, P/759 (IOR), 290. Pelly wrote this at a time when he was considering re-establishing the Native Agency in Bahrain, abolished six years previously.

job.¹¹⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel Meade (Resident 1897–1900), writing about Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar (Agent 1893–1900), admitted that

He has the reputation of being a well-to-do merchant, and it would, I may say at once, be difficult to get a man of his position to carry on the duties he performs on the pay of the post, Rs. 100 per mensem, if he were not allowed to trade. Mohamed Rahim and his predecessors no doubt have only held it because it gave them prestige and assisted them in their private commercial undertakings.¹¹¹

Because the Gulf Residency was always run on a tight budget, the Resident could not afford to pay native residency agents the same salaries as British residency or political agents. By both permitting native agents to engage in trade and allowing their businesses to benefit from their association with the Residency, the Resident compensated them for their inadequate salaries. This was an acknowledged aspect of the native agency system throughout Asia. Whatever conflicts of interest there were in mixing trade with politics, most of the Residents and their superiors in India seem to have considered this a price that had to be paid for the services of these well-connected and influential men.

A second disadvantage of the native agency system was that the agents' intelligence reports were not consistently accurate. Their reports to the Resident were coloured by their personal interests from time to time. They occasionally reported rumours as facts and, in rare instances, even suppressed, distorted, or falsified information if it benefited them to do so. For example, Britain's first Native Agent in Bahrain, Sadah Anandadas (c.1816–19), made a number of false and contradictory reports in February 1819 that led the SNOGP on a wild goose chase and caused him to destroy an innocent dhow that Sadah had claimed was a pirate ship.¹¹² In his report to Bombay about the Agent, the SNOGP bitterly remarked,

I can only say it is much to be regretted that men [accustomed] to falsehood... [are] trusted with situations where they have so much in their power and may do so much mischief. Bahrein is an Island where an English Agent ought to reside, particularly after what has happened... [Many more] lives might have been lost and much [more] damage done in consequence of the false information of that individual...

¹¹⁰ Rs. 1,000 was the monthly salary of the First Assistant Resident during 1866–79. First assistant residents were sent to Bahrain as residency agents on at least five occasions: 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, and 1879. Note entitled 'Resident' by Prideaux (Asst. PRPG), 14 Aug. 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 19–20.

¹¹¹ 'Report on the arms trade at Bahrein' by Meade, 18 Nov. 1898, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR).

¹¹² For a full account of this incident, see Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 845–6; Davies, *The Blood-Red Arab Flag: An Investigation into Qasimi Piracy, 1797–1820* (1997), 85–7.

[W]e must admit ourselves to have been duped by a man without character, truth, or respectability.¹¹³

Experiences like this taught the British to be cautious. Residents had to be on guard against misleading information and did not always accept their agents' reports at face value. If a report were serious enough, a Resident might dispatch one of his British political assistants to investigate—assuming, of course, he could spare him. Take, for example, Meade's comments to his British Political Assistant about a report from the Bahrain Agent, Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, in 1899: 'The Agent's information is not of course as yet more than hearsay news, but when you go to Bahrein I think you will not have any difficulty in making the Bunniehs [Hindu merchants] admit if it is true ... If the Agent's report is true, the Sheikh has grossly broken his word to us.'¹¹⁴ Considering the number of native agents stationed throughout the Gulf Residency, the small number of British political officers on the Residency's staff, and the slowness of travel in the nineteenth century, the Resident's ability to confirm reports was fairly limited. Whether he liked it or not, he depended heavily on information from his native agents and he could not have operated the Residency effectively without it.

A third disadvantage of the native agency system was that the agents employed by the Gulf Resident were not professionally trained men bound by a British civil service code of conduct. But as long as the ends justified the means, the British authorities seem to have made allowances for this. On rare occasions, however, they felt compelled to dismiss a native agent for misconduct, as in the case of Narottam Ramachandar Joshi in Muscat and possibly that of Sadah Anandadas in Bahrain.

A fourth disadvantage was, ironically, the informality of the native agency system. While this was an advantage for much of the nineteenth century, it later became a liability when the British felt a need for a more formal presence in the Gulf. For example, the Ottoman Porte, which claimed Bahrain as an Ottoman dependency, refused to acknowledge Britain's Native Agent in Bahrain as an official political representative, as discussed above. Furthermore, because the native agents were not invested with official power, they sometimes lacked the necessary authority to carry out certain duties and had to refer matters to the Gulf Resident, which caused delays.

¹¹³ Loch (SNOPG) to Bombay, 28 Feb. 1819, P/384/43 (IOR), 2655–6.

¹¹⁴ Meade (PRPG) to Prideaux (Asst. PRPG), 17 Oct. 1899, R/15/1/315 (IOR).

11. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES FOR THE NATIVE AGENTS

The British were not the only ones to benefit from the native agency system. In fact, the native agents probably benefited more from it than the British. During times of instability in South Asia, many affluent Indian merchants chose to work for the East India Company as native agents partly because it afforded them protection. Protection was one of the greatest concerns of Gulf merchants before the twentieth century.¹¹⁵ Merchants trading in the Gulf had to be constantly on guard against pirates and bedouin raiders. If they fell out of favour with a local ruler, their property might be confiscated by members of the local ruling family. To gain protection for themselves, their businesses, and their families, members of merchant families frequently allied themselves with Western governments and companies. Membership on the staff of an American, Belgian, British, French, German, or Russian commercial agency or consulate in the Gulf usually carried with it the much sought-after status of 'protected person'. All non-Britons in the employ of the British Government or British companies, for instance, were known as 'British-protected persons' or 'British dependants' and were entitled to the protection and 'good offices' (diplomatic representation and mediation) of British civil and military officers around the world. If an injustice occurred against a British-protected person or his family in the Gulf, the Gulf Resident was obligated to intervene on his behalf. This practice discouraged harassment of British native agents and protected their private businesses as well. Their ships, goods, families, and employees were all protected, giving them the same advantages British merchants enjoyed. They had a right to the Resident's good offices if their goods were seized and were entitled to the protection of the Indian Navy and Royal Navy in times of trouble. While only British subjects were permitted to fly British flags on their ships to proclaim their protected status, the British seem to have extended this privilege to their native agents. The Government of India did not grant the same privilege to British-protected persons until 1892.

Western governments normally granted protected person status on the basis of extra-territoriality agreements with local governments.¹¹⁶ The Ottoman Porte granted this right to England in 1661, giving immunity from Ottoman courts to all non-English in English employ and, after

¹¹⁵ See Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 36–7, 48, 72.

¹¹⁶ For more about Western extra-territoriality, see the relevant articles by Kelly and Liebesney on the Gulf in part 9 of the Bibliography, the works by al-Baharna and Ballantyne on the Gulf in part 13, the relevant article by Fisher on India in part 16, and the works by Johnston and Spagnolo on the British and Ottoman empires in part 17.

1707, all non-Britons in British employ, including Britain's native agents in Ottoman Iraq—see Table 7 on page 63. The Persian Government granted this right to Britain in 1763, giving immunity from Persian courts to all non-Britons in British employ, including native agents—see Table 7.

The Resident also extended British-protected status to his native agents and their staffs in the Arab-ruled ports on both sides of the Gulf: Muscat, Bahrain, Qatif, Sharjah, Mughu, Lingah, Basidu, Gwadar, and Kuwait. Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar (Bahrain Agent 1893–1900), for example, admitted that his family 'originally took up the work to get British protection'.¹¹⁷ However, the protected status enjoyed by men like Muhammad Rahim in these Arab-ruled ports was established by usage and sufferance, not by grants or treaties. Their protected status was formalized by grants or treaties relatively late in the game, almost as an afterthought. Bahrain proves an interesting example of this informal conferment of status. The Ruler of Bahrain did not formally grant Britain extra-territorial rights over British subjects and dependants in his domain until 1861.¹¹⁸ Yet the British Agent's protected status had been a long-established fact by then. This was clearly demonstrated in 1834 when the Resident personally intervened to uphold the Agent's special position in Bahrain by compelling the senior co-Ruler to punish three men who had assaulted the Agent. Chapter 5 will discuss this incident in detail. The British clearly held the rulers responsible for the protection of the Agent, even though there was no treaty or grant specifically establishing that they had this obligation.¹¹⁹ The protected status of the Agent was based on more than British firepower, however. Gulf Arab rulers were honour-bound by the rules of their culture to protect all representatives in their domains—be they the agents of other Arab rulers, or the agents of the Ottoman Porte, the Persian Government, or Western governments. This protection was based upon the agent's special status as the Resident's protégé (*dakhil*), which the ruler was supposed to respect, and the rulers' duties as the agent's host (*mudhaif*), which obligated him to protect and provide for his guest (*dhaif*).¹²⁰ In this context, the Resident's intervention

¹¹⁷ Statement by Muhammad Rahim to Meade (PRPG), 11 Nov. 1898, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR).

¹¹⁸ Art. 4, Friendly Convention of 1861, in Aitchison, *Treaties*, xi. *Persian Gulf*, 235–6.

¹¹⁹ The Anglo-Bahraini Agreement of 1816 states that 'no person is to interrupt the Agent in his mercantile, or any other, concerns that he may have', but the Govt of India never ratified the agreement. This is why the agreement does not appear in any of the compilations of Anglo-Bahraini treaties. Agreement of 1816, enclosed in Bruce (PR in Bushire) to Bombay, 31 July 1816, P/SEC/BOM/41 (IOR), 1424–6. Also see Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 859; Kemball, 'Historical Sketch of the Uttoohee Tribe of Arabs (Bahrein), 1832–1844', 383.

¹²⁰ See Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 40, 57–8.

in 1834 would have been regarded locally as a justifiable response to the Ruler's failure to protect his guest and to respect the Resident's protection and honour.

While the merchants who became native agents already enjoyed wealth, status, and influence, association with the dominant power in the Gulf offered prospects for further improvement. As British-protected persons, they were entitled to the same treaty privileges that British merchants enjoyed in the Gulf. The Anglo-Persian Commercial Treaty of 1841 and Anglo-Bahraini Friendly Convention of 1861, for instance, both granted British subjects and dependants the right to pay lower customs tariffs. A native political agent's privileged status was symbolized by the Union Jack, which flew outside his Agency to proclaim that he was the local representative of the East India Company or British Government of India. There are no recorded instances of any controversy surrounding the Bahrain agents' use of the Union Jack, such as that experienced by Mahdi 'Ali Khan in Bushire in 1798. Which Bahrain agent first flew the Union Jack is unknown, although the practice seems to have been well-established by Hajji Ibrahim Rajab's time (Agent 1862–4). The Rajab family in Bahrain today still has the Union Jack that flew over Hajji Ibrahim's agency.¹²¹ The Union Jack stood for imperial power, and its presence would have reinforced the impression that the British agent was the most influential man in a ruler's domain outside of the ruler's family. The agent represented the most powerful man in the region, the Gulf Resident, and had regular, direct access to the most powerful men on the Arab and Persian coasts, the local rulers and governors. If the Resident was 'the Uncrowned King of the Persian Gulf', as Lord Curzon dubbed him,¹²² then his native agents were the Gulf's uncrowned princes. This would explain why native agents were willing to run the British agencies at what at first appears to be a financial loss to themselves. The agency-related expenses of Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84), for example, were over four and a half times what he received from the Government of India.¹²³ But this loss was a small price to pay for the protection he received and the enhanced status, influence, and contacts he enjoyed as a British agent. These benefits increased his business, enabling him to recoup the agency operating expenses as part of his larger business profits. This arrangement was an acknowledged feature of the native agency system throughout Asia.

¹²¹ Interviews with Khalil Rajab (great-great-great-nephew of Hajji Ibrahim Rajab), 1999 (Bahrain); Saif, *al-Ma'atam fi al-Bahrain* (1995), 130; 'Abd al-Nabi Safar, 'Account of Personal Expenses, 1872–5' (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

¹²² Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, ii, 451.

¹²³ 'Abd al-Nabi Safar, 'Account of Personal Expenses, 1872–5' (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

Chapters 5–6 will give examples of the financial benefits enjoyed by the Bahrain agents.

There were only two disadvantages to being a native agent. First was the risk of being scapegoated by an unsupportive Resident and removed from the post. In such a situation, a native agent stood to suffer both socially and financially. He would likely have to leave the town to which he had been posted. Second was the risk of personal attack by those who resented British power and authority. As both of these occurrences were rare, the advantages of being a native agent far outweighed any possible disadvantages.

12. CONCLUSION

This chapter and Appendix A have shown how, contrary to popular belief, British political representation and the protection of British interests in Asia relied heavily on native agents before the twentieth century. These indigenous collaborators were attracted to British service because of the benefits involved: British protection, a higher social status, increased power over others, and enhanced business prospects. The British recruited non-Europeans to serve as agents because of the lack of British officers, because of the agents' local knowledge, and because of the agents' willingness to work for nominal salaries. In unhealthy regions such as the Gulf, the British wished to appoint as few British officers as possible because of the high death toll among Europeans. The British recruited their first native agents from local *Bania* communities in both India and the Gulf. Later, in India, the British recruited them from local elite service families. In the Gulf, however, this was not possible, so the British recruited them from Muslim merchant communities in, or with connections to, Bushire. The Bushire merchants had extensive social and business contacts throughout the region, and an intimate knowledge of the region's languages, cultures, and politics. Many of them enjoyed political influence in Arabia and Persia because of their financial relationships with the local rulers and governors. By employing such men as news agents and political agents, the Gulf Residents were able to operate *within* the local political systems of the Gulf to obtain the intelligence and mediation necessary for the maintenance of British hegemony in the region. The disadvantages inherent in the native agency system—mainly the possibility of a conflict of interest between trade and politics and the occasional inaccurate intelligence report—were tolerated as long as these men remained influential with local rulers and governors, and protected British interests. The remaining chapters provide a representative illustration of the native agency system at work, taking the Native Agency in Bahrain as a case study.

4

The Operation of British India's Native Agency in Bahrain

The [Native] Agent's duties are to keep the Political Resident informed of current events in Bahrein, to convey communications between the Residency and the Sheikh, and generally to look after British interests in Bahrein. The Agent exercises no [official] powers.

Viceroy of India to Secretary of State for India, 1899¹

This chapter examines how the Native Agency in Bahrain managed Anglo–Arab political relations and protected British interests in Bahrain, Qatar, Hasa, Najd, and Kuwait for seventy-eight years in the nineteenth century.

1. THE AGENCY BUILDING

Most, if not all, of the native agency buildings in the Gulf Residency were the property of their agents. The possession of a large and impressive house—one suitably reflective of Britain's imperial status—was likely a prerequisite for the position of native agent. In Bahrain, the Union Jack adorned *Bait Safar* (Safar House) for thirty-four years while it served as the British Agency under four members of the Safar family between 1834 and 1900. *Bait Safar* also doubled as the British Indian Post Office in Bahrain from 1884 to 1902, servicing the whole of the Arab coast. The building was known locally as *Bait al-Mu'atamad* and *Bait al-Wakil* (the Agent's House), and to the British as the Agency, the British Agency, and the Native Agent's House. It was only one of possibly nine such buildings that served the same purpose under thirteen native agents between c.1816 and 1900, as Table 13 shows.

Bait Safar commanded a prominent position on the Manamah waterfront, a short distance from the main *sug* (market). The building was

¹ Curzon to Hamilton, 9 Mar. 1899, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR).

Table 13. British native agency buildings in Bahrain

Agency	Dates
1. <i>Bait</i> Sadah	c.1816–1819
2. unknown	c.1819–1827
3. <i>Bait</i> Asu	c.1827–1829
4. <i>Bait</i> Paman	1829
5. <i>Bait</i> Chandu	1829–1834
6. <i>Bait</i> Safar	1834–1842, 1872–1884 1884–1891, 1893–1900, 1900–1902 ^a
7. <i>Bait</i> Hajji Jasim	1842–1862
8. <i>Bait</i> Rajab	1862–1864
9. unknown	1891–1893

^a *Bait* Safar was also the office of the first British Political Agent in Bahrain, Calcott Gaskin (1900–04), until a purpose-built Political Agency was completed in Dec. 1902.

reputedly large enough to have accommodated a thousand safety-seekers during Shaikh ‘Abd Allah Al Khalifah’s violent recapture of Manamah in the Bahraini civil war of 1842–3.² As with any building of note in the Gulf at the time, it was most likely constructed in what William Palgrave called ‘the Persian style of architecture’, which he described as ‘elegant and spacious, with ogival arches, balconies, terraces, porticoes, and latticed windows’. These buildings were typically two storeys high, with a large inner courtyard onto which opened many slim double doors surmounted by semicircular stained-glass windows—like *Bait* Safar in Bushire (see Photo 2).³ They stood in sharp contrast to the palm-frond (*barasti*) huts, which accounted for the majority of dwellings in Eastern Arabia before oil.⁴ The other native agencies seem to have been located on the Manamah waterfront as well and may have been constructed in the same style as *Bait* Safar.

Gulf Residents visited the Rulers of Bahrain and Trucial ‘Oman only once a year. Early residents often conducted their visits entirely on board ship,

² Map of Manamah enclosed in Zwemer to Cobb, 28 Nov. 1899, Arabian Mission MSS, Reformed Church of America Archive, New Brunswick, NJ, USA (copy in the Bushiri Archive, Bahrain); Lt Kemball, ‘Historical Sketch of the Uttooabee Tribe of Arabs (Bahrein), 1832–1844’, 393.

³ Palgrave, *Narrative of a Year’s Journey, 1862–63*, ii. 209. For other examples, see Wheatcroft, *Bahrain in Original Photographs, 1880–1961* (1988), 20, 28, 42, 47, 65, 67–8, 76, 81, 93, 130.

⁴ Palgrave, *Narrative of a Year’s Journey, 1862–63*, ii. 209. For examples, see Wheatcroft, *Bahrain in Original Photographs*, 63, 83–4.

partly for safety reasons. Although some Residents occasionally reciprocated the Ruler of Bahrain's visit on board ship with a shore visit, this did not become an established custom until 1842. Significantly, these shore visits took place not at the Ruler's house in Muharraq, but at the Native Agency in Manamah, adding considerable prestige to the building and the Agent.⁵ Because the Agent's house was not only his private residence and business office, but also the Agency, it possessed a special status in Bahrain. The personal protection the Agent enjoyed through his position as Agent naturally extended to the Agency building.⁶ The inviolability of a diplomat's residence and office had become a universally accepted international convention by the eighteenth century.⁷ This inviolability did not automatically apply to the residence and office of a native agent or honorary consul, however, although most host states accorded *de facto* inviolability as a courtesy to Britain.⁸ To a certain extent, the idea of inviolability was reinforced by a commonly held view in Arabia that it is disgraceful for a man to attack another man's house, as he might inadvertently cause harm to the women inside.⁹ Inviolability had two meanings: the premises could not be entered by anyone (including the local authorities) without the consent of the agent, and the local government was responsible for the protection of the agent's premises.¹⁰ An attack on, or violation of, an agent's premises was a serious offence, second only to an attack on the agent himself. Gulf Residents seem to have taken the *de facto* inviolability of the British Agency in Bahrain for granted in the nineteenth century. Chapter 5 will examine two breaches of the Agency's inviolability in 1842 and 1897 and the Residents' quick responses to them.

2. THE AGENCY'S FINANCES AND ORGANIZATION

The records of Britain's native agencies in India and the Gulf are scarce, in contrast to the abundance of records from political agencies staffed by British officers. The reason is that native agents, unlike their British counterparts, operated their agencies as private businesses. The agencies were wholly owned by the native agents; how they staffed and operated their agencies was left entirely to them. Native agents were given only

⁵ Kemball (Asst. PRPG) to Robertson (offg PRPG), 4 Nov. 1842, consltn 5 of 21 Jan. 1843, P/390/32 (IOR); Meade (PRPG) to Cunningham (Sec. of Indian For. Dept), 23 Feb. 1898, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR).

⁶ Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India* (1910), 366–7.

⁷ Satow, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, ch. 14, s. 9, p. 109.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 27, s. 23, p. 224. ⁹ See e.g. Dresch, *Tribes*, 57.

¹⁰ Satow, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, ch. 14, ss. 14–15, pp. 110–11.

a nominal salary and no operation allowance. This is why the British did not require them to keep financial accounts or submit administration reports like those required of British political agents.¹¹ Unlike these political agencies, the native agencies were never audited by the East India Company or Government of India. A native agent's records, if he kept any at all, remained his private property. This is still the case for honorary consulates in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office today.¹²

The only intact record of the finances and organization of the Bahrain Native Agency comes from the ledger of Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Safar (Agent 1872–84). It provides an extremely detailed picture of how the Agency was run. The most extraordinary aspect of the Agency accounts is the gap between the Agent's salary and the Agency expenses. Between June 1872 and June 1875, 'Abd al-Nabi received Rs. 1,153 (Ks. 2,597) in salary, averaging Rs. 384 per year.¹³ Yet his agency-related expenses were over four and a half times that: Rs. 5,297 (Ks. 11,930), averaging Rs. 1,766 per year. When the Assistant Resident, Major Charles Grant, stayed in Bahrain as British Residency Agent during 1873–4, 'Abd al-Nabi made all the arrangements and payments for his transportation and accommodation without reimbursement.

'Abd al-Nabi employed thirteen full-time staff: one deputy (*na'ib*), five *munshis*, an accountant (*shroff*), a guard (*natur*), two cooks, two coffee-pourers, and an errand boy. The family names—all still known in Bahrain today—reveal many of his staff to have been Persian, including his errand boy, 'Ali Kazim Bushiri from Bushire (great-grandfather of 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, the present-day caretaker of the Safar family manuscripts).¹⁴ Other staff members were *Hawalab* (Persianized Arabs—see Glossary) such as Agha Ahmad bin Salim Kanguni from Kangun sixty-nine miles south-east of Bushire. After Agha Ahmad's retirement from the Agency, two of his nephews, 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Ali Taqi Kanguni and Hajji Muhammad Kanguni, also worked at the Agency for the Safar family. A fourth member of the family, Muhammad bin Ahmad Kanguni, later served as a Residency *munshi* in Bushire in the early twentieth century. See Appendix C2 for

¹¹ British political agency records can be found in the IOR in the R series. Political agency records for the Gulf from 1947–71 can be found in the National Archives (formerly the Public Records Office), London.

¹² HM Govt, Auditor General, *The FCO*, 1, 4.

¹³ 'Abd al-Nabi Safar, 'Account of Personal Expenses, 1872–5' (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain). 'Abd al-Nabi's ledger records the amounts in kran (Persian currency). The exchange rate at the time was roughly 1 kran = 0.444 rupee, 1 rupee = 2.252 kran. Issawi (ed.), *Economic History of Iran, 1800–1914* (1971), 344.

¹⁴ 'Abd al-Nabi Safar, 'Account of Personal Expenses, 1872–5' (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

details. This pattern of employing members of the same families seems to have occurred in many, if not all, native agencies in Asia.

3. THE AGENT'S INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING DUTIES, c.1816–1900

The Gulf Residency native agents were originally intended as an inexpensive means of 'securing authentic intelligence of the proceedings of the several Chiefs on the [Arab] coast and a ready communication with them'.¹⁵ The Bahrain Agent was given responsibility for the Northern and Central Gulf from Kuwait to Qatar. His counterpart at Sharjah was responsible for the Trucial Coast. The Muscat Agent was responsible for the Batinah Coast, while the Agent at Mughu (later moved to Lingah) was responsible for the Persian Coast around the Strait of Hormuz. See Map 2.

The 'authentic intelligence' the Native Agent gathered and dispatched to the Resident over the course of the century was by no means limited to 'the proceedings of the several Chiefs', however. From the very beginning it encompassed an array of subjects, but the reports can be placed into two broad categories. The first, which accounts for the vast majority of information provided by the Agent, is the regular intelligence report on issues and events affecting British interests. In Bahrain, these interests were:

1. the maintenance of friendly Anglo–Bahraini relations;
2. the protection of British shipping;
3. the protection and promotion of British trade;
4. the enforcement of the Anglo–Bahraini treaties;¹⁶
5. the protection of British subjects and dependants—namely members of the *Bania* (Hindu merchant) community from British India and the local British India Steam Navigation Company Agent (appointed c.1873)—along with their property and interests;
6. the just settlement of legal disputes involving British subjects and dependants (from 1861 onward); and
7. the protection of the British Indian Post Office (from 1875 onward).

A number of C. A. Bayly's conclusions on intelligence-gathering in India apply equally to the Gulf. Most significantly, Bayly asserts that the 'gap in

¹⁵ Govr of Bombay to PRPG, 12 Nov. 1822, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853*, 150.

¹⁶ See Appendix E for the terms of these treaties.

resources and military technique between Indians and the British has been exaggerated'. In fact, Britain owed its hegemony in India as much to good political and military intelligence as to its military superiority. Armed with accurate information, the British were able to use their limited military and political resources far more effectively. An understanding of intelligence-gathering is essential, therefore, to the study of British involvement in India. Bayly shows how the East India Company was overwhelmingly dependent upon what he calls as 'indigenous networks of information' and 'indigenous systems of surveillance and intelligence'. These networks and systems were composed of thousands of Indian informants employed to secure military, political, economic, and social information—from *akhbar nawis* and *munshis*, to *dak daurias* (postal runners) and *jasuses* (spies). Their role in India was critical to the success of the Company. Bayly also explains how the British compiled this information into an ever-increasing body of local knowledge, which formed the basis of British policy in India.¹⁷ Lord Strang, a former Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, explains the importance of information in policy formation. 'Clearly there can be no sound foreign policy without accurate information on which to base it; and it is consequently one of the principal duties of the Foreign Service to supply such information.' But if the facts supplied are to be useful, he adds, 'they must be concisely summarized and commented on. It is not enough that the makers of policy should be told of current happenings abroad: an estimate of the underlying reasons for these happenings is also required.'¹⁸

In the same way, the information sent by his native agents enabled the Gulf Resident to identify problems and opportunities affecting British interests and to stay in constant touch with the current state of affairs in the Gulf. The Native Agent in Bahrain sent the Residents routine intelligence reports on the affairs of Bahrain, Qatar, Hasa, Najd, and Kuwait throughout the Native Agency's seventy-eight-year history. The frequency of these reports naturally varied over time. In times of crisis, such as the Bahraini civil war of 1869, the Bahrain Agent might dispatch reports on a daily basis; at other times, weeks could pass between reports. Sometimes the reports were mere hearsay, beginning with, 'I have heard that ...'. At other times a more diligent agent would draw upon his social and business connections, or dispatch a member of his personal staff to investigate the details of some recent event within his district of responsibility. It was in this sense that the Agent functioned as what Bayly calls an 'information broker',

¹⁷ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, pp. i, 1, 4–5, 10, 54, 269, 365; Bayly, 'Knowing the Country', 42.

¹⁸ Strang, *The Foreign Office* (1955), 18.

connecting 'the information systems of the state' with the 'autonomous networks of social communications' of Gulf society.¹⁹ The standard practice at the Gulf Residency headquarters in Bushire was to keep translations of all reports from its native agents in a dispatch copy book entitled 'letters inward', 'native letters inward', or 'translation book'.²⁰ Here is an interesting example written by Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar (Bahrain Agent 1834–42), reporting the 1839 Egyptian conquest of Najd and Hasa:

I have received and understood your two Letters. Certain intelligence has been received from Nejd that, about the end of the month of *Ramazan*, Ameer Fysul [Al Sa'ud, the exiled Ruler of Najd and Hasa], being very hardly pressed, gave himself up to Ameer Khaled [Al Sa'ud, whom the Egyptians installed as his successor] and Khorshid Pasha [the Commander of the Egyptian army], Fysul's army having previously been ruined. It appears that they have sent Ameer Fysul to Mehemed Ali Pasha [the Ruler of Egypt], and that both Lahsa [Hasa] and Katif have surrendered. Oomeer bin Ufeezan, who held Lahsa, fled to Zooknoonea near Oodjeed, and wrote Sheikh Abdoolah ben Ahmed [Al Khalifah, the Ruler of Bahrain] requesting permission to come to Bahrein and that boats might be sent for him. Consequently, Sheikh Abdoollah sent a *Buzzara* [dhow] to bring him over, together with an answer to his letter. Up to this time he has not arrived at Bahrein, but his Cousin, Faïd ben Ufeezan, together with two of his brothers, arrived eight days ago, having come by the way of Oadjeed. The whole of the Lahsa and Katif people have submitted to Ameer Khaled and have gone to wait on him at Dillum [fifty miles south of Riyadh]. A person called Ali Ben Muslut has been sent by Ameer Khaled and Khorshid Pasha to Bahrein bringing letters for Sheikh Abdoollah Ben Ahmed and Mohomed Ben Khuleefa [Al Khalifah], informing them that Ameer Fyzul had been captured and sent to Mehmet Ali Pasha, and also that it appearing from the records of his Father, Ameer Toorkee [Al Sa'ud, Ruler of Najd and Hasa, 1823–34], that he had received an Annual Tribute from Bahrein, [that] this must in future be paid; and that they were marching on Lahsa at which place they expected to be met by one of the sons of Sheikh Abdoollah. It is not known what answer will be returned to these letters.

Since the arrival of Sheikh Abdoollah ben Ahmed, the people of Bahrein have become a little more at their ease, for before his coming, the servants of Sheikh Mohomed [bin Khalifah Al Khalifah] were levying exactions of money, etc. Up to this time no vessels have been launched for the purpose of meeting Ben Tureef.

On the [day of] 25th *Shawal*, a *Buzzara* [dhow] coming [to Bahrain] from Amulgaween [Umm al-Qaiwain] touched at Aboothabee [Abu Dhabi] and when Sheikh Abdoollah learnt that they had been there, he ordered the *Nakhoda*

¹⁹ Bayly, 'Knowing the Country', 42; Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 62, 366.

²⁰ These records can be found in the IOR in the R/15/1 series (Gulf Residency records from Bushire). See e.g. R/15/1/38, R/15/1/44, R/15/1/48, R/15/1/53, R/15/1/55, R/15/1/57, R/15/1/59, R/15/1/61, R/15/1/66, R/15/1/68, R/15/1/78, R/15/1/79, R/15/1/83, R/15/1/85, and R/15/1/91.

[skipper] to be imprisoned, but afterwards liberated him and caused it to be published that whoever came from Aboothabee would not be allowed to enter his Port.²¹

The original reports, written in either Arabic or Farsi, were kept in a separate file.²² Copies of the Resident's replies and instructions to the native agents were kept in another copy book entitled 'native letters outward'.²³ Here is a typical example from 1827, which the Resident sent to Mullah Husain (Sharjah Agent 1827–49):

Your letters of the 15th and 19th July, 14th and 28th August, 8, 11, and 16 September have all reached me, and I am pleased with your diligence in transmitting such full reports. ...

The letter of the 19th July mentions Zet and Ufleea. I wish you to send me the best description of these two places you can learn, and whenever you mention the name of any place for the first time always send the best information you can get respecting its size, population, fortifications, etc.

I shall be glad to know the nature of the communications made by the messenger of Toorkey bin Saeed [Al Sa'ud, the Ruler of Najd and Hasa]—is Hoossen bin Ali, the former Chief of Zyah, now considered a man of consequences and is the Wahabee faith still prevalent on the coast or in the interior of Arabia?²⁴

This filing system was improved in 1850 by placing the native agents' reports into 'copy books' organized by agency (Bahrain, Arabian Coast, Muscat, Persian Coast) or by subject (slave trade, piracy, commerce, Gulf Squadron, etc.). Upon receipt of an agent's report, a Residency *munshi* or the Assistant Resident in Bushire translated it and placed both original and translation into the book, copying the Resident's reply onto the next page. These copy books were often used for internal memoranda between the Resident and his assistants as well, recording their thoughts on the latest report from an agent. This was the extent to which the Residency staff kept records of its native agencies.²⁵ The native agents in Bahrain appear to have followed the same practice. Only a few dozen reports and letters from their copy books survive in Bahrain today.

In 1817, Francis Warden, a Council Member in the Government of Bombay, compiled Britain's first intelligence summary of events in Bahrain,

²¹ Muhammad 'Ali Safar to Hennell (PRPG), 8 Jan. 1839, R/15/1/83 (IOR), 111–13.

²² Very few of these files have survived. See R/15/1/180, R/15/1/181, and R/15/1/182.

²³ See e.g. R/15/1/38, R/15/1/50, and R/15/1/74.

²⁴ Wilson to Mullah Husain, 4 Oct. 1827, R/15/1/38 (IOR), 185.

²⁵ These records are in the IOR in the R/15/1 series (Gulf Residency records from Bushire). For a handlist of these records, see Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 12–15, 180. Native agent reports sent to India can be found in the IOR in P/383–P/478 (Proceedings of the Govt of Bombay, 1797–1871) and P/751–P/11086 (Proceedings of the Govt of India, 1872–1921).

entitled 'Historical Sketch of the Uttoobee Tribe of Arabs (Bahrein), 1716 to 1817'. A close reading of the text offers an interesting insight. The events of 1716–1815 (ninety-nine years) contain few specific details and occupy just seven pages. The events of 1816–17 (two years), on the other hand, are recounted in great detail and occupy three and a half pages—one-third of Warden's intelligence summary. This change is also noticeable in John Lorimer's *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*. Lorimer devotes just eight pages to events in Bahrain during 1602–1815 (213 years), while 1816 on its own receives two pages. Where did Warden and Lorimer get their detailed information from? The most likely explanation is that they had the benefit of intelligence reports written by a native agent in Bahrain. This would further support the probability, suggested in the last chapter, that the Bushire Resident appointed a local agent shortly after his visit to Bahrain in July 1816.²⁶

Between 1831 and 1853, the Assistant Resident periodically reviewed the native agents' reports to write yearly summaries of events, often labelled 'historical sketches' or 'chronological tables of events', which the Government of Bombay published at the time.²⁷ Later, the Assistant Resident used the agents' reports to compile yearly intelligence summaries for the annual *Administration Report of the Persian Gulf Political Residency*, published from 1873 onward.²⁸ These administration reports were kept at the relevant headquarters in Bushire, Bombay, Calcutta, and London for British political staff to consult.

The second category of 'authentic intelligence' provided by the Bahrain Agent to the Resident is the special investigative report. On occasion, to probe some issue of concern to the British, either the Resident would instruct one of his native agents to investigate, or he would send one of his *munshis* as confidential agent. The most common type of investigation involved cases of piracy and contraband trade. The resulting investigative reports were placed in special subject files, many of which are preserved in the India Office Records in the British Library.²⁹ Another type of special investigation involved intelligence-gathering for special memoranda. The local agents and mobile confidential agents provided much of the

²⁶ See Warden, 'Historical Sketch of the Uttoobee Tribe of Arabs (Bahrein), 1716 to 1817', 361–72; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 843–5. Warden confuses his dates: the events he ascribes to 1814–15 actually occurred in 1816.

²⁷ These were later reprinted in 1856 in Thomas (ed.), *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, 24.

²⁸ These can be found in the IOR in the V/23 series (official publications) and have also been republished by Archive Editions as *The Persian Gulf Admin. Reports, 1873–1947*, 10 vols. (1986).

²⁹ They can be found in the R/15/1 series (Gulf Residency records from Bushire).

information on ruling families, tribes, towns, and events for the numerous memoranda compiled by British officers in the Gulf. Consider a few interesting examples:³⁰

- 'Extracts from Brief Notes Containing Historical and Other Information Connected with the Province of Oman; Muskat; the Islands of Bahrein, Ormus, Kishm and Karrack' (1818) by Captain Robert Taylor, in *Selections*, 1–40.
- 'Memoir Descriptive of the Navigation of the Gulf of Persia with Brief Notices of the Manners, Customs, Religion, Commerce, and Resources of the People Inhabiting Its Shores and Islands', parts 1 (1829) and 2 (1835) by Captain George Brucks, in *Selections*, 531–69, 587–634.
- 'Memoranda on the Resources, Localities, and Relations of the Tribes Inhabiting the Arabian Shores of the Persian Gulf' (1845) by Lieutenant Arnold Kemball, in *Selections*, 91–119.
- 'Statistical and Miscellaneous Information Connected with the Possessions, Revenues, Families, Etc. of His Highness the Imaum of Muscat; of the Ruler of Bahrein; and of the Chiefs of the Maritime Arab States in the Persian Gulf' (1854) by Captain Arnold Kemball, in *Selections*, 285–97.
- 'Notes on the Pearl Fisheries of the Persian Gulf' by Captain Edward Durand, in *Report for 1877–8*, 27–41.
- 'Description of the Bahrein Islands' by Captain Edward Durand, in *Report for 1878–9*, 15–18.
- 'List of Vessels Engaged in Trade at Bahrein', in *Report for 1878–9*, 41–2.
- 'List of Guttur El-Katr Ports and the Names of Chiefs and Main Tribes', in *Report for 1879–80*, 8.
- 'Notes on Sea-Fishing in the Persian Gulf' by Lieutenant I. MacIvor, *Report for 1880–1*, 54–77.
- 'Notes on the "Ibn Rasheed" Family of Jebel Shammer and Present Position of Mohammed "Ibn Rasheed"', in *Report for 1888–9*, 15–17.
- 'Pedigrees of Chiefs of the Arabs of Persian Arabistan', in *Report for 1889–90*, 13–14.

Yet another type of special investigation was the routine collection of commercial intelligence on the Gulf's major ports. The oldest surviving

³⁰ These reports were reprinted in Thomas (ed.), *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, xxiv (1856) and the annual *Admin. Report of the Persian Gulf Political Residency* (1873–1947).

report compiled by the Native Agent in Bahrain dates from 1824. It provides a detailed account of Bahrain's exports and imports. As a merchant, the Agent was well-placed to collect this information and was even able to solicit the help of the junior co-Ruler's *Wazir* (Prime Minister). The Agents' report was subsequently included in the East India Company's first travel guide on the Gulf, published in 1829.³¹ The Agent's routine compilation of trade reports did not begin until 1834 however. That year, the Governor of Bombay wished to ascertain the state of trade in the newly pacified Gulf. Was the General Treaty of 1820 benefiting British trade in the region? The Governor issued instructions to the Resident, then David Blane, to collect as much statistical information as he could. Blane replied that 'The value of statistical information is as yet little understood by those in possession of the Ports of this Gulf and the Customs-house Officers find it in their interest neither to keep nor to communicate any very accurate details.'³² In the absence of reliable customs records, Blane instructed his native agents in Bahrain, Sharjah, Lingah, and Muscat to supply him with commercial intelligence on the ports within their respective districts. Upon receipt of this intelligence, Blane and his Assistant were able to compile the first detailed trade reports on the major ports of the Gulf in 1834. Thereafter, this became an annual exercise and the collection of commercial intelligence remained a feature of the native agents' duties in the Gulf. These trade reports were later included in the annual *Administration Report on the Persian Gulf Political Residency* (during 1873–1904). Although the Assistant Resident did the final compilation of the reports in Bushire, the native agents received due credit as co-authors of the reports—sometimes by name, sometimes by title. These reports indicated the growing economic dependence of Gulf ports on British India and British Indian shipping services through the nineteenth century. Made available to the public in both India and Britain, they were intended to encourage further British economic involvement in the region as a way of increasing British influence there.

The frequency and speed of communications between Bushire and Bahrain varied considerably over the course of the nineteenth century. Before the visit of the first steamship to Bahrain in 1869, the Resident and his Agent sent their correspondence aboard dhows and the occasional Indian Navy ship that happened to be sailing between Bushire and Bahrain.³³ As

³¹ Brucks, 'Memoir Descriptive of the Navigation of the Gulf of Persia with Brief Notices of the Manners, Customs, Religion, Commerce, and Resources of the People Inhabiting Its Shores and Islands', part 1 (1829), 568–9.

³² Blane (PRPG) to Govr of Bombay, 17 June 1834, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis on Commerce and Communication in the Persian Gulf, 1801–1905*, 21.

³³ The first BI steamship visited Bahrain in the summer of 1869, but the service was suspended during the Bahraini civil war of Sept.–Dec. 1869. Shaikh 'Ali Al Khalifah to

both ports were major trading centres in the Gulf in the nineteenth century, dhows sailed fairly regularly between them. With a favourable wind (most common during the shipping season of October–April), the journey of 120 miles averaged two days for a dhow and one day for a sail-rigged sloop-of-war. Without a favourable wind, the journey could take over twice that long.³⁴ After the British India Steam Navigation Company (BI Line) began its regular fortnightly service to Bahrain in 1874, the Resident and Agent also sent their correspondence in care of the BI Post Master aboard ship. Even after the local BI Agent was appointed as Indian Sub-Post Master in Bahrain in 1875, the Native Agent does not seem to have relinquished control over the delivery of Residency correspondence between ship and shore.³⁵ Hajji ‘Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar (Agent 1872–84), for example, would typically send one of his personal staff to report to the ship’s Post Master and collect any dispatches from the Resident. The staff member would then hand over the Agent’s intelligence reports and letters from the Ruler (if any) to the Post Master for delivery to the Resident upon the ship’s return to Bushire. If the Resident’s dispatches contained a letter for the Ruler, ‘Abd al-Nabi would personally deliver it to the Ruler at his residence in Muharraq.³⁶

The Resident communicated with the other coastal agencies in the same way, but not with the Agency in Shiraz and the British Legation in Tehran. In these cases, he adopted the Indian practice of employing long-distance messengers or couriers, known as *qasids*, who travelled by foot. The Resident hired *qasids* when needed, paying them a portion of their fee before delivery. The recipient would pay the balance upon delivery. If a *qasid* delivered his consignment before or after the agreed date of delivery, the recipient added to, or subtracted from, the balance owing according to a set daily rate.³⁷ From 1864, the British Minister in Tehran made use of mounted messengers or couriers, known as *ghulams* (servants), whom he hired from the Persian Government’s messenger service, to deliver mail between himself and the British agents in Isfahan and Shiraz. The Resident continued to employ *qasids* on the Bushire–Shiraz route, however, because

Gray Paul & Co., May 1869; Pelly (PRPG) to Sec. of Bombay Govt, 19 June 1869, L/P&S/9/15 (IOR), 323–31, 335; Comdr A. Rowand, ‘Sailing Craft of the Persian Gulf’ (1915).

³⁴ For details, see Agius, *Seafaring in the Arabian Gulf and Oman*, ch. 11.

³⁵ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, appendix K, 2441, 2446–7, 2449.

³⁶ ‘Abd al-Nabi Safar, ‘Account of Personal Expenses, 1872–5’ (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

³⁷ See ‘Instructions to the two Cossids stationed at Assaloo’, 18 Oct. 1828, R/15/1/38 (IOR), 172; Blane (PRPG) to Campbell (British Minister, Tehran), 14 June 1834, R/15/1/64 (IOR), 110–12; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, appendix K, 2454–5. Also see Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 262–3.

of the difficulty of the route, its relatively short distance, and the desire for economy. After 1877, the British used the newly created Persian postal service for all inland mail, but they continued to operate their own postal service along the coast.³⁸

Britain's reliance upon indigenous postal arrangements in Persia and Arabia has interesting parallels with India.³⁹ At first, in the seventeenth century, Company officials employed *qasids* in the same way as the Gulf Resident. Later, they kept regular salaried *qasids* on the staffs of their offices. By the eighteenth century, the Company adopted the Indian rulers' practice of farming out the position of post master general (*dak daroga*) to local merchants and landowners, whose job it was to maintain networks of postal stations (*dak chaukis*) and relays of postal runners (*dak daurias* or *harkaras*) for them. Sometimes the Company employed the same *dak darogas* as the Indian rulers. The *dak daurias* performed an important secondary duty of collecting news along their travels, providing the Indian rulers and Company officials with valuable intelligence. As with the native agents, the *dak darogas* were eager to work for the Company because of the advantages it gave them: protection, monopolies over certain routes, and the prestige of association with the Company. In areas where the Company assumed control of a state's administration, such as Bengal, British officials simply used the existing state *dak* (as this indigenous postal system was known). Because the *daks* were not under the direct control of the Company, the Company's mail was always vulnerable to interference and interception by rivals. This eventually motivated the Company in the late eighteenth century to create its own general post offices (GPOs) for each of its three presidencies. These were based on European models, with the position of post master general held by British officers instead of Indians. As with the *daks*, the new British-controlled postal system combined courier with intelligence services, resulting in an integrated mail and intelligence system. In 1837, these GPOs were unified into a single Indian Post Office under the supervision of a director-general in Calcutta.

Outside British India, the Company's political residents and agents fared as best they could: sometimes employing *qasids*, sometimes using the local state *dak*, sometimes establishing their own *dak*, sometimes using the Indian Post Office if its mail routes ran through their districts. In 1837, the British launched a sustained effort to integrate the separate state *daks* with the

³⁸ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, appendix K, 2454–6; Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, i. 30–1, 247.

³⁹ The following section on the postal systems of India is based on Bayly, 'Knowing the Country', 14, 21, 25, 32; Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 31–3, 58–69, 104, 129; Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 132–3; Fisher, 'The East India Company's Suppression of the Native Dak' (1994), 313–20, 328–30, 342, 344–5. Also see the works by Clarke, Mohini Majumdar, and Sen listed in part 16 of the Bibliography.

Indian Post Office. By the turn of the century, most of the *daks* (including those in the Gulf) had been fully merged with the Indian Post Office, or at least made compatible with it. When the railway was introduced in India, the Indian Post Office was quick to incorporate it into its postal network. The Company's postal arrangements by sea, however, did not have indigenous origins. From the very beginning, the Company employed its own ships to carry mail between its officers stationed along the coast of India. The Bombay Marine (later the Indian Navy) carried government mail for 250 years until 1863, when its mail duties were farmed out to the BI Line.

In the Gulf, there was a similar shift from a reliance on indigenous postal arrangements to a postal system controlled from British India.⁴⁰ This began in the 1860s, as Table 14 shows. The Indian postal system in the Gulf formed part of the Bombay Postal Circle, overseen by the Post Master General of Bombay, the head of the Bombay GPO. Sea mail between Gulf ports and between the Gulf and India was transported aboard dhows and Bombay Marine (later Indian Navy) ships until 1863 and aboard BI steamers thereafter. Local supervision was the responsibility of the Superintendent of the Gulf Postal Division who resided at Bushire (1883–92) and later Bombay (1892–1947).⁴¹ However, most Indian post offices in the Gulf were not staffed by Bombay GPO employees. In Bahrain, the GPO paid the local BI Agent, 'Abd Allah Rajab (c.1873–89), a small allowance to serve as its Sub-Post Master there during 1875–84. The BI Agent performed his postal duties poorly, however, which prompted the GPO to appoint the local British Agent, Hajji Ahmad Safar (1884–91), as a replacement. For the rest of the century, *Bait* Safar served as both the British Agency and the Sub-Post Office for Bahrain and the entire Arab coast, from Kuwait to Trucial 'Oman. After Ahmad's death in 1891, the GPO appointed a replacement from Bombay, but the Sub-Post Office remained in *Bait* Safar, for which the GPO paid the Safar family 7 rupees per month in rent.⁴²

As in Bahrain, the Indian post offices in Bushire, Muscat, Muhammarah, Ahvaz, Lingah, and Kuwait were all housed inside Gulf Residency buildings; while the post offices at Shiraz, Jask, Gwadar, and Chahabar were housed

⁴⁰ The following is based on Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, appendix K: 'Mail Communications and the Indian Post Office in the Persian Gulf', 2439–74; Donaldson, *The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf* (1975); Nuris, 'The Development of the Postal Service in Bahrain' (1993), 450–7; Parsons, *The Indian Postal Agencies in the Persian Gulf* (2001).

⁴¹ The Superintendent resided in Bushire during all but the hottest months (June–Aug.). Lorimer incorrectly gives 1879–92 as the years of his residency at Bushire.

⁴² Under-Sec. of Indian For. Dept to Kemball, 31 July 1901, R/15/2/52 (IOR), 26; map of Manamah, enclosed in Zwemer to Cobb, 28 Nov. 1899, Arabian Mission MSS, Reformed Church of America Archive, New Brunswick, NJ (copy in the Bushiri Archive, Bahrain); Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, appendix K, 2449.

Table 14. Persian Gulf Division of the Bombay Postal Circle (Bombay GPO), 1863–1869, 1879–1947; and the Sindh Postal Circle (Karachi GPO) 1869–1879, 1947–1948

Town	Officer	Location	Dates
Posts held by Gulf and Baghdad Residency staff (Indian Political Service)			
1. Gwadar	Sub-Post Master	rented building	1863–1873, 1874–1884
2. Bushire	Post Master	Political Residency	1864–1869
3. Muscat	Post Master	rented building	1864–1869
		Political Agency	1873–1880
4. Karbala	Postal Clerk (unoff'l)	Political Agency	1866–1887
5. Lingah	Sub-Post Master	rented building	1867–1871
		Political Agency	1871–1910
		Vice-Consulate	1910–1922
6. Baghdad	Sub-Post Master	Political Residency	1868–1879
7. Basrah	Sub-Post Master	Political Agency	1868–1870
8. Bahrain	Sub-Post Master	Political Agency	1884–1891
9. Kuwait	Postal Clerk (unoff'l)	Political Agency	1904–1915
Posts held by Bombay GPO and Karachi GPO staff (Indian Postal Agency)			
1. Bandar 'Abbas	Sub-Post Master	rented building	1867–1923
2. Bushire	Post Master	Political Residency	1869–1923
3. Muscat	Post Master	Political Agency	1869–1873, 1880–1886
	Sub-Post Master	Political Agency	1886–1948
4. Basrah	Sub-Post Master	Consulate	1870–1914, 1915–1919
5. Baghdad	Sub-Post Master	Political Residency	1879–1904
	Post Master	Political Residency	1904–1914, 1917–1919
6. Manamah, Bahrain	Sub-Post Master	Political Agency	1891–1948
7. Muhammarah	Sub-Post Master	Vice-Consulate	1892–1923
8. Gwadar	Sub-Post Master	rented building	1893–1958
9. Henjam	Sub-Post Master	Telegraph Station	1913–1923
10. Ahvaz	Sub-Post Master	Consulate	1915–1923
11. Kuwait	Sub-Post Master	Political Agency	1915–1948
12. Abadan	Sub-Post Master	APOC refinery	1917–1923
13. Masjid-i-Sulayman	Sub-Post Master	APOC oil field	1917–1923
14. Muharra, Bahrain	Sub-Post Master	rented building	1933–1948
15. Dubai	Sub-Post Master	rented building	1941–1948
Posts held by Indo-European Telegraph Department staff			
1. Shiraz	Postal Clerk (unoff'l)	Telegraph Station	1864–1877
2. Fao	Postal Clerk (unoff'l)	Telegraph Station	1867–1886
	Sub-Post Master	Telegraph Station	1915–1919
3. Jask	Postal Clerk (unoff'l)	Telegraph Station	1867–1880

Table 14. continued

Town	Officer	Location	Dates
4. Gwadar	Branch-Post Master	Telegraph Station	1880–1923
	Sub-Post Master	Telegraph Station	1873–1874, 1884–1893
5. Chahabar	Sub-Post Master	Telegraph Station	1913–1923
Posts held by Gray Paul & Co. staff (British India Steam Navigation Co.)			
1. Bahrain	Sub-Post Master	BI Agency	1875–1884
2. Dubai	Branch-Post Master	BI Agency	1909–1941
Posts held by Imperial Airways/BOAC staff			
1. Sharjah	Postal Clerk (unoff'l)	Airfield	1932–1948

inside Indo–European Telegraph stations. As in Bahrain, the postal staff at these places came under the authority of the Resident and his local agent in addition to the Superintendent of the Gulf Postal Division. And, as in Bahrain, the post offices in Gwadar, Bushire, Muscat, Lingah, and Kuwait were run by Gulf Residency staff—the agents themselves often serving as sub-post masters. The same can be said for the Baghdad Residency, which ran the Indian post offices in Baghdad, Basrah, and Karbala. This had both practical and symbolic implications. First, it created what C. A. Bayly calls ‘an integrated mail and intelligence system’ by placing the Indian postal system in the Gulf under the control of the Resident and his agents.⁴³ In Bahrain, it enhanced the Native Agent’s ability to monitor relations between Bahrainis and the outside world, a responsibility of the agent after the signing of the Anglo–Bahraini Exclusive Agreement of 1880.⁴⁴ Second, as the Gulf’s ports and people became increasingly dependent upon the Indian postal system (the only regular postal system in the Gulf), the local standing and power of the Resident and his agents increased.

4. THE AGENT’S JUDICIAL DUTIES, 1861–1900

Before 1861, if British subjects or dependants had a legal dispute amongst themselves, all the Agent could do was report the matter to the Resident. The

⁴³ Bayly, ‘Knowing the Country’, 21; Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 66–9. Also see Fisher, ‘Suppression of the Native Dak’, 319.

⁴⁴ Anglo-Bahraini Agreement of 1880, in Aitchison, *Treaties*, xi. *Persian Gulf*, 237.

Agent had no responsibility or authority to settle such cases himself until 1861, although he did implement the Resident's rulings from time to time.⁴⁵

Likewise, when British subjects or dependants became involved in 'mixed' cases with locals or foreigners, all the Agent could do was report them to the local ruler. Only the rulers handled such cases. In early nineteenth-century Bahrain, mixed cases were usually settled at the Ruler's *Majlis*. As the number of commercial cases increased with the size of the merchant community in Manamah in the mid-nineteenth century, the Ruler began to entrust these cases to a *Majlis al-Tujarah* (Council of Commerce). The *Majlis al-Tujarah* was a specialized variant of Bahrain's *Majlis al-ʿUrf* (Council of Customary Law). The names of the two councils were used interchangeably as members of the *Majlis al-Tujarah* were typically members of the *Majlis al-ʿUrf* and vice versa. Bahrainis today consider the two councils to have been one and the same.⁴⁶ The members of the *Majlis al-ʿUrf* were appointed by the Ruler from amongst the most influential members of Bahrain's merchant community. The early organization of the *Majlis* is unknown, but by the turn of the century it consisted of two Bahraini Arabs (one Sunni, one Shi'i), two Arabs from Hasa, and two *Banias*.⁴⁷ Interestingly, no Persian merchants seem to have been included on the Council. The councillors met informally, as need arose, to arbitrate all cases not involving Islamic law. The *Majlis* had no judge (*qadhi*) and reached all its verdicts by consensus.⁴⁸ It had no authority to enforce its rulings, however. The councillors could only notify the Ruler in writing of their decision. It was then left to the Ruler to approve their verdict, to amend it, or to overturn it.⁴⁹ The Ruler would then assign one of his armed retainers (*fidawiyah*) to enforce the verdict and collect a 10 per cent judicial fee (*khidmah*), which went to the Ruler's treasury.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ For an example, see Kemball, 'Historical Sketch ... 1832 to 1844', 391–2.

⁴⁶ Interviews with ʿAli Akbar Bushiri, 1999–2007, and Khalid Kanoo, 1999 (Bahrain). The pre-1926 *Majlis al-Tujarah* is generally referred to in Bahraini historiography as the *Majlis al-ʿUrf* to differentiate it from the post-1926 *Majlis al-Tujarah*, which served only as a consultative council to which the Bahrain Civil Court and Joint Court referred questions of customary law for advice.

⁴⁷ 'Memorandum regarding the Bahrein *Majlis* or permanent Native Court of Arbitration', n.a. [Prideaux], 25 Feb. 1906, enclosed in Cox (PRPG) to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 25 Feb. 1906, L/P&S/10/28 (IOR). Fuad Khuri believes the *Majlis* was composed of three to four merchants. Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain* (1980), 111.

⁴⁸ Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain*, 111. While Khuri's account of the *Majlis al-ʿUrf* is concerned only with the 20th century, it is a reasonable assumption that the 19th-century *Majlis* operated along similar lines in this regard.

⁴⁹ Interviews with ʿAli Akbar Bushiri, 1999–2007 (Bahrain).

⁵⁰ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, ii. *Geographical and Statistical*, 251; Govt of India, General Staff, *Gazetteer of Arabia*, 1 (1917), 361.

The establishment of the Agency Court

This arrangement changed in 1861. That year, Shaikh Muhammad Al Khalifah (r. 1843–68) signed the ‘Friendly Convention’ with the Resident, incorporating Bahrain into the Trucial system and shouldering Britain with responsibility for the island’s maritime defence. The main purpose of the Convention was to defuse the regional instability Shaikh Muhammad had caused by repeated maritime aggression against his neighbours and through playing the British, Persians, and Ottomans off against each other, creating diplomatic conflict between London, Tehran, and Istanbul. The Convention did more than incorporate Bahrain into the Trucial system, however. It provided for the protection and special treatment of British subjects and dependants resident in Bahrain (whom the Shaikh had been abusing) by establishing British extra-territorial jurisdiction there.⁵¹ It also bestowed British protection upon Bahrainis in the Trucial States and ‘Oman, although in practice the British treated Bahrainis as protected persons everywhere outside of Bahrain.⁵²

The Convention stipulated that Britain’s Agent in Bahrain was to adjust all legal cases involving British subjects and dependants there. In 1909, this was extended to include all foreigners. Bahrainis involved in legal cases outside Bahrain were also entitled to British assistance and protection. The Agent was to refer cases he could not adjust satisfactorily to the Resident for decision.⁵³ This laid the legal basis for the establishment of a British Agency Court on the island. Although the Court was permitted by treaty and operated in practice as early as 1861, the Government of India did not see a need to invest the Agent with the powers of a magistrate until 1901, and it was not until 1913 that it issued an Order-in-Council to establish the Court formally and to regulate what laws and procedures the Court should use.⁵⁴ Even then, the Order-in-Council was not implemented until 1919. The Agency Court operated informally, therefore, for up to fifty-one years (1861–4, 1872–1919) before it became a formal court

⁵¹ For details, see Onley, ‘Politics of Protection’, 51–3; Kelly, *Britain in the Persian Gulf*, 525–7, 672.

⁵² Art. 4, Friendly Convention of 1861, in Aitchison, *Treaties*, xi. *Persian Gulf*, 235–6. Also see al-Baharna, *British Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction in the Gulf, 1913–1971* (1998).

⁵³ Art. 4, Friendly Convention of 1861, in Aitchison, *Treaties*, xi. *Persian Gulf*, 235–6; Anglo–Bahraini Agreement of 1880, *ibid.* 237.

⁵⁴ In British India, a magistrate (also known as a justice of the peace) was a lay judge who tried the majority of civil and criminal cases. For details of the Order-in-Council, see Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs, 1854–1904*, appendix H, 161–5.

of law (1919–71).⁵⁵ For nineteen years after the abolition of the Native Agency in 1900, British political agents followed the system of arbitration developed by the native agents. Even though the British *Bania* community in Bahrain had been entitled to have its cases adjusted by the Agency Court since 1861, it was not until the formation of a Western community on the island that the British authorities felt a need, in the early twentieth century, to formalize the Agency Court's existence by placing it on a proper legal footing according to British Indian law.⁵⁶

Agency Court operations

The date of the first Native Agency Court case is unknown, but it was possibly not too long after the signing of the Friendly Convention in May 1861. Although the Ruler was supposed to have no jurisdiction over the Agency Court, it became accepted practice for the Ruler to send a representative to attend the Court proceedings held at the Native Agency.⁵⁷ Evidence of Bahrain Agency Court operations in the nineteenth century is scarce. No Court records survive in Bahrain, possibly because the native agents rarely kept any due to the informality of the Court's operations. The India Office records in London seem to have documents pertaining to only two Court cases. Both cases concern outstanding debts owed to British subjects or dependants by non-British subjects or dependants. The first was a seemingly exceptional case in January 1889 in which the Agent mediated a settlement between a senior member of the Al Khalifah (who was entitled to British protection outside Bahrain) and a merchant from the Ottoman port of Qatif. This case will be examined in detail in the next chapter. The second case was a presumably typical one in February 1900 in which the acting Agent settled a claim made by a *Bania* (a British subject) against a Bahraini merchant.⁵⁸

The Native Agent referred any case to the Resident that he was unable or unwilling to settle, as stipulated in the 1861 Convention. Upon receiving

⁵⁵ For the history of the Political Agency Court (1919–71), see Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 107–12; al-Tajir, *Bahrain, 1920–1945: Britain, the Shaikh, and the Administration* (1987), 22–3; Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf* (1997), 132, 136–8, 140–5, 185; al-Baharna, *British Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction in the Gulf, 1913–1971*, 38–9, 52–63, 75–121; Ballantyne, *Legal Development in Arabia* (1980).

⁵⁶ Wood (Under-Sec. of Indian For. Dept) to Kembell (PRPG), 6 May 1902, enclosure 3, in Minto (Viceroy) to Moreley (Sec. of IO), 14 Nov. 1907, reg. no. 1153/1909, L/P&S/10/83 (IOR).

⁵⁷ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, ii. *Geographical and Statistical*, 250–1.

⁵⁸ Hajji 'Abbas (acting Agent) to Prideaux (Asst. PRPG), 25 Feb. 1900 (in Arabic) and Residency Agent to Resident, 25 Feb. 1900 (Eng. tr.), R/15/1/330 (IOR), 48.

notification from the Agent, the Resident would make arrangements to arbitrate the case. This usually entailed the convening of an informal Court of Arbitration during the Resident's next scheduled visit to Bahrain, unless the case was urgent, in which case the Resident would send his Assistant over as soon as possible to handle it.⁵⁹ This informal arrangement continued until 1873, when the Government of India decided to formally establish a Residency Court and invest the Resident with the powers of a magistrate, but it was not until 1877 that the Government considered it necessary to invest the Assistant Resident with the same powers.⁶⁰ Only in 1889 did the Government issue an Order-in-Council to regulate what laws and procedures the Residency Court should use.⁶¹ The Residency Court was subordinate to the High Court of Bombay and all prison sentences issued by the Residency Court were served in Bombay. Because the Resident or his Assistant handled all referrals from the Agency Court in Bahrain, greater evidence of these cases survives in British records than of cases handled solely by the Agent. One of the Agent's more notable referrals to the Resident was a case between the Ruler and a British subject. In 1863, Shaikh Muhammad Al Khalifah refused to return a large sum of money owed to a *Bania* in Bahrain. The Resident arbitrated the case personally during his annual visit to Bahrain in March.⁶²

The Agent also referred to the Resident cases in which he himself was involved. In 1876, for example, Gray Paul & Co. (the Gulf agents for BI) rented a warehouse from 'Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar (Agent 1872–84) for the storage of sugar. 'Abd al-Nabi gave Gray Paul the keys and asked them to pay what they deemed to be a fair price when they finished with it. When Gray Paul finished with the warehouse three months later, they offered him 40 rupees per month. 'Abd al-Nabi argued that, as they had the only keys to the warehouse, they should pay for the rent of the whole building, 90 rupees per month. Gray Paul refused to pay this. The two parties referred the matter to the Resident, who acknowledged the merits of both cases and proposed a compromise of 50 rupees per month.⁶³

The Agent did not handle criminal cases. Although the Convention of 1861 stated that he was to handle all legal cases involving British subjects

⁵⁹ See e.g. Smith (Asst. PRPG) to Pelly (PRPG), 19 Dec. 1870, P/671 (IOR), 262–72 (Dec. proceedings).

⁶⁰ Govt of India notifications, 13 June 1873 and 1 Mar. 1877, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of the Affairs of the Persian Coast and Islands, 1854–1905*, 100–1.

⁶¹ Ibid. 106.

⁶² Pelly (PRPG) to Bombay For. Dept, 17 Dec. 1865, *ibid.* 11.

⁶³ 'Memorandum' (judgement on Gray Paul & Co. v. 'Abd al-Nabi Safar) by W. Prideaux (acting PRPG), 17 Nov. 1876 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

and dependants in Bahrain, in practice he handled only civil cases of a commercial nature. The likely reason for this is that he was not a graded or gazetted officer from the IPS. This is in contrast to the Political Agent (1900–71), who, as a magistrate, was empowered to try all offences not punishable by death. When a criminal case arose, therefore, the Native Agent referred it to the Resident in Bushire. The best known criminal case the Agent referred to the Residency Court was an assault involving the local BI Agent in 1873. The BI Agent, Hajji ‘Abd Allah Rajab (c.1873–89), as a British employee, held the status of a British-protected person and was, therefore, exempt from the Ruler’s jurisdiction. In June of that year, the Ruler, Shaikh ‘Isa Al Khalifah (r. 1869–1923/32), arrested ‘Abd Allah on charges of assault. The Resident’s representative on the island, Hajji ‘Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar, reported the incident to Bushire. The Assistant Resident immediately wrote to Shaikh ‘Isa informing him that ‘Abd Allah was a British-protected person and should be released. Shaikh ‘Isa accordingly released ‘Abd Allah but wrote a letter of complaint to the Resident stating that he had conceded only for the Assistant Resident’s sake and that he remained unsatisfied. The Resident wrote instructions to Shaikh ‘Isa that, in future, he should lay charges against British-protected persons before the Resident, for it was the Resident’s responsibility to settle such cases. Shaikh ‘Isa consented and apologized to the Resident and his Assistant for acting incorrectly. The Resident then dispatched his Assistant to Bahrain to deal with the allegations against ‘Abd Allah.⁶⁴

The only description of the Native Agent’s judicial duties given in a Native Agent’s own words comes from Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar (Bahrain Agent 1893–1900). His account reveals some interesting gaps between the theory and practice of British extra-territorial legal jurisdiction in Bahrain in the nineteenth century:

I... settle disputes and claims where British subjects are concerned. These are generally settled either by mutual agreements, or, if that cannot be done, they are inquired into by [the] *Majlis* or Commercial Court composed of arbitrators. I watch generally the interests of British subjects. Formerly various British officers from the Residency used to come to Bahrain and stay for two or three months, but this has not been done of late years. I have no powers, Civil or Criminal, in Bahrain. The only authority in the Island is the Government of the Sheikh who rules by Muhammadan law—[the] *Sharia*. All cases, where British subjects, however, are concerned, go to the *Majlis*, and are not decided in the *Sharia* Court.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Shaikh ‘Isa to Ross (PRPG), 1 May 1873, L/P&S/9/22 (IOR); Gray Paul & Co. to Ross, 10 May 1873, *ibid.*; Ross to Shaikh ‘Isa, 17 May 1873, *ibid.*; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs, 1854–1904*, 117. Also see pp. 122–3 for an assault case.

⁶⁵ Muhammad Rahim to Meade, 11 Nov. 1898, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR).

From Muhammad Rahim's statement it appears that he acted more as an arbitrator than as a judge and that his ability to settle cases relied more on the willingness of the parties to accept his verdicts than on his ability to enforce them. The majority of verdicts reached, therefore, should have been self-enforcing. The Government of India did not invest the Native Agent with the powers of a magistrate to enable him to enforce the settlements of the cases he was responsible for adjusting. In the absence of such legal powers, how was the Agent to enforce verdicts when the need arose? In these cases, three options, or a combination of them, may have presented themselves to the Agent: (1) he could threaten to withdraw his 'good offices' from incomplicant British subjects or dependants; (2) he could request the assistance of the Ruler; or (3) he could inform the Resident and leave the matter for him to address. If relations between Agent and Ruler were good, as seems to have been normally the case, the Agent would have had considerable ability to influence or coerce British subjects and dependants in Bahrain through the Ruler before referring matters to the Resident. But if the Ruler disagreed with the verdict, he could not be relied upon to assist with enforcement against his own subjects.

Since the 1861 Convention stated that all legal cases involving British subjects and dependants were to be handled by the Agent, the Ruler should not have retained jurisdiction over mixed cases involving British subjects and dependants in Bahrain after 1861. In practice, however, he did. As the Agent's statement reveals, there was a significant gap between the terms of the Convention and their actual implementation. The likely reason for this was the reluctance of successive Rulers to relinquish jurisdiction over their subjects in mixed cases. British subjects and dependants continued to use Bahrain's *Majlis al-'Urf* for mixed cases after 1861 despite the Agent's exclusive responsibility for adjusting them. Residents seem to have gone along with this arrangement as long as certain conditions were observed. First, British subjects and dependants consented to the arrangement. If they did not, presumably the Agent would have attempted to adjust the case or refer matters to the Resident. Second, cases were settled amicably. If they were not, British subjects and dependants could still appeal to the Agent and the Resident. Third, a representative from the British Agency (either the Agent himself or a member of his staff) was in attendance. It was the duty of the British Agency representative who attended the *Majlis al-'Urf* to follow the proceedings closely to ensure that the British subjects or dependants involved received a fair hearing. If need be, presumably the Agent would have intervened with the councillors on behalf of the British subject. The mere presence of a representative from the British Agency, in addition to the two *Bania* councillors (likely British subjects), would have acted as a further check against any possible bias on the part of the Arab councillors.

In time, the *Majlis al-ʿUrf* developed the custom of meeting at the British Agency to hear mixed cases, with the Ruler sending a representative to attend the sessions.⁶⁶ Not until 1919, when the Joint Court (*Mahkamat al-Mukhtalatah*) was established in Bahrain, did the British Agent become a regular adjudicator of mixed cases himself, alongside the Ruler or one of his deputies.

The obvious problem with the *Majlis al-ʿUrf* continuing to handle mixed cases was that the Ruler's approval remained essential for the enforcement of rulings in mixed cases. A rift in agent–ruler relations, therefore, would have jeopardized the Agent's ability to ensure that British subjects and dependants received justice in Bahrain. This happened to at least three agents. In the early 1860s, Shaikh Muhammad Al Khalifah (r. 1843–68) became aggressively anti-British. He defrauded a number of *Banias* of money in Bahrain, in part because they were British subjects. Neither Hajji Jasim (Agent 1842–62), nor Hajji Ibrahim Rajab (1862–4) who succeeded him, were able to settle the matter with the Ruler. Hajji Jasim's response appears to have been simply to drop the matter in the interest of maintaining good relations with Shaikh Muhammad. Hajji Ibrahim's response was to refer only the most important cases to the Resident. In 1863, he referred one such case involving over Rs. 6,800 (Ks.17,000)⁶⁷ to the Resident. The Resident arbitrated the case personally during his annual visit to Bahrain in March, but, after his departure, Shaikh Muhammad refused to return the money. The Resident made two more attempts to settle the case over the next two years, with the same result. Eventually, in 1865, the Resident seized Shaikh Muhammad's prized *baghlah* (large dhow—see Glossary). This had the desired effect: Shaikh Muhammad returned the money and the Resident returned the dhow.⁶⁸ Over thirty years later, in 1897, Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar (Agent 1893–1900) complained of his inability to guarantee justice for *Banias* in cases settled by the *Majlis al-ʿUrf* because Shaikh 'Isa Al Khalifah (r. 1869–1923/32) disliked him.⁶⁹ Shaikh 'Isa routinely overturned verdicts made in favour of British subjects and dependants during 1897–1900. This time, the Resident sided against the Agent for a variety of reasons. The Resident's lack of support for the Agent in this and other matters was one of the main causes for the decline

⁶⁶ 'Memorandum regarding the Bahrein *Majlis* or permanent Native Court of Arbitration', n.a. (F.B. Prideaux), 25 Feb. 1906, enclosed in Cox (PRPG) to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 25 Feb. 1906, L/P&S/10/28 (IOR).

⁶⁷ See n. 13 above for the exchange rate at the time.

⁶⁸ Pelly (PRPG) to Bombay For. Dept, 17 Dec. 1865, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs, 1854–1904*, 11.

⁶⁹ Meade to Cunningham, 2 Oct. 1897, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR); Muhammad Rahim to Meade, 2 July 1898, R/15/1/315 (IOR).

of the Native Agency during 1897–1900. Chapter 6 will examine this issue in greater detail.

5. THE AGENT'S POLITICAL DUTIES, 1872–1900

Returning to the Governor of Bombay's instructions to the first Gulf Resident (quoted at the beginning of Chapter 3), we see that Britain's native agents in the Gulf were not only responsible 'for securing authentic intelligence of the proceedings of the several Chiefs on the [Arab] coast', but also for securing 'a ready communication with them'.⁷⁰ In addition to their reporting, therefore, they also delivered correspondence between the Resident and any of the rulers and governors within their respective districts with whom the Resident wished to communicate. In the Bahrain Agent's district, these included the Rulers of Kuwait (up to 1899), Bahrain, Hasa, Najd, and the Governors of Hofuf, Qatif, Dammam, Muharraq, Manamah, Rifa', and the towns along the Qatari coast (Zubarah, Khor Hassan, Ruwais, Huwailah, Bida', and Wakrah).

There was an inherent aspect of political representation in this intermediary duty. Whether the early Residents intended it or not, these native agents were their *de facto* representatives in the Gulf. In passing correspondence between the Resident and the rulers and governors, the agents were participating in the conduct of Anglo–Arab political relations. It seems inevitable that these intermediaries would come to play an increasingly political role, given the facts that they were allowed some discretion in their role as mediators and that the Resident wished to work within indigenous political systems. The Bahrain Agent's role became overtly politicized in the immediate aftermath of the Ottoman occupation of Hasa (1871–1913) and Eastern Qatar (1872–1915). Thereafter, in the face of the new Ottoman threat, the Resident began to shoulder the Agent with political duties. From general statements of the Agent's duties (such as the one quoted at the beginning of this chapter) and the contents of the Agent's political reports, it is clear that the Agent's political duties fell into two broad categories.

The first followed naturally from the Agent's role as intermediary and representative: the task of cultivating good relationships with the local rulers and governors with whom he was responsible for communicating in order to promote understanding between them and the Resident. Bad relations would make it difficult or impossible for the Agent to be effective, while close personal relations might additionally gain him some

⁷⁰ Govr of Bombay to PRPG, 12 Nov. 1822, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853*, 150.

personal advantage for his business or family. Close personal relations would have also helped the Agent with his intelligence-gathering duties, benefiting the Resident and possibly the Agent's private interests as well. As the Agent's political duties increased, the Agent would have become increasingly dependent upon the goodwill and cooperation of the rulers and governors, making the cultivation of good relationships with them all the more important. Such cultivation obviously would have entailed attendance at the Ruler of Bahrain's *Majlis*. The Agent's attendance at *Majlis* would have increased correspondingly with the gradual intensification of Anglo-Bahraini relations through the nineteenth century. After 1861, for instance, the Agent consulted with the Ruler occasionally on the enforcement of legal settlements between British subjects and Bahrainis and, after 1880, he was required to attend all important meetings between the Ruler and foreigners. The close relationship between the Agent and the Ruler was a characteristic of both the native agency system and the political agency system, which replaced it. Sir Rupert Hay (Gulf Resident 1941–2, 1946–53) offers an excellent description of the agent–ruler relationship based on personal observation:

The close personal contact maintained between the Political Agents and the Rulers is an outstanding feature of the British position in the Persian Gulf. They meet each other frequently, and more often socially than for official talks. Possibly the social meetings are more important than the official ones, as a hint dropped here and there in the course of a casual conversation is often more effective than formal advice, and the Rulers, being Arabs, are quick to resent any attempt to teach them their business. Usually, the relations between a Ruler and his Political Agent are, outwardly in any case, those of personal friends⁷¹

As the Agent's political duties increased, so did the number of people with whom he needed to be on good terms. For instance, the Agent's judicial duties from 1861 onward necessitated the cultivation of friendly working relations with the members of Bahrain's *Majlis al-Tujarah* and *Majlis al-ʿUrf*. At some point, possibly as early as 1861, the Agent would have also needed to establish a working relationship with the *Suq* Masters of Manamah and Muharraq, powerful men in Bahrain who oversaw the daily economic life of the shaikhdom's principal towns and who each commanded a group of armed guards.

The second category of political duties grew out of the Agent's original duty to monitor British interests within his district and to report on them to the Resident. As the British became more involved in the affairs of Eastern Arabia and the level of trust between Residents and agents increased over the

⁷¹ Hay, *Persian Gulf States*, 20.

course of the nineteenth century, successive Residents began to instruct the Bahrain Agent to use his influence to look after these interests and to negotiate with the local rulers and governors matters of concern to the British. More than a source of information for the making of policy, the Native Agent was now an instrument for policy execution. The first Native Agent in Bahrain entrusted with this new responsibility was Hajji Jasim (1842–62). This additional duty was incorporated into the Convention of 1861, as discussed above. Hajji Jasim and his successors were also entrusted with enforcing the anti-slave trade treaties Britain had signed with the Ruler of Bahrain. The Resident's instructions to Hajji Jasim in this regard are revealing:

Here, then, is a copy of the [anti-slave trade Treaty] Article subscribed to by the Sheikh of Bahrein, and it behoves you, the British Agent in this quarter, to strive to the best of your ability to give it full effect. ... You must remind the Sheikh of the new Article subscribed to, and be especially vigilant in this matter, for should I learn from any other quarter that slaves have been imported, you will lay yourself open to censure, because implicit confidence is placed upon the British Native Agents in all matters like these.⁷²

Finally, the Native Agent served as protector of British subjects and dependants in Bahrain—a spokesman for the *Bania* community, making representations on their behalf to the Ruler or the Resident.

The duties of the other Native Agents within the Gulf Residency seem to have developed along similar lines. In 1874, the Resident listed the Sharjah Agent's principal duties as protecting British subjects and property, visiting ports within his district to settle claims, giving aid to wrecked British Indian ships, enforcing the General Treaty of 1820 and the Maritime Truce, and reporting breaches of the peace to the Resident. He listed the Lingah Agent's chief duties as protecting British subjects, property, and interests, and inducing the local Governor to help British ships in distress. (He omitted the Agent's responsibility for enforcing the anti-slave trade treaties Britain had signed with Persia.) He described the duties of the Shiraz Agent as reporting to the Resident on British commercial affairs in Shiraz and obtaining outstanding payments owed to British subjects there.⁷³

The Native Agent in Bahrain could not himself enforce the terms of the treaties and the protection of British interests. Only the Ruler, governors, and *sug* masters commanded the physical power to do that. Only they could effectively restrain Bahrainis (and Qataris before 1872) and punish them if they injured British subjects and property, or otherwise violated the treaties. The Agent's effectiveness, therefore, depended upon their

⁷² Jones (PRPG) to Hajji Jasim, 11 May 1856, no. 33, P/760 (IOR), 31.

⁷³ Govt of India, *Admin. Report on the Persian Gulf Political Residency for 1873–4*, 2–3, 6–7.

willingness to cooperate with him. The most common approach was for the Agent to advise them on what they ought to do in circumstances in which British interests were involved. If they refused to cooperate with him, all he could do was report the matter to the Resident, who would intervene with the Gulf Squadron if necessary. But it was infinitely preferable for the Ruler, governors, and *suq* masters to enforce the peace and punish offenders themselves than for the Resident to do it for them and cause local resentment.

The problem of obtaining the cooperation of the Ruler, governors, and *suq* masters raises the question of the nature and extent of the Agent's political authority. The Agent derived his authority from his status as the Resident's representative. The Resident derived his authority from his status as the representative of the Governor of Bombay (until 1873) and the Viceroy of India (during 1873–1947), who in turn derived their authority from Parliament in Britain, which received its authority from the British Crown and the British electorate. Within India, the British also derived their authority from the Mughal Emperor, first as his servants and representatives (from 1764) and then as his successors (from 1858).⁷⁴ Reinforcing the Agent's political authority as a representative of Britain was the Agent's status as an influential member of Bahrain's socio-economic élite, discussed in the previous chapter. The Agent's ability to exercise his authority and obtain cooperation, however, rested upon the recognition of British authority in Bahrain, that is to say, upon the acceptance of an obligation to cooperate with Britain's official representatives. In Bahraini eyes, British authority rested upon three things: the Resident's role as 'protector' (*mujawwir*) of Bahrain and its dependencies (Qatar before 1872), the Ruler's treaties with the British Government, and the presence of the Gulf Squadron.⁷⁵ The protector–protégé relationship and the Anglo–Bahraini treaties lent British involvement in Bahraini affairs a large measure of legitimacy since their terms had been agreed to by both sides. The Gulf Squadron enabled the British to protect Bahrain and Bahrainis, to enforce compliance, and to punish non-compliance, as Table 15 indicates.

As far as Bahrainis were concerned, the Native Agent was Britain's official representative in Bahrain. British officialdom, however, viewed the Native Agent's status somewhat differently. The Agent was not a graded or uncovenanted officer in the IPS, nor was the office he held a gazetted one. His appointment was an informal arrangement made locally by the Gulf

⁷⁴ For details, see Ilbert, *The Government of India*, 1; Cohn, 'From Indian Status to British Contract' (1961); Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India' (1983), in Cohn (ed.), *An Anthropologist Among the Historians* (1987), 632, 635, 637–9, 644.

⁷⁵ For the Resident's role as 'protector' and the protector–protégé relationship in general, see Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 57–8, 71–5.

Table 15. Methods of coercion Britain employed in Bahrain and its dependencies, 1820–1900

Method	Employed
1. Firepower	1821, 1841, 1861, 1868, 1895
2. Threat of firepower	1829, 1836, 1858, 1859
3. Deposing rulers	1868, 1869
4. Imprisonment	1869 (5 Bahrainis, including 2 Rulers)
5. Public flogging	1834 (3 slaves of the Ruler's son)
6. Confiscation of property	1861, 1865, 1888
7. Destruction of property	1868, 1895
8. Blockades	1829, 1858, 1859, 1868, 1869

Resident, rather than an official arrangement made by the Government of India. The Ottoman Porte refused to recognize the Native Agent in Bahrain as a representative of the Government of India largely for this reason, hindering him in the performance of his occasional duties in Ottoman-occupied Hasa and Eastern Qatar after 1871.

The significance of the informality of the Native Agent's appointment lay in the degree of finality with which he could conduct his political and judicial duties in Bahrain. Only on rare occasions, such as the appointment of Mirza Mahdi 'Ali Khan as Native Resident (1798–1803), did the British authorities invest native agents with official power, that is to say, the authority to make undertakings binding on the British Crown. The original intention of granting power was to dispense with the long delays caused by referring problems back to higher authority. The granting of power was also formal recognition of absolute confidence in the authority and standing of the negotiator. Granting full power to a diplomatic agent equated to investing full authority in that agent to act on his government's behalf and to commit it to legal undertakings that whatever was negotiated with the agent would be accepted and upheld by his government.⁷⁶ As the Native Agent in Bahrain had not been granted official power, the Gulf Resident could disavow his actions if it was politically expedient to do so. The principal disadvantage of not investing native agents with official power was the delay it sometimes caused. For example, the Resident complained in his annual report for 1873–4 that

On the Persian Coast every attention has been paid to the protection of British interests by the Agent [at Lingah] and all concerned. Not having the power of

⁷⁶ Satow, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, ch. 8, ss. 8, 9, 16, 18, pp. 58–62.

directly acting for the suppression of [maritime] irregularities on the Persian Coast when they occur, redress is usually more tardily and with more trouble obtained than on the Arab Coast.⁷⁷

The absence of power and full authority did not necessarily limit native agents in the performance of their duties. The Resident normally gave them the freedom to protect British interests as they saw fit—as long as it brought positive results. If an agent was personally skilful and influential enough to obtain the cooperation of the rulers, governors, *suq* masters, and locals, he had no need of formal power. Indeed, from the quotation above, it appears that the Native Agents in Bahrain and Sharjah were able to obtain redress with much less difficulty than the Agent in Lingah, even though they, too, had no power to act directly.

6. THE AGENT'S SOCIAL DUTIES

In order to perform their intelligence-gathering, judicial, and political duties adequately, the native agents needed to exercise influence among the important men within their districts of responsibility. In the nineteenth century, as in the twenty-first, affluent Gulf merchants, such as Britain's native agents, cultivated their influence in the same way as the rulers: through generosity.⁷⁸ Tremendous importance is attached to a man's reputation for generosity in Arabia. The greater his generosity, the greater his popularity, the greater his legitimacy, and the greater his influence.⁷⁹ The native agents, therefore, would have needed to hold occasional feasts for the local élite, distribute gifts, and grant favours. In return for such generosity, the agents were entitled to their favour and cooperation. Harold Dickson, who served as Britain's Political Agent in Kuwait from 1929 to 1936, explains how the 'giving of gifts among persons of rank is an important and essential part of the ritual of hospitality, and has before now fallen on British officials, who have been sent out on special missions, for example, to Bin Sa'ud's court'. He argues that 'a benign Government should abandon the English standpoint and loosen Treasury purse-strings in recognition of the fact that such an exchange of gifts is a vital custom of the country, and if adequate gifts were not made, its representatives would lose face and influence, and give offence'.⁸⁰ Captain Ber of the Russian cruiser *Varyag*, which toured the Gulf in 1901,

⁷⁷ Govt of India, *Admin. Report on the Persian Gulf Political Residency for 1873–4*, 7.

⁷⁸ Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert: A Glimpse into Badawin Life in Kuwait and Sa'udi Arabia* (1949), 53.

⁷⁹ Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 40.

⁸⁰ Dickson, *Arab of the Desert*, 118, 120.

recommended that 'when ships are sent to Persian Gulf ports with the aim of making as many friends there as possible, the commander should be supplied with presents such as good lamps, alarm clocks, weapons, coffee and tea sets, samovars, and so on. At every opportunity the captains of British vessels bestow gifts on these people on behalf of the British Government.'⁸¹

An important aspect of the need for generosity is the keeping of an open house. The giving of gifts and granting of favours in this context is regarded as payment for a visitor's loyalty, compensating him for his trouble of coming to visit. Dickson explains how, as Political Agent in Kuwait, he could

maintain good relations with the great desert tribes of Iraq, Hasa, Najd, and Jabal Shammar only by keeping an open house at all times and receiving with due honour the shaikhs of those tribes whenever they come to [Kuwait] town to purchase supplies. These shaikhs call, as a measure of duty, receive coffee, sherbet, and other refreshments and before departing are given a present of cash, clothing, or coffee by the Political Agent. The expenditure is worthwhile, for each man has given a full picture of what is happening in his country, and has unconsciously provided the official with much valuable intelligence. Were the Political Agent to cease giving his guests a present, however small, they would immediately cease to come and see him, and in a very short time indeed H. M.'s representative would find himself blind and deaf. He certainly would get little news out of the local powers, seeing that in self-defence their policy must always be to keep H. M.'s representative more or less in the dark or at least in blinkers.⁸²

This emphasis on the social activities of a diplomatic agent continues to the present day. Lord Strang, commenting on the British Foreign Service in the mid-twentieth century, explains that the bulk of a head of mission's social life 'consists of entertaining and being entertained to luncheon or dinner'. This is especially true in small postings, such as Bahrain, where the head of mission is 'a social lion of the first magnitude'. The head of mission's social activities enable him to cultivate contacts, influence, and friendship with the local élite, which is essential if he is to perform his intelligence and political duties adequately. Strang explains that 'The diplomatist must, therefore, possess in his social dealings the indefinable capacity for liking and being liked'. The 'degree of his success in making friends will normally be the measure of his usefulness as a whole'.⁸³ The Gulf Residents took great care to appoint agents congenial to the rulers. They chose Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84), Hajji Ahmad Khan Safar (Bahrain Agent 1884–91), and Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar (Bahrain

⁸¹ Report by Capt F. I. Ber, n.d. [early 1902], in E. Rezvan (ed.), *Russian Ships in the Gulf, 1899–1903* (1993), 80. Also see Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 365.

⁸² Dickson, *Arab of the Desert*, 121.

⁸³ Strang, *Foreign Office*, 120–1.

Agent 1893–1900) because of the Safar family's close relationship with Shaikh 'Isa Al Khalifah (Ruler of Bahrain 1869–1923/32).

7. CONCLUSION

Over the course of the nineteenth century, native agents became increasingly important to successive Residents, eventually coming to play a key role in the Gulf Residency's political operations. But how did their duties compare with those of their British counterparts? Sir Ernest Satow and Michael Hardy, who have written the standard texts on diplomatic practice, identify five main functions of a diplomatic mission:

- To represent the sending government
- To promote friendly relations between the two governments
- To report to the sending government on all matters of interest to it at the national level
- To negotiate with the receiving government
- To protect the interests of the sending government and those of its subjects and dependants.⁸⁴

The political and judicial functions of a consulate, which come under the supervision of a diplomatic mission, are

- To perform the above duties at the municipal level, under the direction of a diplomatic mission
- To perform judicial duties.

In addition to this, a consulate has a number of administrative duties:

- To solemnize and register marriages of the sending state's subjects and dependants in the receiving state
- To register births and deaths of the sending state's subjects and dependants in the receiving state
- To perform notarial acts
- To issue passports
- To issue visas.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Satow, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, ch. 9, s. 8, p. 69; Hardy, *Modern Diplomatic Law* (1968), 15–18.

⁸⁵ Strang, *Foreign Office*, 123–36; Satow, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, ch. 27, s. 1, p. 216.

As we have seen, the Native Agent in Bahrain came to perform all the functions of a diplomatic agent and all of the political and judicial functions of a consul, but none of the administrative duties of a consul. The absence of these latter duties appears to be the only functional difference between native political agents and British political agents. Native political agents differed from their British counterparts not so much in their function, therefore, as in their status within the hierarchy of the Government of India. Generally speaking, they

- were not graded officers;
- were not gazetted officers;
- were not granted official judicial or diplomatic powers

Although there were a few notable exceptions, such as Mahdi 'Ali Khan (Native Resident 1798–1803) and Indian doctors from the Indian Medical Service who occasionally performed political duties in the Gulf, the status of native agents within the hierarchy of the Government of India was always informal. There were at least two reasons for this. First, it allowed the Gulf Residents to be flexible in their conduct of political relations without appearing dishonest. It allowed the native agents to use their discretion as to how they mediated in any particular situation and it allowed the Residents to have 'deniability' because they could use their native agents as convenient scapegoats if the need arose. Second, most Britons in India were uncomfortable with the idea of non-Europeans representing Britain in an official capacity or having authority over Europeans. As a result, the Gulf Residents did not give native agents official positions within the Residency. Despite these reservations, the Residents still depended heavily upon native agents and *munshis* for the day-to-day operation of the Residency. With very few Britons on the Gulf Residency staff in the nineteenth century, as shown in Appendices A10 and A14, the Residents could not have effectively managed political relations with the dozens of rulers and governors in Eastern Arabia and Southern Persia, or have protected British interests there, without their influential native agents throughout the Gulf.

British India's Native Agents in Bahrain

As I am shortly proceeding to India, I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Agha Mahomed Rahim ibn Hajee Abdun Nabee [Safar], who has repeatedly proved of great use in obtaining correct information, the securing of which required much tact, delicacy of management, and personal influence. I have found him trustworthy, sincere, zealous, and ever willing to carry out any work entrusted to him to the best of his ability. He is well informed about local matters and, having a large circle of friends at Bushire, Busreh, & other ports in [the] Persian Gulf, correct information can always be obtained through him, & I feel quite certain that as a Confidential Agent his services are indispensable to the Bushire Residency. The influence which he has acquired locally makes him a very useful person in certain negotiations of a delicate nature. I do, therefore, with pleasure bear this testimony to his worth, expressing my sense of esteem and sincere regard for him.

Uncovenanted Assistant Gulf Resident, 1889¹

This chapter looks at the men who served as agents of the East India Company and the Government of India in Bahrain between c.1816 and 1900. A number of interesting patterns emerge. All the agents came from merchant families, many of them affluent, with extensive social and business contacts throughout the Gulf. The 1889 commendation of Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar (*Munshi* and Confidential Agent c.1860–92, Bahrain Agent 1893–1900) quoted above perfectly expresses how British political officers on the Residency staff relied on these well-connected agents for timely information and diplomatic negotiations. Of the thirteen known native agents who served in Bahrain, only two were actually born in Bahrain. Most if not all were over 50 at the time of their appointment. Before 1834, all were Hindus; thereafter, most if not all were Shi'i Muslims.² This was in notable contrast to the Al Khalifah who were Sunni. Seven agents had a

¹ Statement by R. Halier, 2 Mar. 1889 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

² For more about the Shi'ah of the Gulf, see Fuller and Francke, *The Arab Shi'a* (1999).

long-standing connection with Britain, having previously served as British *munshis* or agents. Four of the agents were from a single family; in effect, they ran the British Agency as a family business for nearly half of its seventy-eight-year history. Five of the agents were themselves the sons of British agents—a reflection of the practice by some local families of closely associating themselves with a particular Western government or company, generation after generation. This echoes the tradition of family service with the East India Company and Government of India found in many British families.

The only list of native agents in Bahrain ever published is in John Lorimer's *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*, but this has few details, a number of omissions, and many errors.³ A more accurate list of the agents can be found in Appendix C. This chapter attempts to invest those names with some meaning.

1. THE *BANIAS*, c.1816–34

As discussed in Chapter 3, the East India Company initially recruited its agents in the Gulf from the Indian merchant communities in Shiraz, Muscat, and Bahrain. The agents in Shiraz seem always to have been *Khojahs*, a Shi'ī Isma'īli sect closely associated with trade, while those in Muscat and Bahrain were *Banias* (Hindu Indian merchants, who came from a variety of castes). Contemporary British spelling varied somewhat, the singular being written *Bania*, *Banian*, *Banyan*, etc. There were *Bania* communities in many of the Gulf's ports, the largest being at Muscat, which numbered over a thousand in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ The *Bania* community in Bahrain is quite old, dating back to at least the seventeenth century.⁵ The earliest detailed account of the community is in Lorimer's *Gazetteer*.

At the time of his visit to Bahrain in 1905, Lorimer noted that the British Indian community in Manamah numbered 191 (69 Hindus and 122 Muslims) during the cold weather months of November–April and 325 (175 Hindus and 150 Muslims) during the pearling season of May–October.⁶ The majority of the Hindus were of the Bhattia and Lohana merchant

³ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical* (1915), appendix Q: 'British and Foreign Diplomatic, Political, and Consular Representation in the Countries Bordering the Persian Gulf', 2678–9.

⁴ For details, see Allen, 'The Indian Merchant Community of Masqat'.

⁵ Barendse, *The Arabian Seas, 1640–1700* (1998), 21, 21 n. 40.

⁶ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, ii. *Geographical and Statistical*, 253, 1160.

castes from Sindh.⁷ The Indian Muslims were most likely *Khojahs* from Gujarat and Sunni Baluchis from Baluchistan. The latter were employed by the Ruler of Bahrain as bodyguards and soldiers. Baluchis still fill the ranks of Bahrain's police and armed forces today.

The *Bania* agents were almost never mentioned in correspondence between Bushire and Bombay. If any were mentioned at all, it was only as 'the Agent at Bahrein'. More often, their presence was omitted from Residency reports, except for the rare instances when one was the subject of a report. 'I have received information on ...' was the preferred phrasing of the British, placing the emphasis on the receiver while ignoring the existence of the sender.

Britain's first permanent representative in Bahrain was Sadah Anandadas (spelt 'Suddah Anundass' in British records), whom the Bushire Resident appointed in the months following his historic visit to Bahrain in July 1816, as discussed in Chapter 2.⁸ From his name, Sadah seems to have been a Bhattia from Sindh or Gujarat. He belonged to a *Bania* family with trading houses throughout the Gulf. His family's trading establishment in Muscat was managed by his brother, Gulab Anandadas, the Company's Broker in that port. The family's business in Bushire was managed by a second brother who was known to the Residency staff.⁹ Sadah himself managed the trading house in Bahrain. The Resident most likely employed Sadah because of his brothers' connections with the Company and Bushire.

In February 1819, Sadah made a number of false and contradictory reports that caused the Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf (SNOPG) to destroy an innocent dhow that Sadah had claimed was a pirate ship. The Rulers of Bahrain were furious and the Government of Bombay accordingly paid compensation to the dhow's owner.¹⁰ In his report to Bombay about the Agent, the SNOPG remarked bitterly that

I can only say it is much to be regretted that men [accustomed] to falsehood ... [are] trusted with situations where they have so much in their power and may do so much mischief. Bahrein is an Island where an English Agent ought to reside, particularly after what has happened ... [Many more] lives might have been lost and much [more] damage done in consequence of the false information of that

⁷ For details, see Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, 11, 34–6, 38, 46–7, 123 nn. 25, 26, 249–52; Allen, 'Indian Merchant Community', 43, 52.

⁸ Bruce to Bombay, 31 July 1816, P/SEC/BOM/41 (IOR), 1422; Bruce to Bombay, 26 Feb. 1819, P/384/43 (IOR), 2663–8; Watson to Bruce, 10 May 1819, R/15/1/19 (IOR), 185.

⁹ Bruce to Bombay, 26 Feb. 1819, P/384/43 (IOR), 2663.

¹⁰ For a full account of this incident, see Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 845–6; Davies, *The Blood-Red Arab Flag*, 85–7.

individual ... [W]e must admit ourselves to have been duped by a man without character, truth, or respectability.¹¹

Sadah was probably dismissed after this but, if he was, no records remain of the name of the agent who replaced him.

The next agent to appear in British records is a man identified only as 'the Company's Broker', who compiled the 1824 trade report discussed in the previous chapter.¹² His identity remains a mystery, as Lorimer's list of 'British Political Representatives in Bahrain' (the only known list of Britain's agents in Bahrain in the nineteenth century) omits agents before 1829.¹³ After Sadah, the next agent whose name appears in British records is Asu. He is the first agent on Lorimer's list. Lorimer gives only one year, 1829, as the Agent's residency, but Asu was already Agent by October 1827 and might have been the nameless broker who replaced Sadah.¹⁴ Little can be gleaned from Asu's name other than the fact that he was a Hindu from India. He must have been a merchant of some standing, because he owned a number of *baghlahs* (large dhows—see Glossary), which he employed throughout the Gulf and Arabian Sea. British officers coming out to Bushire from Bombay often took passage on these ships and the ships also carried dispatches to Bushire.¹⁵

In December 1828, one of Asu's *baghlahs* carrying cargo from India was shipwrecked near the Arab-ruled port of Bandar Dilam on the Persian coast, eighty-four miles north-west of Bushire. After the crew landed the cargo ashore, the Shaikh of Bandar Dilam forcibly confiscated it, injuring some crew members in the process. The Resident, Major David Wilson, immediately intervened on Asu's behalf, writing several letters to the Shaikh and sending another *baghlah* to recover the cargo.¹⁶ He told the Shaikh how the 'utmost care should be taken of all things belonging to the Servants of the English Government' and how he was 'desirous that this property should reach its owners with the least possible delay'.¹⁷ The Shaikh ignored Wilson's letters, but Wilson persisted and eventually persuaded the Shaikh to return Asu's property. His final letter to the Shaikh is revealing about the

¹¹ Loch to Bombay, 28 Feb. 1819, P/384/43 (IOR), 2655–6.

¹² Brucks, 'Memoir Descriptive', part 1 (1829), 568.

¹³ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, appendix Q, 2678.

¹⁴ Wilson (PRPG) to Asu, 5 Oct. 1827, R/15/1/38 (IOR), 114–15.

¹⁵ Hennell (acting PRPG) to Shaikh Saif (acting Chief of Congoon/Kong), 18 Oct. 1828, R/15/1/38 (IOR), 171–2; Wilson (PRPG) to Shaikh of Bandar Dilam, 24 Dec. 1828, *ibid.* 177; Wilson (PRPG) to Asu, 8 June 1828, *ibid.* 153.

¹⁶ Wilson to Shaikh of Bandar Dilam, 24 Dec. 1828, R/15/1/38 (IOR), 177; Wilson to Asu, 5 Jan. 1829, *ibid.* 178; Wilson to Shaikh of Bandar Dilam, 5 Jan. 1829, *ibid.*; Wilson to Shaikh of Bandar Dilam, 11 Jan. 1829, *ibid.* 183; Wilson to the Shaikh of Bandar Dilam, 25 Jan. 1829, *ibid.* 183–4.

¹⁷ Wilson to Shaikh of Bandar Dilam, 24 Dec. 1828, *ibid.* 177.

nature of the Resident–ruler relations on the Persian side of the Gulf (an area not covered by Britain’s anti-piracy General Treaty of 1820 with the Gulf Arab rulers):

Now, although it is hardly possible for me to believe that you could be so forgetful of your own interests as to act in this manner [by ignoring my letters], I think it necessary to desire that you will forthwith do what is becoming on this occasion towards recovering this property and that you will inflict the necessary punishment upon such of your people as may have been acting in this manner [injuring the crew of Asu’s *baghlah*] which will assuredly do an injury to yourself unless you act in the manner that has been pointed out to you.¹⁸

Wilson’s intervention on Asu’s behalf is all the more noteworthy in light of the fact that he held Asu in poor regard. Wilson had cause to rebuke Asu on at least two occasions for failing to include sufficient detail in his reports.¹⁹ The tone of his other dispatches to Asu makes plain that he regarded Asu as a most unsatisfactory agent.²⁰ This would explain why Wilson eventually replaced Asu in 1829. In his place, Wilson appointed a man named Paman, a Hindu, likely from Sindh or possibly Gujarat. Paman’s term in office was very brief; he served for just a few months before Wilson had cause to replace him as well, although the reason for Paman’s replacement is undocumented: he may have been dismissed, or he may have resigned or died.

In Paman’s place, Wilson appointed a Sindhi Hindu merchant named Chandu. Early in 1833, the new Resident, David Blane, granted Chandu leave to visit his family in Sindh.²¹ In April, Chandu sailed for India and left his brother, Khushal, in charge as acting Agent on the island.²² Khushal could not have taken over the British Agency at a worse time. Three sons of Shaikh ‘Abd Allah Al Khalifah (co-Ruler 1796–1834, Ruler 1834–43) and a few brothers of Shaikh Khalifah Al Khalifah (co-Ruler 1825–34) had begun to demand a greater share of power and money in the shajhdum. When the Rulers refused their demands, these junior shajhks defied their authority and did as they pleased.²³ In January 1834, these shajhks began to extort money from members of the *Bania* community, forcing most of

¹⁸ Wilson to Shaikh of Bandar Dilam, 25 Jan. 1829, *ibid.* 184.

¹⁹ Wilson to Asu, 25 May 1827 and 5 Oct. 1827, *ibid.* 114–16.

²⁰ See esp. Wilson to Asu, 21 May 1828 and 8 June 1828, *ibid.* 146, 153.

²¹ Blane to Bombay, 15 June 1834, P/387/60 (IOR), no. 2152.

²² Khushal (acting Agent) to Blane, 5 Apr. 1833, R/15/1/61 (IOR), 45; Khushal to Blane, 8 Jan. 1834, R/15/1/66 (IOR), 10.

²³ Khushal to Blane, 8 Jan. 1834, R/15/1/66 (IOR), 10–13; Khushal to Blane, 23 Jan. 1834, *ibid.* 14–17; Khushal to Blane, 15 Jan. 1834, enclosure no. 1, P/387/58 (IOR), no. 1274; Onley, ‘Politics of Protection’, 48.

the *Banias* to flee Bahrain. The commander of a British ship that visited the island a year later described the situation this way:

[Shaikh 'Abd Allah's] followers do just as they please, extorting money from all they can, and lording it over poor and rich in a most despotic manner. ... There is no Police, and in consequence a moneyed man is hourly in danger of losing his property. It is of no use to complain, for the Shaikh only tells them to keep out of his followers and sons' way. In consequence of this misrule, few moneyed men will remain ...²⁴

Khushal himself had been threatened, assaulted, and robbed, forcing him to go into hiding. In early February 1834, David Blane received word of the dire situation in Bahrain. He sent a sloop-of-war across to rescue Khushal and deliver a stern letter to Shaikh 'Abd Allah demanding immediate reparation.²⁵ When the ship arrived on 9 February, Khushal came out of hiding to meet it and was assaulted and robbed once again. The commander of the ship delivered the letter to Shaikh 'Abd Allah and returned to Bushire with the Agent.

Over the course of several weeks, Shaikh 'Abd Allah evaded Blane's demands for reparation, namely the flogging of Khushal's assailants—three slaves belonging to Shaikh 'Abd Allah's 18-year-old son, Muhammad. By late March, Blane had run out of patience and dispatched two sloops-of-war to Bahrain under the command of the SNOGP. The SNOGP spent eleven days in Bahrain, at the end of which he succeeded in convincing Shaikh 'Abd Allah to punish the slaves. Section 13 below will examine this incident at greater length. The SNOGP returned to Bushire in early April. In his report, he informed Blane that

There is said to be a strong feeling on the part of the Arabs against Hindoos and Jews on account of their religion and Shaikh Abdoollah is desirous that a Musselman should be employed as Agent at this place, the feeling of the Inhabitants being so inimical to the Hindoo [Agent] that he cannot be answerable for his safety if he returns; that he himself has no ill will against him, but is desirous of having no further communication with him.²⁶

Since the duties of Britain's native agents depended on the cooperation of the local ruling families, such religious discrimination would have greatly hindered them in the performance of their duties. Blane forwarded the SNOGP's report to the Governor of Bombay, but he did not wait for a reply before acting.

²⁴ Lt Whitelock, 'An Account of Arabs who inhabit the Coast between Ras-el-Kheimah and Abothubee in the Gulf of Persia ...' (1844), 51.

²⁵ Blane to Shaikh Abd Allah, 24 Mar. 1834, enclosure 8, P/387/58 (IOR), no. 1274.

²⁶ Elwon (SNOGP) to Blane, 10 Apr. 1834, enclosure 1, *ibid.*, no. 1275.

Blane concluded that he could no longer safely employ *Banias* as agents. Within days of receiving the SNOGP's report, he appointed the Agency *Munshi* in Bahrain, a Muslim Gulf merchant named Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar, as the new acting Agent and informed Shaikh 'Abd Allah of the new arrangements:

I have the pleasure ... to acquaint you that, our former friendly relations being now fully re-established, I should have directed the return of the British Agent to his Station, but that, being a Hindoo, he cannot be expected to feel sufficiently reassured until the disturbances and confusion, which unfortunately at present prevail in Bahrein, [have] terminated. Under these circumstances, I have thought that the object in view should be equally attained by sending Mirza Mahamed Ally [Safar] to act as Government Agent for the present. I have every confidence that he will exert himself to the extent of his power in promoting the maintenance of our good understanding and [I] trust, therefore, [that] you will receive him with kindness and consideration.²⁷

The Governor of Bombay's response to the SNOGP's report arrived in Bushire the following month. The Governor agreed with Blane that 'it would appear desirable to employ a Mussulman as [our] Agent at Bahrain', but that 'the present Agent should be otherwise provided for before any exchange is made'.²⁸ Blane replied:

I have the honor to submit a Copy of Correspondence detailing measures already adopted with respect to the employment of a Mussulman as Agent at that Port. The person against whom the aggression was made on this occasion was only in temporary charge of the Office of the Agent during the absence of his brother, to whom I had given permission to revisit his family in Scinde. His Supersession was not, therefore, an act of very great hardship upon him, particularly as the individual now appointed [Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar] has long, in reality, conducted the duties of the Station [in the capacity of Agency *Munshi*] and it was my intention to discourage the return of the absent Agent on the grounds of a necessary regard for the public interests, which may, I hope, meet with the approval of the Right Hon'ble the Governor in Council.²⁹

The Governor approved Blane's arrangements the following month.³⁰ The view that Hindus were no longer suitable as Company agents was also held by British residents in India at the time (as discussed in Chapter 3), but

²⁷ Blane to Shaikh Abd Allah, 15 Apr. 1834, enclosure 2, P/387/60 (IOR), no. 2152.

²⁸ Norris (Chief Sec. of Bombay Govt) to Blane, 2 May, 1834, P/387/58 (IOR), no. 1276.

²⁹ Blane to Norris, 15 June 1834, P/387/60 (IOR), no. 2152.

³⁰ Norris to Blane, 22 July 1834, *ibid.*, no. 2153.

for a different reason. In India, it was because the rulers, sensitive to the status of political agents appointed to their courts, had over time adopted the British view of Indian agents: that they were increasingly felt to be less important than British agents. This meant that the Indian agents gradually lost their ability to deal effectively with the rulers. While the appointment of an Indian agent to the court of an Indian state was perfectly acceptable in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was not so in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Arabia, it was not the agents' ethnicity that rulers increasingly objected to, but their religion, as the SNOGP's report reveals. The end result was the same, however: the employment of fewer Indians as British representatives in Asia from the 1830s onward. This British concern for the local perception of an agent's status was reinforced by increasingly common British racial views on 'suitable' and 'unsuitable' roles for Indians in British service.

2. THE SAFAR FAMILY AGENTS

The shift in native agent employment practices in the Gulf in the 1830s saw the British replacing their Hindu agents in Bahrain and Muscat with Muslim agents. The majority were Gulf merchants from Arabia, 'Iraq, and Persia; while those serving in Shiraz (c.1800–1903), Muscat (1832–40), Basidu (1870–82), Gwadar (1880–1958), and Kuwait (1905) were Indian Muslims, as can be seen in Appendix A9. The Gulf merchants who became agents obtained their posts through their close social connections with the Residency staff, which their strong business connections with Bushire had provided them with the opportunity to develop—just as the *Banias* had done.³¹ One of the most notable Gulf merchant families to develop close connections with the Residency was the Safar family.³² As shown in Table 16, six members of this family served the East India Company and Government of India as political agents between 1829 and 1900. Five of these men had held the posts of *munshi*, confidential news agent, or deputy agent (*na'ib*) prior to their appointment as political agent. A seventh member of the family served as a *munshi* at the Gulf Residency

³¹ For a description of the merchant community in Bushire and its close relations with the Residency, see Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Medina, and Persia*, ii. (1830), 111

³² For a detailed study of the Safar family, see Onley, 'Transnational Merchants in the Nineteenth Century Gulf: The Case of the Safar Family' (2005). 'Safar' is spelt *saad*, *faa*, *raa* and comes from the second month of the Islamic year.

Table 16. Safar family members who served British India

Name	Post	Location	Period
1. Mirza Muhammad ʿAli Safar	<i>Munshi</i>	Bahrain	c.1829–1834
	Agent	Bahrain	1834–1842
2. Hajji ʿAbd al-Rasul Safar	Agent	Mocha	c.1829–c.1856
3. Hajji Muhammad Safar	Deputy Agent	Mocha	c.1829–c.1856
	Agent	Hudaydah	c.1875
4. Hajji ʿAbd al-Nabi Safar	Deputy Agent	Bahrain	c.1834–1842
	<i>Munshi</i> and Confidential Agent	Bushire	c.1842–1871
	Agent	Bahrain	1872–1884
5. Hajji Ahmad (Khan) Safar	<i>Munshi?</i>	Mocha	c.1829–1855
	<i>Munshi</i>	Bushire	1857–1884
	Deputy Agent	Bahrain	c.1872–1884 (occasionally)
	Agent	Bahrain	1884–1891
6. Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar	<i>Munshi</i> and Confidential Agent	Bushire	c.1860s–1893
	Deputy Agent	Bahrain	c.1880–1884 (occasionally)
	Agent	Bahrain	1893–1900
7. Muhammad Safar	<i>Munshi</i>	Bushire	c.1900s
8. Ahmad Safar	<i>Munshi</i>	Gulf Sq	c.1930s

Note: The family changed its name to al-Safar in the 1960s.

headquarters in Bushire in the 1900s, while an eighth member of the family served as a *munshi* with the Royal Navy's Gulf Squadron in the 1930s. The fact that four consecutive generations of Safars served the British in political posts in the Gulf suggests a tradition of imperial service in the Safar family similar to that found in many of the British and Indian families who worked for the East India Company and the Government of India.

The Safars were prosperous general merchants in the nineteenth century, importing, exporting, and shipping goods of every description—from rice to rifles—throughout the Gulf region and beyond.³³ They also engaged in banking, loaning large sums of money to other merchants and to the local ruling families. They maintained an extensive business network with merchant houses in Bushire, Manamah, Muscat, Mocha, Hudaydah, and Bombay, and possibly Hillah and Basrah.³⁴ These merchant houses

³³ For an explanation of how general merchants in the Gulf operate, see Field, *The Merchants*, 292–310.

³⁴ Interviews with ʿAli Akbar Bushiri, 1998–2007 (Bahrain).

operated as a loose conglomerate—sometimes engaged in joint-ventures with each other, sometimes operating on their own. Members of the Safar family typically moved from one house to another as their careers progressed, initially working with their fathers, later working on their own or with an uncle. When the head of a merchant house died, his assets were redistributed amongst his sons and daughters. Many family members had business interests and property throughout South and South-West Asia as a result. This family network and the family's even more extensive social contacts were of great value to the British, as reflected in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter. The Safar family manuscripts in the Bushiri Archive in Bahrain include many statements and letters of this kind from British political officers attesting to the family's social status, transnational connections, and political influence. At least three members of the Safar family ranked as Grade I merchants in the nineteenth century—the wealthiest and most influential men in the Gulf after the local ruling élite. An explanation of merchant grades can be found in Appendix C4. The family's prosperity was reflected in their substantial property holdings: date plantations near Basrah and Manamah, and houses and property in Bushire, Shiraz, Manamah, Muscat, Mocha, Hudaydah, and Bombay's prestigious Fort district.³⁵ Landowning was, and still is, a considerable status symbol in the Gulf.

Although the family was dispersed throughout Arabia, Iraq, Persia, and India, Bushire was at the centre of the family's activities in the nineteenth century. The family's principal Bushire residence was a large, impressive building located on the waterfront in the Kuti district of town next to the residences of Britain's Political Resident in the Gulf (Photo 1) and the Governor of Bushire.³⁶ Coincidental or not, the building's location became symbolic of the family's close connections with Britain and the Gulf Residency, just as the building itself signified the family's great wealth. A photograph of the house, known as *Bait Safar* (Safar House), can be seen in Photo 2. A branch of the Safar family still lives in Bushire today, although they have long since lost touch with the Safars in Bahrain.³⁷

³⁵ Declaration by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar [will of 'Abd al-Nabi Safar], 20 Apr. 1886; Voucher by Muhammad Rahim Safar to Fracis, 3 Aug. 1892; Muhammad Rahim Safar to Meade (PRPG), 13 Oct. 1898; note by Muhammad Khalil Sharif, 26 Dec. 1918; Cox (former PRPG), London, to Muhammad Khalil Sharif, Basrah, 10 Sept. 1934 (all documents in the Bushiri Archive, Bahrain). Interviews with Nader al-Safar and 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, 1998–2004 (Bahrain).

³⁶ Interviews with 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, 1998–2007 (Bahrain).

³⁷ Ibid. and interviews with Nader al-Safar, 1999–2004 (Bahrain).

The ethnic identity of the Safar family in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is difficult to establish because the Iranian and Bahraini branches of the family do not agree on this aspect of their history. The Safars of Bushire believe that the family originates from Hamadan in Western Iran and is, therefore, Persian—possibly Bakhtiyari (a tribal group from Western Persia that speaks a dialect of Farsi).³⁸ This belief is supported by a detailed genealogical account of the family written by a traveller who visited the Safars in Bushire in 1896.³⁹ Many of the Safars were Persian subjects, and a photograph taken in the late 1890s of the head of the family, Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, clearly shows him wearing a Persian style turban—see Photo 3. Further evidence of a Persian origin is the fact that virtually all members of the family spoke Farsi as a mother tongue and that many had Persian titles such as *Agha* or *Aga* (which they pronounced *Au* as only the Bakhtiyari do), *Mirza*, and *Khan*.

The Safars of Bahrain, however, believe that their male ancestors were Shi'i Arabs from Southern 'Iraq.⁴⁰ This claim is supported by none other than Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar himself, who once explained, 'I am of Arab descent, but my family has been many years resident in Persia.'⁴¹ The family tree drawn by him shows him to be the great-grandson of Hajji Safar, a Shi'i Arab born in Hillah, thirty-five miles south of the Ottoman provincial capital of Baghdad (see Figure 1). Although Hajji Safar later moved to Persia, his nineteenth-century descendants maintained a strong connection with 'Iraq and Arabia: many were born there, many lived there, many owned property there, many were buried there, and many spoke Arabic. A closer inspection of the photograph of Muhammad Rahim reveals that although he is wearing a Persian style turban he is also wearing an Arab *'abbah* or *bisht* (cloak).⁴² All things considered, it seems that the best description of many of the nineteenth-century Safars is that some of them were Persianized Arabs (similar to the *Hawalab*—see Glossary) and some of them were Arabized Persians. This hybridity gradually disappeared in the twentieth century. The Safars of Bahrain today have an Arab identity—they were born in Bahrain to a Shi'i Arab mother from Karbala in Southern 'Iraq,

³⁸ Ibid. For more about the Bakhtiyari, see Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A Documentary Analysis of the Bakhtiyari in Iran* (1983).

³⁹ Sadid al-Saltanah, *Safar Namah-i Sadid al-Saltanah*, ed. Iqtidari (1983).

⁴⁰ Interviews with Nader al-Safar, 1999–2004 (Bahrain) and Jan al-Safar, 2000–3 (Altrincham, Cheshire, UK).

⁴¹ Statement by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, 11 Nov. 1898, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR), 21.

⁴² For details, see Ingham, 'Men's Dress in the Arabian Peninsula: Historical and Present Perspectives', (1997), 47–8 and 6 (figure 1).

speak Arabic as their mother tongue, and think of themselves as Arabs.⁴³ The Safars of Bushire today have an Iranian identity—they claim Persian roots, speak Farsi as a mother tongue, and think of themselves as Iranians.⁴⁴ The 'Iraqi, Yemeni, 'Omani, and Indian branches of the family, which are no longer in touch with the Bahraini and Iranian branches, may similarly define their identity in relation to their locale.

The family's founding father, Hajji Safar, was likely born in the 1740s and appears to have been a man of considerable status and wealth. On the Safar family tree drawn in the 1960s, he is given the title of *Beg* (Chief), a title used both by the Ottomans and the Bakhtiari (see Figure 1). He was married to the sister of Shaikh Hajji Jabir Khan al-Muhaisin, who was the Shaikh of Muhammarah in south-western Persia (r. 1819–81) and a Shi'i Arab. At some point before 1778, Hajji Safar moved to Bushire, Persia's principal port in the Gulf, which suggests that he was a merchant. His descendants went on to establish themselves in 'Iraq, Iran, Bahrain, 'Oman, Yemen, India, Britain, and America. This great mobility had a demonstrable influence on the Safars. Hajji Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar (1778–1845) was born in Bushire; lived in Hillah, Mocha, Bahrain, Bushire, and Bombay; was a Persian, Ottoman, and likely British Indian subject; wrote his letters in Farsi and Arabic; spoke Farsi and Arabic; and had the Persian title of *Mirza*. His eldest son, Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar (c.1803–84), was born in Hillah to a Persian mother from Bushire; lived in Mocha, Bushire, Bahrain, and Bombay; was a Persian and possibly British Indian subject; used the Persian title of *Khan*; kept his business records in Farsi; and spoke Farsi, Arabic, English, and possibly Hindi. His brother, Hajji Muhammad Jafar, was born in Bombay to a Persian mother from Shiraz; lived in Bombay and Bushire; was a British Indian subject; dressed in the style of an Indian merchant in Bombay; and likely spoke Farsi, Arabic, and Hindi. 'Abd al-Nabi's son, Agha Muhammad Rahim (c.1830s–1900), was born in Bushire to a Persian mother; lived in Bushire and Bahrain; was a Persian and Ottoman subject; used the Persian title of *Agha*; dressed in a hybrid Persian–Arab style (see Photo 3); wrote in Farsi and Arabic, and spoke Farsi, Arabic, English, and possibly Hindi.

Hajji Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar's second eldest son, Hajji 'Abd al-Rasul (b. c.1805), was born in 'Iraq to a Persian mother from Bushire, grew up in Hillah, lived in Mocha, wrote his letters in Farsi and Arabic,

⁴³ Interviews with Nader al-Safar and 'Adel al-Safar, 1999 and 2007 (Bahrain) and Jan al-Safar, 2000–03 (Altrincham, Cheshire, UK).

⁴⁴ Interviews with 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, 1998–2007 (Bahrain).

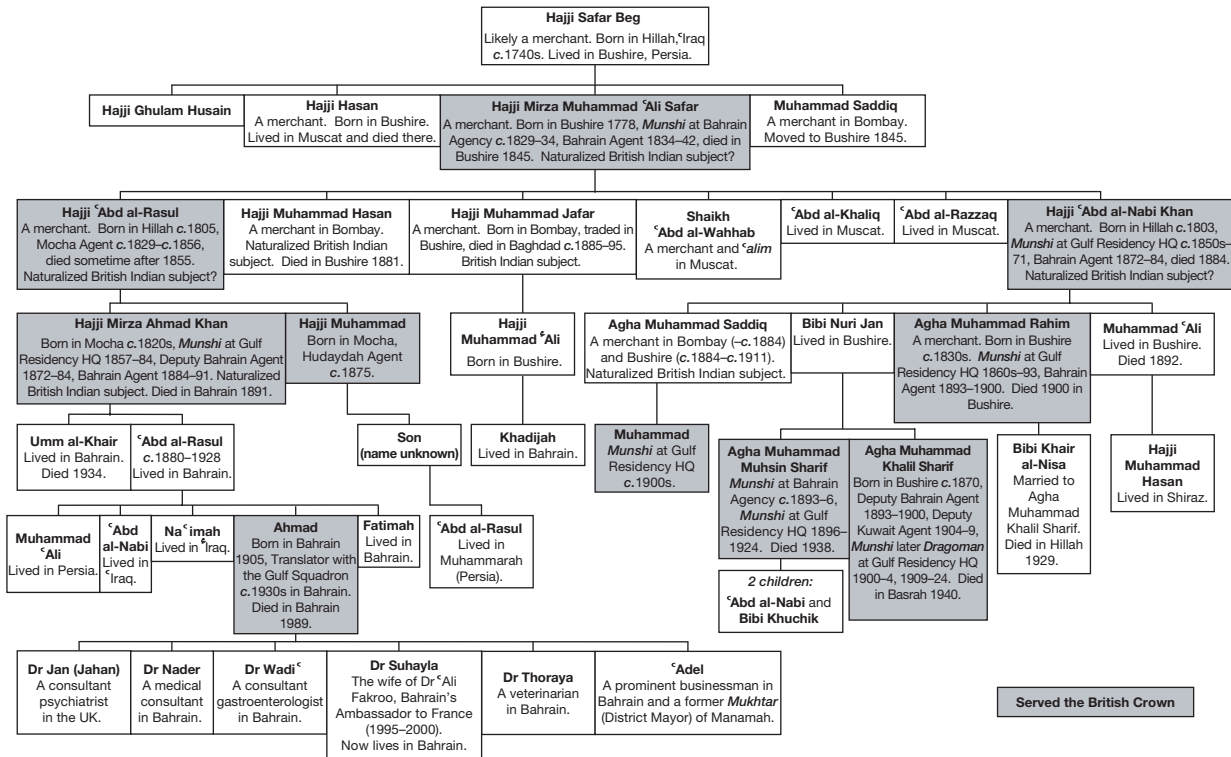


Figure 1. Safar family tree (abridged)

Notes: The family changed its name to al-Safar in the 1960s. This table is based on a family tree drawn by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar in 1898 (L/P&S/7/112, IOR, p. 21) and a family tree drawn by Ahmad al-Safar in the 1960s (Jan al-Safar collection, Altrincham, Cheshire, UK).

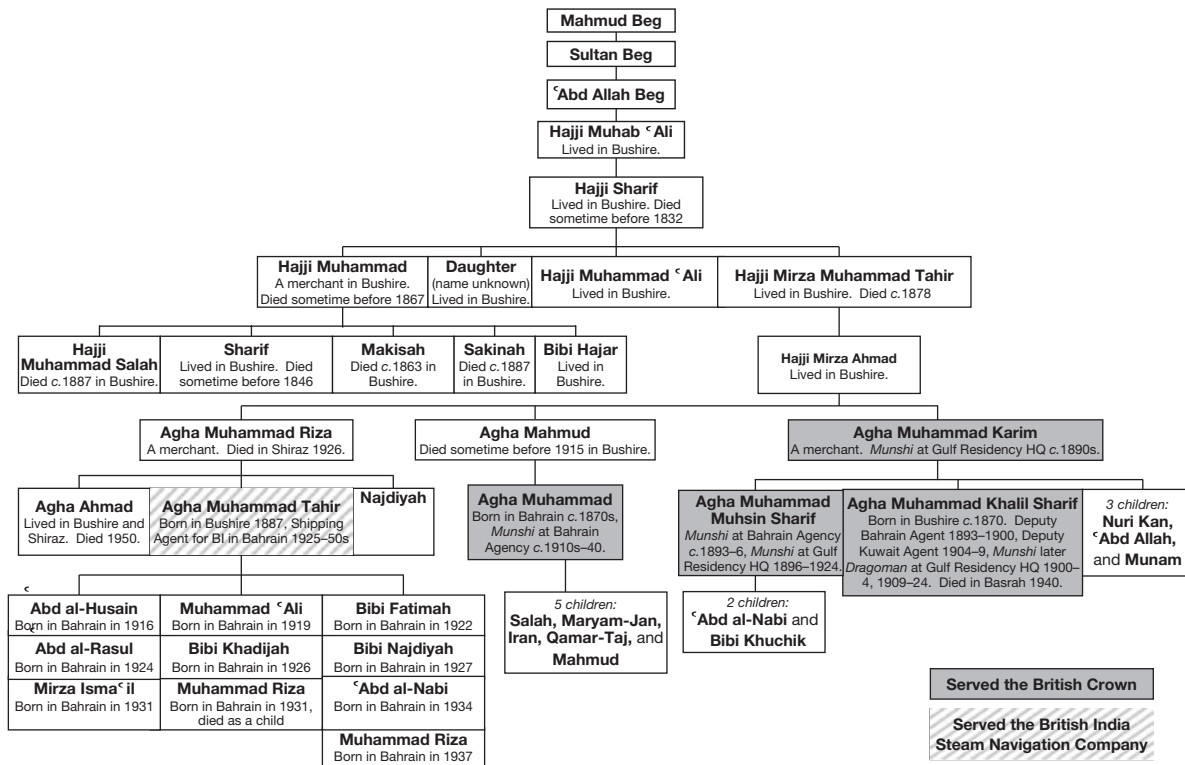


Figure 2. Sharif family tree (abridged)

Notes: The family changed its name to al-Sharif in the early twentieth century. This table is based on the family tree drawn by drawn by Agha Muhammad Tahir al-Sharif and Agha Muhammad al-Sharif in the 1950s (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

was described by the British as 'Persian',⁴⁵ and may have been a British Indian subject. Hajji 'Abd al-Rasul's eldest son, Hajji Mirza Ahmad Khan (c.1820/30s–1891), was born in Mocha to a Persian mother from Bushire, grew up in Mocha, lived in Bushire and Bahrain, was a Persian and British Indian subject, wrote his letters in Arabic, spoke Arabic and Farsi, and used the Persian titles of *Mirza* and *Khan*.⁴⁶ Ahmad's eldest son, 'Abd al-Rasul (c.1880–1928), was born in Bushire to a Persian mother, lived in Bahrain, wrote his letters in Arabic and Farsi, and dressed in the style of a Yemeni merchant (possibly in the fashion of his father). 'Abd al-Rasul's son, Ahmad (1905–89), was born in Bahrain to a Persian mother from Behbahan in south-western Persia, spoke Farsi as a mother tongue, dressed in a Persian style in his youth, was educated in Bombay, lived in Iran and Bahrain, and was a Bahraini citizen. Ahmad's children were all born in Bahrain to an 'Iraqi Arab mother from Karbala, speak Arabic as a mother tongue, and are Bahraini citizens. Ahmad's eldest son, Jan (Jahan), now lives near Manchester. Jan's four children were born to British mothers, speak English as a mother tongue, live in Britain, and have a British–Arab identity.⁴⁷

One of the natural results of the Safars' close connections with 'Iraq, Persia, Bahrain, 'Oman, Yemen, India, and Britain was their intermarriage with local families. The most notable connection through marriage was with the Sharif family of Bushire.⁴⁸ The Safars intermarried with the Sharifs at least ten times between the 1770s and 1890s, creating a close bond between the two families. Sharif family history explains how the Safars and Sharifs are really branches of the same family. Members of the two families in Bahrain today still regard themselves as distant cousins, although they no longer behave as a single family.⁴⁹

Unlike the Safars, however, the closely related Sharif family tended to stay out of the political limelight. As Table 17 shows, four members of the family worked for the Government of India as *munshis* and one served as deputy agent, but none ever held the post of political agent. A fifth member of the family, Agha Muhammad Tahir al-Sharif, served as the Shipping

⁴⁵ Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 45.

⁴⁶ Ahmad seems to have been granted a British Indian passport as a reward for his years of service to the British Crown. See Resolution no. 6220 of the Govt of Bombay, 23 Dec. 1871, P/478 (IOR), 863.

⁴⁷ Interviews with Jan al-Safar, 2000–3 (Altrincham, Cheshire, UK).

⁴⁸ For the politics of intermarriage, see Lienhardt, *The Shaikhdoms of Eastern Arabia* (2001), 21.

⁴⁹ Interviews with Mirza Isma'il al-Sharif, 1999–2007; Nader al-Safar, 1999–2007; 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, 1998–2007 (Bahrain); and Jan al-Safar, 2000–3 (Altrincham, Cheshire, UK).

Table 17. Sharif family members who served British India

Name	Post	Location	Period
1. Agha Muhammad Karim Sharif	<i>Munshi</i>	Bushire	c.1890s
2. Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif	Deputy Agent	Bahrain	1893–1900
	<i>Munshi</i>	Bushire	1900–1904
	<i>Munshi</i> and Deputy Agent	Kuwait	1904–1909
	<i>Dragoman</i>	Bushire	1909–1924
3. Agha Muhammad Muhsin Sharif	<i>Munshi</i>	Bahrain	1893–1896
	<i>Munshi</i>	Bushire	1896–1924
4. Agha Muhammad al-Sharif	<i>Munshi</i>	Bahrain	c.1910s–1940

Note: The family changed its name to al-Sharif in the early twentieth century.

Agent for Gray Mackenzie & Co. (formerly Gray Paul & Co., the Gulf agents for BI) in Bahrain from the 1920s to the 1950s. Sharif family history tells how they were Grade I or II merchants in the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ By the twentieth century, however, their fortunes had declined significantly. Even Agha Muhammad Khalil, who inherited half of Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar's fortune in 1900—including *Bait* Safar in Manamah and the two Safar family estates near Basrah—lost everything by the 1930s. This might explain in part why the British never appointed the Sharifs as political agents. By the time they entered Crown service in the 1890s, they were no longer the sort of extremely affluent and influential men the British appointed as agents. It would also explain why Safar–Sharif intermarriage did not continue past the 1890s. Safar family history records how Zainab Behbahani, the status-conscious daughter-in-law of Hajji Ahmad Safar (Agent 1884–91), forbade her children to marry into the Sharif family, despite the fact that the two families were related.⁵¹

3. MIRZA MUHAMMAD ALI SAFAR, 1834–42

From the 1830s onward, the Gulf Resident appointed only Muslims (mainly Arabs and Persians) as his native agents. The only exceptions appear to

⁵⁰ Interviews with Mirza Isma'il al-Sharif, 1999–2007 (Bahrain). A Grade II merchant was a regional wholesale trader who maintained a small fleet of cargo ships, employed a regional network of commercial agents, and had an annual income of Ks. 300,000–500,000. See Appendix C4 for details.

⁵¹ Interviews with Khanim Behbahani, 1999 (Bahrain); Nader al-Safar, 1999–2004 (Bahrain); Jan al-Safar, 2000–3 (Altrincham, Cheshire, UK).

be the two Jewish Arabs and one Christian Arab at Muscat mentioned in Chapter 3. Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar was the first Gulf merchant to be appointed to the Bahrain Agency. He was born in 1778 in Bushire, the eldest son of Hajji Safar Beg. In 1802, at the age of 24, he moved to his father's hometown of Hillah. He lived there for six or seven years, during which time he purchased two large date plantations near Basrah known as *Bawarin* and *Kut-Zair*. These estates remained in family hands for over a hundred years and were worth nearly a quarter of a million rupees by the late nineteenth century.⁵² In 1809, Muhammad 'Ali moved to Mocha, where he established a merchant house, known locally as *Bait al-'Ajami* (the Persian's House). After trading for twenty years in Yemen, he handed over the business to his second son, Hajji 'Abd al-Rasul Safar (b. c.1805), who remained there for the rest of his life. Such was the family's affluence and influence in Mocha by that time that the East India Company appointed Hajji 'Abd al-Rasul as its Agent there, a position he held from c.1829 until his death sometime after 1855.⁵³

From Mocha, Mirza Muhammad 'Ali moved to Bahrain where he established another merchant house, known locally as *Bait Safar*. Likely to secure British protection for himself and his business, he joined the British Agency staff in Manamah as a *munshi*.⁵⁴ He was subsequently appointed British Agent in 1834, replacing Chandu and his brother Khusal. Muhammad 'Ali was rarely referred to by name in Residency correspondence, but his reports in British records reveal him to have been a far more efficient news agent and political representative than his Indian predecessors. One can estimate the degree of his affluence during this time from a loan he made to the East India Company for Rs. 7,000, which was about three times the monthly salary of the highly paid Gulf Resident.⁵⁵ At some point between 1835 and 1839, Muhammad 'Ali took leave of his

⁵² Voucher by Muhammad Rahim Safar to N. D. Fracis, 3 Aug. 1892; Muhammad Rahim Safar to Meade (PRPG), 13 Oct. 1898; Power of attorney by Louisa Fracis [widow of N. D. Fracis] to Percy James Fracis, 14 Oct. 1909; note by Muhammad Khalil Sharif, 26 Dec. 1918; Cox (former PRPG), London to Muhammad Khalil Sharif, Basrah, 10 Sept. 1934 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain). Interviews with Nader al-Safar, 1999–2004, and 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, 1998–2007 (Bahrain).

⁵³ Safar family tree (Jan al-Safar collection, Altrincham, Cheshire, UK); interviews with Jan al-Safar, 2000–3. The Safar family tree states that 'Abd al-Rasul was appointed Mocha Agent c.1829, but the earliest reports from him in the IOR dates from 1840. See P/431/27–29 and G/17/4 (IOR); Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 24, 45–6, 48, 64, 73, 132, 366; Kour, *History of Aden*, 124–5.

⁵⁴ For Muhammad 'Ali's service as a *Munshi* in Bahrain, see Muhammad Ali (*Munshi* to the Bahrain Agent) to Blane (PRPG), 30 Mar. 1834, R/15/1/66 (IOR), 70–1; Elwon (SNOPG) to Blane (PRPG), 10 Apr. 1834, enclosure 1, P/387/58 (IOR), no. 1275.

⁵⁵ East India Company bill of exchange for Rs. 7,000 in favour of Hajji Muhammad 'Ali Safar for thirty days at 1.5% interest, 15 Oct. 1839 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain);

post to go on Hajj to Mecca. In May 1838, a *baghlah* carrying sacks of sugar belonging to him shipwrecked off Qishm Island and the sugar was carried off by the local shaikh and his men. The Resident and Government of Bombay intervened on his behalf, assisting him to obtain compensation from the Shaikh of Qishm.⁵⁶

During Muhammad 'Ali's eighth year as agent in 1842, Bahrain became embroiled in a civil war between two branches of the Al Khalifah.⁵⁷ In June, the Ruler, Shaikh 'Abd Allah bin Ahmad, launched an assault on his rival's stronghold of Manamah. During the battle, refuge was sought at the British Agency by around a thousand townspeople, from whom Muhammad 'Ali allegedly collected admission fees. Although the charge of selling British protection was never proven, the Resident summarily dismissed Muhammad 'Ali.⁵⁸ Section 13 below will examine this incident in greater detail.

After his dismissal, Muhammad 'Ali moved on once more, this time to Bombay where he had established some business interests a few years previously. He may have purchased his substantial properties in Bombay's Fort district at this time. In the last year or two of his life, Muhammad 'Ali moved back to his hometown of Bushire, having established an extensive family business network with sons in Bushire, Mocha, Bahrain, and Bombay. Hillah and Basrah may have also been included in this network, as was Muscat, where another merchant house was managed by Muhammad 'Ali's brother, Hajji Muhammad Hasan.⁵⁹ Nine of his sons and grandsons went on to work for the British Government as he had done, six of them serving in Bahrain.

4. HAJJI JASIM (HAJJI ABU'L QASIM), 1842–62

Muhammad 'Ali Safar was succeeded by Hajji Abu'l Qasim, better known as Hajji Jasim, some time during July–November 1842. Hajji Jasim went on to

Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of the Affairs of the Persian Coast and Islands, 1854–1905*, 69. The Resident's monthly salary in the 1830s was Rs. 2,400.

⁵⁶ Muhammad 'Ali to Chief Sec. (Bombay), 4 Jan. 1842, P/390/9 (IOR), 571; memorandum by Willoughby (offg Chief Sec. of Bombay Govt), 8 Jan. 1842, *ibid.* 571–2; Willoughby to Muhammad 'Ali, 31 Jan. 1842, *ibid.* 572–3; Willoughby to Robertson (offg PRPG), 31 Jan. 1842, *ibid.* 574; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853*, 272–4.

⁵⁷ For details, see Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 49, 68–9.

⁵⁸ Kemball, 'Historical Sketch of the Uttoobee Tribe of Arabs (Bahrein), 1831–1844', 393–4.

⁵⁹ Declaration by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar [will of 'Abd al-Nabi Safar], 20 Apr. 1886 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain); family tree by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, 11 Nov. 1898, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR).

serve for twenty years in Bahrain, becoming the longest-serving agent in the 149-year history of the British Agency (c.1816–64, 1872–1971). In spite of this, little is known about him. His sectarian identity is unknown: he could have been Shīʿi or Sunni. Two British naval officers who visited Bahrain in the late 1850s described him as Arab.⁶⁰ His Arab identity can also be gleaned from his name: Jasim is pronounced with a J, transliterated with a J, but spelt with a Q in Arabic and Farsi. This alternative pronunciation for Q is unique to Gulf Arabic; it is not used in Farsi. The best-known examples come from Sharjah (spelt ‘Shariqah’ in Arabic) and its ruling family, the Qawasim (singular: Qasimi), which is pronounced ‘Jawasim’ (singular: ‘Jasimi’) in Gulf Arabic—whom the British called the ‘Joasmees’. But Hajji Jasim’s name also makes investigations into his previous activities extremely difficult, for there were several Jasims on the Residency staff during the 1830s–1840s.

By all accounts, Hajji Jasim seems to have been a popular and competent agent, as evidenced by his long tenure in office. In Residency correspondence he was almost always referred to as ‘Haji Jassim, our Agent at Bahrein’. The fact that he was the first Bahrain agent to be consistently identified by name in Residency correspondence suggests that he was well-regarded by the Resident and Assistant Resident. Hajji Jasim reported on events along the Arab coast, from Kuwait to Qatar, on a frequent, often weekly, basis to Bushire.⁶¹ He also attended the Ruler of Bahrain’s *Majlis* from time to time and kept in contact with the Ruler of Najd, Amir Faisal bin Turki Al Sa’ud.⁶² Prior to Hajji Jasim’s appointment, the Ruler had normally met the Resident and Assistant Resident aboard ship during their visits to Bahrain. After Hajji Jasim’s appointment, the Ruler preferred to meet at the Native Agency instead, a change suggesting a good rapport between the two men.⁶³ This change soon became established practice. Hajji Jasim was the first native agent entrusted with enforcing the various anti-slave-trade treaties Britain had signed with the Ruler of Bahrain.⁶⁴ He was also the first agent to exercise extra-territorial judicial jurisdiction in the Ruler’s domains under the terms of the 1861 Friendly Convention. Like Khushal and Muhammad ‘Ali Safar, Hajji Jasim faced serious challenges to his position during his time as agent. These are examined in detail in Section 13 below.

⁶⁰ Capt Constable and Lt Stiffe, *The Persian Gulf Pilot* (1864), 113. Constable and Stiffe conducted their survey of the Gulf during 1857–60.

⁶¹ Hajji Jasim’s reports can be found in P/390/33, P/390/42, P/390/46, R/15/1/108, and R/15/1/111 (IOR).

⁶² Amir Faisal bin Turki to Jones (PRPG), 3 Nov. 1859, enclosed in letter of 27 Mar. 1860, L/P&S/5/504 (IOR).

⁶³ Kemball (Asst. PRPG) to Robertson (offg PRPG), 4 Nov. 1842, in consltn 5 of 21 Jan. 1843, P/390/32 (IOR).

⁶⁴ Jones (PRPG) to Hajji Jasim, 11 May 1856, no. 33, P/760 (IOR), 31.

5. HAJJI IBRAHIM BIN MUHSIN BIN RAJAB, 1862–4

A year after the signing of the 1861 Convention, the Resident decided to replace Hajji Jasim. Why is unclear, but one possibility is that the Resident wanted a more influential agent to exercise these newly conceded extra-territorial rights in Bahrain. Hajji Jasim's replacement was Hajji Ibrahim bin Muhsin bin Rajab.⁶⁵ Rajab family lore tells how their ancestors were Hijazi Arabs from Western Arabia. The family members in Bahrain today are the descendants of Shaikh Muhammad bin Hassan bin Rajab, a Shi'i 'alim (cleric) who lived in Bahrain in the sixteenth century. By the time Hajji Ibrahim was born, the Rajabs were an affluent Gulf merchant family in Manamah. At an early age he was sent to school in Bombay, where he remained until adulthood. It was likely during this time that he became a naturalized British Indian subject.⁶⁶ He returned to Bahrain to take over the family business sometime in the 1850s. By the early 1860s, he was one of the wealthiest merchants in Bahrain. One indication of this is the large stretch of land he owned in the desirable district of Ras al-Jufair a mile and a half south-east of Manamah. Although he spoke little or no English, his connections with British India and local influence were the likely reasons for the Resident asking him to become a British agent in 1862.⁶⁷

Hajji Ibrahim's tenure in office was very short, owing to factors that had nothing to do with Hajji Ibrahim himself. In the year of his appointment, the Government of Bombay cut funding for the Resident's Assistant. The following year, the India Office disbanded the Gulf Squadron along with the Indian Navy for ill-considered reasons, and British naval visits to Bahrain ceased.⁶⁸ The ships of the former Gulf Squadron were moved to Bombay and placed under the command of the newly formed Bombay Marine, where they remained 'on call' for the Gulf in case of emergency. The Resident was unhappy with losing his Assistant and decided to make some changes himself. He believed that the Rs. 960 that Hajji Ibrahim received annually from the Residency could be put to better use. Periodic visits on an

⁶⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, all information about Ibrahim Rajab is from interviews with his great-great-great-nephew, Khalil Rajab, 1999 (Bahrain).

⁶⁶ See entry for 'Hajee Ebrahim, Bahreinee' in Pelly, 'Return of British Subjects and British Protected Persons' (1869), 143.

⁶⁷ Wood (HMIS *Hugh Rose*, Bahrain) to Disbrowe (offg PRPG), 9 Apr. 1862, R/15/1/183 (IOR), 43a.

⁶⁸ For details, see Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 564–5; Low, *History of the Indian Navy, 1613–1863*, ii. 556–75; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis on Naval Arrangements in the Persian Gulf, 1862–1905*, 11–18.

as-needed basis and occasional reports from the British *Bania* community in Manamah would be sufficient, he thought, to maintain political relations with the Ruler of Bahrain and to look after British interests on the island and along the Northern Arab coast of the Gulf. He further proposed the creation of a new post at the Residency headquarters, that of Uncovenanted Assistant, which would cost the Residency Rs. 3,600 annually. Hajji Ibrahim's salary would cover around a quarter of that. In 1864, the Resident implemented this plan and abolished the Agency.⁶⁹ In the succeeding years, Hajji Ibrahim remained in Bahrain managing his profitable business until the 1869 civil war, when the British evacuated him. With the island in chaos, Ibrahim chose to return to Bombay, where he spent the rest of his life. Sometime in the 1870s, he began a land reclamation project in a swamp-land area on the outskirts of Bombay, upon which Ibrahim Square now stands.⁷⁰

Hajji Ibrahim's departure from Bahrain did not end his family's connection with Britain. His brother, Hajji Muhammad, continued the family business in the Gulf. Through Ibrahim, Muhammad was able to become a naturalized British Indian subject and obtain British-protected person status for his son, 'Abd Allah. This later proved invaluable for their business on a number of occasions when their goods were stolen. The Resident intervened on their behalf every time.⁷¹ A few years later, around 1873, Gray Paul & Co. (the Gulf agents for the BI Line) recruited 'Abd Allah as their local Agent in Bahrain, most likely because of his family's close connections with Britain and good relations with the Ruler. Soon after, in 1875, the British Indian Postal Service appointed him its Sub-Post Master for Eastern Arabia, a job he held until 1884. He remained the BI Agent in Bahrain until his death in 1889.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ross (PRPG) to Indian For. Dept, 2 Aug. 1889, qtd in a memorandum by Prideaux (Asst. PRPG), 14 Aug. 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 18–28; acting Sec. of Bombay Govt to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 1 Apr. 1871, P/759 (IOR), 289; Tuson, *Records of the British Residency*, 6.

⁷⁰ Way (Asst. PRPG aboard the *Dalhousie*) to Ibrahim bin Muhsin bin Rajab (Bahrain), 15 Sept. 1869, L/P&S/9/15 (IOR), 552; Pelly to Ibrahim (Bombay), 1 Sept., 28 Nov., and 4 Dec. 1871, R/15/1/182 (IOR); interviews with Khalil Rajab (great-great-great-nephew of Ibrahim), 1999 (Bahrain).

⁷¹ Entry for 'Hajee Mahomed, Bahreinee' in Pelly, 'Return of British Subjects and British Protected Persons' (1869), 143; Pelly (PRPG) to Muhammad, 12 Oct. 1870, R/15/1/182 (IOR); Pelly to Shaikh 'Isa (Ruler of Bahrain), 2 Mar. 1872, *ibid.*; memorandum entitled 'Claims at Bahrain' by S. Smith (Asst. PRPG), L/P&S/9/16 (IOR).

⁷² Pelly (PRPG) to Shaikh 'Isa (Ruler of Bahrain), 12 Feb. 1872, R/15/1/182 (IOR); Gray Paul to Ross (PRPG), 10 May 1873, L/P&S/9/22 (IOR); Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, appendix K, 2449; Saif, *al-Ma'atam fi al-Bahrain*, 130.

6. YEARS OF ABEYANCE, 1865–71

For eight years the Resident continued to receive reports from the *Bania* community in Manamah, on occasion sending his *Munshis* in Bushire, Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar (later Bahrain Agent) and Hajji Abu'l Qasim Behbahani (later Sharjah Agent), as Confidential Agents to investigate incidents. In the absence of a British agent, the Ruler sent an agent of his own to Bushire from time to time to discuss urgent matters with the Resident.

Without regular contact between himself and British political representatives, Shaikh Muhammad bin Khalifah Al Khalifah (r.1843–68) became contemptuous of the Resident and involved himself in activities detrimental to British interests in Bahrain, Qatar, and Hasa.⁷³ Eventually the Resident decided that the Shaikh must go. In early 1868, he forced Shaikh Muhammad from power and recognized his younger brother, Shaikh 'Ali bin Khalifah, as the new Ruler.⁷⁴ With this recent disturbance in Bahraini affairs, the Resident briefly considered re-establishing the Native Agency to encourage stability on the island and to promote confidence in the new Ruler. The question then turned to whom he should appoint. The Resident considered only Persians for the post, but he had his doubts. He accordingly wrote to Bombay in April 1868:

It might be convenient to have a News Agent at Bahrein. But the inconvenience would be that a Persian [holding] this office might afterwards become troublesome in respect to protection. On the whole, I should prefer for the present to [receive] intelligence from Bahrein from our own Indian subjects settled there without having a recognised Agent.⁷⁵

The Resident let the matter rest until the summer of 1869, when civil war again threatened the island and the need for a British presence to act as a stabilizing influence became acute. In August, Shaikh 'Ali sent his Agent, Sayyid Munjid bin Darwish, to Bushire with an urgent request. The deposed Ruler of Bahrain, Shaikh Muhammad, was plotting his return to power and had sent his son to Riyadh to ask the Ruler of Najd for help. Meanwhile, he established an unlikely alliance with the exiled al-'Abd Allah branch of the Al Khalifah in Qatif (the sons and grandsons of Shaikh

⁷³ For details, see Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 51–3.

⁷⁴ For details, see Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 674–5; Farah, *Protection and Politics in Bahrain*, 29–30.

⁷⁵ Pelly (PRPG) to Bombay Govt, 4 Apr. 1868, qtd in acting Sec. of Bombay Govt to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 1 Apr. 1871, P/759 (IOR), 289.

‘Abd Allah, whom Shaikh Muhammad had ousted from power in 1843). A grandson of Shaikh ‘Abd Allah began collecting an invasion force of Bani Hajir bedouin from Hasa to join Shaikh Muhammad in his reconquest of Bahrain. ‘Under these circumstances,’ Sayyid Munjid told the Resident,

Bahrain will not settle, the inhabitants will be uneasy and in fear, and communication to and from the place will cease. I beg you will either appoint a person on your part to reside in Bahrain and hoist the British Flag, or detach a Government vessel to remain there or to frequent the place very often, in order that the enemy may not attempt to come and the people may settle and enjoy peace and quiet.⁷⁶

Despite this urgent request, the Resident did nothing. Granted, he had no naval force at his disposal, but he still could have sent a British residency agent to Bahrain with a detachment of the Residency guard as a show of support for Shaikh ‘Ali in the face of the growing danger. Indeed, the Resident was bound by the 1861 Convention to defend Bahrain. Had the Resident heeded Sayyid Munjid’s request, the outbreak of Bahrain’s second civil war the following month might have been averted. At the time, the leader of the al-‘Abd Allah, Shaikh Muhammad bin ‘Abd Allah (the eldest son of Shaikh ‘Abd Allah), was residing peacefully in Rifa’ Fort in Bahrain, having earlier reconciled his differences with Shaikh ‘Ali. When the al-‘Abd Allah invasion force landed near Rifa’ in early September 1869, however, Shaikh Muhammad joined his kinsmen in the fray. Shaikh ‘Ali was killed at the ensuing Battle at Rifa’. Shaikh Muhammad bin Khalifah was now back in power. He took up residence in his old fort on Abu Mahir Island, off the coast of Muharraq, and permitted the Bani Hajir to plunder Manamah as a reward for their help. The bedouin did not spare British subjects and some *Banias* lost considerable property. It was not long before the al-‘Abd Allah turned against Shaikh Muhammad bin Khalifah. Within days, they overthrew him and imprisoned him in his fort. Their leader, Shaikh Muhammad bin ‘Abd Allah, then assumed the rulership of Bahrain. He made no attempt to control the Bani Hajir, who continued to loot Manamah. The Resident sailed to Bahrain in mid-September to investigate matters personally. Having confirmed recent events, he offered protection to British subjects and dependants on the island. The *Banias* chose to stay, despite the risk, but Hajji Ibrahim Rajab (Agent 1862–4) accepted the offer and left aboard the Resident’s ship for Bombay.⁷⁷

The growing instability in the Gulf since the abolition of the Gulf Squadron, amplified by recent events in Bahrain, convinced the British

⁷⁶ Sayyid Munjid bin Darwish to Pelly (PRPG), 2 Aug. 1869, L/P&S/9/15 (IOR).

⁷⁷ Way (Asst. PRPG aboard the *Dalhousie*) to Ibrahim bin Muhsin bin Rajab (Bahrain), 15 Sept. 1869, *ibid.*, 552; interviews with Khalil Rajab (great-great-nephew of Ibrahim), 1999 (Bahrain).

Government of the need for gunboats in the Gulf. So prompted, the India Office and the Admiralty worked out an arrangement whereby the Government of India would pay for the re-establishment of the Gulf Squadron and the Royal Navy would supply the ships, officers, and crew. The reconstituted Squadron returned to the Gulf soon after, in November 1869. As the Royal Navy was unable to send any ships of its own for almost two years, the old Gulf Squadron gunboats *Clyde*, *Dalhousie*, *Hugh Rose*, and *Sinde* (now of the Bombay Marine) were sent instead.⁷⁸ The Resident immediately sailed for Bahrain with the Squadron. He captured Shaikhs Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah and Muhammad bin Khalifah, and arranged for the installation of Shaikh 'Ali's 21-year-old son, Shaikh 'Isa, as the new Ruler.⁷⁹ See Photo 4 for a picture of Shaikh 'Isa.

In the aftermath of a second civil war and with a young, new Ruler in Bahrain, the Resident reconsidered the need for 'a recognised Agent' in Bahrain. Six months after Shaikh 'Isa's installation as Ruler, the Resident wrote to Bombay recommending the revival of the post.⁸⁰ But the Government of Bombay rejected the idea, remarking that 'the appointment of a Native Agent [is] not desirable at a place where there is a great hazard of disturbance, and where an individual so appointed would be certain to assume a political character. The appointment would, perhaps, be of use to the Ruler of Bahrein; but the Governor in Council much questions whether it would be beneficial to us.'⁸¹

Eight months later, the Resident again recommended the post's revival to the Government of Bombay. With Shaikh 'Isa's enemies imprisoned at Asirgarh Fort in Central India, and with the Royal Navy now patrolling Bahraini waters on a regular basis, peace and stability were returning to Bahrain.⁸² 'There can be little doubt that the presence of a British Agent at Bahrein would tend to diffuse a feeling of confidence', the Resident argued. In fact, the local desire for a British agent was so strong, he believed that 'there would be little difficulty in securing the services of a person of

⁷⁸ Saldanha (ed.), *Précis on Naval Arrangements in the Persian Gulf, 1862–1905*, 6.

⁷⁹ For details, see Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs*, 21–7; Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 682–3, 822–3.

⁸⁰ Pelly (PRPG) to Bombay Govt, 23 May 1870, qtd. in acting Sec. of Bombay Govt to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 1 Apr. 1871, P/759 (IOR), 289.

⁸¹ Acting Sec. of Bombay Govt to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 1 Apr. 1871, *ibid.* 289.

⁸² The British sent three members of the Al Khalifah to its 'princely prisons' in India at Asirgarh Fort near Khandwa and later Chunar Fort near Benares: (1) Shaikh Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah, who died there in 1877; (2) Shaikh 'Ali bin Nasir bin 'Abd Allah, who was released in 1880; and (3) Shaikh Muhammad bin Khalifah, who was released in 1887. The British also sent two allies of the al-'Abd Allah to the same prisons: one died in 1873, the other was released in 1880. See Young to Aitchinson, 2 July 1871, no. 134, P/760 (IOR), 88–9; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs*, 27.

good family and position without money remuneration'.⁸³ The Bombay Government, encouraged by this development, admitted that conditions did appear more suitable for the re-establishment of the British Agency in Bahrain. But Bombay had one reservation: 'as a general rule, these small Political Agencies in the hands of natives of the country are, in the opinion of His Excellency in Council, more likely to be embarrassing than useful'.⁸⁴

Events in Najd in April 1871 soon changed everything. That month, the Ottoman Governor (*Vali*) of Baghdad Province, Midhat Pasha, sent an expeditionary force to Najd and Hasa on the pretext of re-establishing peace and stability in the region.⁸⁵ Soon the Ottoman flag was flying along much of the Arab coast, from Kuwait to Qatar. The Ottomans established garrisons at Hofuf, Qatif, and Bida'. On 28 April, the British Resident in Baghdad sent an urgent cable to Bombay: the Ottoman Porte had just informed the British Ambassador in Istanbul that 'they intend establishing supremacy over Bahrein, Maskat, and [the] independent tribes of Southern Arabia'.⁸⁶ The Ottomans soon retracted this statement, but the British remained suspicious of Ottoman intentions. In late November, an Ottoman commodore arrived at Bahrain to settle a dispute concerning an Ottoman-protected messenger who had been murdered on the island. The Resident sent a British Residency Agent, Major Charles Grant, to Bahrain to watch Ottoman movements closely and to provide a temporary British presence. It was obvious that Britain needed to re-establish a permanent presence in Bahrain in order to send a clear message to the Ottoman Porte that the island was under British protection. In October, the Resident again wrote to Bombay asking for permission to re-establish the British Agency in Bahrain—at least as a temporary measure. Under the changed circumstances, the Governor of Bombay decided to grant the Resident's request in late November as a temporary arrangement, pending final approval by the Indian Foreign Department, which was duly given two months later.⁸⁷ Once re-established, however, the Agency continued to operate until the end of the century.

⁸³ Pelly (PRPG) to Bombay Govt, 28 Jan. 1871, P/759 (IOR), 289.

⁸⁴ Acting Sec. of Bombay Govt to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 1 Apr. 1871, *ibid.* 289.

⁸⁵ For a full account of the Najd expedition see Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs*, 30–3; Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 718–38; Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, 16–33; Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 56.

⁸⁶ Herbert (PR in Baghdad) to Bombay Govt, 28 Apr. 1871, in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs*, 30.

⁸⁷ Pelly (PRPG) to Bombay, 7 Oct. 1871, P/478 (IOR), 815; Resolution no. 5739 of the Govt of Bombay, 29 Nov. 1871, *ibid.* 815; Indian For. Dept to Bombay For. Dept, 28 Jan. 1872, P/479 (IOR), 178; Resolution nos. 1213 and 1215 of the Govt of Bombay, 28 Feb. 1872, *ibid.*

7. HAJJI ABD AL-NABI KHAN SAFAR, 1872–84

In January 1872, the Resident selected an affluent Gulf merchant in his late sixties to be the new Bahrain Agent: Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar.⁸⁸ 'Abd al-Nabi was the son of Mirza Muhammad 'Ali, who had been Britain's agent in Bahrain over thirty years before. He had been a British-protected person since the 1830s and had worked for the Resident as a confidential agent since the 1840s. By the 1850s, he was one of the principal merchants of Bushire and was the local agent for a number of British companies in the Gulf, including Lynch & Co (Lynch Brothers), a prominent British firm in Ottoman 'Iraq and Persia.⁸⁹ An indication of both his affluence and his relationship with the British is the loan he made in 1863 to the Commander of HMIS *Clyde* for the large sum of Rs. 8,000 (Rs. 3,696), a loan which enabled the *Clyde* to return to India after the Gulf Resident had refused to pay any funds out of the Residency's treasury. This sum was about one and a half times the Resident's large monthly salary.⁹⁰

'Abd al-Nabi was born around 1803 in Hillah in the Ottoman Province of Baghdad. In 1809, he moved to Mocha with his father, where he grew up. In 1829, he likely accompanied his father to Bahrain, where he probably served as Deputy British Agent from 1834 until his father's dismissal in 1842. After 'Abd al-Nabi moved to Bushire around 1842–5, he served as the Resident's Confidential Agent, carrying out special missions for him around the Gulf. During 1869–71, for instance, 'Abd al-Nabi collected Qatar's annual tribute payments to Bahrain, which the Resident was responsible for mediating.⁹¹ By 1872, 'Abd al-Nabi was both well-known to the Resident and well-qualified to act as Britain's political representative in Bahrain. But more than this, the Resident had appointed someone with around fifty years' worth of business, social, and political contacts throughout the Gulf. He

⁸⁸ British Minister (Tehran) to Shah's For. Minister, 12 Jan., 22 Jan., 4 Mar. 1875, P/775 (IOR), 237, 239. 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, a Bahraini genealogist, estimates 'Abd al-Nabi was born in 1803.

⁸⁹ Statement by Jones (PRPG), 15 Nov. 1856 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain); 'Abd al-Nabi Safar and J. A. Malcolm (business partner) to PRPG, 11 Sept. 1855, L/P&S/5/485 (IOR); Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians*, 100.

⁹⁰ Statement by Comdr J. Sedley (SNOPG), 4 Apr. 1863 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain). The exchange rate at the time was roughly 1 kran = 0.462 rupee, 1 rupee = 2, 163 Krans. Issawi (ed) *Economic History of Iran*, 343; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of the Affairs of the Persian Coast and Islands, 1854–1905*, 69. The Resident's monthly salary was Rs. 2,400.

⁹¹ Muhammad bin Thani (Govr of Dohah) to Pelly (PRPG), 8 July 1869, L/P&S/9/15 (IOR), 389; Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 55–6.

had also appointed the head of a Gulf family that was well-regarded by the new Ruler of Bahrain, Shaikh 'Isa bin 'Ali Al Khalifah (r. 1869–1923/32).

Both 'Abd al-Nabi and his son, Agha Muhammad Rahim, acting on the Resident's orders, played an active role in Shaikh 'Isa's assumption of the rulership of Bahrain in the wake of the shaikhdом's second civil war.⁹² One account states that when Shaikh 'Isa returned to Bahrain in early December 1869, he found his father's house in Muharraq in ruins and the government treasury empty. 'Abd al-Nabi and Muhammad Rahim handed over the use of the Safar family house in Bahrain and presented the Shaikh 'with a gift of about 100,000 Muhammed Shahi Riels [Rs. 44,400] for the purpose of providing the preliminary requirements of the Emirate'.⁹³ In appreciation for this support and on the Resident's recommendation, Shaikh 'Isa granted the Safars a one per cent concession on customs duty in perpetuity and gave them some control over the island's pearling fleet.⁹⁴

Relations between Shaikh 'Isa and the Safars were very close for the next twenty-five years, although the Al Khalifah never intermarried with them—possibly for political reasons (to limit the Safars' influence with the ruling family) and possibly for religious reasons (because the Safars were not Sunni). Successive Residents took advantage of these close relations, selecting agents for the British Agency in Bahrain exclusively from the Safar family until the end of the century. These were more than patronage appointments, however; the Safars were generally the most qualified men to employ as British representatives in Bahrain.

The Safar agents often placed family members in key posts within their agencies—as Table 16 and Figure 1 show. 'Abd al-Nabi Safar likely worked as Deputy British Agent in Bahrain under his father, Muhammad 'Ali Safar, between 1834 and 1842. 'Abd al-Nabi's brother, 'Abd al-Rasul Safar (Mocha Agent c.1829–c.1856), most likely employed his son, Ahmad Safar, as Deputy Agent. Later, Ahmad occasionally served as acting Agent in Bahrain between 1872 and 1884 while his uncle, 'Abd al-Nabi, was away on business. He eventually succeeded his uncle as Agent in 1884. Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar's nephew, Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif, served as Deputy Agent in Bahrain between 1893 and 1900. Like Ahmad, Muhammad Khalil also served as acting Agent during his uncle's many

⁹² See the PRPG's many dispatches concerning the crisis in Bahrain from Sept. to Dec. 1869, L/P&S/9/15 (IOR), 473 ff.

⁹³ 'Bahrain in the Last Two Centuries' (article translated from an unidentified Iranian newspaper, c.1960s), Muhammad Tahir Sharif mss, Bushiri Archive, Bahrain. Riels replaced krans in 1932 and are of equal value. The exchange rate in 1869 was 1 kran = 0.444 rupee, 1 rupee = 2.252 krans.

⁹⁴ Ibid.; Meade (PRPG) to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 2 Oct. 1897, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR).

business trips abroad. The Safar family's business operations seem to have been intertwined with the family's operation of the British agencies in Bahrain and Mocha; both agencies appear to have been run as family businesses.

'Abd al-Nabi Safar, like Hajji Jasim before him, appears to have been a competent, well-regarded agent. He was referred to in Residency correspondence variously as 'the Confidential Agent for the Arab Coast', 'the Residency News Agent on the Arab Coast', 'the News Agent, Bahrein', and 'the Native Agent at Bahrein'—illustrating the inconsistent use of titles discussed in Chapter 3.⁹⁵ Although the first two titles were only used for the first three years of 'Abd al-Nabi's residency in Bahrain, there does not seem to have been a change in his duties. He continued to write regular intelligence reports on mainland affairs in addition to his duties in Bahrain.⁹⁶ The Agent's duties greatly increased in early 1881 when the Government of India ratified an Exclusive Agreement, which Shaikh 'Isa had signed in December 1880. The Exclusive Agreement was intended to shield the Ruler from increasing Ottoman attempts to incorporate his territory into the Ottoman Empire. The drafting of the agreement was prompted by an attempt in November 1880 to establish an Ottoman presence in Bahrain in the form of a Government coal depot. In the Agreement, Shaikh 'Isa bound himself and his successors 'to abstain from entering into negotiations, or making treaties of any sort, with any State or Government other than the British'.⁹⁷ Although 'customary friendly correspondence with the local authorities of neighbouring states on business of minor importance' was still permitted, the agreement effectively placed the Ruler's foreign relations under British control, making them the business of the Native Agent. The Agent was required to be present at all meetings between the Ruler and foreigners when political issues were to be discussed.

On at least five occasions between 1871 and 1879 the Gulf Resident posted British residency agents on the island when instability and invasion threatened Bahrain, largely as a result of the Ottoman presence on the Arab coast. These agents—Major Sidney Smith (1871), Major Charles Grant (1872, 1873, 1874), and Captain Edward Durand (1879)—took charge of the Bahrain Agency during their stays, which were always in the cold

⁹⁵ Ross (PRPG) to British Minister (Tehran), 12 Jan. 1875; Under-Sec. of Indian For. Dept to British Minister (Tehran), 24 Feb. 1875, P/775 (IOR), 222, 235; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of the Affairs of the Persian Coast and Islands, 1854–1905*, 127; 'Abd al-Nabi to Ross (PRPG), 27 Dec. 1878; Ross to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 7 Jan. 1879, P/1390 (IOR), 141, 148; Ross (PRPG) to PR in Baghdad, 11 Feb. 1879, P/1390 (IOR), 144.

⁹⁶ Examples of his reports in the IOR can be found in P/1390 (pp. 141, 148, 152–4, 159, 167–9, 243), R/15/1/182, and R/15/1/193.

⁹⁷ Article 1, Agreement of 1880, in Aitchison, *Treaties*, xi. *Persian Gulf*, 237.

weather months. Commenting on Durand's residency in 1879, for instance, the Resident reported that 'this measure had a satisfactory effect, and ... by the month of April confidence was so far restored at Bahrain as to permit the withdrawal of the Political Officer and [Indian Army] escort before the setting-in of the intense heat of summer'.⁹⁸ British residency agents were also dispatched to Sharjah every winter during 1937–47.

The Resident's mention of an escort highlights the key difference between the native agents and the British residency agents who temporarily replaced them. Although the native agents spoke better Arabic, knew the region better, and had a greater network of contacts than their British counterparts, their personal status fell far short of a British officer's. This difference was symbolized by the impressive Indian Army guard that invariably accompanied British political officers. Even though these officers were dependent on the native agents and their staffs for information about local affairs during their stays in Bahrain and Sharjah, they had a recognized authority and official presence in the eyes of Ottoman, Persian, and European officials in the Gulf that the native agents clearly did not have. But the Resident was always short-staffed and could not afford to station a British political officer on anything more than a temporary, as-needed basis. More often, Residents simply stationed a gunboat or two off the coast as a deterrent to those coveting towns and territory under their protection.

As Bahrain became increasingly the target of Ottoman, French, and American interests in the late nineteenth century, Residents encountered a corresponding increase in the number of events necessitating a stronger British presence on the island. By 1897, the Resident concluded that the Native Agent in Manamah could no longer provide an effective British political presence. The British residency agents of 1873–9 were an early sign of things to come.

8. HAJJI AHMAD KHAN SAFAR, 1884–91

When 'Abd al-Nabi died in July 1884 at the age of 80 or thereabouts, his nephew, Hajji Ahmad Khan Safar⁹⁹ was appointed as the new agent.¹⁰⁰ Ahmad was born and raised in Mocha, where his father, 'Abd al-Rasul

⁹⁸ Govt of India, *Report on the Admin. of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for 1878–9*, 5.

⁹⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, all information about Ahmad Safar is from interviews with his great-grandsons, Nader al-Safar, 1999–2004 (Bahrain), and Jan al-Safar, 2000–2003 (Altrincham, UK).

¹⁰⁰ Govt of India, *Report on the Admin. of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for 1884–5*, 10.

Safar, had served as the East India Company's Agent from c.1829 until sometime after 1855.¹⁰¹ He may have also served as his father's Deputy Agent. His first wife, Zahrah, was the daughter of Mullah Jafar, a prominent *munshi* at the British Residency in 'Aden who was a colleague and friend of Ahmad's father.¹⁰² Sometime during 1856–7, possibly after his father's death, Ahmad moved to Bushire to live with his uncle, 'Abd al-Nabi. Soon after, the Gulf Resident appointed him to the Residency staff as a *munshi* and occasionally deputized him as a confidential agent on special missions around the Gulf.¹⁰³ In 1871, after sixteen years on the Residency staff, Ahmad petitioned to become a naturalized British subject. The Government of Bombay granted his request and issued him with a British Indian passport, like other members of his family before him.¹⁰⁴ After the Resident appointed Ahmad's uncle as Bahrain Agent in 1872, Ahmad occasionally stood in as acting Agent during his uncle's business trips abroad once or twice a year.¹⁰⁵ At the time of Ahmad's permanent appointment to Bahrain in 1884, he had been in British service for about thirty years and was in his sixties. He appears to have enjoyed an especially close friendship with Shaikh 'Isa, for the Ruler presented him with a horse and two date plantations south-west of Manamah, one of which remains in the family to this day.

Ahmad's residency saw a further expansion of the Native Agent's authority in Bahrain. As previously mentioned, Bahrainis involved in legal cases outside Bahrain during 1861–1971 were entitled to British assistance and protection.¹⁰⁶ In 1886, a case developed between Shaikh Ahmad bin 'Ali Al Khalifah (the Ruler of Bahrain's brother), and Ahmad bin Mahdi (an Ottoman subject in Qatif). The Agent referred the case to the acting Resident for settlement in May, pointing out the impossibility of Shaikh Ahmad receiving payment without the cooperation of the Ottoman District Governor (*Kaymakam*) of Qatif District (*Kaza*). The acting Resident then

¹⁰¹ For details, see Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 24, 45–6, 48, 64, 73, 132, 366; Kour, *History of Aden*, 124–5.

¹⁰² See Gavin, *Aden under British Rule*, 35, 45–8, 65–6, 71, 87–8, 128, 364–5.

¹⁰³ See e.g. Pelly (PRPG) to Ahmad Safar, 26 Nov. 1863, R/15/1/1818 (IOR).

¹⁰⁴ Resolution no. 6220 of the Govt of Bombay, 23 Dec. 1871, P/478 (IOR), 863; Pelly to British Chargé d'Affaires (Tehran), 2 Sept. 1869, L/P&S/9/15 (IOR).

¹⁰⁵ See e.g. Ahmad to Ross (PRPG), 16 Jan. 1873, L/P&S/9/22 (IOR); Ahmad to Ross, 12 May 1874, L/P&S/9/24 (IOR), 995; Ahmad to Ross, 8 Aug. 1874, L/P&S/9/25 (IOR), 238–92; Ahmad to Ross, 2 Sept. 1874, P/773 (IOR), 111; Muhammad bin Sayyid (Qatar) to Ahmad, 15 Feb. 1879, P/1390 (IOR), 167; Shaikh 'Isa to Ross (PRPG), 24 Feb. 1879, *ibid.* 169; Shaikh Jasim Al Thani (Ruler of Qatar) to Ahmad, 31 July 1881, R/15/1/187 (IOR).

¹⁰⁶ Art. 4, Friendly Convention of 1861, in Aitchison, *Treaties*, xi. *Persian Gulf*, 235–6.

wrote to the British Political Resident in Baghdad, who in turn wrote to the British Assistant Political Agent in Basrah to address the matter to the Ottoman Governor (*Vali*) of Basrah—the ultimate superior of the District Governor of Qatif. The Resident finally received a reply six months later in November that the Governor of Basrah had refused to recognize Shaikh Ahmad's right to British protection and that the Shaikh should settle the case in an Ottoman court. Shaikh Ahmad sent an agent to Hofuf with a request for the Regional Governor (*Mutasarrif*) of Hasa Region (*Sancak*) to settle the case, but the Regional Governor would not consider it. The case had the potential of becoming an international incident if Shaikh Ahmad chose to attack Ahmad bin Mahdi in Qatif, or seize his property in Bahrain, but both men died in 1888, considerably simplifying matters for the British. The Resident handed the case back to Ahmad Safar, asking him to use his personal influence to try to settle the case with the men's representatives. Ahmad mediated between the Bahraini and Ottoman parties and settled the case to everyone's satisfaction in January 1889.¹⁰⁷

9. TEMPORARY AGENTS, 1891–3

Ahmad Safar died in November 1891, after only seven years in office. The Resident was unable to find a suitable replacement immediately and, for the next two years, the Agency was staffed on a temporary basis. John Lorimer records that the Resident dispatched some of his *munshis* to Bahrain to watch over British interests for the four months after Ahmad's death. Who these men were remains a mystery, for the Residency had several *munshis* on staff at the time. The inadequacy of this arrangement and the importance of the post soon prompted the Resident to transfer the Lingah Agent, Hajji Muhammad Amin Bushiri (1877–1902), to Bahrain temporarily. Like Ahmad Safar, Muhammad Amin was a Persian subject with close connections to Bushire.¹⁰⁸

10. AGHA MUHAMMAD RAHIM SAFAR, 1893–1900

Muhammad Amin remained in Bahrain for over a year and a half until he was replaced by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar in late 1893. The acting Resident arranged for the new Agent's impressive arrival in Manamah aboard HMS *Lapwing* in mid-November.¹⁰⁹ Muhammad Rahim was the

¹⁰⁷ For details, see Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs*, 80.

¹⁰⁸ Interviews with 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, 1998–2007 (Bahrain).

¹⁰⁹ Crawford (acting PRPG) to Shaikh 'Isa, 15 Nov. 1893 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

grandson of Hajji Muhammad 'Ali (Agent 1834–42), the son of Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi (Agent 1872–84), and cousin of Hajji Ahmad (Agent 1884–91). For the past thirty years Muhammad Rahim had served as *Munshi* at the Residency in Bushire and had often been deputized as Confidential Agent to investigate matters throughout the Gulf. He had also served under his father as Deputy British Agent in Bahrain, in which capacity he made occasional trips to Qatar and Hasa to mediate in disputes between the local authorities and Indian merchants (British subjects).¹¹⁰ He was highly regarded by the Residency's British staff as 'a pleasant companion, a worthy friend, and an able public servant', 'possessed of ability and discretion', a 'very trustworthy' man who 'carried out his instructions with zeal [and] ability', 'who has repeatedly proved of great use in obtaining correct information, the securing of which required much tact, delicacy of management and personal influence.'¹¹¹ One Assistant Resident described him as

trustworthy, cautious, energetic, sincere and ever willing to do anything that might have been required of him. His knowledge of passing events in Bushire, the Gulf Ports, in Turkish Arabia, and in the interior of Persia is wonderful, as is also the influence he possesses in all these places. In fact it would be next to impossible for an Assistant Resident to be acquainted with much that is necessary for him to know if a sensible and faithful person like Mohamed Rahim were not available. And in so far as I am myself personally concerned, I consider I am much indebted to him for not only facilitating my work, but for enabling me to carry it out with credit to myself and I believe with satisfaction to my superiors.¹¹²

Muhammad Rahim was also friends with the Ruler of Bahrain, Shaikh 'Isa—one of the reasons why the acting Resident appointed him to Bahrain. Despite Muhammad Rahim's long, useful service to the Crown and his many commendations from British officers, he was later to be blamed by the Resident, perhaps unfairly, for the decline in effectiveness of the Native Agency. Certain problems caused by Muhammad Rahim's actions during

¹¹⁰ See e.g. Muhammad Rahim Safar (Basrah) to J. C. Edwards (Uncov'd Asst. PRPG), 13 Jan. 1872, L/P&S/5/269 (IOR); E. A. Fraser (Asst. PRPG) to Ross (PRPG), 5 June 1875, P/776 (IOR), 97; Muhammad Rahim (Bahrain) to Ross, Apr. 1881, L/P&S/9/66A (IOR); Capt Nesham (Comdr, HMS *Woodlark*) to Ross, 6 Nov. 1881, L/P&S/7/31 (IOR); Muhammad Rahim (Bahrain) to Ross, 2 Jan. 1882, L/P&S/9/66B (IOR); Govt of India, *Report on the Admin. of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for 1887–8*, 8.

¹¹¹ Statement by E. A. Fraser (Asst. PRPG), 9 Mar. 1876; statement by Ross (PRPG), 13 Apr. 1876; statement by Asst. Resident (signature unreadable), 20 Apr. 1883; Ravenshaw (Asst. PRPG) to Muhammad Rahim, 25 Oct. 1887; Statement by R. Halier (Asst. PRPG), 2 Mar. 1889 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

¹¹² Statement by J. Edward (Asst. PRPG), 21 Apr. 1877 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

1895–9 contributed to the rationale for abolishing the Native Agency in 1900. These issues will be examined at greater length in the next chapter.

Muhammad Rahim was born and raised in Bushire. At the time of his appointment to Bahrain in 1893, he was in his fifties and was head of the Safar family business in the Gulf, a position he had inherited from his father, Hajji ‘Abd al-Nabi, in 1884. Unlike his predecessors, Muhammad Rahim was consistently referred to as ‘the Residency Agent, Bahrain’. He employed his nephew and son-in-law, Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif, as his Deputy. When Shaikh ‘Isa’s son, Hamad, visited the Resident in Bushire in November 1897, he stayed at Muhammad Rahim’s large Bushire residence, *Bait Safar*, next to the British Residency—see Photo 2.¹¹³

Muhammad Rahim acquired Ottoman nationality in 1892, the year before his appointment to Bahrain, but the significance of this has never been completely explained.¹¹⁴ It likely had to do with his two large date plantations in the vicinity of Basrah, worth around Rs. 240,000, and Ottoman land law, which required all land sales to be registered with the *Tapu* (Land Registry) Department before legal title could be obtained. The same year in which Muhammad Rahim became an Ottoman subject, he sold one third of these plantations to a British Indian subject named Nasarwanji Dosabhai Fracis for Rs. 80,000. However, Muhammad Rahim registered the sale, not with the *Tapu* Department in Basrah, but with the *Awqaf* (Religious Endowments) Department in Baghdad, as well as with a notary public in Baghdad, the British Consulate in Basrah, and the British Vice-Consulate in Bushire. The very official-looking deed of sale fooled Fracis into believing he had obtained legal title to the land. A few years later, Fracis, who ran an arms importation business in Bushire, appointed Muhammad Rahim as his Sales Agent in Bahrain. In 1898, when Fracis refused to pay Muhammad Rahim an outstanding debt of Rs. 86,604 (£5,773) for arms sales in Bahrain, Muhammad Rahim confiscated Fracis’s property in Basrah. When Fracis turned to the Ottoman authorities for help, he found that they did not recognize his claim to legal title. For years

¹¹³ Declaration by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar [will of Hajji ‘Abd al-Nabi Safar], 20 Apr. 1886 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain); Prideaux (Asst. PRPG) to Meade (PRPG), 10 Nov 1897; memorandum by Gaskin (Extra Asst. PRPG), 2 Dec. 1897, R/15/1/315 (IOR).

¹¹⁴ Statement by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, 11 Nov. 1898; ‘Report on arms trade at Bahrein’ by Meade, 18 Nov. 1898, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR). Also see Farah, *Protection and Politics in Bahrain*, 93.

afterward, Fracis and his family tried to have the land returned, but without success.¹¹⁵

Muhammad Rahim was friends with not only Shaikh 'Isa in Bahrain, but also the Ruler of Kuwait, Shaikh Mubarak al-Sabah (r. 1896–1915). During the winter of 1898–9, the Resident took advantage of this friendship to assist him in the negotiation of the Anglo–Kuwaiti Exclusive Agreement of January 1899.¹¹⁶ The Exclusive Agreement, though kept secret at the time, brought Kuwait into the British fold by placing the shaikhdom's foreign relations under British control—at least in theory. The agreement was the shaikhdom's first step in its transformation into a British-protected state like the coastal shaikhdoms of the lower Gulf. The Resident reported to India that Muhammad Rahim had been of considerable assistance to him during these negotiations.¹¹⁷ Muhammad Rahim was even made a signatory to the agreement, his name appearing just below Shaikh Mubarak's. In the 200-year history of British treaty relations with the Gulf shaikhdoms, only one other native agent had the distinction of being a treaty signatory: Mirza Mahdi 'Ali Khan (Native Resident in Bushire), who negotiated the Anglo–'Omani Engagement of 1798.

11. HAJJI ABBAS BIN MUHAMMAD BIN FADHIL, 1900

In January 1900, Muhammad Rahim became so ill that he decided to see the Residency Surgeon in Bushire. He left Bahrain on 17 January, assisted by his nephew and Deputy. He must have believed he would be gone only a short while, for he made no arrangements for political representation in Bahrain during his absence and left the Agency building in the temporary charge of his senior *Munshi*, Hajji 'Abbas bin Muhammad bin Fadhil—see Photo 3. Hajji 'Abbas was a *Bahrani* from Manamah of around 50 years of age. The *Baharinah* (singular: *Bahrani*) are Shi'i Gulf Arabs, the original inhabitants of Bahrain. Before the 1930s, many farmed the land in winter

¹¹⁵ Bill of sale by Muhammad Rahim Safar to N. D. Fracis, 3 Aug. 1892; Muhammad Rahim to Prideaux (Asst. PRPG), 13 Aug. 1898; Muhammad Rahim to Meade, 21 Apr. 1898; power of attorney by Louisa Fracis [widow of N. D. Fracis] to Percy James Fracis, 14 Oct. 1909 (all documents in Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

¹¹⁶ Exclusive Agreement of 1899, Aitchison, *Treaties*, xi. *Persian Gulf*, 262; Slot, *Mubarak al-Sabah* (2005), 88, 111; Alghanim, *The Reign of Mubarak al-Sabah, Shaikh of Kuwait*, 37, 73–6.

¹¹⁷ Meade (PRPG) to Sec. of Indian For. Dept., 5 June 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 4a–6b. For an account of Meade's negotiations with the Ruler of Kuwait, see Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, 110–12.

and dived for pearls in summer. They accounted for the vast majority of Bahrain's rural population and were generally characterized as peasant farmers. Lorimer estimated that the *Baharinah* comprised around 40 per cent of the island's population in 1905. Hajji 'Abbas was a valuable member of Muhammad Rahim's staff. He had previously served on the agency staff of 'Abd Allah Rajab (local BI Agent c.1873–89) and was the BI Agent briefly himself during 1889–90 after 'Abd Allah's death.¹¹⁸

Muhammad Rahim and Muhammad Khalil arrived in Bushire on 18 January. The Resident immediately cabled India, proposing to send one of his uncovenanted assistants, J. Calcott Gaskin, to Bahrain as a temporary replacement.¹¹⁹ After ten days it was evident that Muhammad Rahim's recovery would take considerably longer than expected, if he recovered at all. Muhammad Khalil chose to stay with his ailing uncle and asked the Resident to deputize Hajji 'Abbas as acting Native Residency Agent until he returned to Bahrain:

Sir, My uncle has left the work of the Agency to our old *monshi*, Haji Abbas, who has our full confidences & reliance to act for the present till I proceed there with your kind permission, but in the meantime a letter of recommendation is very necessary to be issued to the Chief to the effect that he should give effect to Haji Abbas's representation on behalf of the *Banyans*.¹²⁰

On 2 February, the Indian Foreign Secretary cabled Bushire approving the Resident's proposal to send Gaskin to Bahrain.¹²¹ Yet, the next day, the Resident wrote to Shaikh 'Isa:

I have the honor to inform you that, owing to the absence of Agha Mahomed Rahim from Bahrein, his *munshi*, Haji Abbas, will carry on the current duties of the [Native] Residency Agent there. I would, therefore, request that you will be so good as to accept & give effect to any representations which Haji Abbas may have to make to you on behalf of British subjects residing in Bahrein.¹²²

Hajji 'Abbas was to become the last Native Agent in Bahrain. Muhammad Rahim died on 9 February, one week after Hajji 'Abbas's appointment. That same day, Gaskin left by steamer for Bahrain, arriving on the afternoon of 10 February.

¹¹⁸ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, ii. *Geographical and Statistical*, 238; Gray Paul & Co. (Bushire) to Mirza Muhammad Isma'il Qadhi (Bushire), 29 Dec. 1889 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

¹¹⁹ Meade (PRPG) to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 18 Jan. 1900, reg. no. 289/1900, L/P&S/7/120 (IOR).

¹²⁰ Muhammad Khalil to Meade (PRPG), 27 Jan. 1900, R/15/1/330 (IOR).

¹²¹ Sec. of Indian For. Dept to Meade (PRPG), 2 Feb. 1900, reg. no. 289/1900, L/P&S/7/120 (IOR).

¹²² Meade (PRPG) to Shaikh 'Isa, 3 Feb. 1900, R/15/1/330 (IOR).

Gaskin's appointment was only temporary at first, as the Resident wanted a graded officer for the post. In the end, practicality won out and Gaskin's appointment was made permanent eight months later—making him the first gazetted political officer to be appointed to Bahrain. Gaskin's title was accordingly changed from British Residency Agent to Assistant Political Agent, marking the official abolition of the Native Agency. This eight-month transition period from Native Agency to Political Agency did not go smoothly, however. Before the new Political Agency building was completed in December 1902, Gaskin lived and worked on the top floor of the old Native Agency.¹²³ Presumably, he assumed charge of the Agency immediately upon arrival, just as previous British Residency Agents had done in the 1870s. Yet, strangely, Hajji 'Abbas continued as acting Native Residency Agent for the remainder of the month, if not longer. On 24 February, he settled a Rs. 200 claim between a *Bania* and a Bahraini. The next day he wrote to the Assistant Resident in Bushire:

After the delivery of the Resident's letter regarding my appointment as the acting Political Residency Agent here to Sheikh Isa, I paid him a visit. A conversation with reference to British subjects' affairs ensued between us. He said he would instruct his officials to preserve the rights of British subjects. I now beg to enclose herewith a receipt passed by Kampan bin Wishan Banian for the sum of Rs. 200 being the balance of his claim against Rashid. This is one of the matters which I have settled in these two days.¹²⁴

This dispatch appears in the Residency copy book for Bahrain in the original Arabic with an English translation on the back. The Arabic letter is clearly signed by Hajji 'Abbas, who gives his title as *Na'ib Wakiliyah al-Balyuz* (Resident's Deputy Agent). The English translation only lists the letter as being from the 'Residency Agent, Bahrein', giving no name, an omission which has resulted in its wrong identification as Gaskin's first report from Bahrain.

Hajji 'Abbas's report raises questions about the precise arrangements for the handing over of the Native Agency. For at least a month, even though Gaskin spoke fluent Arabic and was familiar with Bahrain, the island had two residency agents. Why is unclear. The problem may have concerned the ownership of the Agency. Because the Agency was Muhammad Rahim's private property, Hajji 'Abbas may have questioned Gaskin's right to assume charge of it in the absence of its owner. With no clear directives from the

¹²³ Wood (Under-Sec. of Indian For. Dept) to Kemball (PRPG), 31 July 1901, R/15/2/52 (IOR), 26.

¹²⁴ Hajji 'Abbas (acting agent) to Prideaux (Asst. PRPG), 25 Feb. 1900 (in Arabic); Residency Agent to Resident, 25 Feb. 1900 (Eng. tr.), R/15/1/330 (IOR), 48.

Resident or Muhammad Khalil, Bahrain continued with two agents until March.¹²⁵

12. THE NATIVE AGENCY STAFF AFTER 1900

Once the confusion had been sorted out, Gaskin became the Residency Agent and Hajji 'Abbas became his senior *Munshi*—effectively the Assistant Residency Agent, just as Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Safar had been under Major Charles Grant (1872, 1873, 1874) and Captain Edward Durand (1879). Hajji 'Abbas also continued to work for the Safar family, becoming the caretaker of their property in Bahrain. He rented half of the top floor of the Native Agency to Gaskin for 40 rupees per month, sending the money to the Safar family in Bushire. Hajji 'Abbas retired from government service in 1905. The following year he was awarded the prestigious title of *Khan Sahib* by the Viceroy for services to the Crown.¹²⁶

Another of Muhammad Rahim's *munshis* who stayed to work at the new Political Agency was Yusuf bin Ahmad Kanoo, who appears in the photograph of Muhammad Rahim and his agency staff (Photo 3). Yusuf, later Hajji Yusuf, was a Persianized Arab (see *Hawalab* in Glossary) who had joined the agency staff in 1898 at the age of 24.¹²⁷ Yusuf continued to work for the Political Agency, albeit part-time, but an increasing conflict between his public duties and his business dealings led the British to call upon his services less frequently after 1920. Michael Field explains:

There was an obvious difference in philosophy between the British and Yusuf. The British, concerned with the principle of conflict of interest, did not feel it right that a man should use his employment in their service to further his private business and political interests. Yusuf took exactly the opposite view; to him it seemed that his work at the Agency provided a good opportunity for making money, which it would have been utterly illogical for him not to have taken. By Arabian standards there was nothing improper about this attitude.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Hajji 'Abbas's letter, above, was received in Bushire on 7 March. The earliest a reply could have been received in Bahrain was around 9 March by dhow, or 21 March by BI steamer.

¹²⁶ Wood (Under-Sec. of Indian For. Dept) to Kemball (PRPG), 31 July 1901, R/15/2/52 (IOR), 26; *Sanad* signed by Lord Minto (Viceroy), 1 Jan. 1906 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

¹²⁷ Field, *The Merchants*, 265–6; Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo: A Century of Arabian Family Business* (1997), 4–5. Both Field and Kanoo mistake Muhammad Rahim (Agent 1893–1900) for Hajji Ahmad (Agent 1884–91).

¹²⁸ Field, *The Merchants*, 270–1.

The main difference between a native agent's activities and Yusuf's, of course, was that Yusuf was not an independent agent. Since he was a *munshi* under the close supervision of the Political Agent in Bahrain, his conflict of interest could not be tolerated, unlike those of the independent native agents stationed around the Gulf whom the Resident rarely saw. Despite the conflict of interest, Yusuf provided the British with invaluable assistance for over thirty years, for which he was duly rewarded. The Viceroy awarded him the *Kaisar-i-Hind* Medal in 1911, the title of *Khan Sahib* in 1917, an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in 1919, and a CIE (Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire) in 1923.¹²⁹ A photograph of Yusuf Kanoo, late in life with all his medals, can be seen in Photo 5.

Shortly after Muhammad Rahim's death in February 1900, Muhammad Khalil laid him to rest at Karbala thirty miles south of Baghdad—one of the most sacred burial places in Shi'ah Islam. Gaskin continued to live and work in the former Native Agency until a purpose-built Political Agency was completed in December 1902 in Ras Rumman, on the eastern outskirts of Manamah, the site of the present British Embassy. In 1904, Muhammad Khalil rented the old Agency to Gray Paul & Co. (the firm representing BI in the Gulf), eventually selling it to them in 1909 for Rs. 22,000 (£1,466)—a considerable sum considering the now dilapidated condition of the house.¹³⁰ The following year, Gray Paul demolished the old Agency to clear a site for a new headquarters building for BI.

Muhammad Khalil never returned to live in Bahrain, likely at the insistence of the Resident. Instead, he stayed in Bushire, where he continued to work for the British as a Residency *munshi*. In 1904, the Resident assigned him to the new Political Agency in Kuwait with Captain Stuart Knox, where he served for five years as the Deputy Agent and Agency *Munshi*. The Resident chose Muhammad Khalil for the post, in part, because of his late uncle's friendship with the Ruler, Shaikh Mubarak. At the end of Muhammad Khalil's posting to Kuwait, Shaikh Mubarak presented him with a gift of land in Kuwait.¹³¹ Upon Muhammad Khalil's return to Bushire, the Resident appointed him to the post of Residency *Dragoman* (Chief *Munshi*—see Glossary). Muhammad Khalil retired in 1924 after thirty years of political service, for which a grateful Government of India

¹²⁹ Ibid. 272–3.

¹³⁰ Receipt for Rs. 22,000 from Muhammad Khalil al-Sharif; Bibi Khadijah Safar to Gray Paul & Co., 18 Dec. 1909 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

¹³¹ Knox (PA in Kuwait) to Muhammad Khalil Sharif (Bushire), 2 Sept. 1904 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain); Alghanim, *The Reign of Mubarak al-Sabah*, 37; interviews with 'Ali Akbar Bushiri, 1998–2007 (Bahrain).

awarded him the title of *Khan Bahadur*, the *Kaisar-i-Hind* Medal, and an MBE.¹³² Photo 6 shows Muhammad Khalil in 1909.

13. CHALLENGES TO THE AGENTS, 1834–97

One of the most serious challenges faced by Britain's native agents in the Gulf was the disrespect for their status shown on rare occasions by local governors or ruling families. Motivated by either resentment of British hegemony or personal dislike of an agent, they occasionally refused to cooperate with the agent in the performance of his duties, on rare occasions even subjecting him to insults, threats, and abuse. Britain's native agents in Bahrain sometimes received similar treatment from Persian and Ottoman officials because of Britain's frequent rejection of Persian and Ottoman claims of sovereignty over Bahrain.¹³³ Although these incidents were the exception rather than the rule, they illustrate an agent's vulnerable position in Gulf society, one supported by the Resident, but equally dependent on support from the local governor or ruler.

The first incident is an example of how a native agent's private trading practices and religion could interfere with his public duties. In April 1833, Chandu (Agent 1829–33) left Bahrain to visit his family in Sindh, leaving his bother, Khushal, behind as acting Agent.¹³⁴ In October, Chandu wrote to Khushal instructing him to collect an outstanding debt of MT\$600 (Maria Theresa dollars) from Shaikh 'Abd Allah Al Khalifah (co-Ruler 1796–1834, Ruler 1834–43). When Khushal visited the co-Ruler, he asked Khushal to take the value in dates. Khushal did this and managed to sell the dates for MT\$1,900, leaving a balance of MT\$1,300 now owed to Shaikh 'Abd Allah. Khushal paid a portion of this back to the co-Ruler. In January 1834, disaffected members of the Al Khalifah began to extort money from the *Bania* community, as mentioned above. On 5 January, Shaikh 'Abd Allah's 18-year-old son, Muhammad, demanded that Khushal pay him the MT\$600 he still owed for the dates. Khushal went to see Shaikh 'Abd Allah about the money, but the co-Ruler told him that Muhammad only wanted

¹³² MBE certificate, 1 Jan. 1921; statement by A. Trevor (PRPG), 12 Feb. 1924; Muhammad Khalil to Charles Crosthwaite (PRPG), 13 May 1925 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

¹³³ During the life of the Bahrain Agency, the British Govt repudiated Persian claims to Bahrain six times: 1822, 1825, 1844, 1861, 1862, 1869; and Ottoman claims seventeen times: 1839, 1851, 1870, 1874 (twice), 1875, 1876, 1879, 1888, 1892, 1893 (three times), 1895 (twice), 1896 (twice). FO memorandum: British interests in the Persian Gulf, 12 Feb. 1908, L/P&S/18/B166 (IOR), 37.

¹³⁴ Khushal to Blane (PRPG), 5 Apr. 1833, R/15/1/61 (IOR), 45.

the money for himself and that he must not give it to him. The next day, however, Muhammad sent two of his slaves to the British Agency. They beat Khushal, threatened to kill him, and took a bag of money from a chest in the Agency office without counting the amount. The British later discovered that the attack had been religiously motivated, as explained above. Had Khushal been a Muslim, the attack most likely would not have happened. Shaken and possibly wounded, Khushal went to see Shaikh 'Abd Allah for assurances of protection. The co-Ruler was outraged by the assault and he immediately sent for Muhammad and his two brothers, Ahmad and 'Ali, but all three defied his summons. The next day, Muhammad, Ahmad, and 'Ali sent a demand to Khushal for MT\$1,000, which they alleged was still owed for the dates. Again, Khushal went to see Shaikh 'Abd Allah; this time the two men settled their accounts and Khushal was given a receipt. When he returned to the Agency, however, Muhammad, Ahmad, and 'Ali repeated their demand and threatened to kill Khushal if he did not give them the money. Khushal went to see Shaikh 'Abd Allah for a fourth time, but now the co-Ruler told Khushal that the problem was out of his control and that he was unable to protect him. The next morning, the Shaikh sent an urgent message to Khushal advising him to leave Bahrain immediately because he feared his sons would kill him if he remained on the island. At this point, Khushal went into hiding and reported the matter to the Resident in Bushire, David Blane. He told Blane that the *Bania* community in Bahrain was now living in fear because of the lawless behaviour of the sons of Shaikh 'Abd Allah and the brothers of Shaikh Khalifah Al Khalifah (co-Ruler 1825–34).¹³⁵

On 20 January, Shaikh Khalifah's brother, Hamad, extorted MT\$1,200 from a number of *Banias* in Manamah, including Khushal. Khushal and the other merchants immediately went to see Shaikh 'Abd Allah about this. Far from helping them, the co-Ruler told them that they only had themselves to blame. He had warned them earlier that he could not control his family and that the *Banias* should leave the island, but they had ignored his advice. The *Banias* then went to see Shaikh Khalifah, but the co-Ruler could not control his side of the family, which was rebelling against his authority. Realizing the gravity of the situation, the *Banias* left for the Persian coast as fast as they could.¹³⁶

On 9 February, the sloop-of-war *Ternate* arrived at Bahrain to rescue the Agent and deliver a stern letter from the Resident. When Khushal came out of hiding to meet the Commander of the ship, four slaves sent

¹³⁵ Khushal to Blane, 8 Jan. 1834, R/15/1/66 (IOR), 10–13; Khushal to Blane, 15 Jan. 1834, enclosure no. 1, P/387/58 (IOR), no. 1274.

¹³⁶ Khushal to Blane, 23 Jan. 1834, R/15/1/66 (IOR), 14–17.

by Muhammad attacked Khushal and robbed him of MT\$100.¹³⁷ After rescuing the Agent, the Commander delivered the letter to Shaikh 'Abd Allah. It warned the co-Ruler that,

if the report made to me [about the assault on Khushal on 6 January] be correct, a serious cause of offence has been given equivalent to a declaration of War, and under such circumstances it is obviously highly expedient that you should lose no time in endeavouring to clear yourself of this imputation, otherwise it will be my duty to despatch Ships of War to your Island for the purpose of exacting retribution. Do not, therefore, delay to do what is necessary and proper.¹³⁸

Blane's letter also requested that the Shaikh send a *wakil* to Bushire to explain his version of events and the remedial action he proposed to take. The Commander of the *Ternate* arrived back in Bushire with Khushal on 14 February and reported the second attack to the Resident.¹³⁹ Two weeks later, Hajji Bushab Al Khalifah, who was Shaikh 'Abd Allah's brother and *Wazir* (Prime Minister), arrived in Bushire to discuss the matter with Blane. After listening to the *Wazir's* unsatisfactory explanation of events, Blane reiterated the seriousness with which he viewed the incident. He gave him another letter for Shaikh 'Abd Allah, in which he criticized his handling of the affair and warned the Shaikh that

[A] repetition of the ill-treatment, while the Agent was in the actual execution of his duty on the arrival of a Cruizer in your Port, was manifestly a breach of all law, custom, and propriety. You must, therefore, be fully aware that complete satisfaction and the punishment of the parties concerned in the insult is absolutely necessary, both for the honor of the British Government and the maintenance of your own credit and reputation. I therefore require of you that your son, as the originator of the offence, proceed on board the Cruizer and deliver to her Commander a dress of honor (*khil'at*) for the Agent and that at the same time the actual offenders be either sent to the Ship for punishment, or else be brought along side in one of your own boats, and these [offenders] flogged in the presence of the Crew, which being done they may be dismissed.¹⁴⁰

Blane told the *Wazir* that, if Shaikh Muhammad refused to come on board the ship, Shaikh 'Abd Allah himself should appear in his place.¹⁴¹ The co-Ruler's reply to the Resident's letter was delivered by the *Wazir* in mid-March. In it, he thanked Blane for pardoning the offenders and expressed

¹³⁷ Poole (Comdr, *Ternate*) to Elwon (SNOPG), n.d. [15 Feb. 1834], enclosure no. 4, P/387/58 (IOR), no. 1274; Blane to Elwon, 24 Mar. 1834, enclosure no. 7, *ibid.*

¹³⁸ Blane to Shaikh 'Abd Allah, enclosure no. 3, *ibid.*

¹³⁹ Poole to Elwon, n.d. [15 Feb. 1834], enclosure no. 4, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Blane to Shaikh 'Abd Allah, 28 Feb. 1834, enclosure no. 5, *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Annotation at end of letter, *ibid.*

his great pleasure that matters between them were now resolved.¹⁴² Furious at the insulting response, Blane dispatched the SNOGP, Commodore Thomas Elwon, to Bahrain with the sloops-of-war *Ternate* and *Amherst* to deliver an ultimatum:¹⁴³

Your letter under date the 4th *Zil Kuada* has been received and its contents understood. Since I took great pains to explain to your *Wakeel*, Hajee Bushab, the serious nature of the offence that had been given by the ill-treatment of the Agent owing to the disrespect thus displayed towards the British Government, and the wording of my letter to yourself was likewise sufficiently distinct, I could hardly have expected to receive such a reply as that you have now transmitted. From the contents of this communication, it would appear that you think lightly of the affront offered to the British Government through their *Wakeel*. Under such circumstances, it is evident the punishment of the offending parties has become doubly necessary and I have in consequence despatched two of the Vessels of War to deliver this letter and wait for the space of twenty-four hours with a view to giving you an opportunity of displaying the sincerity of your disavowal of all connivance in this affair by carrying into effect the alternatives [as I] proposed in my former letters and orally explained to your *Wakeel*, Hajee Bushab; and in the event of the ineffective expiration of this period, they are directed to treat you as an Enemy and [to] do everything in their power to enforce redress. I would also warn you that other Ships will soon follow the Vessels now despatched and you should be aware that, hostilities being once actually commenced with the British Government, there is little probability of their being stopped until full and heavy responsibility shall have been extracted. Your decision, I therefore hope, may be quickly and wisely taken.¹⁴⁴

Blane permitted Elwon to blockade Manamah and Muharraq and to seize or destroy some of the Shaikh's ships if he refused to comply with the ultimatum.¹⁴⁵

Elwon arrived at Bahrain on 28 March and sent a British officer ashore accompanied by the Agency *Munshi*, Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar, to deliver Blane's ultimatum to Shaikh 'Abd Allah in Muharraq. The next morning, the *Wazir*, accompanied by Mirza Muhammad 'Ali, came on board the *Ternate* to present a *khil'at* (robe of honour—see Glossary) for Khushal, but Elwon insisted that Shaikh Muhammad or Shaikh 'Abd Allah present the *khil'at*. The *Wazir* departed with Mirza Muhammad 'Ali and returned three hours latter with the co-Ruler. Shaikh 'Abd Allah presented Elwon with a large roll of red cloth and three Kashmiri shawls for Khushal and told Elwon that Khushal's attackers had fled. Elwon gave the Shaikh eight days to find them and bring them to the *Ternate* for punishment. The Shaikh

¹⁴² Shaikh 'Abd Allah to Blane, 13 Mar. 1834, enclosure 6, *ibid*.

¹⁴³ Blane to Elwon, 24 Mar. 1834, enclosure 7, *ibid*.

¹⁴⁴ Blane to Shaikh 'Abd Allah, 24 Mar. 1834, enclosure 8, *ibid*.

¹⁴⁵ Blane to Elwon, 24 Mar. 1834, enclosure 7, *ibid*.

consented and asked Elwon to stay in Muharraq as his guest during the interval.¹⁴⁶

At last, on 5 April, the guilty men were found and brought alongside the *Ternate* for punishment. Elwon described the event in his report to Blane:

On the day appointed, Saturday the 5th Instant, one of the Shaikh's sons and the *Wuzeer* took three prisoners alongside, and fear alone had a wonderful effect upon these culprits. They were punished under the *Wuzeer's* directions in their own boat by the hands of their own people, receiving from one dozen to two dozen lashes according to the *Wuzeer's* idea of the extent of each man's crime, and they then returned to the shore as Prisoners.¹⁴⁷

The following day, Shaikh 'Abd Allah paid a visit to Elwon on board the *Ternate*, presenting him with the following letter for Blane:

I ... beg to intimate that the individuals who were reported to you by the *Banian* [Agent] as having ill-treated him have been seized by me and punished in one of our Boats along side the Cruizer in the manner required by you, the crew of the Vessel looking on all the time. God willing, you will never have occasion to notice any [further] deficiency of friendship on our part.¹⁴⁸

Elwon departed Bahrain two days later. In his report to Blane, he explained that the attack on Khushal and the *Banias* had been religiously motivated, as previously discussed. Blane realized that the continued employment of a Hindu agent in Bahrain would only undermine Anglo-Bahraini relations. His solution was to appoint Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Safar, a Muslim, as the new British Agent in Bahrain.¹⁴⁹

Eight years later, Mirza Muhammad 'Ali himself experienced a serious challenge from the Al Khalifah that also required the Resident's intervention.¹⁵⁰ In June 1842, at the outbreak of Bahrain's first civil war between rival factions of the Al Khalifah (the al-Salman and the al-'Abd Allah), Shaikh 'Abd Allah advised Muhammad 'Ali either to leave Manamah (then held by al-Salman) and join him in Muharraq where he could protect him, or to seek protection on board a British vessel then in the harbour. Muhammad 'Ali disregarded the Shaikh's advice and remained at the British

¹⁴⁶ Muhammad 'Ali (*Munshi* to the Bahrain Agent) to Blane, 30 Mar. 1834, R/15/1/66 (IOR), 70-1; Elwon to Blane, 10 Apr. 1834, enclosure 1, P/387/58 (IOR), no. 1275. The dates Elwon gives are slightly off: he arrived on 28 Mar., saw the *Wakil* on 29 Mar., and visited the Ruler on 30 Mar.

¹⁴⁷ Elwon to Blane, 10 Apr. 1834, *ibid*.

¹⁴⁸ Shaikh 'Abd Allah to Blane, 6 Apr. 1834, enclosure 1, P/387/60 (IOR), no. 2152.

¹⁴⁹ Blane to Shaikh 'Abd Allah, 15 Apr. 1834, enclosure 2, *ibid*.

¹⁵⁰ The following is based on Kemball's 'Historical Sketch of the Uttoobee Tribe', 393-4. Lorimer's account of this incident is based on Kemball as well. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 870-1. Also see Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 68-9.

Agency. Not long after, the Shaikh attacked Manamah and captured it from the al-Salman, forcing its leader, Shaikh Muhammad bin Khalifah, to flee Bahrain. Widespread pillaging by Shaikh 'Abd Allah's troops followed. In the hope of being spared, the *Banias* draped British flags outside their houses to show they were under British protection. Around a thousand townspeople—mostly women and children—rushed to the Agency to seek protection. Although Muhammad 'Ali could not offer them British protection, he still offered up the Agency as a refuge. It was later alleged, although never proven, that Muhammad 'Ali had in fact charged an admission fee to the Agency. In the confusion, a small number of Shaikh 'Abd Allah's enemies who had fled the battle scene managed to sneak into the Agency.¹⁵¹ Upon discovering them, Muhammad 'Ali was unable to eject them without force, which he was unwilling to use. Shaikh 'Abd Allah arrived at the Agency soon after and demanded that Muhammad 'Ali surrender these men, threatening to level the Agency and kill all inside if he refused. Muhammad 'Ali thought it best to comply. Not wanting to unlock the front door of the Agency, he had the men thrown down from the Agency roof to the street below. Shaikh 'Abd Allah's men cut them to pieces as soon as they hit the ground.

Once again, the Resident was called upon to resolve a challenge to Britain's standing in Bahrain. But who had acted inappropriately, the Agent or Shaikh 'Abd Allah? This time the Resident decided against the Agent and dismissed him from the East India Company. Muhammad 'Ali had clearly abused his office by offering the Agency as a refuge to those who had no entitlement to British protection. The allegation that Muhammad 'Ali had charged admission, although never proven, made it impossible for the Resident to forgive the Agent, even if he had been inclined to do so. If the Agent had not offered refuge to Bahraini subjects for purely humanitarian reasons (free of charge), then he had no excuse whatsoever for his actions. The Resident was unwilling to consider that Muhammad 'Ali had acted in a private capacity in charging admission to his own house (which also happened to be the British Agency). Since the Agent's house was considered a refuge only because it was the British Agency, no distinction could be made between private action and official duties in this case. Furthermore, Muhammad 'Ali had violated the Agency's neutrality by permitting the defeated combatants to remain in the Agency. The Resident believed Shaikh 'Abd Allah had been within his right to demand

¹⁵¹ The son and dependants of Hamud of the 'Amair section of the Bani Khalid tribe, blood-enemies of Shaikh 'Abd Allah.

the surrender of these men, although he strongly disapproved of the Ruler's actions.

This incident, coupled with Shaikh 'Abd Allah's rejection of British protection three years before in favour of Ottoman protection, lost the Ruler any credibility he might still have had with the Assistant Resident at the time, Lieutenant Arnold Kemball.¹⁵² The following year, in 1843, Shaikh Muhammad returned to Bahrain and overthrew Shaikh 'Abd Allah. When Shaikh 'Abd Allah went to Bushire for help, he found the unsympathetic Kemball was now acting Gulf Resident. Kemball had no interest in seeing the Shaikh return to power and refused his request. John Lorimer remarks that, as a direct result of the incident, 'the countenance of the British Government was finally withdrawn from the Shaikh'.¹⁵³ During 1843–4, Shaikh 'Abd Allah made a further five requests to Kemball and Captain Samuel Hennell (Resident 1843–52) for military assistance. All were refused.

The next native agent, Hajji Jasim, faced a challenge from the Al Khalifah within months of his appointment.¹⁵⁴ In early 1843, during the final days of his rulership, Shaikh 'Abd Allah feared an impending counter-attack upon Bahrain by Shaikh Muhammad bin Khalifah, the leader of the al-Salman whom Shaikh 'Abd Allah had defeated at the Battle of Manamah the year before. As a precaution, he ordered that no vessel should lay anchor near Manamah. In March, a British-protected dhow flying the British flag and carrying stores for the SNOGP at Basidu, laid anchor off Manamah. Two well-manned boats belonging to Shaikh 'Abd Allah sailed out to meet the dhow, supposedly to order its skipper to anchor off Muharraq. Upon reaching the dhow, however, the crews not only plundered the British cargo, but also hauled down the British flag and tore it to pieces. Hajji Jasim went to Shaikh 'Abd Allah to protest this attack, but Shaikh 'Abd Allah would not meet with him. Instead, the Ruler sent a message to the Agent that he had nothing to do with the plundering of the ship, nor would he have anything to do with it. The British were deeply suspicious of Shaikh 'Abd Allah. Why send out two well-manned boats merely to warn off a neutral vessel? Indeed, why did a British-protected vessel need to be warned off at all? What was at issue here was the protective power of the British flag and Hajji Jasim's ability to enforce it through Shaikh 'Abd Allah. Native agents depended upon the Ruler's cooperation to ensure the

¹⁵² For details, see Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 67–70.

¹⁵³ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 871.

¹⁵⁴ The following is based on Kemball's 'Historical Sketch of the Uttoobee Tribe', 398–9. Lorimer's account of this incident is based on Kemball as well. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 871. Also see Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 49, 69.

protection of British subjects and dependants in Bahrain. In the absence of cooperation, intervention by the Gulf Resident was needed. Hajji Jasim reported these events to the Resident who promptly dispatched an Indian Navy cruiser to Bahrain to investigate. Before the cruiser arrived, however, Shaikh Muhammad captured Muharraq in early April and forced Shaikh 'Abd Allah from power. There was nothing further the Resident could do and the matter was dropped.

From 1850 onward, Shaikh 'Abd Allah's successor, Shaikh Muhammad bin Khalifah (r. 1843–68), became increasingly anti-British, and Hajji Jasim naturally suffered for this.¹⁵⁵ In June 1850, Shaikh Muhammad sent an insulting message to the Resident through Hajji Jasim. The Resident responded by dispatching a sloop-of-war to Bahrain to demand an explanation and an apology, which was obtained. In 1852, both Captain Arnold Kemball (still Assistant Resident) and Hajji Jasim were insulted by Shaikh Muhammad when paying a formal visit to him. In 1858, the Resident received complaints against Shaikh Muhammad from the British *Bania* community trading in Bahrain. They claimed Shaikh Muhammad was mistreating them and had laid an embargo on a British Indian *baghlah* sailing under the British flag. Hajji Jasim had protested this to Shaikh Muhammad, but the Ruler had replied with insults. In September, the Resident dispatched his Assistant, Lieutenant Herbert Disbrowe, and the SNOGP with the Indian sloop-of-war *Clive* to investigate. Upon arriving at Bahrain, Disbrowe sent a letter to Shaikh Muhammad from the Resident demanding the release of the *baghlah* and an explanation for his behaviour. He then warned the *Banias* resident in Manamah to prepare to leave Bahrain within twenty-four hours in case Shaikh Muhammad refused the Resident's demands. But the Ruler released the boat and sent his brother, Shaikh 'Ali bin Khalifah (Governor of Manamah 1843–68), to meet Disbrowe aboard the *Clive* and offer an explanation. Shaikh 'Ali assured Disbrowe that Hajji Jasim in future 'would be treated with every respect due to his position'. Disbrowe requested that the Ruler honour him by paying a visit aboard ship before he left. But Shaikh Muhammad stalled, insisting that Disbrowe accord him the first visit on shore. This posturing was indicative of the Ruler's attitude towards Britain and may help explain his hostility toward the Resident and the *Banias*. He appears to have resented the unequal power relationship between Bahrain and Britain and seems to have believed that Britain should treat Bahrain as an equal. To the Ruler, Disbrowe was a mere representative, inferior in status to a head of state. Disbrowe was not

¹⁵⁵ The following is based on Disbrowe, 'Historical Sketch of the Uttoobee Tribe of Arabs (Bahrein), 1844–1853', 421–2, 425. Also see Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 50–1.

intimidated by Shaikh Muhammad's stance, however. He stood his ground and the Ruler eventually yielded. While visiting Disbrowe aboard ship, Shaikh Muhammad expressed his regret at the detention of the *baghlah* and his treatment of Hajji Jasim. Once back on shore, the Ruler hoisted 'an Arab Flag' above his fort on Abu Mahir Island and fired a salute as a compliment to the British flag. Disbrowe and the SNOGP then returned the visit ashore.¹⁵⁶

Challenges to native agents in Bahrain were not always locally based. Persian subjects employed by the Gulf Residency were vulnerable to attack by Anglophobes, who could target an employee or his family or his possessions in Persia, if an opportunity arose. This happened in 1875 to Hajji 'Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84).¹⁵⁷ 'Abd al-Nabi's son, Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, was a *munshi* on the Residency staff at the time. 'Abd al-Nabi had taken up his post in Bahrain in January 1872—just a little over two years after the Resident's military intervention during the second Bahraini civil war of 1869. In the course of that intervention, the Resident had detained a Persian Government official on his way to see the new self-proclaimed Ruler of Bahrain, Shaikh Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah Al Khalifah (leader of the al-'Abd Allah), whom the Persian Government believed to be pro-Persian. The Persian official carried with him a letter recognizing the Shaikh as the Shah's appointed Governor of the island and promising him support from the Persian Government. After detaining the official for some hours, the Resident allowed him to deliver the letter to Shaikh Muhammad before immediately confiscating it. The following month the Resident returned to Bahrain with a naval expedition to depose Shaikh Muhammad. Not surprisingly, the Persian Government was greatly angered by the Resident's actions.¹⁵⁸ British Residency staff were unpopular in Persia for the next few years as a result. The subsequent appointment of 'Abd al-Nabi Safar, a Persian subject, to Bahrain as a British agent should be viewed with these preceding events in mind. 'Abd al-Nabi's appointment could have been regarded as a further British insult to the Persian Government's claim to Bahrain.

¹⁵⁶ Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs*, 7; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 886. Lorimer misleadingly lists Jasim's name as Qasim.

¹⁵⁷ There are extensive records of this incident in P/775, pp. 221–37, and P/776 (IOR), pp. 64–5. It is also well-summarized in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of the Affairs of the Persian Coast and Islands, 1854–1905*, 127–9. The following is based on these records as a whole. Saldanha says this case was 'typical ... of claims of British subjects and protégés against the Persian Government and officials' (ibid. 127).

¹⁵⁸ For details, see Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs*, 27–8; Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 682–5.

Since the 1850s, the Resident's main channel of communications with the Persian Government in Tehran had been through its Foreign Office Agent in Bushire. By all accounts, the man who occupied this post in the 1870s, Mirza Muhammad Khan, was an Anglophobe and clearly disliked Persian subjects who worked for the British. In 1875, he targeted 'Abd al-Nabi by manipulating a legal situation involving him and a man named Hajji Muhammad Baqir (spelt 'Bauker' in British records). Muhammad Baqir's son-in-law had owed 'Abd al-Nabi a great sum of money, which he was unable to repay. Muhammad Baqir had signed an agreement pledging his house in Bushire to 'Abd al-Nabi for two years as security for the debt. At the end of that time, if Muhammad Baqir's son-in-law had not repaid 'Abd al-Nabi the remaining money, ownership of the house would be transferred to 'Abd al-Nabi. This came to pass in June 1873, but matters did not end there. Having lost his legal title to his house, Muhammad Baqir asked Mirza Muhammad Khan to intervene in the case. Mirza Muhammad Khan used this as an opportunity to attack 'Abd al-Nabi by seizing the house in January 1875 and restoring it to Muhammad Baqir. 'Abd al-Nabi protested, but Muhammad Khan refused to return the house. 'Abd al-Nabi then asked the Resident to intervene, invoking his right to British protection:

I beg you to be so good as to think about the restoration of my credit and honor, so that proper justice should be done on my behalf. There is no doubt that ... I have always been respectfully treated by the Persian Government; but I am astonished why, after that kind regard, and not withstanding my being under British protection, the Government should for such a trifling matter suffer me now to be thus oppressed.¹⁵⁹

In concert with Muhammad Khan, the Persian customs officer in Bushire refused to recognize 'Abd al-Nabi's brother, Muhammad Jafar, as a British subject and demanded that he pay full customs dues on the goods he was importing at the time.¹⁶⁰ The Resident wrote about 'Abd al-Nabi's case to the British Minister in Tehran, Tylour Thomson, who agreed to take up the matter with the Shah's Minister for Foreign Affairs.¹⁶¹

The Shah's Foreign Minister relied heavily upon Muhammad Khan's distorted reports, in which 'Abd al-Nabi was portrayed as a deceitful merchant evading his responsibilities as a Persian subject. Muhammad Khan even tried to downplay 'Abd al-Nabi's entitlement to British protection:

¹⁵⁹ 'Abd al-Nabi to Ross, 6 Jan. 1875, P/775 (IOR), 235.

¹⁶⁰ Muhammad Jafar Safar to Thomson (British Minister, Tehran), 4 Jan. and 20 Apr. 1875, *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Ross (PRPG) to Thomson, 6 Jan. 1875, *ibid.* 221.

Hajee Abdool Nubbee, the merchant of Bushire, is well known, but no one has ever seen his merchandise, and he never yields a farthing per annum of profit to the Shah's Custom House. He is reputed to be sometimes under British, sometimes under Turkish, and sometimes under Dutch protection, but he has always been a Persian subject.¹⁶²

The Foreign Minister then questioned Thomson 'how and on what grounds Hajee Abdool Nubbee has merited the protection of the British Government'.¹⁶³ Thomson had to insist repeatedly on 'Abd al-Nabi's status as a protected person and his right to defend him'.¹⁶⁴ The case dragged on for months, largely because the Foreign Minister was influenced by Muhammad Khan's biased reports. In late March, the Foreign Minister finally instructed Muhammad Khan to place the house 'into the possession of the former possessor'.¹⁶⁵ Muhammad Khan feigned ignorance as to who this meant and asked for clarification from Tehran, delaying the return by another three weeks.¹⁶⁶ When Muhammad Khan finally notified 'Abd al-Nabi of the Foreign Minister's decision to return the house, he told him to 'send an intelligent and fit man, unlike the rogues and rascals who surround your son Agha Muhammad Rahim, that I may deliver the house to him'.¹⁶⁷ This deeply upset 'Abd al-Nabi, who complained that 'the whole property cannot equal the slighting hint the Khan has made [about my son]' and asked the Resident to seek redress of this insult.¹⁶⁸ One of the Residency *munshis*, Mirza Abu'l Qasim Behbahani (later Native Agent at Sharjah), took possession of 'Abd al-Nabi's house from Muhammad Khan. He was shocked to find the house ransacked: all of the doors, screens, and windows were missing, many walls had been knocked down, a number of rafters had been removed, and the veranda had been pulled down. He estimated the damage at Ks. 730, equivalent to Rs. 324.¹⁶⁹ It appears that

¹⁶² Persian For. Office Agent (Bushire) to Shah's For. Minister (Tehran), n.d. [c. Jan. 1875], *ibid.* 238.

¹⁶³ Shah's For. Minister to Thomson (British Minister, Tehran), 10 Jan. 1875, *ibid.* 237.

¹⁶⁴ Thomson to Shah's For. Minister, 6 Jan., 12 Jan., 22 Jan., 4 Mar. 1875, *ibid.* 237, 239.

¹⁶⁵ Shah's For. Minister (Tehran) to Persian For. Office Agent (Bushire), 24 Mar. 1875, *ibid.* 240.

¹⁶⁶ Shah's For. Minister (Tehran) to Persian For. Office Agent (Bushire), 17 Apr. 1875, *ibid.* 242.

¹⁶⁷ Persian For. Office Agent (Bushire) to 'Abd al-Nabi Safar, 19 Apr. 1875, P/776 (IOR), 64.

¹⁶⁸ 'Abd al-Nabi Safar to Ross, 19 Apr. 1875, *ibid.* 64–5.

¹⁶⁹ Report by Mirza Abu'l Qasim Behbahani, 21 Apr. 1875, *ibid.* 65–6. Ross insisted that Muhammad Khan pay for the damages. The exchange rate at the time was roughly 1 kran = 0.444 rupee, 1 rupee = 2.252 krans. Issawi (ed.) *Economic History of Iran*, 344.

Muhammad Khan delayed the return of the house so that Muhammad Baqir could remove all the wooden fixtures and render it uninhabitable.¹⁷⁰

The Assistant Resident accused the Persian Foreign Office Agent of four counts of condemnable behaviour: obstruction of justice, wrongful confiscation of 'Abd al-Nabi's property, conspiring in the destruction of that property, and insulting 'Abd al-Nabi's son.¹⁷¹ As a final insult, the Shah's Foreign Minister told Taylour Thomson that if 'Abd al-Nabi did not subsequently take Muhammad Baqir to court over the house, the house would be reconfiscated. Thomson rejected this, arguing that the onus was on Muhammad Baqir to take legal action and hinting that he would prevent any attempt to reconfiscate the house.¹⁷² This seems to have settled the matter and 'Abd al-Nabi was finally left alone to pick up the pieces. The incident had lasted over three months and had greatly upset 'Abd al-Nabi. At the insistence of the Resident, Muhammad Khan was later removed from his post for misconduct.¹⁷³ Although this incident is an extreme case, it illustrates just how vulnerable Persian subjects in British employ could be. Britons in Persia were also vulnerable to attack, of course. One of the most notable examples is from 1862, when the Persian authorities in Bushire tore down the Residency Surgeon's summer house in protest over the signing of the Anglo-Bahraini Convention of 1861, which placed Bahrain under British protection and undermined the Shah's claim to the island.¹⁷⁴

In August 1897, an incident similar to the refuge event of 1842 occurred at the British Agency in Bahrain.¹⁷⁵ That month, a recently bankrupt merchant named Sayyid Khalaf was placed in custody by the Ruler's chief clerk, Sharidah bin 'Ali. Sayyid Khalaf was being taken to the Ruler's *Majlis* for questioning when he escaped and sought refuge in the British Agency. Sharidah followed in hot pursuit. Upon reaching the British Agency, Sharidah entered and forcibly removed Sayyid Khalaf with the assistance of the Manamah *Suq* Master, Salih bin Rashid. Although the fugitive had no right to British protection, the acting British Agent, Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif, protested against the man's removal and reported the incident to the Resident. The Resident considered the incident 'of a serious nature,

¹⁷⁰ Report by J. Edwards (Asst. PRPG), 10 June 1875, P/776 (IOR), 66.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Shah's For. Minister to Thomson (British Minister, Tehran), 7 Apr. 1875, P/775 (IOR), 242; Thomson to Shah's For. Minister, 17 Apr. 1875, *ibid.* 242.

¹⁷³ Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of the Affairs of the Persian Coast and Islands, 1854–1905*, 10.

¹⁷⁴ For details, see *ibid.* 84; Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, 527–8, 572.

¹⁷⁵ A summary version of the incident can be found in Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 932.

involving our prestige in these parts' and promptly wrote to the Ruler about it.¹⁷⁶ The Ruler, Shaikh 'Isa, asserted that Sharidah had apprehended Sayyid Khalaf *outside* the Agency. Faced with two contradictory accounts, the Resident dispatched his two assistants to investigate in mid-September. They interviewed witnesses and collected evidence. Their report to the Resident confirmed Muhammad Khalil's story. The Resident accordingly wrote to Shaikh 'Isa again in early October. He admitted: 'There is no doubt that Seyyid Khalaf did wrong in running away from Sheraideh, and I do not consider that there was anything in his case to entitle him to receive British protection.'¹⁷⁷ But Sharidah's forceful removal of Sayyid Khalaf from the British Agency against Muhammad Khalil's will was a violation of the sanctuary of the building. Sharidah should have requested Muhammad Khalil to hand over the fugitive and, failing that, referred the matter to Shaikh 'Isa. If Shaikh 'Isa had requested that the man be removed from the Agency, the Resident would have ordered Muhammad Khalil to expel him. (Such a process would have taken days, if not weeks, of course.) The Resident's letter to Shaikh 'Isa about this matter speaks volumes about the nature of Resident–ruler relations in the Gulf:

I believe this was done without premeditation, and if I thought otherwise, I would call on you to inflict very severe punishment on the men who had dared to offer such an insult to the British Government, under whose protection you are. You, I feel assured, are quite free of blame as regards to the occurrence, but as your sincere friend, I must point out that you are responsible for the acts of your servants, and I must ask you to at once disavow their action in this matter and, by punishing them yourself, let everyone see that you are indeed the loyal friend of the great British Government.

The Resident asked Shaikh 'Isa to fine Sharidah bin 'Ali and Salih bin Rashid each Rs. 500, with the money to be deposited in the Residency treasury. In addition, the men were to write an apology to the Resident. The Resident ended his remarks by subtly threatening that, if Shaikh 'Isa did not comply immediately, he would report the incident to India. The Resident made no mention of impropriety on Muhammad Khalil's part. This omission is surprising considering the similarity of this case to the 1842 incident, for which Muhammad 'Ali Safar was dismissed. That Muhammad Khalil was Muhammad 'Ali's great-grandson lends a certain irony to the situation. One possible explanation for the different outcomes is that the 1842 incident was used as an excuse to dismiss an unpopular native agent. The Assistant Resident at the time described Muhammad 'Ali as being of

¹⁷⁶ Meade to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 31 Oct. 1897, P/5497 (IOR), 89.

¹⁷⁷ Meade to Shaikh 'Isa, 8 Oct. 1897, *ibid.* 90.

'timid and imbecile character';¹⁷⁸ Muhammad Khalil, on the other hand, was well-regarded by the Residency's British staff.¹⁷⁹ Muhammad Khalil was not reprimanded for his refusal to hand over the fugitive, Shaikh 'Isa fined the two men, and the incident was soon forgotten.¹⁸⁰

14. CONCLUSION

The Gulf Residents' employment of merchants as news agents, *munshis*, and political agents (as examined in this and the two preceding chapters) enabled the Residency to operate within the local political systems of the Gulf shaikhdoms by drawing on their employees' local and regional knowledge, contacts, and influence. These merchants possessed a greater understanding of the region and a more extensive socio-political network than the British political officers in Bushire.

The position of Native Agent in Bahrain, while a powerful one, was heavily dependent upon the goodwill and cooperation of local rulers and governors. The most serious challenge a native agent faced was local disrespect for his status and the subsequent withholding of cooperation. As the representative of the Company and later the Government of India, an agent was a convenient target for those who resented British hegemony. On rare occasions, the local authorities subjected agents to insults, threats, and abuse. Agents in Bahrain with strong connections to Bushire were also vulnerable to attack by Anglophobes in Persia. The Residents regarded such attacks as an insult to the British Crown and almost always responded forcefully to uphold the honour of their agents.

Initially, the Residents recruited their agents from the *Bania* community in Bahrain. Little is known about these agents, but their employment patterns were probably similar to those of other Indian merchants in the Indian residencies. The last *Bania* agent in Bahrain was withdrawn in 1834 because of the ruling family's objections to his religion. Rather than follow the current practice in Princely India and replace him with a British political officer, the Resident replaced him with an affluent Muslim Gulf merchant with connections to Bushire. Successive Residents continued to employ men from Arab and Persian merchant families as agents throughout the

¹⁷⁸ Kemball, 'Historical Sketch of the Uttoobee Tribe of Arabs (Bahrein), 1831-1844', 394.

¹⁷⁹ Meade (PRPG) to Muhammad Khalil, 30 Aug. 1901; Kemball (PRPG) to Muhammad Khalil, 19 Apr. 1904; Knox (PA in Kuwait) to Muhammad Khalil, 2 Sept. 1904; Cox (PRPG) to Muhammad Khalil, 7 Dec. 1913 (all letters in the Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

¹⁸⁰ Shaikh 'Isa to Meade (PRPG), n.d. [Oct. 1897], P/5497 (IOR), 91.

Gulf until the early twentieth century. The reasons for employing these men appear to have been threefold: the financial advantage to the British, the agents' ability to function well as representatives, and their suitability as Muslims to be posted to the Gulf shakhdoms. Successive Residents gave the Arab and Persian agents greater responsibilities than previous Residents had given to the *Bania* agents. The result, paradoxically, was an expanding political role for non-Europeans in the Gulf Residency at a time when the role of non-Europeans in the Indian residencies was diminishing.

All the Gulf merchants who served as native agents in Bahrain had long-standing connections with the Gulf Residency for the same reasons Michael Fisher gives for the attachment of Indian service élite families to the East India Company.¹⁸¹ All but one of these Gulf merchants had served as British agents or *munshis* before their appointment to Bahrain as British Agent. Many, if not all, were over 50 at the time of their appointment and three died in their posts from old age. Most, if not all, were Shi'i Muslims, in noticeable contrast to the Al Khalifah, who were Sunni. For half of its seventy-eight-year history, the Native Agency in Bahrain was in the hands of the Safar family, who had close connections with the Ruler, Shaikh 'Isa Al Khalifah. The Safars' tradition of service to the East India Company and Government of India parallels that of many British and Indian families.

¹⁸¹ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 320, 363.



1 Gulf Residency headquarters, Bushire in 1902 From Lorimier's *Gazetteer*, ii. *Geographical and Statistical*, 348 © British Library



2 Bushire c.1940s. *Left to right: Bait Safar*, the Governor of Bushire's residence, and the Gulf Residency headquarters. © Bushiri Archive, Bahrain



3 Britain's Native Agency staff in Bahrain *c.*1898–9. *Left to right:* Hajji 'Abbas bin Muhammad bin Fadhil (Agent 1900), 'Abd al-'Aziz Khargi, Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar (Agent 1893–1900), and Yusuf bin Ahmad Kanoo. © Bushiri Archive, Bahrain



4 Shaikh 'Isa bin 'Ali Al Khalifah (Ruler of Bahrain 1869–1923), centre, with members of the Al Khalifah and Major Clive Daly (Political Agent in Bahrain 1921–6). Taken *c.*1923. © Bahrain National Museum

5 Yusuf bin Ahmad Kanoo, Bahrain
c.1940 (British *Munshi* in Bahrain
c.1898–1923) © Kanoo Archive, Bahrain



6 *Left to right:* Major Francis Prideaux
(Assistant Resident in Bushire 1897–
1900 and Political Agent in Bahrain
1904–09), Agha Muhammad Muhsin
Sharif, Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif,
and ‘Abd al-Nabi Sharif—see Figures
1 and 2 for details. Taken in Bushire
c.1909. © Bushiri Archive, Bahrain





7 Britain's Political Agency staff in Bahrain c.1929. Of the twenty-three members of staff, only one—the Agent himself—is British. The man Standing behind the Agent in the light grey blazer is a member of the Sharif family (see Figure 2 and Table 17 on pages 149 and 151). The seated man on the far right would later serve as Britain's last Native Agent in Sharjah during 1945–9. The Indians seated in the front row belong to the Uncovenanted / Provincial Civil Service of India, while the Arabs seated at either end of the front row and the two Persians immediately behind the Political Agent belong to the locally-recruited Subordinate Civil Service. The remaining men are all locally-engaged support staff from Bahrain. © Bushiri Archive, Bahrain.

6

The Decline of British India's Native Agency System in Bahrain and the Gulf

At the present time the Political work on the Arab Coast has been done through two Native Agents [at Bahrain and Sharjah] who are permitted to trade. For various reasons ... this arrangement has been found not to work well and it is therefore now proposed that a Gazetted Officer should be placed in immediate Political charge of the Arab Coast from Ras Mussendem to Koweit with Head Quarters at Bahrein.

Gulf Resident, 1899¹

From the mid-1890s on, Britain faced a new challenge in the Gulf. Growing European rivalry in the region threatened British paramountcy in Eastern Arabia and British influence in Persia. The resulting need for a stronger political presence eventually caused the British to abandon their native agency system throughout the entire region. Between 1900 and 1911, in an effort to counter the threat, the British replaced all but two of their native agencies with political agencies or consulates run by British political officers. This process began with Bahrain. The following study of the final years of the Native Agency in Bahrain provides a close-up view of India's Arabian frontier at the end of the nineteenth century.

1. THE RIFT IN AGENT–RULER RELATIONS, 1895–1900

The decline of the Native Agency in Bahrain was triggered by a rift in agent–ruler relations in 1895. Why the Agent at the time, Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar (1893–1900), and Shaikh 'Isa Al Khalifah fell out is a matter

¹ 'Tubular Proposition Statement' by Meade (PRPG), 24 Sept. 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 43a.

of conjecture, but it likely had something to do with the delicate power relations between them. From the Ruler's perspective, the Agent was a potential rival. The rift happened at a time when the Gulf was gaining the attention of France, Russia, and Germany and renewed attention from the Ottoman Porte, challenging British hegemony in the region. Had the rift occurred at any time before the mid-1890s, it probably would not have contributed to the abolition of the Native Agency.

Whatever the cause of the rift, it was not long before difficulties began to manifest themselves. In early 1896, Muhammad Rahim asked for repayment of a Rs. 2,000 (£133) loan he had made to Shaikh 'Isa, but the Shaikh was unwilling to repay more than Rs. 100.² This likely caused further hard feelings between the two men. The same year, a merchant from the Ottoman port of Qatif in Hasa, named Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab, was frequently seen at the Shaikh's *Majlis*. The Resident suspected him of being the unofficial Agent of the Ottoman Regional Governor (*Mutasarrif*) of Hasa.³ The Resident believed he was advising Shaikh 'Isa to stop cooperating with Muhammad Rahim and the British in general. Accounts of the merchant's activities by a Russian traveller who visited Bahrain a few years later confirm the Resident's suspicions to have been correct.⁴ As Muhammad Rahim and the Ottoman Agent vied for influence with Shaikh 'Isa, it seems likely that a conflict between the two men developed. Such a conflict would certainly have exacerbated the rift between Muhammad Rahim and Shaikh 'Isa. Muhammad Rahim, for example, may have tried to control the Ottoman Agent's access to Shaikh 'Isa, leading to the resentment of both the Ottoman Agent and the Ruler. In response, the Ottoman Agent may have tried to hasten the deterioration of Muhammad Rahim's relationship with Shaikh 'Isa. It is also possible that Shaikh 'Isa was using the Ottoman Agent as a counter-weight to Muhammad Rahim.⁵ Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab was not the only Ottoman influence on

² Muhammad Rahim's nephew, Muhammad Khalil Sharif, was still trying to recover this money from the Al Khalifah forty years later. Khalifah bin Ibrahim al-Yusuf (Shaikh 'Isa's Agent) to Muhammad Rahim Safar, c.Feb.–Mar. 1896; Yusuf bin Ahmad Kanoo to Muhammad Khalil Sharif, 9 July 1937; Muhammad Khalil Sharif to Shaikh Hamad bin 'Isa Al Khalifah, 18 June 1939 (all documents in the Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

³ Meade (PRPG) to Cunningham, 21 July 1899, telegram, reg. no. 788/1899, L/P&S/7/115 (IOR); Farah, *Protection and Politics in Bahrain*, 100.

⁴ Bogoyavlensky to Russian Consul-General (Bushire), 14 June 1902; Bogoyavlensky to Russian Consul-General (Bushire), 16 June 1902, in Rezvan (ed.), *Russian Ships in the Gulf, 1899–1903* (1993), 86–93. There is some confusion over Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab's occupation: Bogoyavlensky describes him as 'the Sheikh of Dhahran' (p. 91).

⁵ Meade (PRPG) to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 5 June 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 5a–5b.

Shaikh 'Isa. The Resident knew the Shaikh's chief *munshi*, Sharidah bin 'Ali, had strong Ottoman sympathies and suspected him of being an Ottoman subject.⁶

In June 1897, when the outgoing Resident, Colonel Frederick Wilson, handed over to his successor, Lieutenant-Colonel Malcolm Meade, Wilson remarked that 'Bahrein affairs [are] not altogether in a satisfactory state, and that the Sheikh [is] being badly advised by those who wish to extend Turkish influence along the Arab Coast.'⁷ The Ruler had become noticeably anti-British. Muhammad Rahim complained that Shaikh 'Isa's men had become obstructive, hindering him in the performance of his duties. He found, for instance, that he was no longer able to ensure justice for *Banias* in cases arbitrated by Bahrain's *Majlis al-'Urf* (Council of Customary Law) or to protect them. In July 1898, Muhammad Rahim complained that the Shaikh no longer listened to his advice. As a final resort to maintain his influence, Muhammad Rahim began to threaten Shaikh 'Isa with unfavourable reports to the Resident if the Shaikh did not follow his advice.⁸

In 1899, with the arrival of a suspected French agent named Antonin Goguyer, Muhammad Rahim had to contend with a second anti-British influence on Shaikh 'Isa. Goguyer stayed with Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab for several months in 1899 and was rumoured to be issuing Bahrainis with French citizenship certificates or French registration papers for their ships, in return for a small fee. The Resident, Lieutenant-Colonel Meade, saw this as an attempt to establish a degree of French influence in Bahrain.⁹ In July, he cabled his superior in India about Goguyer:

[The] Frenchman Goguyer speaks Arabic fluently and has had numerous interviews with [the] Shaikh and his confidential *munshi*, Sherida. Mahomed Abdul Wahab, [the] principal Turkish resident [in] Bahrain, has for some time been [the] Shaikh's most influential advisor and the opponent of our agent [Muhammad Rahim]. I cannot say whether, or to what extent, these persons are officially authorized to forward the interests of their Governments: both profess to be merchants.¹⁰

⁶ 'Confidential Memorandum' by Meade (PRPG), 6 Dec. 1899, enclosed in Meade to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 6 Dec. 1899, L/P&S/7/118 (IOR).

⁷ Meade to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 2 Oct. 1897, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR).

⁸ Muhammad Rahim to Meade, 2 July 1898, R/15/1/315 (IOR); Meade to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 5 June 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 5a–5b.

⁹ Memorandum by Meade, 28 Aug. 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR). For more about Goguyer, see Slot, *Mubarak al-Sabah*, 46–7, 112 (n. 68), 212–14, 251, 262, 277–86, 289–90, 327.

¹⁰ Meade to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 21 July 1899, telegram, reg. no. 788/1899, L/P&S/7/115 (IOR).

Meade regarded this as a bad time to have an uninfluential agent in Bahrain. The Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon (1899–1905), agreed and reported the matter to London:

As a fresh indication of the unsatisfactory way in which matters are moving in the Persian Gulf, I may mention that it is clear to me from our correspondence with Meade that the Sheikh of Bahrein is also rapidly getting out of hand. An intriguing Frenchman named Goguyer, who was at Muscat, has gone on, under the disguise of a merchant, to Bahrein. He is the man of whom we told you in some previous communication that he is doing his best for small payments to get the people of Bahrein to accept French nationality. He speaks Arabic fluently and appears to have acquired great influence with the Shaikh, who is also much under the control of the leading Turkish resident in the island, a strong opponent of our own [agent, Muhammad Rahim].¹¹

Goguyer's activities were an extension of a similar problem the British were encountering in Muscat. Since 1891, the French Consul at Muscat had been granting French citizenship, papers, and flag-flying privileges to 'Omani skippers in an effort to undermine British influence in 'Oman. This enabled many 'Omani skippers who were shipping slaves and arms (prohibited by treaties with Britain) to escape search and seizure by the Gulf Squadron.¹² The Resident and Viceroy were keen to prevent the same thing happening in Bahrain.

2. THE AGENT'S CONFLICT OF INTEREST BETWEEN TRADE AND POLITICS, 1897–9

In addition to the problem of Muhammad Rahim Safar's loss of influence with Shaikh 'Isa, two allegations about the Agent's conduct were made that, if true, would prove there was a serious conflict of interest between his private business practices and his public duties. The first of these concerned the Agent's inability to secure justice for the *Banias* in Bahrain's *Majlis al-ʿUrf* or to protect them. Muhammad Rahim claimed it was because of Shaikh 'Isa. The *Banias*, however, told Meade that he was deliberately withdrawing his support, in particular cases, for reasons of his own.¹³ The suspicion was that he did not help them because they were his commercial competitors.

¹¹ Curzon to Hamilton (IO Sec.), 26 July 1899, Mss. Eur. F111/158 (IOR).

¹² For details of the French flag problem in 'Oman (1891–1905), see Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894–1914*, 154–86.

¹³ Meade to Cunningham, 2 Oct. 1897, L/P&S/7/104, reg. no. 711/1898 (IOR).

The second allegation of improper conduct by the Agent was made by Shaikh 'Isa.¹⁴ In late August 1897, the Shaikh told Meade that Muhammad Rahim had received word in mid-August that a Bahraini merchant heavily indebted to Muhammad Rahim, named Sayyid Khalaf, was planning to announce his bankruptcy the next day. The Shaikh had discovered that Muhammad Rahim immediately went to Khalaf's house and made him hand over several thousand rupees worth of jewels in payment of the debt. Although Muhammad Rahim had deprived Khalaf's creditors by seizing assets that should have been divided among them, he probably considered that there was no conflict with his public duties as British Agent since he had acted entirely in his private capacity as a merchant. In his response to Shaikh 'Isa's complaint, Meade distanced himself from his Agent:

you may rest assured that Government will never support one of its servants who has behaved badly, nor should you ever think that your opinion regarding our Agent at Bahrein will fail to carry great weight with me. It is desirable that our Agent should be agreeable to you, and I regret to think this is not the case. You may be sure, therefore, that Agha Mahomed Raheem will not be supported by me if I find after full enquiry that he has acted wrongly. ... Again you will understand that Agha Mahomed Raheem is an old man, who has been connected with Government for many years, and it would not be right to condemn him without the fullest consideration of all the facts.¹⁵

A short time later, in a related incident, Meade's attention was again drawn to Muhammad Rahim. In late August 1897, Muhammad Rahim went away on a business trip and left the Agency in the care of his Deputy and nephew, Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif. Soon after, Shaikh 'Isa had Sayyid Khalaf arrested, likely because of his bankruptcy. Khalaf was being taken to the Shaikh for questioning when he escaped and took refuge in the British Agency (as discussed in the previous chapter). Even though Khalaf was not entitled to British protection in Bahrain, Muhammad Khalil allowed him to remain in the Agency. Shaikh 'Isa's men unwisely chose to remove Khalaf by force, violating the sanctuary of the Agency and damaging Britain's prestige in Bahrain.

The following month, Meade's attention was drawn to Muhammad Rahim for a fourth time. Members of the *Bania* firm then managing Bahraini customs for Shaikh 'Isa sailed to Bushire to see Meade. They complained that Muhammad Rahim would only pay 3 per cent duty instead of the full 4 per cent on goods he was importing on behalf of Fracis Times & Co. of Bushire, for whom he was acting as Sales Agent

¹⁴ Shaikh 'Isa to Meade, 27 Aug. 1897, cited in Meade to Shaikh 'Isa, 8 Oct. 1897, P/5497 (IOR), 90.

¹⁵ Meade to Shaikh 'Isa, 8 Oct. 1897, *ibid.* 90.

in Bahrain. The *Banias* accused Muhammad Rahim of using 'his position as British Agent to advance his interests in his private capacity'.¹⁶ When Meade confronted Muhammad Rahim about this, he replied that Shaikh 'Isa had given his family a one percent concession in return for the help his family had rendered the Shaikh in the wake of the 1869 civil war, and that they were permitted to extend it to anyone they wished. This was indeed the case (as discussed in the previous chapter), but Meade did not believe Muhammad Rahim. Shaikh 'Isa had a hand in this as well, by failing to inform the *Banias* of Muhammad Rahim's concession.

In mid-September 1897, Meade's two Assistants, Captain Francis Prid-eaux and J. Calcott Gaskin, arrived in Bahrain to investigate the sanctuary incident at the Agency and the complaints of Shaikh 'Isa and the *Banias* against Muhammad Rahim. They stayed only five days before sailing back to Bushire to report their findings. In early October, Meade submitted a highly unfavourable report on Muhammad Rahim to his immediate superior in Calcutta, the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir William Cunningham. In it, Meade complained about the Agent's conflict of interest between trade and politics:¹⁷

It is clear that Muhammad Rahim is not only our Agent but is also one of the largest merchants in the Island where, as well as here [in Bushire], he owns considerable property, the British Agent's house belonging to him, and I am afraid he merely regards his position as our Agent as a convenience in the advancement of his private interests. He only gets Rs. 100 a month from Government, and everything points to a far larger income from other sources.

The following points appear to me to be pretty clear. Our Agent's position at Bahrein is not a proper or satisfactory one. He is, or ought to be, the supporter of the interests of British traders, and should be an arbiter in their disputes. But, from the fact that he is largely interested in trade himself, he is not really competent to be as useful as he should be, and has, I fear, taken advantage of his position as the British representative at Bahrein. He is not a *persona grata* to the Chief, or popular with the British traders. He is [also] an old man ...

Meade further accused Muhammad Rahim of deliberately failing to support the *Banias* in cases arbitrated by Bahrain's *Majlis al-ʿUrf* and of depriving Sayyid Khalaf's creditors.

All of Meade's complaints can be traced back to one factor: the Agent's poor relationship with Shaikh 'Isa. Had Agent and Ruler not fallen out, Muhammad Rahim's ability to obtain justice for the *Banias* in Bahrain's *Majlis al-ʿUrf* would likely not have been affected; Shaikh 'Isa would have informed the *Bania* firm managing his customs of Muhammad Rahim's

¹⁶ Meade to Cunningham, 2 Oct. 1897, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR).

¹⁷ Ibid.

one per cent concession; and the Shaikh would certainly have sorted out the bankruptcy incident privately without complaining about it to the Resident. Had Muhammad Rahim not lost influence with Shaikh 'Isa, he might have been able to counter the growing Ottoman and French influence with the Shaikh. Everything points to the flawed relationship between Agent and Ruler, which handicapped Muhammad Rahim in the performance of his duties. Meade concluded his report by recommending that Muhammad Rahim retire from government service. However, he admitted that, 'If this is done ... it may be difficult to replace him. We could of course send one of our clerks from [Bushire] who would be glad to get the increase of pay; but he would only be a news-writer, and could not be expected to keep up the position Muhammad Rahim does. He undoubtedly has a considerable standing in Bahrein.' Sir William Cunningham did not share Meade's views. Muhammad Rahim's 'interest in trade need not, of itself, be a bar to his retention as our Agent at Bahrein', he told Meade. Furthermore, his status as one of Bahrain's principal merchants was a distinct advantage to Britain. Cunningham did not believe that the conflict of interest charges alone were a sufficient reason to retire Muhammad Rahim. 'The question turns mainly on whether he exercises his influence with integrity, zeal, and ability', he told Meade.¹⁸ Cunningham thought that Muhammad Rahim's personal standing and influence in Bahrain was of greater importance than his ability to protect the *Banias* there.

As if matters were not bad enough for Muhammad Rahim, the complaints outlined above were soon followed by an undeniable conflict of interest between Muhammad Rahim's private business and public duties.¹⁹ Two years previously, the Ruler of Qatar, with Ottoman support, had attempted to invade Bahrain, but the Royal Navy intervened, sinking or capturing the entire invasion fleet at Zubarah. As a precaution, Shaikh 'Isa decided to arm his armed retainers (*fidawiyah*) with modern rifles. He accordingly issued a concession to his *Wazir*, 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Abd al-Wahhab, for the sole right to import arms to Bahrain, in return for which the *Wazir* was to provide thirty rifles and 6,000 rounds of ammunition per year for the Shaikh's men free of charge. One of the stipulations of the concession was that the arms could only be imported for transshipment purposes and were not to be sold to Bahrainis. The concession further stated that customs duty was to be paid in the form of rifles and ammunition. The *Wazir*

¹⁸ Cunningham to Meade, 8 Nov. 1897, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR).

¹⁹ The following is based upon Meade's 'Report on arms trade at Bahrein', 18 Nov. 1898, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR), unless otherwise indicated. The report contains 31 pages of correspondence from all the concerned parties during 1896–8, the most important of which is Muhammad Rahim's own account of the whole affair: Statement by Muhammad Rahim, 11 Nov. 1898, pp. 21–3.

farmed out the contract to Muhammad Rahim in return for an annual payment of five rifles and 1,000 rounds of ammunition. Muhammad Rahim approached Fracis Times & Co., one of the largest arms trading firms in the Gulf, managed by Nasarwanji Dosabhai Fracis in Bushire and a Mr Times in London—a company with which Muhammad Rahim had been dealing since 1890.²⁰ Muhammad Rahim handed over the concession to Fracis in return for becoming the company's Sales Agent in Bahrain and a share of half the profits from the concession. This gave the company an edge, as Muhammad Rahim had an additional concession from the Shaikh to pay 3 per cent instead of the usual 4 per cent customs duty on all imports—a privilege he could extend to his associates. Muhammad Rahim stored the arms in his warehouse in Manamah. His Deputy and nephew, Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif, assisted him with the business.

Bahrain soon became a regional clearing house for arms as merchants from all over the Gulf came to purchase rifles from Muhammad Rahim. Virtually all payments were made direct to him. Between 1895 and 1897 Muhammad Rahim sold around 6,000 rifles and 1.2 million rounds of ammunition to merchants from Kuwait, Hasa, Sharjah, Bandar 'Abbas, and Lingah for Rs. 600,000 (£40,000). Shaikh 'Isa benefited as well: he received 180 rifles and 36,000 rounds of ammunition from this as customs duty—six times what he was already receiving as a concession fee per year.

The arms trade in the Gulf was a matter of great concern to the Government of India. Most of the rebellious tribes of the North-West Frontier obtained their arms through the Gulf. To combat this, Britain had convinced the Shah of Persia in 1891 to reintroduce a previous ban on arms importation along the Persian coast. That same year, Britain also convinced the Ruler (Sultan) of Muscat to sign an arms prohibition for the Batinah Coast of 'Oman. From 1891 onward, the Gulf Squadron patrolled actively against gun-running along the Persian and Batinah coasts, seizing all arms shipments.²¹ However, arms importation was still perfectly legal in Bahrain before 1898 and the Trucial States before 1902. While the Resident actively discouraged British firms from importing arms to Bahrain and the Trucial States, he had no legal right to stop them. Added to this difficulty was the fact that most of the arms importation firms in the Gulf in the 1890s, such as Fracis Times, were British and were obviously trading against the interests of the British Government. In relation to the Cain–Hopkins theory of

²⁰ Muhammad Rahim to J. C. P. Holtz & Son, 22 Aug. 1890; C. John Zaytun (Muhammad Rahim's business agent) to N. D. Fracis, 25 Mar. 1892 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

²¹ For some interesting first-person accounts of the Gulf Squadron's anti-gun-running activities, see the works by Austin, Harding, and Jeans listed in part 9 of the Bibliography.

imperial activity, outlined in Chapter 2, this situation reveals an interesting conflict of interest between the City (business) and Government.²²

Shaikh 'Isa soon realized the problems he would have to deal with if he did not tightly control the transshipment of arms through Bahrain. As a precautionary measure in January 1896, he issued a general prohibition on all arms trading in Bahrain, except through Muhammad Rahim's concession. Fourteen months later, in April 1897, Shaikh 'Isa had concerns about the arms trade again. Growing numbers of Bahrainis were obtaining firearms, despite the prohibition on selling them to Bahrainis. The *Wazir* told Muhammad Rahim to stop importing arms for four months, after which time Shaikh 'Isa would re-evaluate the situation. In June 1897, Shaikh 'Isa decided to cancel Muhammad Rahim's concession. The *Wazir* wrote to Muhammad Rahim requesting the concession's return, but Muhammad Rahim failed to comply. The *Wazir* wrote Muhammad Rahim once more in August and again in September with no result. Not until Shaikh 'Isa approached Muhammad Rahim on the matter personally in September did Muhammad Rahim take action. That month, Muhammad Rahim wrote to Fracis Times asking for the concession to be returned, but now it was their turn to refuse. Muhammad Rahim then asked the *Wazir* to intervene, but he too was unsuccessful. Added to this was the problem that the company still owed Muhammad Rahim Rs. 86,604 (£5,773), which they were unwilling to pay.²³ In the meantime, Fracis Times had sent over a man from their Bushire office to continue selling arms in Bahrain. This no doubt further alienated the Ruler from Muhammad Rahim.

In July 1897, the Assistant Resident, Captain Claude Ducat, heard about Fracis Times's business in Bahrain. He wrote to Nasarwanji Fracis telling him to cease trading there. Fracis paid no attention to Ducat's letter, however, nor did he tell Muhammad Rahim about it. In October, the Resident discovered Muhammad Rahim's connection with Fracis Times. When the Resident confronted Muhammad Rahim about it later that month, Muhammad Rahim willingly explained all the details of Shaikh 'Isa's concession. Indeed, Muhammad Rahim seemed surprised that the Resident should disapprove of the transshipment of arms through Bahrain, as it was perfectly legal. Muhammad Rahim had not acted illegally, but Meade still condemned him for it. Although Muhammad Rahim had never received orders from Bushire prohibiting him from trading in arms, Meade still believed he should have known better. Meade, therefore, portrayed

²² For more on the arms trade in the Gulf, see the works by Gabriel and Lorimer (appendix N) listed in part 8 of the Bibliography, the works by Fraser and Keppel in part 9, and the relevant articles by Burrell and Prasad in part 13.

²³ Muhammad Rahim to Meade, 21 Apr. 1898 (Bushiri Archive, Bahrain).

Muhammad Rahim unfairly in his reports to India as someone who *had* acted illegally.

By November 1897, Muhammad Rahim was under pressure from both Ruler and Resident to stop trading arms in Bahrain, a directive which Muhammad Rahim was by now attempting to follow. Exasperated with Fracis and prompted by a recent theft of a few rifles from his warehouse in Manamah in January 1898, Muhammad Rahim asked Shaikh 'Isa to place his locks and a guard on the warehouse, which then contained a shipment of arms and ammunition worth Rs. 180,000 (£12,000). A few days later, Shaikh 'Isa had the arms confiscated and moved to one of his own warehouses. Unfortunately, a large number of weapons were damaged and some went missing in the process. Muhammad Rahim denied any involvement in the seizure. Angered at Shaikh 'Isa's action, Fracis sought compensation through Meade in Bushire. Fracis deceptively complained that Muhammad Rahim had ordered the seizure of the weapons in his capacity as British Agent. Even if this was untrue, there was clearly a conflict between Muhammad Rahim's dual position as Residency Agent and Sales Agent, as Meade later reported to India:

The Agent's dual position is undoubtedly an unsatisfactory arrangement and advantage has been taken of it by Messrs Fracis [and] Times to assert that they were dealing with the British representative at Bahrein when they obtained the concession and, again, that the British representative had induced the Sheikh to act as he did when, in reality, Mohamed Rahim was really acting in his private capacity as a private individual and merchant.²⁴

Meade went to Bahrain to assess the situation, arriving in early February 1898. He soon convinced Shaikh 'Isa to issue a proclamation forbidding the sale of arms in Bahrain and granting the Gulf Squadron the right of search and seizure.²⁵ Meade's investigation into the affair lasted nine months. In the report Meade finally submitted to Sir William Cunningham in November 1898, Meade concluded that Muhammad Rahim

has the reputation of being a well-to-do merchant and it would, I may say at once, be difficult to get a man of his position to carry on the duties he performs on the pay of the post, Rs. 100 per mensem, if he was not allowed to trade. Mohamed Rahim and his predecessors no doubt have only held it because it gave them prestige and assisted them in their private commercial undertakings. ... It will, however, be

²⁴ 'Report on arms trade at Bahrein' by Meade, 18 Nov. 1898, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR).

²⁵ Proclamation by Shaikh 'Isa, 6 Feb. 1898, enclosed in Meade to Cunningham, 23 Feb. 1898, enclosed in Elgin to Hamilton, 7 July 1898, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR).

difficult to get a trustworthy agent of this class who will not use the influence the position gives him to forward his own interests ...²⁶

Meanwhile in London around the same time, the Political and Secret Department Secretary in the India Office, Sir William Lee-Warner, was reflecting on Meade's earlier report on Muhammad Rahim. He concluded: 'The present arrangement of giving a local trader a few rupees to represent us has proved, as it was sure to do, obnoxious to others, including the Chief [Shaikh 'Isa], and detrimental to our interests.'²⁷ Lee-Warner's views recall those of British officials in early nineteenth-century India about the unsuitability of Indians as *wakils*. Meade had won over a valuable ally in his efforts to get rid of Muhammad Rahim. In June 1899, Meade renewed his plea to Cunningham for Muhammad Rahim's retirement:

Agha Mohamed Raheem is over 55 years of age [the retirement age for graded officers in the IPS], and is not in good health. He ought therefore to be retired ... I think I had better advise that Agha Mohamed Raheem and his family should no longer be associated with us at Bahrein, and I think this can be done without pressing his connection with the Arms Traffic against the Agha, whose services might perhaps receive some sort of recognition from the Government of India.

It has however been represented to me that the attitude taken of late years by Sheikh Isa and his undoubted leanings towards the Turks are due to ill-feeling between our Agent and himself. Mohamed Rahim has no doubt used his position to advance his own interests, and has made the Sheikh feel that he is in his power to the extent that he can report unfavourably about him to us if he does not do what the Agent wishes. There seems considerable reason to think that this is the case and that our relations with Sheikh Isa will become more satisfactory if Agha Mohamed Rahim and his family have nothing further to say to them.²⁸

The case involving Shaikh 'Isa's arms seizure was eventually decided against Fracis Times. Angered at the outcome, the company launched a lawsuit against Meade personally, for which Meade had to return to London to appear in court—perhaps the only time a Gulf Resident was ever sued in the performance of his duties. The case was decided in favour of Meade in May 1901.²⁹

²⁶ 'Report on arms trade at Bahrein' by Meade, 18 Nov. 1898, reg. no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (IOR).

²⁷ Minute by Lee-Warner, n.d. [mid-Nov. 1898], reg. no. 1044/1898, L/P&S/7/108 (IOR).

²⁸ Meade to Cunningham, 5 June 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 5a–5b.

²⁹ *The Times* (1 May 1901), 3, (2 May 1901), 14, (23 May 1901), 9; Messrs Hollams, Sons, Coward, & Hawksley (London solicitors) to Meade, 23 July 1900, enclosed in Meade to India Office, 25 July 1900, L/P&S/3/378 (IOR); Hamilton to Curzon, 23 May 1901, reg. no. 2011a, L/P&S/3/352 (IOR). For a summary of the case, see Rich, *Invasions of the Gulf*, 225–6. Also see the more famous case of Carr v. Fracis Times

Despite the complaints against Muhammad Rahim from Shaikh 'Isa, the *Bania* firm managing the Shaikh's customs, the *Bania* community in Bahrain, and Nasarwanji Fracis in Bushire, as well as the personal inconveniences the Resident experienced himself because of the Agent's private business practices, Meade failed to convince his superiors in India that these reasons, in themselves, were sufficient to retire Muhammad Rahim. This is a point missed by other historians.³⁰ Had these been the principal concerns, the British would have replaced Muhammad Rahim with another native agent. It was only by convincing his superiors of other reasons to do with the inadequacy of the native agency system as a whole that Meade was able to effect the abolition of the Native Agency in Bahrain. It is to these reasons that we now turn.

3. THE ARGUMENT FOR A POLITICAL AGENCY, 1897–9

All the while Meade was arguing for Muhammad Rahim Safar's retirement, he had been suggesting that a British (graded) officer should replace him. The process of convincing his superiors took a year and a half, requiring the approval of eight people in the Indian Foreign Department, India Office, and Foreign Office.

This process began in October 1897, when Meade first suggested the idea of replacing Muhammad Rahim to Sir William Cunningham in Calcutta. Meade had cited the complaints of the *Banias* against the Agent, the rift in Agent–Ruler relations, the Agent's abuse of his position, and the conflict of interest with the Agent's private business practices as his principal reasons for wishing to retire Muhammad Rahim from government service. Meade then presented Cunningham with three options for Muhammad Rahim's replacement.

The first option was to replace Muhammad Rahim with his Deputy, Muhammad Khalil Sharif, since Muhammad Rahim wished his Deputy to succeed him when he retired. Muhammad Khalil was Muhammad Rahim's nephew, son-in-law, and junior business partner. In Muhammad Rahim's absence, Muhammad Khalil had acted as Native Agent in Bahrain

& Co, in HM Govt, Court of Appeal, *Law Reports: Appeal Cases* (1902), 176–86, concerning the Gulf Squadron's confiscation of Fracis Times's shipment of ammunition at Muscat in 1898.

³⁰ See Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 930–1; Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894–1914*, 138–9; Tuson, *Records of the British Residency*, 44; Farah, *Protection and Politics in Bahrain*, 91–4, 98–100, 108, 110.

numerous times since 1893. Muhammad Rahim had no son, so Muhammad Khalil was destined to take over Muhammad Rahim's business interests in Bahrain and Bushire. But Meade presented the idea of Muhammad Khalil only in passing before dismissing the suggestion without argument.

The second option was to send a Residency clerk to act as agent in Bahrain. Given the current pay allocated to the post (Rs. 1,200 per year), this was really all Meade could afford to do on the Residency's present budget, if he did not appoint Muhammad Khalil as a replacement. But, he admitted, a mere clerk 'could not be expected to keep up the position Muhammad Rahim does'.³¹ Such a step would result in a considerable loss of British influence in Bahrain.

Having presented the available options in this way, Meade clearly wished to leave no doubt in Cunningham's mind as to the need for some third option. And so he presented it: abolish the Native Agency and replace it with a political agency. But such a move would cost a considerable amount more than the current arrangement. Meade knew that there was little chance of the Indian Foreign Department increasing the pay of the post, but he had a plan. Shaikh 'Isa was receiving only Rs. 90,000 (£6,000) a year from the *Bania* firm managing his customs, but Meade believed that Bahraini customs, at 4 per cent, was worth Rs. 320,000 (£21,333) a year. If Shaikh 'Isa could be persuaded to place the management of his customs in British hands, his customs would be managed more efficiently and he would get a fair share of the profit. A new political agent could also be paid for out of the increased revenue. Meade seems to have been applying a variation of Indian precedent to Bahrain, for in Princely India the practice of some rulers paying for British political residents and agents posted to their states dated back to the mid-eighteenth century. If a British officer were to manage Bahraini customs, both the British and the Ruler would profit: 'we could afford to pay a good official and staff, and give the Sheikh a great deal more than he receives at present from the contractors. We would also be able to improve the present arrangements for landing cargoes, which are causing great delay to the mails from India.'³² Meade overlooked the fact that his proposal contravened the terms of the General Treaty of 1820, which clearly states that the British must cover the costs of their own agents in the Gulf.³³

Meade had already asked his two Assistants, Prideaux and Gaskin, to sound Shaikh 'Isa out confidentially on the subject while they were in Bahrain the previous month investigating the sanctuary incident at the

³¹ Meade to Cunningham, 2 Oct. 1897, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR).

³² Ibid.

³³ Art. 6, General Treaty, 23 Feb. 1820, in Aitchison, *Treaties*, xi. *Persian Gulf*, 246.

Agency and the complaints against Muhammad Rahim. Although Shaikh 'Isa had given a guarded reply and asked for time to think the proposal over, Meade was optimistic. He closed his October 1897 report by telling Cunningham that 'The opportunity may be a good one to place our position at Bahrein on a satisfactory footing, and if the Government of India approve, I will do what I can in that direction.'³⁴

As discussed above, Cunningham believed the complaints against Muhammad Rahim were insufficient to retire him, let alone to abolish the Native Agency. Despite its shortcomings, the native agency system was still good value for money. Yet there were other reasons Cunningham *was* willing to consider: namely the chance to enhance Britain's standing and influence in Bahrain. He liked Meade's customs plan. Indeed, the Ruler of Muscat had recently handed over the management of his customs to a British officer seconded from the Government of India with good results and to the satisfaction of both sides. Accordingly, Cunningham granted Meade permission to proceed, but warned him: 'be careful to say and do nothing which might arouse suspicion or bind us in any way'.³⁵

What happened next illustrates how well-founded were Meade's suspicions that Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab was an unofficial Ottoman agent. In January 1898, the Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs in Istanbul received word of Meade's proposal. Since 1871, the Ottoman Porte had been running a diplomatic campaign aimed at countering British influence in Bahrain. It desired to incorporate the island eventually into the Ottoman District (*Sancağ*) of Hasa on the mainland, for which Bahrain was the natural entrepôt. However, the Porte argued from the perspective that Bahrain was *already* Ottoman. It then lodged complaints with the British Government against British actions that undermined Ottoman interests on the island. In this case, the Ottoman Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs notified the British Ambassador in Istanbul that the British Government would need to apply to the Porte for an Ottoman *exequatur* (authorization document) before posting a vice-consul to Bahrain. The hidden message here seems to have been that, although the Porte might be ignoring Britain's present position in Bahrain, it would not tolerate a formal manifestation of that position. Not knowing about Meade's proposal, the British Ambassador merely replied: 'Her Majesty's Government cannot admit the right of the Porte on consular officers in that district being furnished with an Ottoman Exequatur.'³⁶ If Meade's proposal were implemented, it would

³⁴ Meade to Cunningham, 2 Oct. 1897, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR).

³⁵ Cunningham to Meade, 8 Nov. 1897, *ibid*.

³⁶ Currie to Salisbury, 19 Jan. 1898, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 1c.

seriously undermine the Porte's plans for Bahrain. The Ambassador reported this incident to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in London, Lord Salisbury, adding that 'the Porte appears to be much pre-occupied with the question of British influence in Bahrain'.³⁷ Salisbury, likewise, had heard nothing of Meade's proposal. Since the Gulf was an area where the India Office routinely sought Foreign Office approval on policy decisions, this was disconcerting. The Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in London wrote to his counterpart at the India Office asking what this was all about.³⁸ No one in the India Office had heard of Meade's proposal either. And so things went until Cunningham was eventually notified in India. Meade never knew for sure who in Bahrain had reported this information to the Ottoman authorities, but Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab was the obvious suspect. So long as the suspected Ottoman agent remained close to Shaikh 'Isa, Meade could not trust the Shaikh with further confidences.

Meade finished his investigation in June 1898. In his report to Cunningham, he commented that his investigation had only reinforced his belief that the 'the time has come to take a more decided position in Bahrein than we have hitherto done'.³⁹ He suggested the British Government

inform the Turkish Government that the representative we maintain at Bahrein is not a Consular Officer, but is a Residency (Political) Agent under the Government of India, and if, as I strongly recommend, it is decided to improve our position there, the change should, I consider, be accompanied by the appointment of a Political, and not a Consular, Officer of higher rank than our present Agent.

Note how Meade changed his emphasis to address Cunningham's concerns: a political agent was now needed to strengthen Britain's position in Bahrain.

Because of the plan's premature disclosure, London wished to be involved in its development. In August 1898, the Secretary of State for India in London, Lord Hamilton, wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, requesting more information.⁴⁰ Lord Elgin replied in October that,

Colonel Meade [is] inclined to the opinion that the Agent, who is of advanced age, should retire, and thought it possible that a more suitable arrangement might be made, without increased expense, if the Sheikh agreed to our taking over control of the customs. ... The suggestion for the appointment to Bahrein of a Political Officer of higher rank than the present Agent is too indefinite for us to base upon it any recommendation; but we expect a further report from Lieutenant-Colonel Meade

³⁷ Ibid. ³⁸ Sanderson to Godley, 4 Feb. 1898, *ibid.*

³⁹ Meade to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 13 June 1898, enclosed in Elgin to Hamilton, 27 Oct. 1898, reg. no. 1044/1898, L/P&S/7/108 (IOR).

⁴⁰ Hamilton to Elgin, 12 Aug. 1898, reg. no. 711/1898, L/P&S/7/104 (IOR).

[regarding a] ... more suitable arrangement than that now in force for the discharge of local political duties in Bahrein.⁴¹

The question of the new Political Agency lay dormant until May 1899, when Meade again raised the subject with Cunningham. Again, he placed it in the context of countering the challenge to British hegemony in the Gulf:

There is, I think, little doubt that before long there will be considerable activity displayed by various European Powers or their subjects in these regions, and I think the only way to meet their efforts is to increase our own Consular representatives, and to assist our own merchants in establishing themselves. We should have representatives at Bahrein and Bundar Abbas, who should be encouraged to move about and visit the country in their neighbourhood. Thus the officer at Bahrein should proceed occasionally to Koweit, and should visit the Arab coast constantly. The man at Bundar Abbas would similarly go to Lingah and other places on the Persian side of the Gulf. ... I wish however to urge that *we ought to be better represented if we wish to maintain our preponderating influence in the Persian Gulf*, and I am moreover convinced that our representatives should be Englishmen of good position and standing. They ought to have some experience of Arabs, and should know Arabic.⁴²

He also placed the issue in a commercial context:

We must also, I think, encourage British trade more than we have done. The trade of Bahrein especially is rapidly expanding and it is visited yearly by the representatives of several British firms. The [British-owned] Imperial Bank of Persia, I may observe, wish to have an agent at the place. If we have a proper official at Bahrein, there is little doubt that our interests will benefit and that foreign traders will find it difficult to obtain a footing in the place. I will report on this matter separately in connection with other Bahrein affairs, but I think *no time should be lost in considering the general question of increasing our representatives in these parts*.

The following month, Meade raised the issue again. Shaikh 'Isa disliked Meade's customs plan and was refusing to hand over control of his principal revenue source to the British, so Meade decided to press ahead with the new Political Agency as a separate issue:

Improved management of the Customs must unfortunately hold over for the present but no time should, I think, be lost in arranging for the appointment of a suitable officer to represent us at Bahrein, and I venture to recommend the desirability of creating such an appointment for the favourable consideration of the Government of India.

⁴¹ Elgin to Hamilton, 27 Oct. 1898, reg. no. 1044/1898, R/15/1/722 and L/P&S/7/108 (IOR); Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Bahrein Affairs, 1854–1904*, 131.

⁴² Meade to Cunningham, 28 May 1899, reg. no. 665/1899, L/P&S/7/114 (IOR). Italics added here and in the following quotation.

In recommending, however, the creation of a post in which we will be represented by an English official, I think I had better advise that Agha Mohamed Raheem and his family should no longer be associated with us at Bahrein, and I think this can be done without pressing his connection with the Arms Traffic against the Agha, whose services might perhaps receive some sort of recognition from the Government of India.⁴³

Meade then proposed a reorganization of political representation at Kuwait, Bahrain, and Sharjah. The Political Agent at Bahrain was to assume responsibility for the entire Arab coast, with the Native Agents at Kuwait and Sharjah coming under his immediate supervision. The Political Agent would also be responsible for touring the Arab coast, visiting Kuwait and Trucial 'Oman from time to time. Meade promised to submit a full, itemized proposal pending initial approval of the plan.⁴⁴

In July 1899, the Deputy Secretary in the Indian Foreign Department replied to Meade, granting initial approval of the plan. Before the Department would give final approval for the new Political Agency, it wanted a detailed proposal from Meade with all the facts, an explanation of the economic benefits to British India, a list of the new Agent's duties, and an estimate of the costs involved.⁴⁵

By late July, Lord Curzon, who had replaced Lord Elgin as Viceroy six months previously, came to a decision on the issue. Even though Meade had yet to submit his formal itemized proposal for the new Political Agency, Curzon informed Lord Hamilton in London that he intended to 'send an officer to reside permanently at Bahrein before long and, I think that, before the year is out'.⁴⁶

Meade spent over two months drawing up his detailed proposal. In his initial notes, he admitted that 'The advantages of an appointment of a British Officer at Bahrein to succeed the Residency Agent, I regret, cannot be shown in figures for comparison.'⁴⁷ Indeed, in his final report, Meade estimated that the new Political Agent, a second-class political assistant (the lowest rank of graded officer permitted to take charge of a political agency), with necessary support staff, would cost almost fourteen times as much as the present Native Agent: Rs. 16,576, versus Rs. 1,200.⁴⁸ Including set-up

⁴³ Meade to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 5 June 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 5a.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 5b-6a.

⁴⁵ Daly to Meade, 4 July 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 7-8.

⁴⁶ Curzon to Hamilton (IO Sec.), 26 July 1899, Mss. Eur. F111/158 (IOR).

⁴⁷ Memorandum by Meade, 21 July 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 11a-17.

⁴⁸ The Rs. 16,576 breaks down to Rs. 7,200 for the Agent's salary, Rs. 4,876 for the agent's operation allowance, and Rs. 4,500 for the salaries of the agency staff. 'Tubular Proposition Statement' and 'Statement of Initial and Other Annual Current Expenditure' by Meade, 24 Sept. 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 39-43, 43a.

costs (Rs. 20,200 for construction of agency buildings and the purchase of office furniture, etc.), Meade estimated the total expenditure in the first year of the new Political Agency to be Rs. 36,776 (£2,452)—over thirty times the annual cost of the Native Agency—but Meade believed the benefits of the new post would outweigh this cost.⁴⁹ He identified six commercial benefits to be gained ‘from the presence of an officer with greater powers and authority than a [Native] Residency Agent’:⁵⁰

1. greater security;
2. non-interference with the rights of British traders;
3. a decrease in fraudulent transactions involving British traders;
4. a more prompt recovery of the legal claims of British traders;
5. a cessation of intrigues between the *Bania* customs firm and the Ruler;
6. an increase in traders, resulting in increased customs revenues.

The Assistant Resident, Captain Francis Prideaux, identified four political advantages to be gained from the permanent presence of a British (graded) officer in Bahrain. First, it would provide a more effective counterweight to the growing Ottoman influence there and the rising numbers of foreign visitors to Eastern Arabia. Second, it would provide a stronger stabilizing influence when the Heir Apparent, Shaikh Hamad bin ‘Isa Al Khalifah, inherited the rulership of the shaikhdom from his ageing father (a transition Prideaux and Meade envisioned in the near future). Third, it might eventually induce Shaikh ‘Isa to hand over control of his customs to Britain. Fourth, the BI Line would ‘be much benefited and encouraged’ by it.⁵¹

The new Political Agent’s duties were to be those normally performed by British representatives, namely:

1. protecting British subjects, dependants, and property;
2. extending his good offices to foreign subjects residing in Bahrain;
3. recording the claims of British subjects and dependants against Bahrainis made through the Ruler;
4. arbitrating or adjudicating commercial cases involving British subjects and dependants;
5. submitting regular news reports on the Arab coast to the Resident;
6. submitting an annual trade report on Bahrain to the Resident;
7. granting manumission to slaves seeking refuge at the British agency;
8. endorsing passports issued by the Ruler to his subjects;

⁴⁹ ‘Statement of Initial and Other Annual Current Expenditure’ by Meade, 24 Sept. 1899, *ibid.* 43a.

⁵⁰ Memorandum by Meade, 21 July 1899, *ibid.* 11a–11b.

⁵¹ Prideaux to Meade, 14 Aug. 1899, *ibid.* 21a–21c.

9. authenticating other documents at the Ruler's request;
10. managing Bahraini customs, should the Ruler agree to it.

Control of the customs administration would serve the dual purpose of increasing the Ruler's revenues and providing an effective check on the arms trade in Bahrain. Meade believed the greater part of the Political Agent's work would be consular in nature, the majority of his work coming under the headings of: (1) claims and complaints, (2) the slave trade, (3) matters connected with shipping, (4) notarial duties, and (5) trade and other returns. He advised that the Political Agent be made a consul, therefore, 'as it will increase his powers and facilitate matters'. Of the ten duties he listed, only the last four were new. The last duty never came to pass.⁵²

Curzon waited impatiently for Meade's report for over two months. Unbeknownst to Meade, Curzon was compiling a proposal of his own outlining his new 'forward policy' for the frontiers of Britain's Indian Empire. He needed Meade's report to complete it and was greatly annoyed at the delay Meade was causing. In the end Curzon decided not to wait and, in September 1899, he dispatched his famous eighty-nine paragraph proposal to Lord Hamilton in London.⁵³ The proposal painted a stark picture of Russian encroachment in Persia and the Gulf; of German encroachment in Kuwait and the Ottoman Provinces of Basrah and Baghdad; of French encroachment in Bahrain, Muscat, and Persia; and of Ottoman encroachment in Bahrain and Kuwait.⁵⁴ Curzon itemized the proliferation of Russian, French, German, and Ottoman agents, spies, survey parties, quarantine teams, military advisers, naval patrols, merchant steamers, and trading companies throughout the region, all actively undermining Britain's political and commercial influence since the mid-1890s.⁵⁵ He discussed, for instance, Goguyer's activities in Bahrain in the context of a larger pattern of recent French political and commercial activity in Muscat, Lingah, Bushire, Isfahan, Muhammarah, Shushtar, and Dizful.⁵⁶ Having identified this pattern, he commented that,

French interests in the Persian Gulf, either political or commercial, are so small; her own territories are so distant; and the Gulf lies so far out of the track of her merchant vessels or men-of-war, that we are unable to construe these proceedings

⁵² Memorandum by Meade, 21 July 1899, *ibid.*, 12a–12b.

⁵³ Curzon to Hamilton (IO Sec.), 21 Sept. 1899, L/P&S/7/116 (IOR).

⁵⁴ For details, see Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence on International Rivalry and British Policy in the Persian Gulf, 1872–1905*; Rezvan (ed.), *Russian Ships in the Gulf, 1899–1903*.

⁵⁵ Curzon to Hamilton (IO Sec.), 21 Sept. 1899, paras. 26–46, pp. 9–15, L/P&S/7/116 (IOR).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 40, p. 13.

in any other light than as an attempt to cause trouble and annoyance to a possible rival [Britain], and to lend ... assistance to the plans of a European ally [Russia].⁵⁷

Curzon explained how, 'in Eastern countries, commercial and industrial enterprises are the familiar agencies through which political influence is exercised by alien powers'. The growing European and Ottoman involvement in the Gulf constituted a serious challenge to Britain's informal empire and spheres of influence in the region. Even more serious than the threat Russia posed to British India by land was the possibility of Russia establishing a naval base in the Gulf. '[T]he maritime defensibility of India would require to be altogether reconsidered, were the dangers of a [Russian] land invasion [from Central Asia] to be supplemented by the appearance of a possible antagonist as a naval power in waters contiguous to Indian shores.' A naval threat from the Gulf would add considerably to the burdens of defending British India.⁵⁸

To meet these threats, Curzon recommended that Britain consolidate its position in the region by (1) fortifying its political presence; (2) safeguarding its commercial interests; (3) preventing European governments from exercising control or jurisdiction over Gulf ports; (4) implementing a stricter enforcement of its treaties with Kuwait and Bahrain in order to counter the encroachment of foreign influence; and (5) encouraging domestic reforms in Persia and lending its government whatever money and assistance it needed in order to wean it off its financial dependency on Russia.⁵⁹ Curzon believed that a stronger Persia was the best way to check Russia's advance towards the Gulf. To implement his recommendations, Curzon made twelve proposals for increased political representation: four for Central and Eastern Persia outside the Gulf Resident's jurisdiction, and eight for the Gulf Resident's jurisdiction in Southern Persia and Eastern Arabia.

For Central Persia, he recommended that the British Consul in Isfahan 'should be raised in respect of title and pay to the same level as the recently arrived Russian representative', even though British trade in the town was stagnating or declining. For Eastern Persia he suggested, first, that the Consulate in Kerman, run on a temporary basis since 1895, be made permanent. Second, he recommended that a native agent, under the orders of the Kerman Consul, be appointed to Bampur. Third, he wanted a British consul to be appointed to the province of Sistan. In the interim, a native agent should be appointed without delay to the district capital of Nasratabad. The purpose of these appointments was to build up British

⁵⁷ Curzon to Hamilton (IO Sec.), 21 Sept. 1899, para. 41, p. 14.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, paras. 47–8, 57, pp. 15–16, 18.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, paras. 26, 49, 53, 55–6, pp. 9, 16–18.

commercial involvement and political influence in Eastern Persia in an effort to keep the Russians at bay.⁶⁰

For the Gulf Residency and Fars Consulate-General, Curzon recommended, first, to replace the Native Agent at Kermanshah with a British vice-consul in order to encourage British trade along the Baghdad–Tehran trade route (then estimated at one million pounds per year). Second, he recommended the establishment of a consulate for Arabistan (Khuzistan) and the Karun River with the aim of increasing British influence with local tribes so as to ‘postulate a firmer and more permanent footing than we have yet established in South-West Persia’. Third, he recommended the purchase of a house in Shiraz (the capital of the province of Fars) for the Gulf Resident to reside in during the summer months in his capacity as Fars Consul-General. This would compensate for the inadequacy of the Native Agent there, whom Curzon considered ‘a nonentity, without influence or power’. Fourth, he wanted to increase the salary and allowance of the Gulf Resident so that ‘the best men in our service are ... attracted to that post’. Fifth, he recommended that a British officer be appointed to Bandar ‘Abbas to oversee British interests along the south-east Persian coast, from Bushire to the Strait of Hormuz (hitherto the responsibility of the Native Agent at Lingah).⁶¹

Sixth, he recommended the appointment of a British officer to Bahrain. Curzon commented that

such an appointment is in our opinion both desirable and obligatory. Trouble, similar to that which we have already incurred in Maskat, is brewing in Bahrein, the treaty engagements of which petty State with Her Majesty’s Government provide no legitimate excuse for such complications. It is necessary to anticipate them by placing a British officer permanently in the island; and we are at the present time awaiting Colonel Meade’s definite proposals on the matter.⁶²

Seventh, he suggested that the Makran Coast Agency should be transferred from the charge of the Director of the Persian Gulf Section of the Indo-European Telegraph Department in Karachi to the charge of the Political Agent in Muscat. Eighth, he recommended that the Gulf Squadron should be enlarged and tour more frequently around the Gulf, and that the SNOGP’s superior, the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies Station (Fleet) at Bombay, should himself visit the Gulf from time to time.⁶³

After considering Curzon’s long list of proposals, Lord Hamilton concluded that only Bahrain and Bandar ‘Abbas were of immediate importance.

⁶⁰ Ibid., paras. 17, 77, pp. 6, 25.

⁶¹ Ibid., paras. 15–16, 18–19, 74, 77, 81–2, pp. 6–7, 24–7.

⁶² Ibid., para. 83, p. 27.

⁶³ Ibid., para. 84, pp. 27–8.

He promised to approve the appointment of a political agent to Bahrain just as soon as he received the details of Meade's proposal.⁶⁴

4. THE TRANSITION TO A POLITICAL AGENCY, 1899–1900

Meade completed his itemized proposal for the new Political Agency a few days after Curzon's report. In it he explained how the transition to the Political Agency should occur. The Political Agency would be part of an overall reorganization of the Gulf Residency, involving Bahrain, Bushire, Kuwait, and Sharjah.

The post of Native Agent in Bahrain would be converted into that of senior Political Agency *Munshi*. The *Munshi's* duties would be 'to attract reliable men, whom it may often be found necessary to depute on confidential missions to the various chiefs within the charge [of the Agency]. He will have to know Arabic and Persian fluently as well as English.'⁶⁵ This is significant, for it shows that Meade knew that, despite the increasing political rivalry in the region, he still needed local intermediaries to perform political duties for him. In fact, all Meade was doing was limiting the role of these intermediaries. They were no longer to be employed as independent political representatives, but as subordinate political deputies and assistants.

At first, Meade thought of appointing Muhammad Rahim Safar's nephew and Deputy, Muhammad Khalil Sharif, to the important post of Agency *Munshi*. Muhammad Khalil, after all, was 'an intelligent and able man who can read and write as well as speak English, and who is well versed in the local politics of the place'.⁶⁶ But Meade later dismissed the idea, concluding that British relations with Shaikh 'Isa would be better served if the Safar family had nothing more to do with the Al Khalifah. In Muhammad Khalil's place, Meade proposed the Native Residency Agent in Sharjah, Khan Bahadur 'Abd al-Latif, whom he believed to be 'intimately acquainted with all the political features of the appointment'.⁶⁷ 'Abd al-Latif had been Agent in Sharjah since 1890 and was well-regarded by the British. Like Muhammad Rahim, he had served as *Munshi* and Confidential Agent at the Residency during the 1860s–1880s. Meade proposed to increase the

⁶⁴ Godley (Under-Sec. of IO) to Sanderson (Under-Sec. of FO), 20 Dec. 1899, reg. no. 927/1899, L/P&S/7/116 (IOR).

⁶⁵ Meade to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 24 Sept. 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 33a–38b.

⁶⁶ Meade to Cunningham, 5 June 1899, *ibid.* 5a–5b.

⁶⁷ Meade to Cunningham, 24 Sept. 1899, *ibid.* 33a–38b.

pay of the post from Rs. 1,200 to Rs. 1,800 per year. Muhammad Khalil would then be offered 'Abd al-Latif's old post, which would be downgraded to that of a news agent with an annual salary of Rs. 600. Henceforth the Agent at Sharjah was to report to the Political Agent in Bahrain, who was to be restyled the Political Agent for the entire Arab coast, from Kuwait to Trucial 'Oman.⁶⁸

There was one problem with Meade's plan, however: there were no suitable officers available to take the new posts in Bahrain and Bandar 'Abbas. Meade had stipulated that the new officers 'should be Englishmen of good position and standing. They ought to have some experience of Arabs, and should know Arabic.'⁶⁹ This was a very old problem, of course, one that the British had faced since the establishment of the Gulf Residency in 1822. All year, Curzon had been corresponding with the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India, Sir Arthur Godley, on just this point. In February 1899, Godley told Curzon how

There seems to be a general opinion here [at the India Office in London] that *we suffer from the fact that frequent changes are made and that our men do not, as a rule, know Arabic*. It is a complaint which I have, of course, often heard before. ... I wonder what you think about it? I confess it seems to me that change is required, e.g. either that the Foreign Office should take over these posts, or else that *you should create a class of specially qualified men, speaking Arabic, who would be told that they must spend a good long time in the Persian Gulf*, and would be paid accordingly. This last alternative would be an expensive one; but even so it would be preferable to the present state of things.⁷⁰

Curzon responded in March that 'the best men will not go to so disagreeable a station, and such as go clamour till they are taken away'.⁷¹ In April, Godley replied,

I am sorry that you apparently do not think it possible to get some class of men who will be more competent to hold their own against the French and Russian emissaries whom you describe in the Persian Gulf stations. Certainly, gentlemen are to be preferred; but *if gentlemen cannot be induced to learn the language and to stay long enough in one place to acquire influence there, I should be disposed to descend a step lower in the social scale*. But will not gentlemen respond to an offer of increased salaries and allowances? I should have thought that it was partly, at any rate, a question of money, and that a little expenditure for this purpose would be money well laid out.⁷²

⁶⁸ 'Tubular Proposition Statement' by Meade, 24 Sept. 1899, *ibid.* 43a.

⁶⁹ Meade to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 28 May 1899, reg. no. 665/1899, L/P&S/7/114 (IOR).

⁷⁰ Godley to Curzon, 24 Feb. 1899, Mss. Eur. F11/181 (IOR), 26. Italics added.

⁷¹ Curzon to Godley, 23 Mar. 1899, Mss. Eur. F11/158 (IOR), 48a.

⁷² Godley to Curzon, 14 Apr. 1899, *ibid.* Italics added.

Having received no reply on the matter, Godley wrote to Curzon on the subject again in May:

I hope you will not dismiss from your mind the question whether we cannot, either by spending more money, or by an alteration of our system of recruitment, obtain *a more suitable and efficient class of agents for the Persian Gulf*. As the correspondence goes on, I am freshly struck with the advantages which the French enjoy in this respect. Could not men be appointed, on good pay, from the Consular Service? We can hardly go on as at present, I think.⁷³

Curzon replied that he was very disappointed with most of the British political officers in the IPS. He attributed this to 'the miserable system, or lack of system, under which men have hitherto been selected for political service'.⁷⁴ To rectify the problem, Curzon intended to interview candidates personally before approving their appointments. Henceforth, he would be on the lookout for good men whom he could send to the Gulf.⁷⁵

After the India Office approved Meade's plan in December 1899, Meade was unable to find anyone for the new post of Political Agent in Bahrain. The Indian Foreign Department was extremely short-staffed and could not spare any graded officers. Meade had no choice but to keep Muhammad Rahim on as Agent for the time being. And so things continued until 18 January 1900, when Muhammad Khalil suddenly arrived at the Residency headquarters in Bushire with Muhammad Rahim, who was terminally ill. Muhammad Khalil handed his uncle over to the care of the Residency Surgeon and Meade immediately cabled Cunningham in Calcutta with a proposal to send one of his Assistants to Bahrain as a temporary replacement.⁷⁶ Meade had only two assistants to choose from: one graded officer and one uncovenanted officer. The first, Captain Francis Prideaux, was English, a commissioned officer in the Indian Army, and a second-class Political Assistant. The second, J. Calcott Gaskin, was Anglo-Indian, a civil servant, and an Extra-Uncovenanted Political Assistant. Meade preferred to send Prideaux because of his ethnicity and higher rank, but Prideaux spoke no Arabic or Farsi. Gaskin, on the other hand, spoke both fluently and was well acquainted with Bahrain. When Cunningham approved Meade's temporary solution twelve days later, Meade dispatched Gaskin to Bahrain. Muhammad Rahim died on 9 February. Gaskin arrived in Bahrain on the afternoon of 10 February. The Indian Foreign Department made his appointment permanent eight months later.

⁷³ Godley to Curzon, 3 May 1899, *ibid.* Italics added.

⁷⁴ Curzon to Godley, 24 May 1899, mss. Eur. F111/181 (IOR), 25.

⁷⁵ Curzon to Hamilton (IO Sec.), 24 May 1899, mss. Eur. F111/158 (IOR), 94.

⁷⁶ Meade to Cunningham (Indian For. Sec.), 18 Jan. 1900, reg. no. 289/1900, L/P&S/7/120 (IOR).

5. CONCLUSION

The decline of the native agency system in the Gulf and its replacement with a political agency system was the result of increasing imperial rivalry in the region and the native agents' ineffectiveness in the face of this new threat. In Bahrain, the Resident believed that British management of the Ruler's customs administration would generate the funds to employ a British political agent who, unlike the Native Agent, would be able to counter the foreign influences on the Shaikh. The Resident failed to convince the Shaikh of this plan, but his superiors in Calcutta and London still approved the replacement of the Native Agent. They might tolerate the Agent's poor conduct, but not his lack of influence over the Ruler at a time of increasing imperial rivalry. The Agent's inability to stop the Al Khalifah's abuse of the *Baharinah*, cited by other historians, was not a deciding factor in the abolition of the Native Agency in 1900.

Previous accounts of the Agency's decline point to the Native Agent's failure to protect British Indian subjects in Bahrain as one of the main reasons for the Agency's abolition.⁷⁷ However, the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir William Cunningham, rejected this as an adequate reason for replacing the Agent, let alone for replacing the native agency system. He viewed the Agent's conflict of interest in the same way. Meade's attempt to replace the Native Agency on these grounds was unsuccessful—a point overlooked by previous accounts. Nor have these accounts noted the marked contrast between Meade's negative comments about the Agent and those of previous Residents who thought so highly of him. This discrepancy suggests that Meade's efforts to retire the Agent may have been to some extent motivated by a personal dislike of him. In the end, Meade's superiors in Calcutta and London agreed to replace the Agent because of the unsatisfactory state of Agent–Ruler relations. Had the Agent not fallen out with the Ruler, his continuing influence with the Shaikh would likely have been sufficient to neutralize the complaints against him. The Agent's ineffectiveness was sufficient reason to replace him with another native agent, but not to replace the native agency system. Meade could have easily replaced him with the Sharjah Agent, who in turn could have easily been replaced with the Agent's Deputy and nephew, Muhammad Khalil Sharif. In the end, the native agency system in Bahrain was replaced with a political agency system because of factors that had nothing to do with the Agent.

⁷⁷ See Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 930–1; Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894–1914*, 138–9; Tuson, *Records of the British Residency*, 44; Farah, *Protection and Politics in Bahrain*, 91–4, 98–100, 108, 110.

The single most important cause of the demise of the Native Agency in Bahrain was the growing international rivalry in the Gulf. Meade's superiors in Calcutta and London agreed to do away with the native agency system in Bahrain because it was an inadequate counterweight to the new threats facing Britain. In other words, the system of indigenous political mediation and collaboration had not broken down. On the contrary, it was the regional political situation that had changed. Had international rivalry in the Gulf not increased, the native agency system in Bahrain could have continued to function adequately for its established purpose. This is a significant point. Ronald Robinson's theory of collaboration holds that it was the breakdown of the systems of indigenous political mediation and collaboration that led to the transition from indirect to more direct forms of imperial involvement. This chapter's analysis of the abandonment of the native agency system in the Gulf therefore offers a significant modification to Robinson's theory. It shows that an indigenous system does not have to break down to lead to more direct forms of imperial control.

Despite the disadvantages of the native agency system, it served the Gulf Residents remarkably well throughout most of the nineteenth century. By the time Meade realized the need for a more formal political presence in the Gulf, however, the disadvantages inherent in the system (discussed in Chapter 3) had begun to outweigh its advantages. Curzon's implementation of his forward policy in 1900 started the decline of the native agency system in the Gulf.⁷⁸ At the beginning of Curzon's viceroyship in 1899, the Gulf Resident had thirteen agencies, consulates, and offices in his charge, eight of which were operated by native agents—see Table 18. Twelve years later, in 1911, the Gulf Resident had fourteen agencies, consulates, and offices in his

Table 18. Agencies and consulates under the supervision of the Gulf Resident in 1899

Native agencies	Political agencies/consulates/offices
1. Kuwait Agency	1. Muscat Agency and Consulate
2. Bahrain Agency	2. Muhammarah (Arabistan) Consulate
3. Sharjah Agency	3. Makran Coast Agency—HQ in Karachi
4. Kermanshah Agency	4. Jask Office—part of the Makran Coast Agency
5. Shiraz Agency	5. Chahabar Office—part of the Makran Coast Agency
6. Lingah Agency	
7. Basidu Agency	
8. Gwadar Agency	

⁷⁸ For details of Curzon's forward policy, see Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894–1914*, 114–53, 235–69.

charge, but now only two were operated by native agents—see Table 19. The replacement of the Native Agent in Bahrain alone was expected to increase the Gulf Residency's annual staffing costs by over 10 per cent—24 per cent if one includes the construction of the new agency building. But this must be viewed in context. The residency system in Arabia and Princely India, even with the more expensive political agencies run by British officers, still cost far less to maintain than the system of direct rule in British India.

Table 19. Agencies and consulates under the supervision of the Gulf Resident in 1911

Native agencies	Political agencies/consulates/offices
1. Sharjah Agency	1. Muscat Agency and Consulate
2. Gwadar Agency	2. Bahrain Agency
	3. Kuwait Agency
	4. Muhammarah (Arabistan) Consulate
	5. Ahvaz Consulate
	6. Shiraz Consulate
	7. Kerman Consulate
	8. Lingah Vice-Consulate
	9. Bandar 'Abbas Consulate
	10. Makran Coast Agency—HQ in Karachi
	11. Jask Office—part of the Makran Coast Agency
	12. Chahabar Office—part of the Makran Coast Agency

Note: The Native Agent in Kermanshah was also replaced with a British officer in 1904, but responsibility for the post was transferred away from the Gulf Resident in 1910.

7

Conclusion: The Arabian Frontier of the Indian Empire

It has been by a policy of Protectorates that the Indian Empire has for more than a century pursued, and is still pursuing, its as yet unexhausted advance.

Lord Curzon, 1907¹

The Gulf Residency was one of the largest and most important of the dozens of residencies maintaining the protective zone of informal empire surrounding British India. Since all these residencies were part of the same political residency system directed from British India and all used native political officers in the nineteenth century, it follows that they all must have operated to a great extent as the Gulf Residency did. Differences in local circumstances would have called for different strategies of influence and control, but all the residencies must have had a largely indigenous political infrastructure, and they all must have worked within indigenous political systems to whatever extent was possible. Given the scarcity of British political officers in most if not all residencies, had the British not employed native political officers, they would never have been able to establish their districts of informal empire around British India. Hence the conclusions proceeding from a study of the Gulf Residency also provide some insight into the organization and operation of British India's other residencies and agencies in Asia and Africa. These conclusions reveal a significant difference between the traditional view of Britain's Indian Empire and the reality of how it actually functioned.

The first conclusion is that the Indian Empire was much larger than current Indian historiography says it was, and that the informal part of this empire included Arabia. If 'informal empire' is defined politically, using the definitions the British Government of India used at the time, then it becomes

¹ Curzon, *Frontiers*, the 1907 Romanes Lecture, delivered at the Univ. of Oxford on 2 Nov., part 4.

apparent that British India itself had an informal sub-empire in South Asia, Arabia, and East Africa comprised of semi-independent states under the suzerainty of the British Crown. If we define the Indian Empire as 'British India together with any territories of any Native Prince or Chief under the suzerainty of Her Majesty exercised through the Governor-General of India',² as the Government of India itself defined it, one is presented with a very different picture of the Indian Empire from that portrayed by historians of the Raj and even the British Government itself. In the late nineteenth century, for instance, the British claimed their Indian Empire was comprised of British India (including 'Aden Settlement) and Princely India. But if we add those semi-independent states under British Indian suzerainty excluded from the official maps of the Indian Empire—namely Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, the Gulf shaikhdoms, the 'Aden Protectorate, and British Somaliland—we find the Indian Empire was over a quarter larger than the British wished to claim, as shown by Map 1 and Table 5 on pages 16 and 25. As a result, most historians of the Indian Empire consider India and Arabia in isolation from each other. The few who do compare the two regions place too much emphasis on the differences between them. In reality, the similarities between the protected states of India and Arabia are striking. They led Ameen Rihani, whose comments begin Chapter 1, to observe that 'Bahrain belongs to British India.'³ If Viceroy Curzon could remark that Muscat, a state far less treaty-bound than the Gulf shaikhdoms and the 'Aden Protectorate, 'is as much a Native State of the Indian Empire as Lus Beyla or Kelat [in Princely India], and far more so than Nepal or Afghanistan',⁴ then could there have been any significant political difference between the British-protected states of Arabia and India?

The second conclusion is that Britain maintained its informal empire in Arabia in order to protect British India and its trade and communication routes. By offering a series of treaties through which Britain became increasingly responsible for the protection of the Gulf shaikhdoms, Britain was able to get local rulers to collaborate in the pacification of the Gulf and in the later exclusion of foreign influence that threatened British India.⁵ In South Arabia, Britain entered into similar treaties with the rulers of the 'Aden Protectorate in order to protect its vital port at 'Aden (1839–1967). Britain's primary motive for entering into these relationships was strategic: to establish a cordon sanitaire around British India. Outside of the ports of Muscat and 'Aden, the financial value of Arabia to the cities of London and

² Ilbert, *Government of India*, 292.

³ Rihani, *Around the Coasts of Arabia*, 258.

⁴ Curzon to Sec. of Indian For. Dept, 21 Nov. 1903, mss. Eur. F 111/162 (IOR), 411.

⁵ See Onley, 'Politics of Protection'.

Bombay was relatively small before oil. Economic interests there did not begin to shape British policy until the 1930s, after the discovery of oil and the establishment of airfields for Imperial Airways (later British Overseas Airways, BOAC) connecting Britain with India and South-East Asia. Before that time, British intervention was determined solely by circumstances and events within the shajkhdoms that threatened British ships in Arabian waters and British interests in Muscat and 'Aden. Historians of the region should, therefore, take note of Robinson and Gallagher's theory of British imperialism, for it offers the best explanation of the nature of British India's informal empire in Arabia, as well as other frontier regions of the Indian Empire like Afghanistan, Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier, and Nepal.

The third conclusion is that the environment had a formative influence on the infrastructure of informal empire in the Gulf. Arabia's debilitating climate and disease-ridden living conditions were often deadly for Europeans, as shown by Table 9 on page 69. The high death tolls prompted the British to withdraw most of their agents and soldiers from the Gulf by the early nineteenth century. However, the British were able to replace their Gulf garrison with a naval squadron because the maritime nature of the Gulf shajkhdoms meant that most of the Anglo-Arab treaties could be enforced through naval power alone. But so undesirable were Arabian postings and so complex and little studied was the Arabic language that, when the Indian Foreign Department desired to post just one British political officer to Eastern Arabia in 1899, it had great difficulty finding anyone. Thus the Gulf's harsh environment, together with the Government of India's need for economy, resulted in the operation of the Gulf Residency by a very small number of British officers in the nineteenth century. This scarcity of British officers led to a largely indigenous infrastructure, as shown by Table 6 on page 55 and Appendices A10 and A14.

The fourth conclusion is that most of British India's political officials in Asia were not British at all, but locally-engaged native agents—as Appendices A2–A14 illustrate. From the very beginning of its operations in India, the East India Company had employed local Indian merchants as its representatives. When the Company began to take an interest in Arabia, it appointed Indian merchants as its representatives there as well. Many of these men were Hindu merchants, known as *Banias*. After 1764, the Company began to recruit the services of the traditional service élite of India, who replaced the merchants in this role. However, the British were unable to do this in the Gulf because Arabia lacked a traditional service élite and the Persian service élite was not interested in collaborating with the British. After the 1820s, the declining effectiveness of Indians as political representatives in India resulted in the replacement of many of them with British officers. In the Gulf, however, *Bania* agents were replaced with

Muslim merchants (usually from Arabia, Iraq, or Persia) and their relatives. The British entrusted these agents with greater responsibilities as the century progressed, and the result, paradoxically, was an expanding political role for non-Europeans in the Gulf Residency at a time when the political role of non-Europeans in the Indian residencies was diminishing. As late as 1899, about 70 per cent of the Gulf Residency's political staff were non-European or Eurasian, as shown by Appendix A14. The Resident's choice of native agents—locally established, affluent, influential merchants with whom the rulers were financially and politically interdependent—motivated rulers to collaborate. It enabled the Resident both to tap into the local political systems of the Gulf shakhdoms and to enhance the influence his agents had with the rulers. The native agency system thus blended local and imperial politics, creating a dynamic power triangle between the Resident, his native agents, and the rulers—a system of relationships that formed the core of the infrastructure of informal empire.

The fifth conclusion is that the Gulf Residency, like Britain's other residencies and agencies in Asia and Africa, not only employed great numbers of non-Europeans, but also used them to tap into indigenous intelligence networks. Studies by C. A. Bayly and Michael Fisher have shown how British political residents, political agents, governors, district officers, and army commanders in India were able to obtain the intelligence they needed by employing thousands of Indians as postal runners, spies, *munshis*, news agents, and political agents. This study has shown how the British used a similar system in the Gulf by employing Persian postal runners and Arab and Indian dhows for communications, and by employing Indian, Arab, and Persian merchants as *munshis*, news agents, and political agents. The British recruited prominent local merchants who not only had an extensive knowledge of local cultures, languages, and politics, which men from outside a region could not possibly possess, but who also could obtain (through their family, social, and business networks) the intelligence British India needed to sustain its informal empire.

The sixth conclusion is that Britain's residencies and agencies in Asia and Africa were not 'British' institutions at all, but multinational collaborative organizations run for Britain by non-Britons. In 1869, for instance, 92 per cent of the Gulf Residency's staff in Persia was non-European, as shown by Appendix A11. All of British India's residencies and agencies in Asia and Africa were organized along similar lines. Britain's employment of hundreds of native agents and thousands of native assistants, doctors, clerks, soldiers, sailors, servants, and labourers made the administration of informal empire affordable, and hence possible. British India's informal empire was, to an amazing extent, 'empire on the cheap' (to use Robinson and Gallagher's famous phrase). Most of the British political officers in the

Indian Political Service were seconded from the Indian Army and Navy because they received smaller salaries and were more numerous (and hence more affordable and available) than their counterparts in the Indian Civil Service. Non-Europeans in the IPS were paid the least of all: the salary of a native political agent was around 10 per cent of that of a British political agent seconded from the Indian Army. As the analysis of costs in Chapter 3 and Appendix A14 showed, non-Europeans and Eurasians accounted for almost three-quarters of the Gulf Residency's political staff in 1899, yet their salaries accounted for a little over one-quarter of the political staff budget. If Residency support staff is included, then non-Europeans and Eurasians accounted for over nine-tenths of those staffing the Gulf Residency's headquarters, agencies, and consulates in 1899, yet their salaries accounted for under one-quarter of the total staffing cost. For the affluent merchants who became British agents, the real payment came in the form of British protection, higher social status, increased power, and enhanced business prospects. If they had not been permitted to benefit from their association with the East India Company and Government of India, there would have been little incentive for them to serve as British agents. This was an accepted feature of the native agency system. If there was a conflict of interest in mixing trade with politics, most of the British residents and their superiors seem to have considered it a price worth paying for the services of these well-connected and influential men.

The seventh conclusion is that, despite the general effectiveness of the native agents, race and religion usually influenced the British in how they employed them. In India, the British ceased to employ Indians as native agents in many locations after the 1820s because of covertly racial views about their unsuitability as political representatives at Indian courts. They justified this change by pointing to the increasing preference of the status-conscious Indian rulers for dealing with British agents. In fact, the rulers had simply adopted the British view of Indian agents—that they were of lower status than British agents. In Eastern Arabia, the Gulf Resident ceased to employ Hindu agents because of local objections to their religion. The British concern for local perceptions of an agent's status, however valid, was reinforced by increasingly common British racial views on 'suitable' and 'unsuitable' roles for Indians in British service. Unable to replace the Hindu agents with Britons because of environmental and financial constraints, Residents from the 1830s onward appointed only Muslim agents—usually Arabs and Persians. As the perceived importance of the agencies in the Gulf increased in the 1890s and 1900s, British racial views again came into play. The native agents were replaced with Britons or Anglo-Indians, who were now better equipped to survive in the Gulf thanks to advances in medicine and technology. Even though there is no evidence to suggest that the Arab

rulers regarded Muslim native agents as inferior, the British experience of India seems to have coloured the views of men like the Political and Secret Department Secretary at the India Office, Sir William Lee-Warner, who believed that Arab rulers *did* regard such agents as 'obnoxious'.⁶ The replacement of native agents in the early twentieth century may have been simply the result of British reluctance to invest non-European officers with the same official status and political authority as that held by British officers. Without this official status and authority, the native agents were effective only so long as there was no competing foreign influence in the Gulf. This explains why, between 1900 and 1911, the Government of India replaced its native agents with British officers in every post in the Gulf region except Sharjah and Gwadar, where foreign influence was not a serious threat.

The final conclusion is that the native agency system was a highly effective mechanism of influence and control. This informal and flexible system enabled British India to maintain political relations with hundreds of rulers and governors throughout Asia and Africa. The native agents' lack of formal authority was a great advantage for the British. As the agents were neither officially appointed nor invested with power, the British allowed them to act in any way they thought fit so long as it brought the desired results. When this flexible approach did not work, the British could always disavow an agent's actions. Both the British and the rulers could save face by blaming the native agents. The informality also allowed for unorthodox arrangements such as the arbitration of mixed commercial cases by Bahrain's *Majlis al-Urf*, an innovation that enabled the British to work within indigenous legal systems as well.

Yet, despite the effectiveness of most native agents, some British officials never ceased to question the loyalty of non-Britons who served as British political representatives. This was most dramatically illustrated in the Gulf in 1798, when the outgoing Bushire Resident, Nicholas Smith, refused to hand over the Union Jack to the incoming Resident, Mahdi 'Ali Khan, because he passionately believed that Muslims were incapable of sincerely representing the interests of a Christian nation. The Governor of Bombay, Jonathan Duncan, enforced the handover because he believed that what really mattered was Mahdi 'Ali Khan's skill as a diplomat. Some British officials feared, like Smith, that Muslim agents in Muslim states might conspire with their co-religionists against Britain. Such fears were ill-founded as far as the Gulf is concerned, for there is no record of such an occurrence. Those agents who did betray Britain did so by secretly working for Britain's Christian European rivals, mainly France.

⁶ Minute by Lee-Warner, n.d. [mid-Nov. 1898], reg. no. 1044/1898, L/P&S/7/108 (IOR).

As successful merchants, often from transnational families like the Safars, Britain's native agents were realistic and pragmatic, regional as well as local in their outlook. Although conflicts of interest did occur, it seems unlikely that the agents were influenced by ethnicity, nationality, or religion in any way that was detrimental to British interests.

Overall, the native agency system was an effective form of informal political representation in the Gulf until the mid-1890s, when international rivalry in the region began to threaten Britain's Indian Empire. In the face of this threat, the informal status of Britain's native agents became counter-productive, a development that prompted the Government of India in the 1900s to replace most of its native agents with a stronger political presence in the form of gazetted British political agents. However, the replacement of the agents, which eventually led to a complete abandonment of the native agency system, did not change the larger, underlying system of indigenous collaboration. Members of the same merchant families continued to be employed in political roles under the direct supervision of British officers in the Gulf Residency and political agencies, just as political residents in India continued to employ Indians on their political staffs after the decline of the native agency system in India. British political agents in the Gulf continued to rely heavily on the intelligence and mediation provided by their native political assistants, and on the various other services provided by large native staffs, until the end of the Gulf Residency in 1971. The crucial importance of indigenous support is abundantly clear from the Residency and agencies' annual staff photographs. Take, for instance, the staff photograph of the Political Agency in Bahrain from c.1929 (Photo 7), which still hangs in the British Embassy in Manamah: it shows twenty-three men, only one of whom, the Political Agent, is British. When the political agencies were converted into embassies upon the independence of the Gulf shaikhdoms, the British Government kept these men on. Some continued to work for the British Government well into the 1990s.⁷ In other parts of the world, native agents continue to represent Western governments, but as honorary consuls not political agents (their role now confined to commercial relations and administrative duties), and locally-engaged personnel still account for the majority of staff in Western embassies and consulates. In 2005, over half of the overseas offices maintained by Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office were honorary consulates (290 out of 573) and two-thirds of overseas consular staff were locally-engaged.⁸

⁷ Interviews with Yusif al-'Ali (Consul 1958–98), 1999 (Bahrain), and Rui Falco (Accountant, Gulf Residency 1966–72 and British Council 1972–present), 1999 (Bahrain).

⁸ H M Govt, Auditor General, *The FCO*, 1, 4, 53, 69.

Robinson's theory of collaboration finds that the greater the informality of an empire, the greater the level of local collaboration needed to sustain it, and the greater the need to work within indigenous political systems.⁹ This study of the Gulf Residency shows how the Resident used a native agency system to mediate with local rulers and governors, and how the Maritime Truce secured the collaboration of Arab rulers and governors on both sides of the lower Gulf by casting the British in the culturally acceptable role of 'protector' (*mujawwir*) within the regional political system of Arabia.¹⁰ Robinson's theory holds that it was the breakdown of indigenous systems of collaboration that led to more direct forms of imperial involvement. In the case of the Gulf Residency, the indigenous system clearly did not break down. While men from regional or local merchant families were no longer employed as political agents, except in Sharjah and Gwadar, they continued to work in subordinate political roles. Furthermore, the system of collaboration Britain maintained through its protector–protégé relationships with the Gulf rulers continued well into the twentieth century—until Britain's military withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971. This study both illustrates Robinson's theory and provides a significant modification to it. It shows that indigenous systems of mediation and collaboration do not have to break down to lead to more direct forms of imperial control.

More broadly, this study of how the 'policy of protectorates' described in the Preface of this book was implemented on the ground throws new light on the nature of informal empire. While historians have examined at length the role of Indians in the maintenance of formal empire in India, they have barely acknowledged the crucial political role played by native agents in the informal empire surrounding British India. The tendency remains for historians to focus on the official aspects of this informal empire—the very few gazetted officers and the formally defined political and judicial arrangements—which have been highlighted by the selective nature of the imperial archives, such as the India Office and Gulf Residency records in the British Library. The indigenous side of informal empire is often obscure: records that might have revealed much have been thoughtlessly discarded over the years, and those remaining are often held in private archives or lie, forgotten, in dust-covered trunks. By bringing together what official and private records have to say about the life and work of some formerly invisible agents of empire, this book fills a significant gap in Gulf, Indian, and British imperial history. Yet the native agency system

⁹ See Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism'.

¹⁰ For the Resident's role as 'protector', see Onley, 'Politics of Protection', 57–8, 71–5.

does not appear to have been unique to the Gulf, India, or even the British Empire. This study of the Gulf Residency and Bahrain Agency should encourage historians to look anew at informal empire. A shift in focus may reveal that the political infrastructure of informal empire everywhere was largely indigenous.

APPENDIX A

British India's Residency System in Asia and Africa

1. BRITISH INDIA'S RESIDENCY SYSTEM, 1880s

Residencies, consulates-general, and independent agencies and offices reporting to the central and provincial governments of British India.

A. Headquarters of foreign and political departments in British India

Govt depts	Winter HQ	Summer HQ
1. Foreign Dept, Govt of India	Calcutta	Simla
2. Political Dept, Govt of Assam	Shillong	Shillong
3. Political Dept, Govt of Bengal	Calcutta	Darjeeling
4. Political Dept, Govt of Bombay	Bombay	Poona and Mahabaleshwar
5. Political Dept, Govt of Burma	Rangoon	Maymyo
6. Political Dept, Govt of Central Provinces	Nagpur	Pachmarchi
7. Political Dept, Govt of Madras	Madras	Ootacamund (Ooty)
8. Political Dept, Govt of NW Provinces	Allahabad	Naini Tal
9. Political Dept, Govt of Punjab	Lahore	Dalhousie

B. British diplomatic districts in neighbouring South Africa

Name of district (area covered)	Type of district
1. Kabul (Afghanistan)	Independent Native Agency
2. Turkish Arabia (Ottoman Iraq)	Consulate-General
3. Tehran (Northern and Central Persia)	Legation (oversaw 4 and 5)
4. Khorasan (Eastern Persia)	Consulate-General
5. Fars (Southern Persia)	Consulate-General (run by same officer as 6)
6. Persian Gulf (Eastern Arabia)	Political Residency (run by same officer as 5)

7. 'Aden (South Arabia & British Somaliland)	Political Residency
8. Zanzibar (Sultanate of Zanzibar, East Africa)	Consulate-General
9. Chiang Mai (North-West Siam)	Consulate

C. British Diplomatic Districts in South Asia

Name of district (area covered)	Type of district
1. Ajmer	Political Residency
2. Akalkot	Political Agency (independent office)
3. Assam States (<i>later</i> North-East Frontier)	Political Residency
4. Baluchistan	Political Residency
5. Baroda	Political Residency
6. Benares	Political Residency
7. Central Indian States	Political Residency
8. Chamba	Political Residency
9. Cutch	Political Agency (independent office)
10. Dujana and Laharu	Political Residency
11. Eastern Rajputana States	Political Residency
12. Faridkot	Political Residency
13. Frontier Tribes (<i>later</i> North-West Frontier)	Political Residency
14. Gwalior	Political Residency
15. Hill States	Political Residency
16. Hill Tipperah	Political Agency (independent office)
17. Hyderabad	Political Residency
18. Kaira (Combay)	Political Agency (independent office)
19. Kapurthalla, Mandi, and Suket	Political Residency
20. Kashmir, including Jammu and Hunza	Political Residency
21. Kathiawar	Political Agency (independent office)
22. Khyber	Political Office (independent office)
23. Kolaba	Political Agency (independent office)
24. Kolhapur	Political Agency (independent office)

25. Kumaun	Political Agency (independent office)
26. Ladakh	Political Residency
27. Mahikantha	Political Agency (independent office)
28. Malair Kotla and Kalsia	Political Residency
29. Meywar	Political Residency
30. Mysore and Coorg	Political Residency
31. Nepal	Political Residency
32. Orissa Tributary States	Political Agency (independent office)
33. Palanpur	Political Agency (independent office)
34. Pataudi	Political Agency (independent office)
35. Patiala	Political Residency
36. Poona	Political Agency (independent office)
37. Rajputana	Political Residency
38. Rewa Kantha, Panch Mapals, and Narukot	Political Agency (independent office)
39. Rohilkand	Political Agency (independent office)
40. Satara	Political Agency (independent office)
41. Savantvadi	Political Residency
42. Shahpur	Native Agency (independent office)
43. Sikkim	Political Office (independent office)
44. Southern Mahratta Country	Political Agency (independent office)
45. Surat	Political Agency (independent office)
46. Travancore and Cochin	Political Residency
47. Western Rajputana States	Political Residency

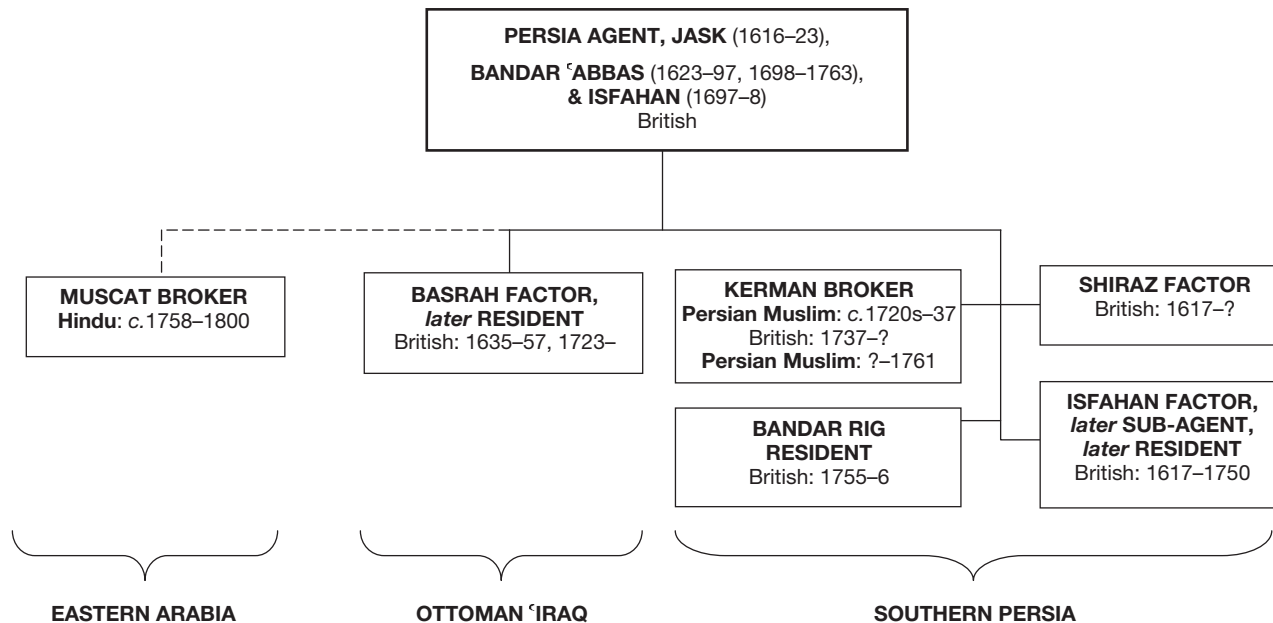
Note:

The Sikkim Office (1889–1947) was responsible for Britain's relations with Bhutan and later with Tibet (1904–47).

Sources:

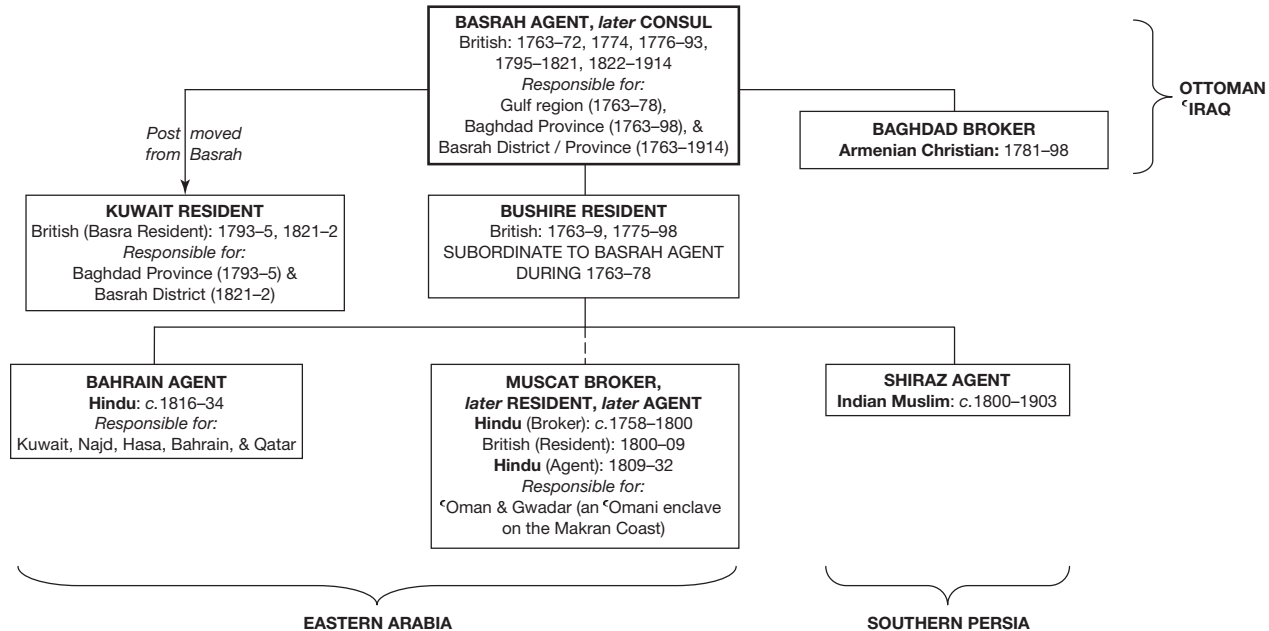
Lists compiled from HM Govt, India Office, *The India List: Civil and Military, July 1880*, 26, 72a, 92, 110, 129, 155–7; *The India List: Civil and Military, July 1884*, 45, 46, 46*, 59a, 72a, 92, 110, 131, 155–7; *The India List: Civil and Military, January 1888*, 45, 46, 46*, 59a, 72a, 92, 110, 131, 155a, 156–7.

2. THE PERSIA AGENCY, 1616–1763



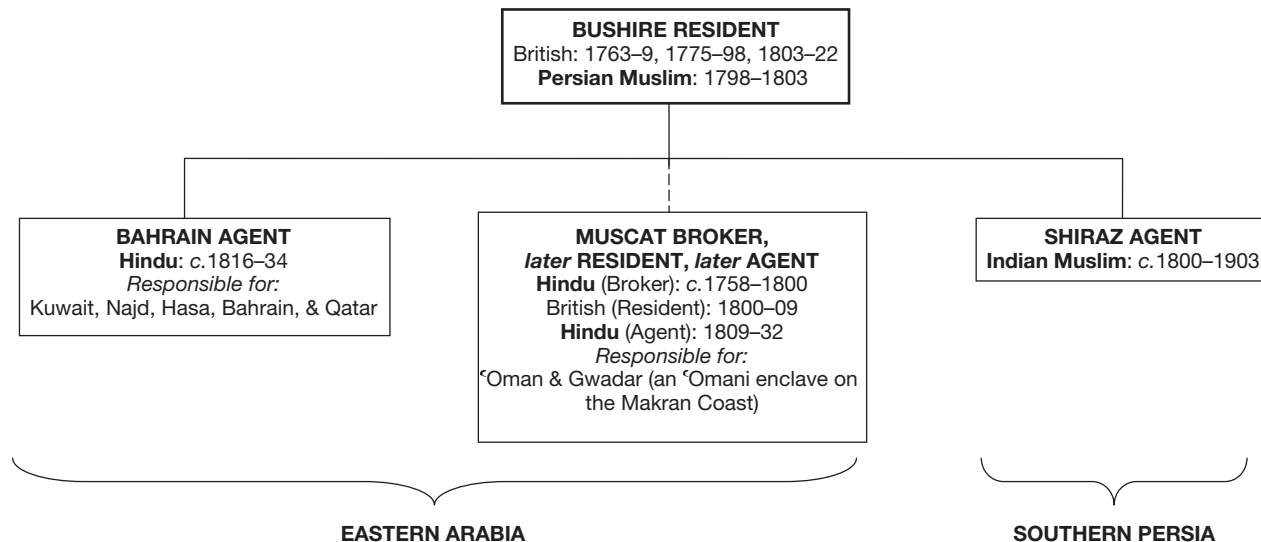
Note: The Broker at Muscat communicated and cooperated with the Persia Agent on a regular basis, but he took his orders directly from the Govt of Bombay. The Persia Agency was transferred to Basrah in 1763. For details about the Agency, see Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 173.

3. THE BASRAH AGENCY, 1763–1914 (RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GULF DURING 1763–78)



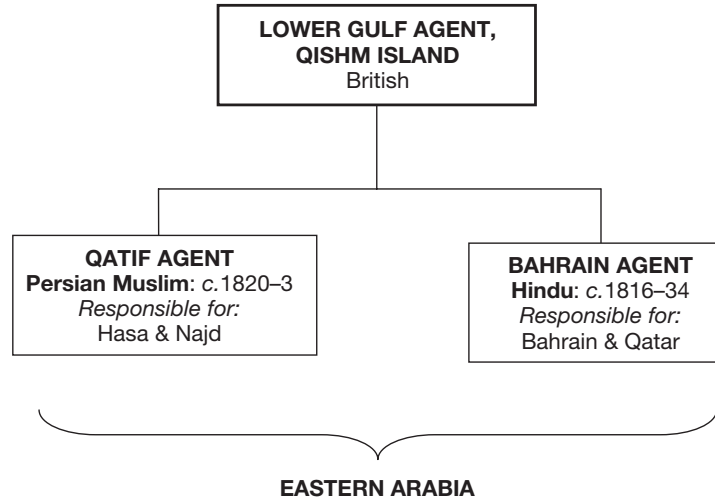
Note: The Broker and Resident at Muscat communicated and cooperated with the Resident in Bushire on a regular basis, but they took their orders directly from the Govt of Bombay. During the 1793–5 and 1821–2 ruptures in Anglo–Ottoman relations in ‘Iraq, the Basrah Agent relocated to Kuwait.

4. THE BUSHIRE RESIDENCY, 1778–1822

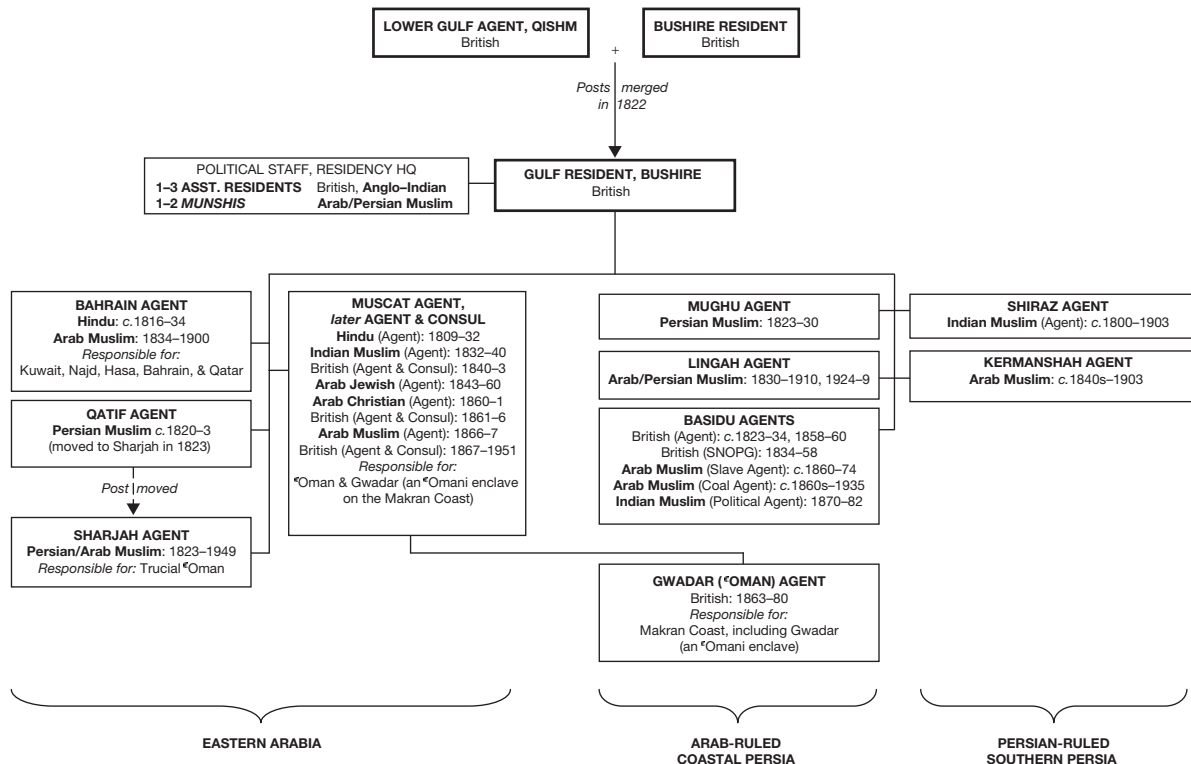


Note: The Broker and Resident at Muscat communicated and cooperated with the Resident in Bushire on a regular basis, but they took their orders directly from the Govt of Bombay. In 1810, the Muscat Agency was made subordinate to the Bushire Residency, but the Agent continued to report additionally to Bombay until 1865. For details, see Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 151.

5. THE LOWER GULF AGENCY, 1820–1822



6. THE GULF RESIDENCY, 1822–78



Note:

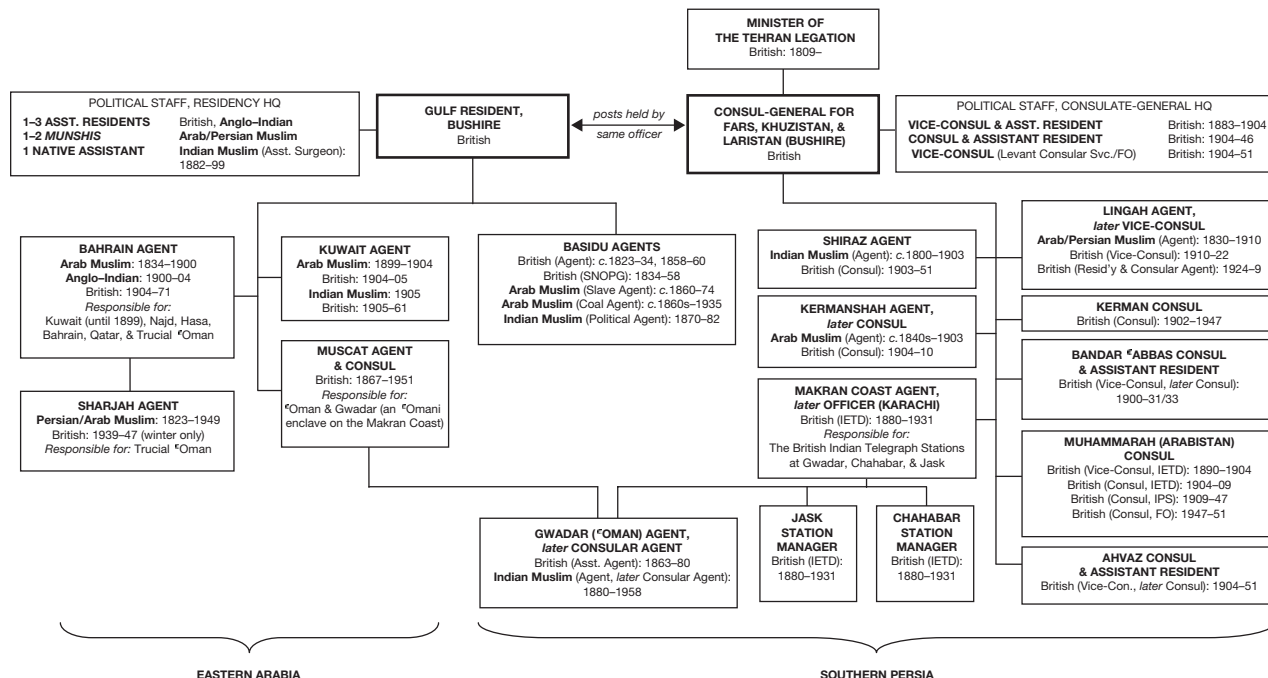
The Agent in Muscat reported to both Bushire and Bombay until 1865. The Agent held a consular commission during 1841–3 and again during 1863–1971. For details, see Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 151–2. The enclave of Gwadar on the Makran Coast was given to the Ruler (Sultan) of Oman by the Khan of Kalat in 1784. Because of overlapping political interests in Gwadar, the Agent there reported to the following British authorities in both the Gulf and India:

- (a) The Political Agent in Muscat during 1863–1958
- (b) The Political Agent for Kalat State during 1863–1931
- (c) The Gulf Resident in Bushire (later Bahrain) during 1870–1958
- (d) The Commissioner for Sindh during 1873–7
- (e) The Agent to the Governor-General for Baluchistan during 1877–1931

Sources:

Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Mekran Affairs* (1905), 105–13; Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 155.

7. THE GULF RESIDENCY, 1878–1946 & THE CONSULATE-GENERAL FOR FARs, KHUZISTAN, AND LARISTAN, 1878–1946



Notes:

The Consul-General was initially responsible for Fars. Khuzistan and Laristan were added to his jurisdiction in 1890.

This chart does not include short-lived consulates and offices such as the Native Agency in Bampur (1901–4), the Native Agency (1904–6) and Vice-Consulate (1906–10) in Bam, and the Political Office in Dizful (c.1919–21).

The Native Agent in Shiraz was replaced with a British officer from the IPS in 1903. Thereafter, Shiraz reported also to the British Minister in Tehran.

The Vice-Consulate in Muhammarah was a Foreign Office appointment, paid for entirely by the Foreign Office. Between 1890 and 1909, the Vice-Consul was an officer seconded from the Persian Section of the Indo-European Telegraph Department (IETD) of the Government of India. For details, see Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Persian Arabistan Affairs* (1903), 72–5.

The Assistant Political Agent (later Political Officer) for the Makran Coast was the Director of the Persian Section of the IETD, who resided in Karachi, although he conducted frequent tours of the Makran Coast. The Station Manager at Jask (a Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent) was the senior British Government representative on the Makran Coast, although he held no title reflecting this.

Gwadar on the Makran Coast belonged to the Ruler (Sultan) of Oman in Muscat. Because of overlapping political interests, the Gwadar Agency reported to the following British authorities in both the Gulf and India:

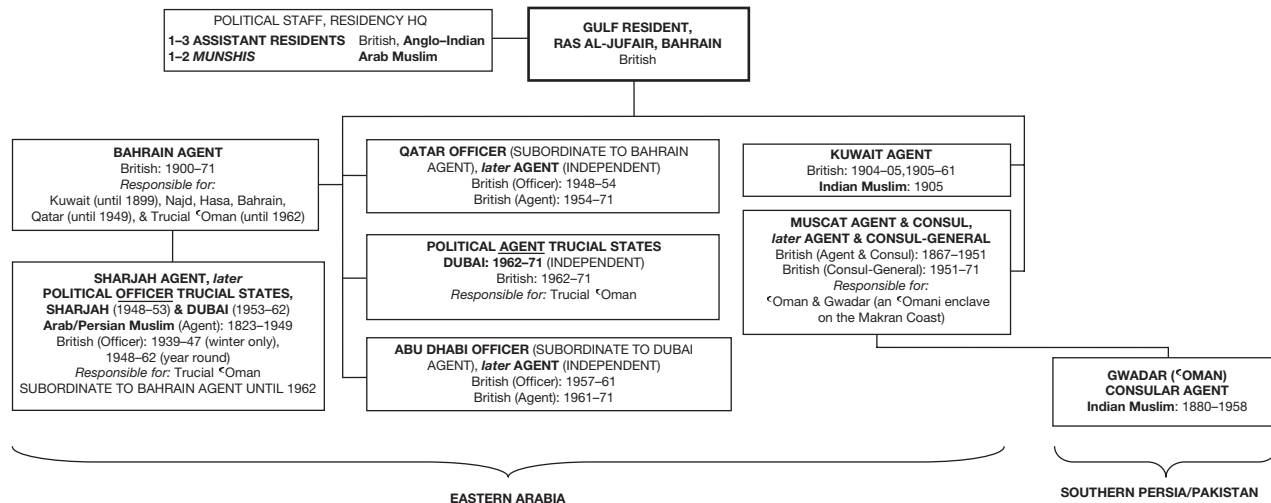
- (a) the Political Agent in Muscat during 1863–1958;
- (b) the Political Agent for Kalat State during 1863–1931;
- (c) the Gulf Resident in Bushire (later Bahrain) during 1870–1958;
- (d) the Agent to the Governor-General for Baluchistan during 1877–1931;
- (e) the Assistant Political Agent (later Political Officer) for the Makran Coast in Karachi during 1880–1931.

The Makran Coast Agency was abolished in 1931 when all IETD land lines in Iran were transferred to the Iranian Government and the IETD Stations at Jask, Chahabar, Henjam, and Bushire were transferred to Imperial and International Communications Ltd (renamed Cable and Wireless Ltd in 1934). Thereafter, the Gwadar Agent reported only to Muscat. For details, see Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 155.

Kerman was first staffed by a Native Agent (c.1840s–95) under the supervision of the Tehran Legation and later the Mashhad Consulate-General. In 1895, the Native Agent was replaced by a temporary Consul (Captain Percy Sykes), who was paid for by the Foreign Office. In 1902, this post was transferred to the Gulf Residency and half its cost was assumed by the Government of India.

In 1943, the Tehran Legation was raised in status to an Embassy headed by an Ambassador.

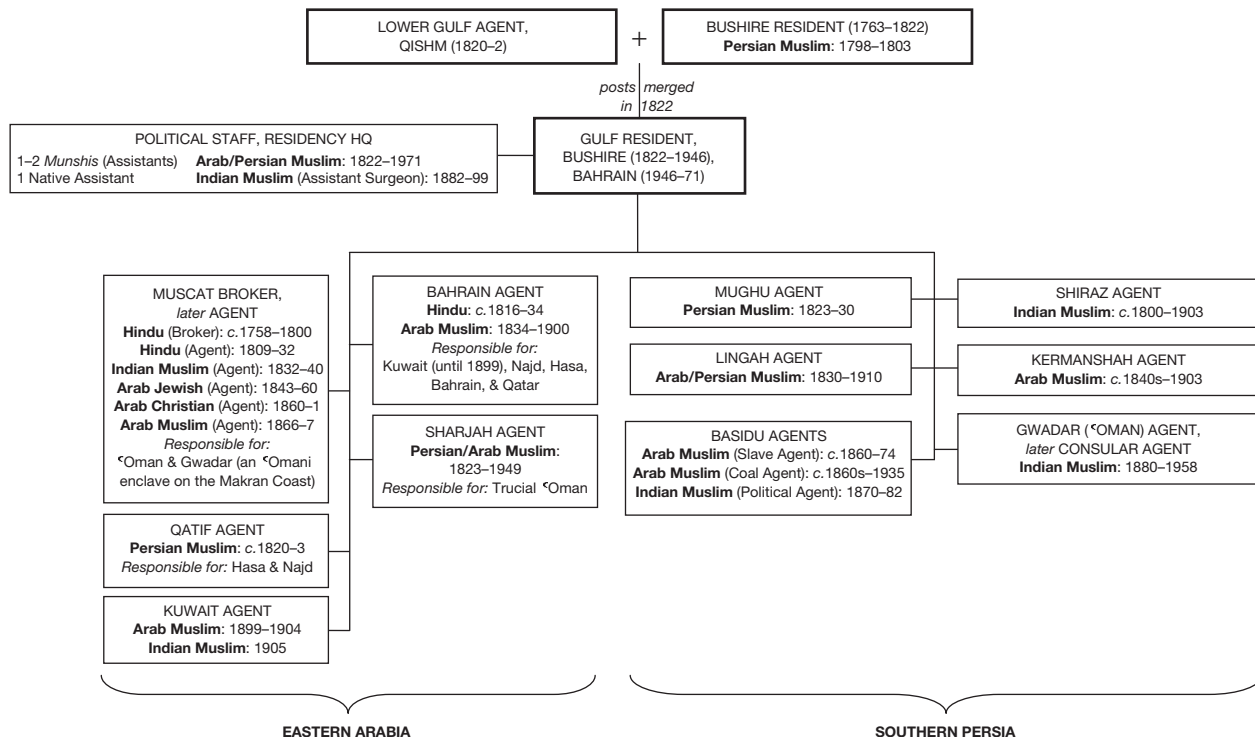
8. THE GULF RESIDENCY, 1946–1971

*Notes:*

In 1946, the Gulf Residency headquarters was transferred from Bushire to Ras al-Jufair (the headquarters of the Gulf Squadron since 1935) south-east of Manamah in Bahrain.

Both the Residency Agent at Sharjah and the Political Officer for the Trucial States (POTS) were under the supervision of the Political Agent in Bahrain. In 1958, the Ruler (Sultan) of ‘Oman sold Gwadar to Pakistan for £3,000,000.

9. BRITAIN'S NATIVE AGENTS IN THE GULF, c.1758–1958



10. GULF RESIDENCY STAFF, 1834

A. European staff (government employees)

Institution	Position	Name or number of staff	ID
<u>Gulf Residency</u>			
Bushire	Resident	David Blane, ICS	British
	Assistant Resident	Lt Samuel Hennell, IA	British
	Civil Surgeon	Thomas Mackenzie, IMS	British
	Apothecary [Pharmacist]	T. Gerald, IMS	British?
	Captain of the Residency launch (the <i>Fly</i>)	———— [no entry]	British
<u>Gulf Squadron</u>			
Basidu	Sr Naval Officer in the Gulf (SNOPG)	————	British
	Officers and crew for six ships-of-war	————	British

B. Non-European staff (government employees)

Institution	Position	Name or number of staff	ID
<u>Gulf Residency</u>			
Bushire	Persian <i>Munshi</i> (for Persian correspondence)	1	Persian
	Arabic <i>Munshi</i> (for Arabic correspondence)	1	Arab
	<i>Urz Beggee</i> [Master of Ceremonies]	1	Persian

	Accountant	1	non-European
	Clerk	1	non-European
	Treasurer	1	non-European
	<i>Shroff</i> [Treasury Officer]	1	non-European
	<i>Kalcoonchee</i>	2	non-European
	<i>Pesh Khedmat</i> [Tent Pitcher]	2	Persian
	<i>Ferrash</i> [uniformed Orderly]	3	Persian
	Mariner [Head Pilot] of Residency launch	Haji Iassim [Jassim?]	Arab or Persian
	Crew of Residency launch	_____	non-European
	<i>Havildar of Sepoys</i> [Infantry Sergeant]	_____	Indian
	<i>Sepoys</i> [Infantry Privates]	_____	Indian
Sharjah	Agent at Sharjah	1 [Mullah Husain]	Persian
Bahrain	Agent at Bahrain	1 [Muhammad Ali Safar]	Arab
Lingah	Agent at Lingah	1 [Hajji Salih]	Persian or Arab
<u>Gulf Squadron</u>			
Basidu	Crew for six ships-of-war	_____	Indian
	Local support staff	_____	Persian or Arab

C. Servants (private employees)

Institution	Position	Name or number of staff	ID
<u>Gulf Residency</u>			
Bushire	Servants of staff	_____	non-European
	Servants of Residency launch officers & crew	_____	non-European
	Servants of Residency Guard	_____	non-European
Sharjah	Servants of Sharjah Agent	_____	non-European
Bahrain	Servants of Bahrain Agent	_____	non-European
Lingah	Servants of Lingah Agent	_____	non-European
<u>Gulf Squadron</u>			
Basidu	Servants of Gulf Squadron officers & crew	_____	non-European

Sources: List compiled from a statement drawn up in the Bombay Secretariat in 1834, reprinted in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853* (1906), 314. All names are spelt as they appear on the list. See pp. 312–13 for a similar list from 1830.

11. GULF RESIDENCY STAFF (PERSIAN COAST AND ISLANDS ONLY), 1869

A. European staff (government employees)

Institution	Position	Name or number of staff	ID
<u>Gulf Residency</u>			
Bushire	Resident	Capt Lewis Pelly, IA	British
	1 st Assistant Resident	Capt A. Cotton Way, IA	British
	Residency Surgeon	Dr A. N. Hojel, IMS	British
	Apothecary [Pharmacist]	William Hayward, IMS	British
Basidu	2 nd Assistant Resident	Capt Sydney Smith, IA ^a	British
<u>Gulf Squadron^b</u>			
Basidu	Sr Naval Officer in the Gulf, Bombay	_____	British
	Crew of Gunboat <i>Dalhousie</i> , Bombay	_____	British
	Crew of Gunboat <i>Clyde</i> , Bombay	_____	British
	Crew of Gunboat <i>Hugh Rose</i> , Bombay	_____	British
<u>Indo-European Telegraph Dept, Govt of Bombay^c</u>			
Bushire			
(a) <i>Cable Office</i>	Superintendent	Lewis Gabler	German
	Assistant Superintendent	Fred A. Patten ^d	British
	1 st Class Clerk	J. Robertson	British
	1 st Class Clerk	S. Parrott	British
	2 nd Class Clerk	F. Pout	British
	3 rd Class Clerk	C. P. Gray	British

(b) <i>Persian Branch</i>	4 th Class Clerk	G. Hampton	British
	4 th Class Clerk	L. S. Macquire	British
	Inspector	Sgt John Isaacson, RE	British
	Clerk	Cpl A. Holdway, RE	British
	Clerk	Cpl J. M. McCormick, RE	British
	Clerk	A. O'Donnel	British

B. Eurasian & non-European staff (government employees)

Institution	Position	Name or number of staff	ID
Gulf Residency			
Bushire	Uncovenanted Assistant Resident	Jas. Chas. Edwards, UCS	Anglo-Indian
	Head Clerk	George Lucas, UCS	Ottoman (Armenian)
	2 nd Clerk	Joseph Edwards, UCS	Anglo-Indian
	3 rd Clerk	James Hayward, UCS	Anglo-Indian
	4 th Clerk	A. R. Tucker, UCS	Anglo-Indian
	1 st <i>Munshi</i>	Mirza Mahomed Hussein, SCS	Persian
	2 nd <i>Munshi</i>	Mirza Abdul Mahomed, SCS	Persian
	<i>Munshi</i>	Abul Kasseem, SCS ^e	Bushiri (Persian)
	<i>Shroff</i> [Treasury Officer]	Mulla Aghayee Yahyah, SCS	Persian
	<i>Havildar of Puttawallas</i> [Chief Orderly]	Shaikh Ali	Persian
	<i>Puttawallas</i> [Orderlies]	4	Persian
	Residency Mason	Haji Abdul Hussein	Persian
	Contractor of Government Ships	Mahomed Ali	Persian
	<i>Jemadar of Sepoys</i> [Infantry Lt]	Shaikh Ismail, IA	Indian
	<i>Sepoys</i> [Infantry Privates]	15	Indian

Lingah	<i>Daffadar</i> of <i>Sowars</i> [Cavalry Sgt]	Kayem Khan, IA	Indian
	<i>Sowars</i> [Cavalry Troopers]	19	Indian
Basidu	British Agent	Mahomed Basheer, SCS	Persian
	Writer to British Agent [<i>Munshi</i>]	Hajee Ali, SCS	Persian
	Government <i>Tindal</i> [Petty Officer]	Abdullah Tindal, SCS	Persian
	Government Contractor	Hajee Abbass, SCS	Persian
	Coal Agent	Mirza Jowad, SCS	Persian
	Government Servant	Mahomed Butak, SCS	Persian
<u>Gulf Squadron</u>			
Basidu	Crew of Gunboat <i>Dalhousie</i> , Bombay	_____	Indian
	Crew of Gunboat <i>Clyde</i> , Bombay	_____	Indian
	Crew of Gunboat <i>Hugh Rose</i> , Bombay	_____	Indian
<u>Indian Post Office</u>			
Bushire	Post Master	A. C. Cardiers	Indo-Portuguese
	Post Master's <i>Munshi</i>	Mirza Agha	Persian
<u>Indo-European Telegraph Dept (IETD), Govt of Bombay^f</u>			
Bushire			
(a) <i>Cable Office</i>	2 nd Class Clerk	W. Plunkett	Anglo-Indian
	3 rd Class Clerk	R. H. New	Anglo-Indian
	4 th Class Clerk	A. W. Salmon	Anglo-Indian
(b) <i>Persian Branch</i>	Public Servants, Telegraph Office	7	Persian
	Clerk	A. Glud [Gleed?]	Indian
	Clerk	A. Malcolm	Persian (Armenian)
	Storekeeper	A. S. Constantine	Persian (Armenian)
	<i>Munshi</i>	Mirza Ali	Persian

Henjam	<i>Ferash Bashee</i> [Head Orderly]	Perooz	Persian
	<i>Ferash</i> [uniformed Orderly]	5	Persian
	Contractor to Telegraph Station	Reza	Persian
	Contractor's <i>Munshi</i>	Mahomed Ali	Persian
	<i>Puttawalla</i> [Orderly]	Ali Sungoor	Persian
	<i>Puttawalla</i>	Ameer Khan	Indian

C. Servants & labourers (private employees)

Institution	Position	Name or number of staff	ID
<u>Gulf Residency</u>			
Bushire	Resident's Tailor	1	Portuguese
	Resident's Cook	1	Portuguese
	Resident's Butler	1	Persian
	Resident's 2 nd Servant	1	Persian
	Resident's <i>Dhobi Walla</i> [Laundryman]	1	Persian
	Resident's Grooms	2	Persian
	Resident's Waterman	1	Persian
	Resident's Sweeper	1	Persian
	1 st Assistant Resident's servant	1	Portuguese
	1 st Assistant Resident's servants	7	Persian
	1 st Assistant Resident's servants	2	Indian
	Residency Surgeon's servants	8	Persian
	Residency Surgeon's servants	3	Indo-Portuguese
	Apothecary's servants	2	Persian
	Apothecary's servant	1	Indo-Portuguese
	Uncov'd Assistant Resident's servants	10	Persian

	Head Clerk's servants	3	Persian
	1 st <i>Munshi's</i> servants	2	Persian
	<i>Shroff's</i> servant	1	Persian
	<i>Sepoy's</i> Waterman	1	Persian
	<i>Sowars'</i> Waterman	1	Persian
	Residency Gardeners and Watchmen	4	Persian
	Residency Sweeper	1	Persian
Basidu	2 nd Assistant Resident's servant	1	Persian
	Waterman	1	Persian
<u>Indian Post Office</u>			
Bushire	Post Master's servant	1	Indo-Portuguese
	Post Master's servant	1	Persian
<u>Indo-European Telegraph Dept</u>			
Bushire			
(a) <i>Cable Office:</i>	Superintendent's servants	3	Persian
	Superintendent's servant	1	Indo-Portuguese
	Assistant Superintendent's servant	1	Persian
	Assistant Superintendent's servant	1	Baluchi (Indian)
	1 st Class Clerk's servant	1	Indian
	1 st Class Clerk's servant	1	Persian
	1 st Class Clerk's servant	1	Indian
	1 st Class Clerk's servant	1	Persian
	2 nd Class Clerk's servants	2	Persian
	2 nd Class Clerk's servant	2	Persian
	3 rd Class Clerk's servant	1	Indo-Portuguese
	3 rd Class Clerk's servant	1	Persian

	4 th Class Clerk's servant	1	Indo-Portuguese
	4 th Class Clerk's servants	2	Indo-Portuguese
	4 th Class Clerk's servant	1	Persian
(b) Persian Branch:	Office Sweeper	1	Persian
	Office Waterman	1	Persian
	Clerk 1's servant	2	Persian
	Clerk 2's servant	1	Persian
	Clerk 3's servants	2	Persian
	Clerk 4's servant	1	Persian
	Clerk 5's servant	1	Persian
	Munshi's servant	1	Persian
	Inspector's servants	3	Persian
Henjam	Bheestie [water-carrier]	Sadoola Badooia	Indian
	Sweeper	Poonjah Purbboo	Indian

D. Analysis

	Totals	British	Other European	Eurasian & non-European
Government employees				
Gulf Residency staff	63	5 (8%)	0	58 (92%)
Indian Post Office staff	2	0	0	2 (100%)
Indo-Euro Telegraph Dept staff	<u>36</u>	<u>11 (30.5%)</u>	<u>1 (2.5%)</u>	<u>24 (67%)</u>
SUB-TOTALS	101	16 (16%)	1 (1%)	84 (83%)

<u>Servants & labourers</u>	95	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	92 (97%)
SUB-TOTALS	196	16 (8%)	4 (2%)	176 (90%)
<u>Gulf Squadron</u> (if re-established)	151	13 (8.6%)	0 (0%)	138 (91.4%)
TOTALS	347	29 (8.4%)	4 (1.1%)	314 (90.5%)

Notes:

^a Smith compiled the list of British subjects and dependants at Basidu, but forgot to put himself on the list.

^b The Gulf Squadron was disbanded six years previously. The gunboats listed here were stationed in India with the Bombay Marine and were merely 'on call' for the Gulf, which explains the non-entry for their crew. Each gunboat had a compliment of fifty officers and crew, with the vast majority of the latter being Indian. Preston and Major, *Send a Gunboat!* (1967), 205.

^c IETD employees in Bushire formed a part of the Gulf Residency infrastructure, although they were outside the Residency command structure (the Superintendent and Inspector took their orders from a Director in Karachi).

^d Pattern was based in Bushire, but was on Henjam Island at the time this list was compiled, in temporary charge of the newly established Telegraph Station there.

^e Abul Kasseem was on assignment as a Confidential Agent at Bandar Singo. See Pelly, 'Return of British Subjects', 139.

^f IETD employees in Bushire formed a part of the Gulf Residency infrastructure, although they were outside the Residency command structure (the Superintendent and Inspector took their orders from a Director in Karachi).

Sources:

Compiled from Lt-Col Lewis Pelly, 'Return of British Subjects and British Protected Persons on the Persian Coast and Islands' (July–Aug. 1869), in Saldanha (ed.), *Précis on Commerce and Communications in the Persian Gulf, 1801–1905*, appendix E, 119–47. All names are spelt as they appear on the list. The British Agency at Gwadar (established 1863) and the British Telegraph Stations at Gwadar, Chahabar, and Jask (established during 1864–9) seem to have been accidentally omitted from the list.

12. GULF RESIDENCY STAFF BUDGET (BUSHIRE), 1899

Excludes Muscat, Makran Coast, Jask, Chabahar, Gwadar, Basidu, Muhammarh, and Kermanshah, which had separate operating budgets.

Staff	Rupees per month	Rupees per month
<u>British staff</u>		
1. Political Resident	2,750	33,000
Exchange compensation allowance	141	1,692
2. Political Assistant	800	9,600
3. Residency Surgeon	650	7,800
Exchange compensation allowance	42	504
SUB-TOTALS	4,383	52,596
<u>Eurasian staff</u>		
1. Extra Assistant	350	4,200
2. Uncovenanted Assistant	300	3,600
SUB-TOTALS	650	7,800
<u>Non-European staff</u>		
1. Head Clerk	150	1,800
house rent	10	120
2. Treasury Accountant	130	1,560
house rent	10	120
3. 2 nd Clerk	120	1,440
house rent	10	120
4. 3 rd Clerk	90	1,080
house rent	10	120
5. 4 th Clerk	70	840
house rent	10	120
telegraph allowance	10	120
6. 5 th Clerk	60	720
house rent	5	60
telegraph allowance	10	120
7. 1 st <i>Munshi</i>	100	1,200
8. 2 nd <i>Munshi</i>	70	840
9. 3 rd <i>Munshi</i>	70	840
10. <i>Shroff</i> [Treasury Officer]	40	480
11. Shiraz Residency Agent	200	2,400
12. Sharjah Residency Agent	150	1,800
13. Bahrain Residency Agent	100	1,200
14. Lingah Residency Agent	50	600
15. Kuwait Residency Agent	50	600

16. Assistant Surgeon	150	1,800
staff allowance	30	360
house rent	30	360
17. <i>Havildar</i> of <i>Peons</i> [Chief Orderly]	150	1,800
Staff allowance	30	360
18. <i>Peon</i> [uniformed Orderly]	18	216
19. <i>Peon</i>	15	180
20. <i>Peon</i>	12	144
21. <i>Peon</i>	12	144
22. <i>Peon</i>	12	144
23. <i>Peon</i>	10	120
24. <i>Peon</i>	10	120
25. <i>Peon</i>	10	120
26. <i>Kossid</i> [<i>Qasid</i> : Messenger]	12	144
27. <i>Kossid</i>	12	144
28. Sweeper	10	120
29. Sweeper	10	120
30. <i>Bhisti</i> [Water-carrier]	8	96
31. <i>Daffador</i> [Indian Cavalry Sgt]	35	420
32. <i>Sowar</i> [Indian Cavalry Troopers]	25	300
33. <i>Sowar</i>	25	300
34. <i>Sowar</i>	25	300
35. <i>Sowar</i>	25	300
36. <i>Sowar</i>	25	300
37. <i>Sowar</i>	25	300
38. <i>Sowar</i>	25	300
39. <i>Sowar</i>	25	300
40. Watchman/Water-carrier	12.25	147
41. Watchman/Water-carrier	12.25	147
42. Watchman/Water-carrier	12.25	147
43. Watchman/Water-carrier	12.25	147
44. <i>Tindal</i> [Petty Officer]	11	132
45. <i>Lascar</i> [Sailor]	10	120
46. <i>Lascar</i>	10	120
47. <i>Lascar</i>	10	120
48. <i>Lascar</i>	10	120
49. Engine Driver	150	1,800
Ration money	15	180
50. Navigation	20	240
51. Stoker	13	156
52. <i>Lascar</i>	12	144
SUB-TOTALS	2,611	31,332
TOTALS	7,644	91,728

Analysis of staff budget

Staff (numbers)	% of staff	% of budget	Annual cost (rupees)
<u>Political staff (12 men)</u>			
British political officers (2 men)	16.7	71.9	44,292
Eurasian political officers (2 men)	16.7	12.7	7,800
Native political officers (8 men)	66.6	15.4	<u>9,480</u>
			61,572
<u>All staff (57 men)</u>			
Britons (3 men)	5.3	57.3	52,596
Eurasians (2 men)	3.5	8.5	7,800
Non-Europeans (52 men)	91.2	34.2	<u>31,332</u>
			91,728

Note: The Gulf Resident incorrectly lists the monthly total as Rs. 7,440.

Source: 'Tubular Proposition Statement' by Gulf Resident, 24 Sept. 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 39–43.

13. MUSCAT AGENCY STAFF BUDGET, 1901

Staff	Monthly salary (rupees)	Annual salary (rupees)
<u>British staff</u>		
1. Political Agent	800	9,600
allowances	200	2,400
2. Agency Surgeon	650	7,800
medical stores, etc.	450	5,400
SUB-TOTALS	2,100	25,200
<u>Non-European staff</u>		
1. Head Clerk & Accountant	150	1,800
2. Correspondence & Confidential Clerk	80	960
3. Treasury Clerk	80	960
4. <i>Munshi</i> [Political Assistant]	75	900
5. <i>Peon</i> [Unifomed Orderly]	11	132
6. <i>Peon</i>	11	132
7. Boat <i>Tindal</i> [Petty Officer]	11	132
8. <i>Khalasi</i>	10	120
9. <i>Khalasi</i>	10	120
10. <i>Khalasi</i>	10	120
11. <i>Khalasi</i>	10	120
12. <i>Khalasi</i>	10	120
13. Sweeper	10	120
14. Hospital Assistant	150?	1,800?
house rent	120	1,440
15. <i>Peon</i>	11	132
16. Night Watchman	12.25?	147?
17. Compounder	?	?
18. <i>Bhisti</i> [Water-carrier]	12.25?	147
19. Sweeper	10	120
20. <i>Punka Coolie</i> [Fan Operator]	10?	120?
21. <i>Punka Coolie</i>	10?	120?
SUB-TOTALS	813.50?	9,762?
TOTALS	2,913.50?	34,962?

Analysis

Staff (numbers)	% of staff	% of budget	Annual cost (rupees)
<u>Political staff (2 men)</u>			
British Political Agent	50.0	93.0	12,000
Native Political Assistant (<i>Munshi</i>)	50.0	7.0	<u>900</u>
			12,900
<u>All staff (23 men)</u>			
Britons (2 men)	8.7	72.1	25,200
Non-Europeans (21 men)	91.3	27.9	<u>9,762</u>
			34,962

Source: Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Maskat Affairs, 1892–1905* (1906), 151–2.

14. GULF RESIDENCY COMPLETE BUDGET, 1899 (IN RUPEES)

A. Political staff

ID	Officer	Location	Annual salary	Operation allowance	Total ^a
Graded political officers, IPS (British)					
British	Pol. Resident	Bushire	33,000	1,692	34,692
British	Pol. Agent	Muscat	9,600	2,400	12,000
British	Pol. Asst.	Bushire	9,600	0	9,600
British	Vice-Consul	Muhammarah	5,250	1,500	6,750
British	Asst. Pol.	Makran Coast	0	1,800	1,800
	Agent (Dir of the Gulf Sec. of the IETD)	(HQ: Karachi)			64,842
Unofficial political officers, IETD (British)^b					
British	Stn Manager	Jask	0	0	0
British	Stn Manager	Chabahar	0	0	0
Uncovenanted political officers, IPS (Eurasian, Indian)					
Anglo-Indian	Extra Asst.	Bushire	4,200	0	4,200
Porto-Indian	Uncov'd Asst.	Bushire	3,600	0	3,600
Indian	Native Asst. & Asst. Surgeon	Bushire	1,800	720	2,520
					10,320
Subordinate political staff, IPS (non-European)					
Arab	Native Agent	Gwadar	480	2,475	2,955
Indian	Native Agent	Shiraz	2,400		2,400
Arab	Native Agent	Sharjah	1,800		1,800
Persian	Native Agent	Bahrain	1,200		1,200
Persian	1 st <i>Munshi</i>	Bushire	1,200		1,200
Arab	<i>Munshi</i>	Muscat	900		900
Arab	2 nd <i>Munshi</i>	Bushire	840		840
Persian	3 rd <i>Munshi</i>	Bushire	840		840
Arab	Native Agent	Lingah	600		600
Arab	Native Agent	Kuwait	600		600

Persian	Native Agent	Kermanshah	360	360
Persian	<i>Munshi</i>	Makran	240	240
		Coast		
Arab or Persian	Coal Agent ^c	Basidu	?	<u>?</u>
				13,935

B. Support staff

ID	Officer	Location	Annual salary	Operation allowance	Total ^d
Graded officers, IMS (British)					
British	Surgeon	Muscat	7,800	5,400	13,200
British	Surgeon	Bushire	7,800	504	<u>8,304</u>
					21,504
Local staff (non-European)					
Indian	Hospital Asst.	Muscat	1,800?	1,440	3,240
non-European	43 support staff	Bushire		19,322	19,322
non-European	19 support staff	Muscat		9,762?	9,762
non-European	3 support staff	Gwadar		660	<u>660</u>
					32,984

C. Naval & military staff

	Location	Annual salary	Operation allowance	Total
Subsidy for HMS <i>Sphinx</i>	Basidu		225,000	225,000
HMIS <i>Lawrence</i>	Bushire		123,990	123,990
(Resident's launch)				
Coal for <i>Sphinx</i> and <i>Lawrence</i>	Basidu		59,400	59,400
Repairs of <i>Sphinx</i>	Basidu		49,140	49,140
Indian Army detachments	Gulf region	18,705	18,705	
Coaling depots	Basidu & Muscat		7,050	<u>7,050</u>
				483,285

D. Totals (in rupees)

all political staff	89,097
all support staff	<u>54,488</u>
STAFF BUDGET	143,585
naval and military support	<u>483,285</u>
TOTAL BUDGET	626,870 (£41,348) for 1899

E. Analysis

These tables reveal that 69.5 percent (16 out of 23) of the political staff within the Gulf Residency were Arab, Persian, Indian, or Eurasian, yet their salaries accounted for only 27 percent (Rs. 24,255) of the annual political staff budget (Rs. 89,097). If Residency support staff is included, then Arabs, Persians, Indians, and Eurasians accounted for 90 percent (82 out of 91) of those staffing the Gulf Residency's headquarters in Bushire and its fourteen agencies, consulates, and offices, yet their salaries accounted for only 40 percent (Rs. 57,239) of its total annual staffing costs (Rs. 143,585). The cost-effectiveness of the native agency system and the extensive use of non-European and Eurasian support staff also meant that the annual cost of maintaining and staffing the Residency headquarters and the agencies, consulates, and offices was only 23 percent (Rs. 143,585) of the Gulf Residency's overall operating cost (Rs. 626,870).

Notes:

^a Conversion rate was £ 1 = Rs. 15.

^b IETD staff were paid for their telegraph duties only, their salaries are not listed here as a result.

^c Performed political duties on occasion.

^d Conversion rate was £ 1 = Rs. 15.

Sources:

'Tubular Proposition Statement' by Gulf Resident, 24 Sept. 1899, R/15/1/330 (IOR), 39–43; Curzon (Viceroy) to Hamilton (Sec. of IO), 21 Sept. 1899, L/P&S/7/116 (IOR), 21; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Maskat Affairs, 1892–1905*, 112, 151–2; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Persian Arabistan Affairs*, 72; Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Mekran Affairs*, 112.

15. GRADED OFFICERS SERVING IN POLITICAL RESIDENCIES, 1877

A. Graded officers in the IPS

ID	Uncovenanted Civil Service	Covenanted Civil Service	Indian Army	Indian Medical Svc
British	4 (4.8%)	10 (12%)	62 (74.7%)	2 (2.4%)
Eurasian	1 (1.2%)	0	0	0
non-European	<u>4 (4.8%)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
SUB-TOTALS	9 (10.8%)	10 (12%)	62 (74.7%)	2 (2.4%)

TOTAL: 83 men

B. Graded officers from the IMS attached to political residencies

ID	Indian Medical Svc
British officers	24 (92.3%)
Eurasian officers	1 (3.85%)
Indian officers	<u>1 (3.85%)</u>
TOTAL	26 (100%)

C. All graded officers serving in political residencies

Officers	On duty	On leave	Totals
political residents	14 (12.8%)	4 (3.7%)	18 (17.3%)
political agents	26 (23.8%)	9 (8.3%)	35 (31.8%)
political assistants	25 (22.9%)	5 (4.6%)	30 (27.3%)
surgeons	<u>22 (20.2%)</u>	<u>4 (3.7%)</u>	<u>26 (23.6%)</u>
SUB-TOTALS	87 (79.7%)	22 (20.3%)	109 (100%)

TOTAL: 109 men

Source: Aberigh-MacKay, *The Native Chiefs and their States in 1877*, 69–72.

16. BRITISH MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE GULF

1. Army

Unit or location	Service	Dates
<u>Guard detachments</u>		
Gulf Residency HQ, Persia	Indian Army	1763–1946
Muscat Agency, ‘Oman	Indian Army	c.1800–1809, c.1840–1843, c.1861–1866, c.1867–1947
Basidu Naval Depot, Persia	Indian Army	1821–1883
Bushire Telegraph Stn., Persia	Indian Army	1864–1877
Henjam Telegraph Stn., Persia	Indian Army	c.1869–1880, 1904–1931
Rishire Telegraph Stn., Persia	Indian Army	1877–1931
Gwadar Agency	Indian Army	1877–1905
Jask Telegraph Stn., Persia	Indian Army	1878–1931
Kerman Consulate, Persia	Indian Army	c.1895–1947
Chahabar Telegraph Stn., Persia	Indian Army	c.1898–1931
Bandar ‘Abbas Consulate, Persia	Indian Army	1900–1931
Kermanshah Consulate, Persia	Indian Army	c.1904–1910
Shiraz Consulate, Persia	Indian Army	c.1903–1947
Ahvaz Consulate, Persia	Indian Army	c.1904–1947
Bam Vice-Consulate, Persia	Indian Army	c.1904–1910
Bahrain Agency	Indian Army	1904–1947
Kuwait Agency	Indian Army	c.1909–1947
Muhammarah Consulate, Persia	Indian Army	c.1909–1947
Lingah Vice-Consulate, Persia	Indian Army	c.1910–1922
<u>Regiments</u>		
Ras al-Khaimah	Indian Army	1820
Qishm Island, Persia	Indian Army	1820–1823
Bushire, Persia	Indian Army	1856–1858
Shiraz, Persia	Indian Army	1897–1898
Muscat, ‘Oman	Indian Army	1913–1921
Fao Peninsula, ‘Iraq	Indian Army	1914–1930
Bahrain Levy Corps	Indian Army	1924–1926
Bahrain	Indian Army	c.1939–1945
Hamalah, Bahrain ^a	British Army	1961–1971
<u>Locally-raised units</u>		
Sistan Levy Corps, E. Persia ^b	Indian Army officers & local soldiers	1915–1921
South Persia Rifles, S.W. Persia	“ “	1916–1921

Trucial ‘Oman Levies, Sharjah	British Army officers & local soldiers	1951–1955
Trucial ‘Oman Scouts, Sharjah ^c	“ “	1955–1971
‘Aden Protectorate Levies, Masirah	“ “	c.1942–1946
‘Aden Protectorate Levies, Sharjah	“ “	1953

2. Navy

Unit or location	Service	Dates
<u>Gulf Squadron HQ</u>		
Qishm Island, Persia	Bombay Marine	1821
Muscat, ‘Oman	Bombay Marine	1821–1823
Mughu, Persia	Bombay Marine	1823
Basidu, Persia	Bombay Marine	1823–1830
Basidu, Persia	Indian Navy	1830–1863
Basidu, Persia	Royal Navy	1869–1911
Henjam, Persia	Royal Navy	1911–1935
Ras al-Jufair, Bahrain	Royal Navy	1935–1971
<u>Air-Sea Rescue Station</u>		
Ras Musandam, ‘Oman	Royal Navy	1941–1946

3. Air force

Unit or location	Service	Dates
<u>Airfields (later stations)</u>		
Basrah (Shaibah), ‘Iraq	RAF	1915–1956
Manamah, Bahrain	RAF	1932–1933
Muharraaq, Bahrain	RAF	1933–1971
Sharjah, Trucial ‘Oman	RAF	1932–1971
Masirah Island, ‘Oman	RAF	1932–1977
Salalah, ‘Oman	RAF	1932–1977
Habbaniyah (w. of Baghdad), ‘Iraq	RAF	1936–1959
Kuwait	RAF	1940–1946
Abadan, Iran	RAF	c.1941–1946
Dubai, Trucial ‘Oman	RAF	1942–1946

Locally-raised units

RAF Levies, Bahrain	RAF officers & local soldiers	1942–1945
RAF Levies, Sharjah	“ “	1942–1945
RAF Levies, Masirah, ‘Oman	“ “	1942–1945
RAF Levies, Jask, Persia	“ “	1942–1945

Notes:

^a Other British regiments also served for short periods in Persia during the 1850s–1910s, and in ‘Oman and the Trucial States during the 1950s–70s, but they were on temporary assignment only and did not form part of the of the Gulf Residency’s permanent military establishment at those places.

^b Became the Muscat Levy Corps in 1921 (later the Muscat Infantry).

^c Became the Union Defence Force of the UAE after Britain’s withdrawal from the Gulf.

^d The RAF maintained a number of airfields and stations around Basrah, the most significant being RAF Shaibah (1920–56).

Sources:

Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of the Affairs of the Persian Coast and Islands, 1854–1905*, 79–83; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, i. *Historical*, 395–6; Low, *History of the Indian Navy, 1613–1863*, i. 536–41.

APPENDIX B

Rulers and Residents

1. RULERS OF BAHRAIN

Ascended	Position	Name
1783	Ruler	Ahmed bin Khalifah Al Khalifah (known as Ahmad <i>al-Fatah</i> , 'the Conqueror')
1796	Senior co-Ruler	Salman bin Ahmad Al Khalifah (founder of the al-Salman branch of the family)
	Junior co-Ruler	ʿAbd Allah bin Ahmad Al Khalifah (founder of the al-ʿAbd Allah branch of the family)
1825	Senior co-Ruler	ʿAbd Allah bin Ahmad Al Khalifah
	Junior co-Ruler	Khalifah bin Salman Al Khalifah
1834	Ruler	ʿAbd Allah bin Ahmad Al Khalifah
1843	Ruler	Muhammad bin Khalifah bin Salman Al Khalifah
1868	Ruler	ʿAli bin Khalifah bin Salman Al Khalifah
1869	Ruler	Muhammad bin Khalifah bin Salman Al Khalifah (2nd time, ruled only for a few days in Sept.)
1869	Ruler	Muhammad bin ʿAbd Allah Al Khalifah (ruled during Sept.–Nov.)
1869	Ruler	ʿIsa bin ʿAli bin Khalifah bin Salman Al Khalifah (known as ʿIsa <i>al-Kabir</i> , 'the Great')
1923	Ruler (nominal)	ʿIsa bin ʿAli Al Khalifah (retired from active rulership in 1923; died in 1932)
1923	Regent	Hamad bin ʿIsa Al Khalifah
1932	Ruler	Hamad bin ʿIsa Al Khalifah
1942	Ruler	Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifah
1961	Ruler	ʿIsa bin Salman Al Khalifah
1971	Amir	ʿIsa bin Salman Al Khalifah
1999	Amir	Hamad bin ʿIsa Al Khalifah
2002	King	Hamad bin ʿIsa Al Khalifah

2. RESIDENTS IN BUSHIRE

Appointed	Position	Name
Apr. 1763	Resident	Benjamin Jarvis
July 1767	Resident	William Bowyear ^a
Nov. 1767	acting Resident	James Morely
Jan. 1768	Resident	James Morely
Feb. 1769	post abolished	—
May 1775	Resident	John Beaumont
Jan. 1781	Resident	Edward Galley
June 1787	Resident	Charles Watkins
Oct. 1792	Resident	Nicholas Hankey Smith
Oct. 1798	Native Resident	Mirza Mahdi 'Ali Khan Bahadur
Jan. 1803	post vacant	—
Apr. 1803	Resident	Jonathan Henry Lovett
Feb. 1804	Acting Resident (self-appointed)	Samuel Manesty
Mar. 1804	acting Resident	Lt (N) William Bruce ^b
May 1807	Resident	Nicholas Hankey Smith
July 1808	acting Resident	Capt Charles Pasley
Sept. 1808	acting Resident	Lt (N) William Bruce
Dec. 1808	in charge	Surgeon Andrew Jukes
May 1809	acting Resident	Lt (N) William Bruce
Apr. 1810	in charge	Stephen Babington
May 1810	acting Resident	Lt (N) William Bruce
Sept. 1810	Resident	Nicholas Hankey Smith
Oct. 1810	Acting Resident	Lt (N) William Bruce
Apr. 1812	in charge	Lt Robert Taylor
Nov. 1812	Resident	Lt (N) William Bruce
Aug. 1813	in charge	Asst.-Surgeon James Orton
Apr. 1814	Resident	Lt (N) William Bruce Capt (N) in 1819
Nov. 1819	in charge	James Dow
Jan. 1820	Resident	Capt (N) William Bruce
June 1820	in charge	James Dow

Appointed	Position	Name
Jan. 1822	in charge	Asst.-Surgeon John Tod
Mar. 1822	Resident	Capt (N) William Bruce
July 1822	in charge	Broker and Linguist
Sept. 1822	Resident	Capt (N) William Bruce
Dec. 1822	post merged with Lower Gulf Agent	—

Notes:

^a Bowyear died on 15 Nov. 1767 when his ship, the *Defiance*, was blown up during an expedition against Hormuz Island to recover stolen treasure. See al-Qasimi, *Power Struggles and Trade in the Gulf*, 119–23, 141.

^b (N) indicates a naval rank. A naval lieutenant is equal in rank to an army captain and a naval captain is equal to a full colonel. Only three officers from the Indian Navy served as Resident in the Gulf: William Bruce (1808–22), Henry Hardy (1823), and Felix Jones (1855–62).

Sources:

The lists are based on Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, ii. *Geographical and Statistical* (1908), 2673–5; Govt of India, *Admin. Reports of the Persian Gulf Political Residency* (1873–1947); Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency*, 184; Rich, *The Invasions of the Gulf*, 192–4.

3. AGENTS FOR THE LOWER GULF (QISHM ISLAND)

Appointed	Position	Name	Biography ^c
July 1820	Agent	Capt T. Perronet Thompson	<i>DNB</i> , Johnson
	Deputy Agent	Capt Charles James Maillard	
Mar. 1821	acting Agent	Capt (N) F. Faithful (SNOGP)	
June 1821	Agent	Surgeon Andrew Jukes ^d	
Nov. 1821	acting Agent	Capt (N) F. Faithful (SNOGP)	
Dec. 1822	post merged with Bushire Resident	—	

Notes:

^c See part 13 of the Bibliography for biographies of these men. *DNB* = *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

^d Jukes (a former surgeon at the Bushire Residency) arrived in Muscat from India in June and at Qishm Island in Aug. He died on 10 Nov. 1821 in Isfahan of cholera while on his way to Tehran to meet with the Shah.

4. POLITICAL RESIDENTS IN THE GULF (BUSHIRE)

Appointed	Position	Name	Biography ^e
Dec. 1822	Resident	Capt John MacLeod ^f	
Oct. 1823	Resident	Capt (N) Henry Hardy	
Dec. 1823	Resident	Col Ephraim G. Stannus	<i>DNB</i>
Jan. 1827	Resident	Maj David Wilson	
Mar. 1831	in charge	Lt Samuel Hennell	
Jan. 1832	Resident	David Anderson Blane	
June 1834	acting Resident	Capt Samuel Hennell	
July 1835	in charge	Surgeon Thomas Mackenzie	
Oct. 1835	Resident	Maj James Morrison	
Oct. 1837	in charge	Surgeon Thomas Mackenzie	
May 1838	Resident	Capt Samuel Hennell	
Jan. 1842	officiating Resident	Lt-Col Henry D. Robertson	
Apr. 1843	officiating Resident	Lt Arnold B. Kemball	<i>DNB</i>
Dec. 1843	Resident	Capt Samuel Hennell	
		Maj in 1845	
		Lt-Col in 1850	
Mar. 1852	Resident	Capt Arnold B. Kemball	
July 1855	post vacant	—	
Oct. 1855	officiating Political Resident	Commander J. Felix Jones	<i>DNB</i> , Rich
July 1856	Political Resident	Commander J. Felix Jones	
		Capt (N) in 1858	
Apr. 1862	officiating Political Resident	Capt Herbert F. Disbrowe	Rich
Nov. 1862	acting Political Resident	Maj Lewis Pelly	<i>DNB</i> , Rich
Mar. 1863	officiating Political Resident	Lt-Col Lewis Pelly	

Appointed	Position	Name	Biography ^e
Apr. 1864	Political Resident	Lt-Col Lewis Pelly Col in 1871	
Oct. 1872	acting Political Resident	Maj Edward C. Ross Lt-Col in 1875	Rich
Apr. 1876	officiating Political Resident	Lt-Col William F. Prideaux	Rich
Aug. 1877	acting Political Resident	Maj Charles Grant	
Nov. 1877	Resident	Lt-Col Edward C. Ross	
Mar. 1885	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Samuel B. Miles	Rich
Oct. 1886	Political Resident	Col Edward C. Ross	
Mar. 1891	officiating Political Resident	Lt-Col Adelbert C. Talbot	Rich
Sept. 1891	Political Resident	Lt-Col Adelbert C. Talbot	
May 1893	in charge	Capt Stuart H. Godfrey	
June 1893	acting Political Resident	Maj J. Hayes Sadler	
July 1893	in charge	James A. Crawford	Rich
Dec. 1893	acting Political Resident	Maj J. Hayes Sadler	
Jan. 1894	Resident	Col Frederick A. Wilson	Rich
June 1897	officiating Political Resident	Lt-Col Malcom J. Meade	Rich
Mar. 1898	Resident	Lt-Col Malcom J. Meade	
Apr. 1900	acting Political Resident	Maj Charles A. Kemball	Rich
Apr. 1904	officiating Political Resident	Lt-Col in 1901 Maj Percy Z. Cox	<i>DNB</i> , Graves, Rich, Townsend

Appointed	Position	Name	Biography ^e
Oct. 1905	Political Resident	Maj Percy Z. Cox Lt-Col in 1909	
Aug. 1909	in charge	Maj Arthur P. Trevor	Rich
Mar. 1910	Political Resident	Lt-Col Percy Z. Cox Sir Percy in 1911	
Dec. 1913	Political Resident	John G. Lorimer ^g	<i>DNB</i> , Rich
Feb. 1914	in charge	Capt Richard L. Birdwood	Rich
Mar. 1914	in charge	Maj Stuart G. Knox	Rich
Nov. 1914	Political Resident	Lt-Col Sir Percy Z. Cox ^h	
Jan. 1915	Officer on Special Duty (Deputy Political Resident)	Maj Stuart G. Knox	
Apr. 1915	Deputy Political Resident	Maj Arthur P. Trevor	Rich
Dec. 1917	Deputy Political Resident	John Hugo H. Bill	Rich
Sept. 1919	Deputy Political Resident	Maj Cecil H. Gabriel	Rich
Nov. 1919	Deputy Political Resident	Lt-Col Arthur P. Trevor	
Oct. 1920	officiating Political Resident	Lt-Col Sir Arnold T. Wilson	<i>DNB</i> , Rich
Nov. 1920	Political Resident	Lt-Col Arthur P. Trevor	
Apr. 1923	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Stuart G. Knox	
Oct. 1923	Political Resident	Lt-Col Arthur P. Trevor	
Apr. 1924	Political Resident	Lt-Col Francis B. Prideaux	Rich
June 1925	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Charles G. Crosthwaite	Rich
Oct. 1925	Political Resident	Lt-Col Francis B. Prideaux	
Jan. 1927	Political Resident	Lt-Col Sir Lionel B. Haworth	Rich

Appointed	Position	Name	Biography ^c
Nov. 1928	Political Resident	Sir Frederick W. Johnston	Rich
Apr. 1929	Political Resident	Lt-Col Cyril C. J. Barrett	Rich
Nov. 1929	Political Resident	Lt-Col Hugh V. Biscoe	Rich
May 1931	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	Rich
Oct. 1931	Political Resident	Lt-Col Hugh V. Biscoe ⁱ	
July 1932	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	
Sept. 1932	Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	
Apr. 1933	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Percy G. Loch	Rich
May 1933	Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	
July 1933	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Percy G. Loch	
Oct. 1933	Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	
July 1934	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Percy G. Loch	
Oct. 1934	Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	
July 1935	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Percy G. Loch	
Oct. 1935	Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	
July 1936	acting Political Resident	Lt-Col Percy G. Loch	
Oct. 1936	Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	
Aug. 1937	acting Political Resident	Olaf Kirpatrick Caroe	Rich
Nov. 1937	Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	

Appointed	Position	Name	Biography ^e
Aug. 1938	acting Political Resident	Hugh Weightman	Rich
Sept. 1938	Political Resident	Lt-Col Trenchard C. Fowle	
Sept. 1939	Political Resident	Lt-Col C. Geoffrey Prior	Rich
Oct. 1941	officiating Political Resident	Lt-Col W. Rupert Hay	Rich
Sept. 1942	Political Resident	Lt-Col C. Geoffrey Prior Sir Geoffrey in 1943	
May 1945	officiating Political Resident	Lt-Col Arnold C. Galloway	Rich
Nov. 1945	Political Resident	Lt-Col Sir Geoffrey Prior	
May 1946	Political Resident	Lt-Col W. Rupert Hay	

Notes:

^e See part 13 of the Bibliography for biographies of these men. *DNB* = *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

^f MacLeod died on 20 Sept. 1823 in Bushire from the climate.

^g Lorimer died on 8 Feb. 1914 from a self-inflicted gunshot wound while cleaning his Colt pistol.

^h Cox was the Chief Political Officer with the British Expeditionary Force in Iraq during 1914–20; he was Gulf Resident in name only. His duties were performed by a series of Deputy Residents in Bushire.

ⁱ Biscoe died on 19 July 1932 from a heart-attack aboard HMS *Lupin* off the coast of Sharjah.

5. POLITICAL RESIDENTS IN THE GULF (RAS AL-JUFAIR, BAHRAIN)

Appointed	Position	Name	Biography ^j
May 1946	Political Resident	Lt-Col W. Rupert Hay	Rich
June 1947	officiating Political Resident	Lt-Col Arnold C. Galloway	Rich
Oct. 1947	Political Resident	Lt-Col Sir Rupert Hay ^k	

Appointed	Position	Name	Biography ^j
July 1953	Political Resident	Sir Bernard A. B. Burrows ^l	
Oct. 1958	Political Resident	Sir George Middleton	<i>DNB</i>
May 1961	Political Resident	Sir William (Bill) H. T. Luce	
Sept. 1966	Political Resident	Sir Stewart Crawford	
Sept. 1970	Political Resident	Sir Geoffrey G. Arthur	
Apr. 1972	post abolished	—	

Notes:

^j See part 13 of the Bibliography for biographies of these men. *DNB* = *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

^k Hay was the last Gulf Resident from the IPS.

^l Burrows was the first Gulf Resident from the Foreign Office.

6. GOVERNORS OF BOMBAY (1763–1873 ONLY)

The Bushire Resident and Gulf Resident took their orders from the Governor of Bombay between 1763 and 1873.

Appointed	Position	Name
Feb. 1760	Governor	Charles Crommelin
Jan. 1767	Governor	Thomas Hodges
Feb. 1771	Governor	William Hornby
Jan. 1784	Governor	Rawson H. Bodham
Jan. 1788	acting Governor	Andrew Ramsay
Sept. 1788	Governor	Maj-Gen Sir William Medows
Jan. 1790	Governor	Maj-Gen Sir Robert Abercromby
Nov. 1792	acting Governor	George Dick
Nov 1795	acting Governor	John Griffith
Dec. 1795	Governor	Jonathan Duncan
Aug. 1811	acting Governor	George Brown
Aug. 1812	Governor	Sir Evan Nepean
Nov. 1819	Governor	Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone
Nov. 1827	Governor	Maj-Gen Sir John Malcolm

Appointed	Position	Name
Dec. 1830	acting Governor	Lt-Gen Sir Thomas S. Beckwith
Jan. 1831	acting Governor	John Romer
Mar. 1831	Governor	Lord Clare (John Fitzgibbon)
Mar. 1835	Governor	Sir Robert Grant
July 1838	acting Governor	James Farish
May 1839	Governor	Sir James Rivett-Carnac
Apr. 1841	acting Governor	George W. Anderson
June 1842	Governor	Sir George Arthur
Aug. 1846	acting Governor	Lestock R. Reid
Jan. 1847	acting Governor	Sir George R. Clerk (1st time)
May 1848	Governor	Lord Falkland (Lucius B. Carey)
Dec. 1853	Governor	Lord Elphinstone (John Elphinstone)
May 1860	acting Governor	Sir George R. Clerk (2nd time)
Apr. 1862	Governor	Sir H. Bartle E. Frere
Mar. 1867	Governor	William R. S. V. Fitzgerald
May 1872	Governor	Sir Philip E. Wodehouse

7. VICEROYS OF INDIA (1873–1947 ONLY)

The Gulf Resident took his orders from the Viceroy of India during 1873–1947 and the British Foreign Secretary in London during 1947–72.

Appointed	Position	Name
May 1872	Viceroy	Lord Northbrook (Thomas G. Baring)
Apr. 1876	Viceroy	Lord Lytton (Robert Bulwer-Lytton)
June 1880	Viceroy	Lord Rippon (George F. S. Robinson)
Dec. 1884	Viceroy	Lord Dufferin (Frederick T. Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood)
Dec. 1888	Viceroy	Lord Lansdown (Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice)
Oct. 1894	Viceroy	Lord Elgin (Victor A. Bruce)
Jan. 1899	Viceroy	Lord Curzon (George N. Curzon)
Apr. 1904	acting Viceroy	Lord Amphill (Odo Russell)
Dec. 1904	Viceroy	Lord Curzon (George N. Curzon)

Appointed	Position	Name
Nov. 1905	Viceroy	Lord Minto (Gilbert J. Elliot-Murray-Kynynmound)
Nov. 1910	Viceroy	Lord Hardinge (Charles Hardinge)
Apr. 1916	Viceroy	Lord Chelmsford (Frederic H. N. Thesiger)
Apr. 1921	Viceroy	Lord Reading (Rufus Daniel Isaacs)
Apr. 1925	acting Viceroy	Lord Lytton (Victor A. G. Robert)
Apr. 1926	Viceroy	Lord Irwin (Edward F. L. Wood)
Apr. 1931	Viceroy	Lord Willingdon (George F. Freeman-Thomas)
May 1934	acting Viceroy	Sir George Stanley
Aug. 1934	Viceroy	Lord Willingdon (George F. Freeman-Thomas)
Apr. 1936	Viceroy	Lord Linlithgow (Victor A. J. Hope)
June 1938	acting Viceroy	Lord Brabourne (Michael H. R. Knatchbull)
Oct. 1938	Viceroy	Lord Linlithgow (Victor A. J. Hope)
Oct. 1943	Viceroy	Lord Wavell (Archibald P. Wavell)
Feb. 1947	Viceroy	Lord Mountbatten (Louis F. Mountbatten)
Aug. 1947	post abolished	_____

APPENDIX C

British India's Native Agents in Bahrain, *c.*1816–1900

1. NATIVE AGENTS

Appointed	Position	Name	ID	Religion
c.1816	Agent	Sadah Anandadas ^a	Sindhi or Gujarati?	Hindu
c.1819	Agent	unknown	unknown	unknown
c.1827	Agent	Asu	Sindhi or Gujarati?	Hindu
1829	Agent	Paman	Sindhi?	Hindu
1829	Agent	Chandu	Sindhi	Hindu
2 Apr. 1833	acting Agent	Khushal ^b	Sindhi	Hindu
15 Apr. 1834	Agent	Mirza Muhammad ‘Ali Safar	‘Iraqi Arab	Shi‘i
June 1842	post vacant	—	—	—
Autumn 1842	Agent	Hajji Jasim (a.k.a. Hajji Abu’l Qasim)	Arab	likley Shi‘i
Mar. 1862	Agent	Hajji Ibrahim bin Muhsin bin Rajab	<i>Bahrani</i> Arab	Shi‘i
1864	post vacant	—	—	—
Jan. 1872	Agent	Hajji ‘Abd al-Nabi Safar ^c	Persianized Arab (Bushiri)	Shi‘i
20 July 1884	Agent	Hajji Ahmad Khan Safar ^d	Yemeni Arab (Mochan)	Shi‘i

Nov. 1891	acting Agents	unidentified Residency <i>Munshis</i> sent from Bushire	Arab or Persian?	unknown
Mar. 1892	acting Agent	Hajji Muhammad Amin Bushiri ^e	Persianized Arab (Bushiri)	Shī'i
Nov. 1893	Agent	Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar ^f	Persianized Arab (Bushiri)	Shī'i
17 Jan. 1900	in charge	Hajji 'Abbas bin Muhammad bin Fadhil	<i>Bahrani</i> Arab	Shī'i
3 Feb. 1900	acting Agent	“ “ “ “	“ “	“
c. mid-Mar. 1900	post abolished	—	—	—

Notes:

^a Brother of Gulab (Muscat Agent c.1814–28).

^b Brother of Chandu (Bahrain Agent 1829–33).

^c Son of Muhammad 'Ali Safar (Bahrain Agent 1834–42); see Figure 1 on p. 148.

^d Grandson of Muhammad 'Ali Safar (Bahrain Agent 1834–42), son of 'Abd al-Rasul Safar (Mocha Agent c.1829–56), nephew of 'Abd al-Nabi Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84); also served as Indian Sub-Post Master for Eastern Arabia; see Figure 1 on p. 148.

^e Lingah Agent (1877–1902) on temporary assignment as Bahrain Agent.

^f Grandson of Muhammad 'Ali Safar (Bahrain Agent 1834–42), son of 'Abd al-Nabi Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84), cousin of Ahmad Safar (Bahrain Agent 1884–91); see Figure 1 on p. 148 and Photo 3.

2. NATIVE AGENCY STAFF

Residency	Position	Name	ID	Religion
1829–1833	Deputy Agent	Khushal ^a	Sindhi	Hindu
c.1829–1834	<i>Munshi</i>	Mirza Muhammad ‘Ali Safar	Persianized Arab (Bushiri)	Shi‘i
c.1834–1842	Deputy Agent?	Hajji ‘Abd al-Nabi Safar ^b ‘Abd al-Karim		
c.1873	Govt Contractor		Arab or Persian?	Unknown
c.1874–1884	Deputy Agent	Hajji Ahmad Khan Safar ^c	Persianized Arab (Mochan)	Shi‘i
c.1872–1884	<i>Munshi</i>	Agha Ahmad bin Salim Kanguni	Persianized Arab (<i>Holi</i>)	Sunni
c.1870s	<i>Munshi</i>	Salman bin Safar (no relation to the other Safars)	Persian (Bushiri)	Unknown
c.1870s	English Writer	‘Ali bin Salman	Arab or Persian?	Unknown
c.1870s–1900	<i>Munshi</i>	‘Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Ali Taqi Kanguni	Persianized Arab (<i>Holi</i>)	unknown
c.1880–1884	Deputy Agent	Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar ^d		
c.1884–1891	<i>Munshi</i>	‘Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Abd Allah Hindi	Persian (Bushiri)	Shi‘i

1893–1900	Deputy Agent	Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif ^e	Persian (Bushiri)	Shi'i
1893–1896	<i>Munshi</i>	Agha Muhammad Muhsin Sharif ^f	Persian (Bushiri)	Shi'i
1893–1905	<i>Munshi</i> no. 1	Hajji 'Abbas bin Muhammad bin Fadhil ^g	<i>Bahrani</i> Arab	Shi'i
1893–1900	<i>Munshi</i> no. 2	'Abd al-'Aziz Khargi ^h	<i>Bahrani</i> or Persianized Arab?	Shi'i
c.1898–1923	<i>Munshi</i> no. 3	Yusuf bin Ahmad Kanoo ⁱ	Persianized Arab (<i>Holi</i>)	Sunni
c.1890s	<i>Munshi</i>	Hajji Muhammad Kanguni	Persianized Arab (<i>Holi</i>)	Sunni
c.1899–1901	<i>Munshi</i>	Mirza Jasim Barhulli	Persianized Arab (<i>Holi</i>)	Shi'i

Notes:

^a Bother of Chandu (Bahrain Agent 1829–33), later acting Bahrain Agent (1833–4).

^b Son of Muhammad 'Ali Safar (Bahrain Agent 1834–42), later Bahrain Agent himself (1872–84); see Table 16 (p. 144) and Figure 1 (p. 148).

^c Grandson of Muhammad 'Ali Safar (Bahrain Agent 1834–42), son of 'Abd al-Rasul Safar (Mocha Agent c.1829–56), nephew of 'Abd al-Nabi Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84), later Bahrain Agent himself (1884–91); see Table 16 (p. 144) and Figure 1 (p. 148).

^d Grandson of Muhammad 'Ali Safar (Bahrain Agent 1834–42), son of 'Abd al-Nabi Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84), cousin of Ahmad Safar (Bahrain Agent 1884–91), later Bahrain Agent himself (1893–1900); see Table 16 (p. 144), Figure 1 (p. 148), and Photo 3.

^e Great-grandson of Muhammad 'Ali Safar (Bahrain Agent 1834–42), grandson of 'Abd al-Nabi Safar (Bahrain Agent 1872–84), second cousin of Ahmad Safar (Bahrain Agent 1884–91), nephew and son-in-law of Muhammad Rahim Safar (Bahrain Agent 1893–1900); see Figures 1–2 (pp. 148–9), Table 17 (p. 151), and Photo 6.

^f Younger brother of Muhammad Khalil Sharif (Deputy Bahrain Agent 1893–1900), later *Munshi* in Bushire (1896–1924).

^g See Photo 3

^h See Photo 3

ⁱ See Photo 3 and 5

3. BRITISH INDIA STEAM NAVIGATION CO. AGENTS (GRAY PAUL & CO.)

Residency	Position	Name	ID	Religion
c.1873–1889	Agent	ʿAbd Allah bin Muhammad bin Rajab ^a	<i>Bahrani</i> Arab	Shiʿi
c.1873–1889	Deputy Agent	Hajji ʿAbbas bin Muhammad bin Fadhil	<i>Bahrani</i> Arab	Shiʿi
1889–1890	acting Agent	Hajji ʿAbbas bin Muhammad bin Fadhil ^b	<i>Bahrani</i> Arab	Shiʿi
1890–1904	Agent	Mirza Muhammad Ismaʿil Qadhi	Persian (Bushiri)	Shiʿi
c.1890s–1930	<i>Munshi</i>	Abu Talib Behbehani ^c	Persian (Behbehani)	Shiʿi
Apr. 1904–	Agent	H. S. Milborrow	British	Christian?
1904–1925	Shipping Agent	Mirza Muhammad Ismaʿil Qadhi	Persian (Bushiri)	Shiʿi
1925–1950s	Shipping Agent	Agha Muhammad Tahir Sharif ^d	Persian (Bushiri)	Shiʿi

Notes:

^a Nephew of Hajji Ibrahim bin Muhsin bin Rajab (British Agent in Bahrain 1862–4); also served as Indian Sub-Post Master for Eastern Arabia (1875–84).

^b Later *Munshi* at British Agency in Bahrain (1893–1905) and acting British Agent (1900).

^c Son of Muhammad Baqir Behbahani (Residency *Munshi*, Bushire), grandson-in-law of Ahmad Safar (British Agent in Bahrain 1884–91).

^d Son-in-law of his predecessor, Mirza Muhammad Ismaʿil Qadhi; cousin of Muhammad Khalil Sharif (Deputy British Agent in Bahrain 1893–1900); cousin of Muhammad Sharif (Political Agency *Munshi* in Bahrain c.1910–40); see Figure 2. (p. 149).

4. GULF MERCHANT GRADES

Grade/annual sales	Characteristics
<u>Grade I</u>	
Earned Ks. 500,000+	Imported and exported internationally.
(= Rs. 231,000+ in 1864)	Maintained a fleet of ten or more ships, at least three of which were <i>booms</i> (ocean cargo ships).
(= Rs. 110,000+ in 1898)	Did not purchase from the local market, but supplied it.
	Had commercial agents in international ports.
	Had a high credit rating in international ports.
	Loaned large sums of money; acted as a merchant bank.
	There were rarely more than a small number of Grade I merchants in a given port.
	Normally held a local monopoly on certain goods.
	Held a very high social position in the local community, may have been the head of a local <i>husainiyah</i> (Shi'ah community centre, 'house of mourning') or school, and was typically a member of the local <i>majlis al-tujarah</i> (council of commerce).
<u>Grade II</u>	
Earned Ks. 300,000–500,000	Imported and exported regionally.
(= Rs. 138,600–231,000 in 1864)	Maintained a small fleet of five to ten ships.
(= Rs. 66,000–110,000 in 1898)	Did not purchase from the local market, but supplied it.
	Had one or two commercial agents in regional ports.
	Had a good credit rating in regional ports.
	Loaned some money.
	There were rarely more than ten Grade II merchants in a given port.

Often was a local distributor for, or junior partner with, a Grade I merchant.

Held a relatively high social position in the local community, might have been the head of a local *busainiyah* (Shi'ah community centre, 'house of mourning') or school, and might have been a member of the local *majlis al-tujarah* (council of commerce).

Often acted as a middle man between Grade I and Grade III–IV merchants, especially in cases of low supply and high demand.

Grade III

Earned Ks. 150,000–300,000

(= Rs. 69,300–138,600 in 1864)

(= Rs. 33,000–66,000 in 1898)

Rarely imported or exported.

Might have maintained one or two ships.

Normally purchased his goods from Grade I–II merchants.

Had no commercial agents.

Had good credit with local Grade I–II merchants.

Loaned small sums of money.

There were rarely more than thirty Grade III merchants in a given port.

Grade IV

Earned Ks. 50,000–150,000

(= Rs. 23,100–69,300 in 1864)

(= Rs. 11,000–33,000 in 1898)

Did not import or export.

Maintained no ships.

Purchased his goods from Grade I–III merchants.

Had no commercial agents.

Had limited credit with local Grade I–III merchants.

Loaned no money.

There was typically more than fifty Grade IV merchants in a given port.

Ungraded

Earned up to Ks. 50,000

(= up to Rs. 23,100 in 1864)

(= up to Rs. 11,000 (1898)

Did not import or export.

Maintained no ships.

Purchased his goods from Grade I–IV merchants.

Had no commercial agents.

Had very limited credit with local Grade I–III merchants.

Loaned no money.

These petty merchants typically accounted for 80–90% of merchants in a given port.

They were not considered proper merchants by the Persian Government (hence no assigned grade) and were not required to pay tax on their profits.

Notes:

These grades were established by the Persian Govt for taxation purposes. Conversions are based on exchanges from 1864 (1 kran = 0.462 rupee, 1 rupee = 2.163 kran) and 1898 (1 kran = 0.22 rupee, 1 rupee = 4.5 kran). Rupees in amounts over 100,000 are normally written in *laks*. One *lak* of rupees is written as Rs.1,00,000, however standard decimalization has been used here to avoid confusion.

Sources:

Bushiri, 'Grades of Merchants' (Bahrain, c.1999); Bushiri, 'Value of Currencies Used in Bahrain, 1824–1944' (Bahrain, c.1999); Sadid al-Saltanah (Kababi), *Safar Namah-i Sadid al-Saltanah* (1983). Kababi based his merchant grades on Persian taxation laws from c.1896–1930; Issawi (ed.), *Economic History of Iran*, 343–4; Pelly, *Report on a Journey to Riyadh in Central Arabia* (1865), appendix 8: 'Riyadh Currency', 84.

APPENDIX D

British Control: Bahrain versus the Indian States

On the ground, Bahrain was treated no differently from a Princely Indian state. The technical differences between the formal and informal (legally-based and non-legally-based) types of control were marginal and often had little or no effect upon in the degree of control exercised by the British Crown. Differences are marked in **bold**.

Areas of control	State	Method of control	Was there a legal basis for control?
Defence	Bahrain	direct	yes
	Indian states	direct	yes
External political affairs	Bahrain	direct	yes
	Indian states	direct	yes
External communications	Bahrain	direct	yes
	Indian states	direct	yes
External transportation	Bahrain	direct	yes
	Indian states	direct	yes
External contraband trade	Bahrain	direct	yes
	Indian states	direct	yes
British subjects & dependants	Bahrain	direct	yes
	Indian states	direct	yes
Foreign subjects	Bahrain	direct	yes
	Indian states	direct	yes
A Ruler's own subjects (in certain circumstances)	Bahrain	direct	yes
	Indian states	direct	yes
A Ruler's subjects outside his state (in certain cases)	Bahrain	direct	yes
	Indian states	direct	yes
Key posts held by Britons in the native government	Bahrain	direct	yes and no
	Indian states	direct	yes and no
Internal affairs of special concern (through 'advice')	Bahrain	indirect	yes
	Indian states	indirect	yes
Internal political affairs (through 'advice')	Bahrain	indirect	no , but 'advice' still given.
	Indian states	indirect	yes

APPENDIX E

Anglo–Bahraini Legal Obligations and Rights

OBLIGATIONS OF THE BRITISH CROWN

1. The British Government must permit Bahrainis to visit and trade at British ports in India (1816).
2. The British Government shall refrain from attacking its enemies when they are on board Bahraini ships (1816).
3. The British Government is to be Bahrain's 'Protecting Power' (1861).
4. As Protecting Power, the British Government must defend Bahrain against attack by other Treaty States (1861) and foreign powers (implied: 1880, 1892).
5. The British Government must represent Bahrain in international affairs (implied: 1880, 1892).
6. The British Government's entering into treaty relations with Bahrain constituted recognition of Bahrain as an independent state (albeit one in subordinate relations with Britain). Commitments 3–5 constituted a British guarantee to assert and defend this status diplomatically and militarily.
7. The British Political Resident in the Gulf must arbitrate all cases of conflict between Bahrain and other nations, and must take all necessary steps to obtain reparation (1861).
8. The British Government 'shall take notice of' any attack made upon Bahraini ships flying the white-pierced-red flag [Trucial Flag] (1820)—a flag identifying all Arab ships subject to the Anglo–Arab anti-piracy treaty of 1820.
9. British Crown representatives must extend their 'good offices' [diplomatic protection and representation] to Bahrainis in other Gulf Arab Treaty States (1861) and world-wide (implied: 1880, 1892).
10. The British Agent in Bahrain must handle all legal cases involving only British subjects, dependants (1861), or foreigners (1909).
11. The British Agent and Ruler of Bahrain must jointly handle all legal cases between Bahraini subjects and British subjects, dependants (1861), or foreigners (1909; implied: 1880, 1892). In practice Bahrain's *Majlis al-ʿUrf* handled these cases until 1919.

RIGHTS OF THE BRITISH CROWN

1. The British Government has the right to establish an agent or broker at Bahrain (1816, 1820).
2. The British Government has full jurisdiction over British subjects and dependants (1861, 1919) and foreigners (1909, 1919; implied: 1880, 1892) in Bahrain.
3. The British Government has full jurisdiction over Bahrainis in foreign territories where the British Crown exercises extra-territorial rights (1890; implied: 1861, 1880, 1892).
4. The British Government has partial jurisdiction over Bahrainis *in* Bahrain in certain cases (1919, 1924; implied: 1880, 1892).
5. The British Government has the right to deport British subjects and dependants from Bahrain (1919, 1924; implied: 1861, 1880, 1892).
6. The British Political Resident in the Gulf has the right to make 'Kings Regulations' for the peace, order, and good government of British subjects and dependants and foreigners in Bahrain, and to compel Bahrainis and non-Bahrainis alike to observe treaty obligations and laws decreed by the Ruler of Bahrain (1919, 1922).
7. British vessels and subjects have the right to trade in Bahrain (1816).
8. The British Government has the right to intervene in cases of piracy (1820) and acts of aggression (1861) committed by or against Bahrainis at sea.
9. British Government representatives have the right to search Bahraini ships for slaves (1847) and arms (1898).
10. British Government representatives have the right to confiscate slaves transported on Bahraini ships or landed at Bahrain (1847, 1856).
11. The British Government has the right to establish a telegraph station in Bahrain (1912).
12. The British Government has the right to determine to which oil company the Ruler of Bahrain may grant concessions (implied: 1914).

OBLIGATIONS OF THE RULER OF BAHRAIN

1. The Ruler of Bahrain must always be at peace with the British Government (1820).
2. The Ruler of Bahrain must conduct all his foreign relations through British Crown representatives (1880, 1892).
3. The Ruler of Bahrain must not enter into agreements or correspondence with any foreign state, government (1880), or power (1892) other than Britain.
4. The Ruler of Bahrain must permit British subjects and dependents to trade in Bahrain (1816).

5. The Ruler of Bahrain must provide British vessels with pilots to carry them into the harbour, although the British must pay for them (1816).
6. The Ruler of Bahrain must render every aid and assistance to British vessels in distress (1816).
7. The Ruler of Bahrain shall refrain from attacking his enemies when they are on board British ships (1816).
8. The Ruler of Bahrain must not permit foreign political representatives to reside in Bahrain (1880, 1892).
9. The Ruler of Bahrain must not permit foreign states to establish coaling stations in Bahrain (1880).
10. The Ruler of Bahrain must not cede, sell, mortgage, or otherwise give for occupation any part of his territory to foreign governments, except the British Government (1880, 1892).
11. The Ruler of Bahrain and the British Agent must jointly handle all legal cases involving British subjects or dependants and Bahraini subjects (1861). In practice Bahrain's *Majlis al-ʿUrf* handled these cases until 1919.
12. The Ruler of Bahrain must ensure that full redress is afforded in cases of maritime offences [contraband trade, piracy, and acts of aggression] committed by Bahrainis (1861).
13. The Ruler of Bahrain must not declare war against any state or permit Bahrainis to carry out premeditated retaliation against other states (1861).
14. The Ruler of Bahrain must report to the British Political Resident all incidents of war, premeditated retaliation, and piracy committed by or against Bahrainis (1861).
15. The Ruler of Bahrain must arrest the skipper (*nukhadah*) of any Bahraini ship transporting slaves (1856) and arms (1898), and report the matter to the Political Resident who will issue instructions.
16. The Ruler of Bahrain must not allow arms to be sold in Bahrain (1898).
17. The Ruler of Bahrain must permit British vessels and subjects to trade in Bahrain (1816); the Ruler of Bahrain must accord 'most favoured people' status to British subjects and dependants in Bahrain (1861).
18. The Ruler of Bahrain must not charge the English more customs duty than he charges Arabs (1816); the Ruler of Bahrain must not charge British subjects and dependants more than 5 per cent *ad valorem* customs duty on their goods (1861).
19. The Ruler of Bahrain must not engage in oil exploration in Bahrain without the consent of the British Government (1914).
20. The Ruler of Bahrain must not enter into oil concession negotiations without consulting the British Government (1914).

RIGHTS OF THE RULER OF BAHRAIN

1. The Ruler of Bahrain has the right to send an envoy to reside at the British Political Residency in Bushire (1820).
2. The Ruler of Bahrain is entitled to British protection against foreign attack by other Treaty States (1861) and foreign powers (implied: 1880, 1892).
3. The Ruler of Bahrain is entitled to British diplomatic representation and protection of Bahraini interests outside Bahrain (1880, 1892).
4. The Ruler of Bahrain has the right to conduct customary friendly correspondence with local authorities of neighbouring Gulf Arab States on issues of business and minor importance (1880).

OBLIGATIONS OF BAHRAINIS

1. Bahrainis must not harm or hinder British vessels (1816).
2. Bahrainis must render every aid and assistance to British vessels in distress (1816).
3. Bahrainis shall refrain from attacking their enemies when they are on board British ships (1816).
4. Bahrainis must not interrupt the British Agent in his mercantile, or any other, concerns that he may have (1816).
5. Bahrainis must abstain from piracy (1820).
6. Bahrainis shall abstain from the slave trade (1847, 1856).
7. Bahrainis must abstain from acts of war and premeditated retaliation (1861).
8. Bahrainis must not transport slaves by sea (1847, 1856, 1861).
9. Bahrainis must not trade in arms (1898).
10. Bahraini skippers must keep on board a Register certificate listing their ship's name, size, and tonnage—this must bear the signature of the Ruler of Bahrain and the British Agent (1820). The British abandoned this in 1823 as unenforceable.
11. Bahraini skippers must keep on board a Port Clearance ledger [provided by the British] listing the name of the skipper, the number of his crew, the number of weapons on board, the owner of the ship, and the ports of departure and destination—each entry must bear the signature of the Ruler of Bahrain (1820). The British abandoned this in 1823 as unenforceable.
12. Bahraini skippers must hand over both Register and Port Clearance to British representatives for inspection when requested to do so (1820). The British abandoned this in 1823 as unenforceable.

13. The Ruler of Bahrain and Bahraini skippers must fly the white-pierced-red flag [Trucial Flag] on their ships (1820). The British did not enforce this and most skippers did not fly the flag until the introduction of the Perpetual Maritime Truce in 1853, to which Bahrain was admitted in 1861.

RIGHTS OF BAHRAINIS

1. Bahrainis have the right to visit and trade at British ports in India (1816).
2. Bahraini ships flying the white-pierced-red flag [Trucial Flag] have the right to trade in British ports (1820).
3. Bahrainis have the right to defend themselves against acts of piracy (implied: 1820) and war (implied: 1861), but not to engage in premeditated retaliation (implicit: 1820, 1861).
4. Bahrainis are to be considered British-protected persons [British dependants] outside Bahrain—in effect giving them the same rights as British subjects (1861; implied: 1880, 1892).
5. Bahrainis, as British-protected persons, may fly the British flag on their ships (1892).

OBLIGATIONS OF BRITISH SUBJECTS AND DEPENDANTS IN BAHRAIN

1. British subjects and dependants must observe the laws of Bahrain, Britain, and British India while in Bahrain (implied before 1919, explicit thereafter).
2. British subjects and dependants must comply with instructions and verdicts issued by British Crown representatives in Bahrain and the Gulf (implied before 1919, explicit therefore).
3. British subjects and dependants in Bahrain must register with the British Political Agency (1919, 1922).

RIGHTS OF BRITISH SUBJECTS AND DEPENDANTS IN BAHRAIN

1. British subjects and dependants have the right to the good offices of British Crown representatives in Bahrain and the Gulf.
2. British subjects and dependants have the right to trade (1816, 1861) and reside (1861) in Bahrain.

3. British vessels have the right to be provided with pilots to carry them into the harbour, paying for the same (1816).
4. British subjects and dependants have the right to have their legal cases adjudicated, either partly or wholly, by the British Agent in Bahrain and the British Political Resident in Bushire (1861, 1919).
5. British subjects and dependants have the right to pay no more than 5 per cent *ad valorem* customs duty on their goods (1861).
6. British subjects and dependants have the right to be treated as ‘most favoured people’ (1861).

These treaties conferred upon the British Crown considerable extra-territorial jurisdiction. ‘Jurisdiction’ within a foreign state is normally understood as ‘the administration of justice’, but in the Treaty States this was gradually extended to include ‘the exercise of power’. The British Crown exercised jurisdiction in Bahrain and over Bahrainis in several areas:

EXCLUSIVE BRITISH JURISDICTION IN BAHRAIN

1. All ‘foreign affairs’ (a term the British Crown usually defined in a very broad sense).
2. All matters of external defence.
3. Most external communications: (a) post, (b) telegraph, and (c) telephone.
4. All external transport: (a) port facilities, (b) shipping, (c) airport, (d) lighting and buoying, (e) maritime navigation, and (f) maritime registration.
5. All external contraband trade: (a) slaves, (b) arms, and (c) smuggled goods.
6. All land owned or leased by the British Crown: (a) the Political Agency compound in Manamah, (b) the Assistant Political Agent’s house in Qudaybiyah, (c) the Royal Navy base in Ras al-Jufair, (d) the RAF base in Muharraq, (e) the Senior RAF Officer’s house in Qudaybiyah, and (f) the British Army base in Hamalah.
7. All non-Bahrainis in Bahrain.
8. All persons aboard non-Bahraini ships in Bahraini waters.
9. All Bahrainis who are: (a) in British employ in Bahrain, or (b) in territories where the British Crown exercises extra-territorial jurisdiction.
10. All legal cases in which both the plaintiff and defendant are: (a) foreigners, or (b) Bahrainis entitled to British protection *inside* Bahrain—usually Bahrainis in British employ and their families.
11. All legal cases in which a Bahraini commits a crime against the British Crown.
12. All oil negotiations.

JOINT ANGLO-BRITISH JURISDICTION IN BAHRAIN

1. All ‘mixed’ legal cases between: (a) Bahrainis and non-Bahrainis, and (b) Bahrainis and Bahrainis entitled to British protection.

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Hajji 'Abbas bin Muhammad bin Fadhil	Deputy BI Agent, Bahrain c.1873–89 BI Agent, Bahrain 1889–90
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14. Merchants in the Gulf and Asia

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Index

- 'Abbas Fadhil, *see* Fadhil
 'Abbas, Shah 43
 'Abd Allah Al Khalifah, *see* Al Khalifah
 'Abd Allah branch of the Al Khalifah, *see* Al Khalifah
 'Abd al-Nabi Safar, *see* Safar
 'Abd al-Latif, *see* Sharjah Native Agents
 'Abd al-Rahim Hakim, *see* Hakim
 'Abd al-Razzaq Razuqi, *see* Sharjah Native Agents
 'Abd al-Wahhab, 'Abd al-Rahman bin (Ruler of Bahrain's *Wazir* 1890s) 195–7
 'Abd al-Wahhab, Muhammad bin (Ottoman Agent in Bahrain 1890s) 190–1, 202–3
 al-Abr Native Agency ('Aden Protectorate) 64
 Abu Dhabi (Trucial State) 110
 oil 34
 Ottoman threat to 37
 Political Officer/Agent 46, 236
 treaties 37, 46
 'Aden
 British Empire, place within 21, 24, 31–2
 British interests in 217
 Indian Empire, place within 24, 217
 Mullah Jafar (*Munshi*) 165
 native agents 62, 64, 86
 Protectorate/Residency 11, 18–19, 21, 24–5, 31–2, 62, 64, 86, 165, 217, 226, Map 1
 Protectorate Levies 258
 Rassam, Hornuzd (Native Agent 1854–69) 86
 Settlement/Colony 18, 21 (n. 9), 24, 25, 31, 217–18, Map 1
 Afghanistan vii, 5, 11, 19, 24–5, 36, 62
 Indian Empire, part of 24–5, 28, 217–18
 also see Herat, Kabul, Kandahar
 Africa, *see* East Africa
 Ahvaz
 Consulate 46, 215, 234, 257
 post office 117–18
 airfields (Imperial Airways, RAF) 34, 46, 49, 119, 218, 258–9, 286; *also see* Bahrain, Basrah, Gwadar, Imperial Airways, Kuwait, RAF, Sharjah, Trucial States
 'Ajman (Trucial State) 37, 46
akhbar nawis (news writers) 75, 78–80, 84, 109
 America in the Gulf
 Bahrain 164
 Cantine, James (missionary doctor) 67
 Fifth Fleet 46
 Muscat 24, 37, 47
 native agents 61
 Anandadas, Gulab, *see* Muscat Native Agents
 Anandadas, Sadah, *see* Bahrain Native Agent
 Arabic, Gulf 154
 Arabistan (Khuzistan), British Consulate at 209
 Armenian native agents 85–6
 arms trade 168, 192, 195–9, 204–5, 207
 army units and guards
 British 46, 53, 68, 164, 218, 257–8
 British Indian 39, 40, 46, 58, 89, 164, 220, 257
 Ottoman 37–8, 57, 110, 160
 Astarabad Native Agency (Persia) 63
 Asu, *see* Bahrain Native Agents
 Awadh (Oudh), Nawab of 14, 38
 Baghdad
 Agent/Resident 18–19, 69, 119, 160, 166
 Consul/Con-Gen 15–16, 18–20, 226
 Ottoman govt of xxiii–xxiv, 85, 160–1, 168
 postal service 118–19
 trade 209
 also see 'Iraq
 Baghdad Native Agents (1781–98, 1824–32) 63, 229
 Marcar, Khojah (1781–95) 85
 Petrus, Khojah (1795–8) 85–6
 salary of 85
Baharinah xviii, 169–70, 213
 Bahrain 4, 5, 21, 32, 34, 37, 63, 92
 Abu Mahir Fort 158, 182
 Agent–Ruler relations, rift in 189–92
 airfield (Imperial Airways, RAF) 34, 46, 259, 286
 Ameen Rihani's comments on 1, 217
 Anglo–Bahraini legal obligations and rights 281–7
 arms trade 168, 192, 195–9, 207, 282–4, 286
 army units stationed in 46, 164, 257–8, 286
 Bania community in 137–43
 battle of Manamah (1842) 105, 153, 178–80
 battle of Rifa' (1869) 158
 BI Line 33, 114–15, 206
 British coercion/control 27–9, 124, 126, 130–1 (table), 157, 175–82, 180–2, 186, 191, 198, 204, 280, 282–7
 British Embassy xxxiii
 British interests in 29, 33–8, 108, 217–18, 286
 British naval visits 56 (1816), 57, 138–9 (1819), 92 (1823), 141–2, 175–8 (1834), 106 (1842), 181–2 (1858), 123, 126 (1863), 158–9 (1869), 166 (1893)
 British-owned land 286
 British-protected persons 6, 21, 101–2, 108, 121–2, 124, 126, 156, 158, 161, 174–9, 181, 195, 281–2, 285–6
 British-protected state 21, 26–9, 31–2, 37, 47, 100, 160, 195, 217
 civil war, first (1842–3) 105, 153, 178–9
 civil war, second (1869) 109, 156, 158, 182
 climate and disease 66–8, 70
 foreign influence in 207–8
 French agent (Antonin Goguyer) 191–2, 195, 207, 211–12
 Gaskin, Calcott 105 (n. a), 170–3, 194, 201, 212
 Gulf Resident's visits to 56 (1816), 92 (1823), 106 (1842), 123, 126 (1863), 158–9 (1869), 54, 105
 Gulf Sqn HQ, Ras al-Jufair 45–6
 Indian Empire, part of 25, 27–29, 217

- Bahrain (*cont.*)
- Indian states, comparison with 27–9, 280
 - legal cases 122–4, 126, 165–6
 - Mahkamāt al-Mukhtalatāt* 126
 - Majlis al-Tujarāh* 120, 128, 277–8
 - Majlis al-Urf* 120–1, 124–6, 128, 191–2, 194, 221, 277–8, 281, 283
 - oil 34, 282–3, 286
 - Order-in-Council (1913) 121
 - Ottoman Agent (Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab) 190–1, 202–3
 - Ottoman claims to 37, 83, 99, 160, 163–4, 174, 174 (n. 133), 202
 - Ottoman coal deport (1880) 163
 - Ottoman influence in 190–1, 195, 206
 - Ottoman naval visit to (1871) 160
 - Ottoman protection of 180
 - Ottoman threat to 127, 160, 163–4, 190
 - Persian claims to 83, 99, 174 (list), 182, 185
 - Prideaux, Francis 194, 201, 206, 212, 265, Photo 6
 - RAF base 46
 - Residency Agents (1871–9) 98 (n. 110), 107, 158, 160, 163–4, 171–2
 - rulers 260 (list); *also see* Al Khalifah
 - rulers imprisoned in India 159 (n. 82)
 - rulers overthrown 157–8, 159 (n. 82), 162, 180, 182, 260
 - Russian visit to (1902) 190
 - threatened invasion of (1895) 163–4
 - treaties 21, 28, 37, 45, 47, 91, 101–2, 108, 114, 121, 125, 129–30, 140, 154, 158, 163, 196, 198, 201, 281–7
 - also see* Al Khalifah
 - Bahrain Native Agency (c.1816–1900) 4–7, 51, 54–7, 63, 104–35, 229–37, 239–40, 248, 253
 - abolition in 1865 155–6
 - abolition in 1900 169–72, 205, 210–12
 - agents, list of 272–3
 - Bair* Safar 104–5, 117, 151–2, 162, 171–3, 178–9
 - buildings 104–6
 - comparison with Political Agency 95, 205–6
 - costs 94–5, 205–6
 - Court 119–27, 171, 165–6, 281–2, 286–7
 - decline (1895–1900) 167–8, 189–200, 213
 - district 108
 - establishment in 1816 56–7, 93, 98, 112, 138
 - establishment in 1871 159–61
 - finances and organization of 106–8
 - postal service 104, 108, 115, 117–19
 - records 5–7, 106–7, 110–12, 122, 147, 223, 289
 - Bahrain Native Agency staff 106–7, 109, 115, 125, 143, 152, 170, 172–4, 274–5, Photos 3, 5, 6
 - Bushiri, 'Alī Kazim (errand boy 1870s) 5–6, 107
 - Fadhil, 'Abbas (*Munshi* 1893–1900) 169–72, 275, Photo 3
 - Kanguni, 'Abd al-Rahman (*Munshi* 1870s–1900) 107, 274
 - Kanguni, Ahmad (*Munshi* 1872–84) 107, 274
 - Kanguni, Muhammad (*Munshi* 1890s) 107, 275
 - Kano, Yusuf (*Munshi* 1898–1923) 172–3, 275, Photos 3, 5
 - Khargi, 'Abd al-'Aziz (*Munshi* 1893–1900) 275, Photo 3
 - Safar family 6–7, 143, 152, 165
 - Safar, Ahmad (*Munshi* 1874–84) 165
 - Safar, Muhammad 'Alī (*Munshi* 1829–34) 152
 - Sharif family 6–7, 150–1
 - Sharif, Muhammad Khalil (Deputy Agent 1893–1900) 6, 151, 162, 168, 173–4, 185–6, 193, 196, 200–1, 210, 211, Photo 6
 - Sharif, Muhammad Muhsin (*Munshi* 1893–6) 149, 151, 275, Photo 6
 - Bahrain Native Agents (c.1816–1900) 5–7, 55, 63, 66, 80, 82–3, 137–88, 272–3, Photo 3
 - Anandadas, Sadah (c.1816–19) 57, 98–9, 138–9, 272
 - Asu (c.1827–9) 139, 272
 - authority and power of 104, 124–5, 129, 130–2, 135, 164–5, 187, 206, 221
 - communication with Bushire 114–15
 - Bushiri, Muhammad Amin (1892–3) 166
 - challenges to 174–87
 - Chandu (1829–33) 140, 174–5
 - conflict of interests 85, 172–3, 192–200, 213
 - Curzon on 104
 - duties 108–35, 163
 - duties compared with a British political agent 134–5
 - Fadhil, 'Abbas (1900) 169–72, 273, Photo 3
 - intelligence-gathering duties of 108–19
 - Jasim (1842–62) 66, 126, 129, 153–4, 180–1
 - judicial duties of 119–28
 - Khushal (1833–4) 140, 141, 174–8
 - list of agents 272–3
 - Ottoman refusal to recognize 83, 131
 - Paman (1829) 140
 - political duties of 127–32
 - postal duties of 117–19
 - protection of 101–2, 139–41, 153, 158, 174–8
 - published accounts of 51
 - Rajab, Ibrahim (1862–4) 7, 102, 105, 126, 155–6, 158
 - religion/race of 82, 141–2, 220
 - religious/racial discrimination against 82, 141–2, 174–8, 187, 220
 - Safar family Agents (1834–42, 1872–1900) 6–7, 143–53, 161–9
 - Safar, 'Abd al-Nabi (1872–84) 6, 94, 102, 107, 115, 123, 124, 133, 144, 147, 161–4, 182–5
 - Safar, Ahmad (1884–91) 7, 117, 133, 144, 164–6
 - Safar, Muhammad 'Alī (1834–42) 66, 86, 110–11, 142, 151–4, 161, 162, 178–9, 183
 - Safar, Muhammad Rahim (1893–1900) 6, 7, 98, 101, 124–5, 126, 133, 136, 144, 146, 147, 166–9, 173, 182, 189–200, 212–13, Photo 7
 - salary of 71, 94–5, 97–8, 102, 107, 156, 194, 205, 210–11, 248, 253
 - slave trade duties of 129, 154
 - social duties of 132–4
 - status of 102
 - temporary Agents (1891–3) 166
 - Union Jack, use of 102, 104
 - Bahrain Political Agency (1900–71) 171–4
 - argument for 200–10
 - buildings 105 (n. a), 173, Photo 7
 - comparison with Native Agency 95, 205–6
 - cost 95, 205–6, 215

- Court 121–2, 124, 126
 Curzon on 205, 209
 Daly, Clive (Agent 1921–6) Photo 4
 establishment of 210–12
 Fadhil, 'Abbas (*Munshi* 1900–5) 172, 275, Photo 3
 Gaskin, Calcott (Agent 1900–04) 105
 (n. a), 170–3, 212
 judicial powers of 121, 124
 Kanoo, Yusuf (*Munshi* 1900–23) 172–3, 275,
 Photos 3, 5
munshis 172–3, 210–11, 275
 Prior, Geoffrey (Agent 1929–32) 267, Photo 7
 records of 107 (n. 11), 290
 salary of Agent 95, 205 (n. 48)
 slave trade duties of 206–7
 staff of 172–4, Photo 7
Baharinah xviii, 169–70, 213
 Balfour-Paul, Glen (political officer, historian) 26, 47
 Baluchistan (India) 11, 42, 138, 218, 226, 233, 235
 Bam
 Native Agency (1904–6) 63, 235
 Vice-Consulate (1906–10) 235, 257
 Bampur Native Agency (1901–4) 63, 208, 235
 Bandar 'Abbas 13, 43, 44, 196, 204, 209
 climate of 66
 Consul (1900–51) 209, 211, 215, 257
 post office 118
 also see Persia Agent
 Bandar Dilam, Shaikh of 139–40
 Bandar Rig Factory (1755–6) 33, 43, 228
Banias 108, 122, 125, 129, 137–43, 158, 187,
 218–19
 legal cases 122–3, 125–6, 171, 191–2, 194,
 286–7
 Bahrain 108, 120, 122–3, 125, 129, 137–43,
 156–8, 171, 174–9, 181, 187, 191–5,
 200–1, 206
 Muhammad Rahim Safar, complaint
 against 193–4, 200
 Muscat 84–5, 88, 99, 137–8, 228–30, 232, 273
 (n. a)
 native agents xxvii, 57, 80, 82, 84–5, 88, 99, 103,
 136–43, 174–8, 187–8, 218, 228–32, 237,
 272, 273 (n. a)
 religious discrimination against 141–2, 174–8,
 187, 220
 Baqir, Muhammad (Bushiri merchant) 183, 184
 Basidu, Qishm Island (Persia)
 Coal Agent (c.1860s–1935) 55, 232, 234, 237, 243
 Native Agency (c.1860–1935) xxix, 55, 63, 67, 93,
 143, 214, 232, 234, 237
 naval station xxv–xxvi, xxix, xxx, 45, 52, 68,
 238–41, 243, 245, 254, 257–8
 Slave Agent (c.1860–74) 55, 232, 234, 237
 Basrah
 Agency/Residency 18–19, 44, 69, 84–6, 228–9
 airfield (Imperial Airways, RAF) 46, 258–9
 BI Line 33–4
 Factory 13, 33, 43, 208
 German involvement 207
 Manesty, Samuel (Basrah Resident
 1786–1810) 86, 261
 Nabi, Akan Muhammad (Native Agent c.1790s) 86
 Native Agents 63, 86
 Ottoman govt of xx–xxi, xxiii–xxiv, 86, 166
 Political Agent/Consul 20, 44, 166, 168, 229
 post office 118–19
 also see Persia Agency, Safar family, Sharif family
 Bayly, C. A. (historian) 79, 108–9, 219
 Behbahan 150, Map 2
 Behbahani, Abu'l Qasim (*Munshi* in Bushire
 1860s–70s, Sharjah Agent 1880–90) 157, 184
 Behbehani, Abu Talib (BI *Munshi* in Bahrain
 c.1890s–1930) 276
 Behbehani, Khanim (interviewee) xxxiii, 151 (n. 51)
 Behbahani, Zainab (daughter-in-law of Ahmad
 Safar) 150–1
 Bengal
 Civil Service 40
 Fort William, Calcutta 13
 HQ of British India 13–14, 38, 77 (n. 45)
 Presidency 13–14, 116
 Nawab of 14, 38
 also see British Govt of India, India,
 Bhutan
 Indian Empire, place within 11, 19, 25, 217, 227
 native agents 62
 BI Line (British India Steam Navigation Co.) xviii,
 33–4, 114 (n. 33), 115, 119, 173, 206
 postal duties 115, 117, 119, 156
 BI Agents in Bahrain 115, 117, 119, 124, 156, 170,
 276
 Behbahani, Abu Talib (1925–50s) 276
 Fadhil, 'Abbas (1889–90) 170, 276, Photo 3
 list of agents 276
 Qadhi, Muhammad Isma'il (1890–1925) 170
 (n. 118), 276
 Rajab, 'Abd Allah (1873–89) 115, 117, 124, 156,
 170, 276
 al-Sharif, Muhammad Tahir (1925–50s) 149–51,
 276
 Birjand Native Agency (Persia) 63
 Blane, David (PRPG 1832–4) 114, 141–2, 176–8,
 238, 263
 Bogle, Archibald, *see* Muscat
 Bombay, Govr of 70, 84, 92, 130
 authority of 130, 141–2
 Duncan, Jonathan (1795–1811) 87–91, 221,
 268
 Elphinstone, Mountstuart (1819–27) 61, 64, 93,
 268
 list of Govrs 268–9
 Bombay Govt/Presidency 13–14, 156
 Bombay Marine, *see* Gulf Sq'n
 Civil Service 40
 High Court of 123
 Political Dept 14, 38, 39, 46, 225
 also see postal service
 British Crown, *see* British Govt of India
 British Empire
 formal and informal empire xix–xx, 2, 30–2,
 216–17
 Middle East 29–32
 protected states 21, 24–6, 31, 217, Map 1
 sovereignty 21, 31
 suzerainty 20–1, 31–2, 217
 theories 29–38, 71–4
 also see imperialism, British Indian Empire

- British flag (Union Jack)
 British-protected persons using 21, 100, 179–81, 192, 285
 native agents using 49, 87, 89–90, 102, 104, 158, 221
 symbolism of 100, 102, 179, 182
- British Govt (HMG)
 British Crown 2, 20–1, 25–7, 130, 217, 281–2
 'Government', meaning of term xviii
 Parliament 130
also see Foreign Office
- British Govt of India 2, 4, 12, 14–15, 20, 66
 Bahrain, legal obligations and rights 281–7
 diplomatic districts of 1–2, 11–12, 18–19
 Gulf policy vii–viii, 25 (n. 14), 34–8, 207–9, 214
 intelligence-gathering 12, 74–6, 79–81, 103, 219
 native agents, use of 61–6, 74–82
 non-Europeans officials, reluctance to appoint 83
 Paramount Power (British Crown) 20–1, 25–8
 protection 20–1, 25–6, 100–1, 184
 treaties with Gulf shaikhdoms, *see* treaties
also see Bengal, Bombay, East India Co., Indian
 residency system, native agency system, postal
 service
- British India 13–14, 21 (n.9), 24–5, 48, Map 1
 authority in 26–7, 130
 British Empire, status within 20–1, 26, Map 1
 cordon sanitaire around vii, 11–12, 35–8, 216–18
 Gulf region's importance to 29–30, 33–8, 217–18
 naval expedition against the al-Qawasim 44–5
 treats to 35–8, 208, 217
also see Bengal, Bombay, Madras, postal service
- British Indian Empire 20–9, Map 1
 British-protected states vii, 20–1, 24–9, 31, 37–8, 217–18, Map 1
 diplomatic districts of 18–19
 defined 20–1, 24, 217, Map 1
 dependencies of vii, 20–1, 24–9, 31, 37–8, 217–18, Map 1
 frontiers of vii–viii, 2, 4, 24–5, 38, 207, 218
 informal parts of 2, 21, 24–5, 30–2, 37, 216–17, 223
 misleading accounts of 2, 24–5, 48, 73, 216–17
 native agency system, politicization of 80–1
 native agents in 4, 74–5, 218, 220–2
 Paramount Power (British Crown) 26–8
 size 25 (table), 216–17, Map 1
 sovereignty 21, 31
also see postal service
- British India Steam Navigation Co. *see* BI Line
- British Somaliland vii, 19, 24–6, 31, 217, 226, Map 1
 brokers, *see* native agents
- Bruce, William (Bushire Resident 1808–20) 56–7, 138, 261–2
- Burrows, Bernard (PRPG 1953–8, author) 47, 268
- Busch, Briton Cooper (historian) 48
- Bushire 2, 15, 18, 19, 22, 44, 45, 63, 64, 89, 92, 136
 climate 66–7
 Factory 33, 44
 merchants as agents 80, 82, 103, 138, 143, 145, 166
 post office 117–18
 Persian Foreign Office Agent (Muhammad Khan) 182–5
also see Gulf Residency, Safar family, Sharif family
- Bushire Residency (1763–1822) 15, 18, 19 (n. a), 44, 230
 native agents 83–91
- Bushire Residents
 Bruce, William (1808–20) 56–7, 138, 261–2
 list of 261–2
 Mahdi 'Ali Khan (1798–1803) 87–91, 131, 135, 169, 261
 Smith, Nicholas Hankey (1792–8, 1807–08, 1810) 89–90, 221, 261
also see Gulf Residents
- Bushiri, 'Ali Akbar (Bushiri Archive,
 interviewee) xxxii–xxxiii, xxxv, 5–6, 107, 120
 (nn. 46, 49), 144 (n. 34), 145 (nn. 35–6), 147
 (n. 44), 150 (n. 49), 152 (n. 52), 161 (n. 88), 166
 (n. 108), 173 (n. 131), 289, 292
- Bushiri, 'Ali Kazim (Bahrain Agency staff 1870s) 5–6, 107
- Bushiri, Muhammad Amin, *see* Lingah Native Agency
- Cain, P. J. and Hopkins, A. G. (historians), theory of
 imperialism 29, 30, 32, 33–5, 196–7
- Cantine, James (American missionary doctor) 67
- Chahabar (Persia)
 post office 117, 119
 Station Manager (*de facto* Political Agent) 46, 53,
 55, 214–15, 234–5, 247, 257
 telegraph stn, *see* IETD
- Chiang Mai, *see* Siam
- Chandu, *see* Bahrain Native Agents
- China, treaty ports 26
- Chinese Turkistan, Consulate-General in 5, 15, 17,
 19, 20, 62, Map 1
- collaboration 3–4, 30, 52, 103, 214, 217–19, 222–3
 definition of xix, 3
 Robinson's theory of 71–4, 214, 223
- Colonial Office 21 (n. 9)
 native agents 61
- commercial intelligence 113–14
- commissions, Queen's 20, 39–41, 212, 233; *also see*
 covenants
- confidential agents, *see* native agents
- consulates, role of 134
- courts, *see* extra-territoriality
- covenants 39, 41; *also see* commissions
 covenanted civil servants 39–40; *also see* ICS,
 uncovenanted
- Crawford, James (PRPG 1893) 166, 264
- Creagh-Coen, Terence (IPS officer, author) 42, 47
- Crystal, Jill (historian/political scientist) 95–6
- Cunningham, William (Indian Foreign
 Secretary) 194, 195, 198, 201, 202, 203, 204,
 212, 213
- Curtin, Philip (historian) 32
- Curzon, Lord (Viceroy 1899–1905, author) 27, 38,
 47, 269
 on Bahrain 104, 192, 205, 207–09
 on Bahrain Native Agent 104
 on calibre of IPS officers 211–12
 forward policy in the Gulf 207–9, 214
 on French influence in Bahrain 192, 207
 on Gulf climate 67–8
 on PRPG as 'Uncrowned King' 102

- on Muscat's status within Indian Empire 28, 217
- on 'policy of Protectorates' vii–viii, 216, 223
- Cyprus Colony 31
- dak* (Indian postal system) xix, 109, 116
- dakhlah*, see protection
- Darwin, John (historian) 32
- Daly, Clive (Bahrain Political Agent 1921–6) Photo 4
- Dickson, Harold (Kuwait Political Agent 1929–36) 132–3
- Disbrowe, Herbert (Asst. PRPG 1850s) 181–2, 263
- Dizful Political Office (c.1919–21) 235
- Dohah, see Qatar
- dragoman* xxvi, 42, 151, 173
- Dubai (Trucial State)
 - BI Line 34, 119
 - British interests in 29, 33–8, 217–18
 - British trade with 34
 - merchants 95
 - Ottoman threat to 37
 - Political Agent (1953–71) 46, 236
 - post office 118–19
 - RAF 258
 - treaties 37, 46
- Ducat, Claude (Asst. PRPG 1893–7) 197
- Duncan, Jonathan (Govr of Bombay 1795–1811) 87–91, 221, 268
- Dutch in the Gulf 61, 84, 88, 184
- Durand, Edward (Asst. PRPG 1870s) 113, 163–4, 172
- East Africa
 - British Empire 31, 48
 - diplomatic districts 15, 19–20, 39, 219, 226
 - Indian Empire, part of vii, 14, 19–20, 24–6, 217, Map 1
 - also see British Somaliland, Zanzibar
- East India Co. (1600–1858) 1–2, 4, 12–15, 20–1
- Bahrain, establishment of Agency in 54–7
- commercial and diplomatic districts of 18–19
- factories 13, 33, 43–4, 88
- family service in 137, 144, 188
- Gulf, early involvement 33, 43–4
- intelligence-gathering 4, 12, 64, 74–6, 79–81, 84–5, 92–3, 95, 98–9, 103, 108–19, 132–4, 136, 138, 219, 222
- mumshis* 75–9
- native agents (*akbhar nawis*, brokers, *wakils*)
 - employed by 4, 50, 57, 61–2, 74–5, 78–80, 84–91, 100, 102, 107, 109, 136–54, 174–82, 187–8, 218, 220, 272–4
- political officers 38–43
- postal service 116–17
- ranks 13
- Regulating Act (1773) 44, 97
- residency system 12–20
- Safar family loan to 152
- stations 13
- also see Bayly, British Govt of India, British Indian Empire, Fisher, IPS, Indian residency system, Persia Agency, Indian residency system, merchants
- Eastern Question 37
- Egypt 20, 31, 32
 - army units in 31 (n. 29)
 - British Empire, status within 31–2
 - conquest of Najd and Hasa (1830s) 57, 110–11
 - Consul-General for 5, 15–16, 18–20, 64
 - French occupation 35–6
 - native agents 62
- Elgin, Lord (Viceroy 1894–9) 203, 205, 269
- Elphinstone, Mountstuart (Govr of Bombay 1819–27) 61, 64, 93, 268
- Elwon, Thomas (SNOPG 1830s) 141, 175–8
- empire, see British Empire
- Exclusive Agreements, see treaties
- extra-territoriality 100 (n. 116), 121–7
 - agreements 100–1
 - Bahrain Agency Court 121–7
 - British-protected persons 21, 88, 100–2, 121, 124, 156, 161, 285
 - Gulf Residency Court 122–4
 - legal jurisdiction 124, 154
 - orders-in-council 26 (n. 17), 121, 123
 - in Ottoman Empire 26, 100
 - in Persia 101
- factories 13, 33, 43–4, 88
- Fadhil, 'Abbas (BI Agent, *Munshi*, Native Agent in Bahrain) 122, 169–72, 272, 275, Photo 3
- Fars Consul-General (1878–1946) 15–16, 18, 20, 22, 46, 209, 225, 234–5, Map 2
- Field, Michael (historian) 172
- Fisher, Michael (historian) 28, 42, 74–80, 81, 188, 219
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office 61–2, 222
- Foreign Office 15, 19, 200, 203, 211
 - Bahrain Embassy xxxiii
 - Bahrain Political Agency, approval for 200, 203, 211
 - competition with India Office 15, 19–20, 235
 - diplomatic practice, guides to 39, 134
 - Fars Con-Gen (1878–), responsibility for 28, 46, 235
 - Gulf Residency (1947–71), responsibility for 28, 46, 235
 - IPS officers 15, 19–20
 - Lansdowne's Gulf declaration (1903) 37
 - locally-engaged officers 41
 - native agents 61
 - Ottoman Porte, Ambassador to 160, 202–3
 - Tehran Legation, Minister at 15, 63, 115, 183–4, 235
 - also see Fars Consul-General, Tehran Legation, Thomson, treaties
- Fort St George, Madras 13
- Fort William, Calcutta 13
- Fracis, Nasarwanji Dosabhai (arms merchant in Bushire) 168–9, 196–8, 200
- Fracis Times & Co. of Bushire 193, 196–9
- France/French
 - destruction of British Factory at Bandar 'Abbas (1759) 44
 - empire vii, 25
 - Baghdad 36, 86

- France/French (*cont.*)
- Bahrain (Antonin Goguyer) 191–2, 195, 207, 211–12
 - French flag, misuse of 192
 - Gulf 24, 35–8, 44, 84, 86–9, 164, 207–8, 211–12, 221
 - Muscar 24, 35–7, 47, 84, 88, 192, 207, 212
 - Napoleonic wars 36–7, 84–9
- Friendly Convention of 1861, *see* treaties
- Fujairah (Trucial State) xxii
- Gangtok, *see* Sikkim
- Gaskin, Calcott (Asst. PRPG 1890s, Bahrain Political Agent 1900–04) 105 (n. a), 170–3, 194, 201, 212
- gazetted officers, *see* IPS, political officers
- General Treaty of 1820, *see* treaties
- Germany in the Gulf 37, 38, 61, 190, 207
- ghulams* (couriers) xxvi, 115; *also see* postal service, *qasids*
- gifts, importance of 132–3
- Godley, Arthur (India Office civil servant) 203, 210–12
- Goguyer, Antonin, *see* Bahrain
- Gould, Basil (IPS officer, author) 11
- governors-general, *see* India
- Govt of India, *see* British Govt of India
- graded officers, *see* IPS, political officers
- Grant, Charles (Asst. PRPG 1870s) 107, 160, 163–4, 172, 264
- Gray Mackenzie & Co (*formerly* Gray Paul & Co) 151
- Gray Paul & Co (Gulf Agent for BI) xviii, 119, 123–4, 150–1, 156, 170, 173
- 'Great Game' 37
- Gulf Arabic 154
- Gulf region/shaikhdoms
- British interests in 29–30, 33–8, 217–18
 - British involvement before 1822 43–4
 - British policy on vii–viii, 25 (n. 14), 34–8, 207–9, 214
 - British-protected states 21, 24–9, 31, 217, Map 1
 - British trade with 33–5, 113–14, 204, 209, 217
 - climate/disease 66–70, 218
 - Indian Empire, part of 28, 37–8, 217, Map 1
 - international rivalry in 190, 207, 222
 - native agency system in 64–103, 214–5, 237
 - Ottoman govt of xx–xxiv
- Gulf Residency (1822–1971) 2–3, 20, 22–3, 44–54, 110, 216–24, 226, 232–55, 257–8
- Admin. Report on the Gulf Residency* 112, 114
- budget 70–2, 94, 98, 201, 220, 248–50, 253–5
- buildings of 104, 117–19, Photo 1
- communication with Bahrain 114–15
- Court 122–4
- Curzon's plans for (1899) 209
- establishment of 35, 44–5
- filing system of 110–11
- grade of 40
- intelligence-gathering 4, 12, 49–50, 58, 64–5, 80–1, 92–3, 95, 98–9, 103, 108–19, 132–4, 136, 138, 164, 167, 219, 222
- launches (ships), *Fly* and *Lawrence* 53, 238–40, 254
- military protection 46, 53, 88 (n. 81), 164, 239, 242–3, 254, 257–9
- native agency system in 64–103, 214–5, 237
- native agents 46, 53, 55 (list), 63 (list), 94–103, 114, 221, 223, 214–15, 223, 237
- non-European staff 53, 71, 73, 94, 219–20, 238–50, 253–5
- organizational charts of 231–6
- political agencies, supervision of 4
- political officers 52–3, 55
- postal service xxvi, xxviii, 31, 53, 104, 108–9, 114–19, 118–19, 156 (table), 243, 245–6
- published annual intelligence summaries 112
- records of 5, 51, 110–12, 122–3, 223, 290
- report filing system 110–12
- size of Map 2
- staff 53, 71, 73, 94, 219–20, 238–50, 253–5
- staff salary 70–1, 253
- written historical accounts of 47–52
- also see* Fars Con–Gen, Foreign Office, Asst. Gulf Residents, postal service, Safar, Sharif
- Gulf Residency Surgeons xxix, 55
- cost 248, 253–4
- Hakim, 'Abd al-Rahim (Asst. 1870–99) xxix, 39, 53, 55, 67, 234, 237, 249, 253
- Hojel, A. N. (c.1860s) 241, 244,
- Hore, Ernest (c.1890s–1900) 169, 212, 248, 254
- Jukes, Andrew (c.1800s) 261–2
- Mackenzie, Thomas (c.1830s) 238, 263
- Orton, James (Asst. c.1810s) 261
- Tod, John (Asst. c.1820s) 262
- summer house 185
- Gulf Residents (PRPG) 2, 18, 44–6, 263–8
- authority of 3, 87, 130
- Bahraini civil war (1869) 157, 158
- Blane, David (1832–4) 114, 141–2, 176–8, 238, 263
- Burrows, Bernard (1953–8) 47, 268
- court cases 122–4, 126
- Crawford, James (1893) 166, 264
- Hay, Rupert (1941–2, 1946–53) 47, 70, 128, 267
- Hennell, Samuel (1838–42) 66, 180, 238, 263
- intelligence network of 80–1, 219
- list of 263–8
- Jones, Felix (1855–62) 6, 97, 129, 262 (n. b), 263
- judicial powers 120–6
- Kemball, Arnold (1852–5) 67–8, 113, 180–1, 263
- Kemball, Charles (1900–04) 68, 70, 264
- MacLeod, John (1822–3) 61, 64, 69, 92–3, 263, 267 (n. f)
- Meade, Malcolm (1897–1900) 28, 83, 98–9, 126, 169–70, 185–6, 187 (n. 179), 189–214, 264
- mediation role of 179
- Pelly, Lewis (1862–72) 6, 97, 123, 126, 155–62, 165, 241, 263–4
- Prideaux, William (1876–7) 123, 264
- protector (*mujawwir*), role as 3, 47, 101–2, 223, 130, 217
- Ross, Edward (1872–91) 7, 124, 167 (n. 111), 183–4, 264
- salary of 71, 152, 161, 209, 248, 253
- use of native agents 64, 80–3, 130–2, 138
- Wilson, David (1827–31) 86 (n. 74), 111, 139–40, 263

- Wilson, Frederick (1894–7) 191, 264
also see Bushire Residents, Lower Gulf Agency
- Gulf Residents, Assistant
 Disbrowe, Herbert (1850s) 181–2, 263
 Ducat, Claude (1893–7) 197
 Durand, Edward (1870s) 113, 163–4, 172
 Gaskin, Calcott (1890s) 105 (n. a), 170–3, 194, 201, 212
 Grant, Charles (1870s) 107, 160, 163–4, 172, 264
 Hennell, Samuel (1830s) 66, 238, 263
 judicial powers of 123
 Kemball, Arnold (1841–52) 67–8, 113, 180–1, 263
 Prideaux, Francis (1897–1900) 194, 201, 206, 212, 265, Photo 6
 Smith, Sidney (1869–71) 69, 163, 241, 247 (n. a)
 Way, Cotton (1860s) 158 (n. 77), 241, 244
- Gulf Sqn (Indian/Royal Navy) 2, 37, 45, 53–4, 58, 92, 100, 130, 143, 157, 164, 175–8, 181–2, 218, 238–41, 243, 247, 254–5, 258
 anti-gun-running patrols 53, 112, 192, 196, 196 (n. 21), 198, 199 (n. 29), 282, 286
 Bahrain station, Ras al-Jufair (1935–71) 45–6, 258
 Bahrain, protection from invasion (1895) 195
 Bahrain, visits to 56 (1816), 57, 138–9 (1819), 92 (1823), 140–2, 175–8 (1834), 106 (1842), 181–2 (1858), 123, 126 (1863), 158–9 (1869), 166 (1893)
 Basidu station (1823–1911) xxv–xxvi, xxix, xxx, 45, 52, 68, 238–41, 243, 245, 254, 257–8
 casualties of the climate 68
 crew (compliment) of 53, 68, 238–41, 243, 247, 247 (n. b)
 cost 254–5
 Curzon's plans to enlarge 209
 disbanded (1863) 53, 155, 158, 247 (n. b)
 East Indies Station (Fleet) 209
 establishment (1821) 45
 gunboats/sloops-of-war, *see* gunboats
 Henjam station (1911–35) 45, 257–8
 re-establishment (1869) 53, 159
 sailing times 115
 size 45, 241, 243, 247 (n. b)
 use of force 130–1
 'watch and cruise' 45
also see Senior Naval Officer
- gunboats/sloops-of-war 2, 37, 45, 53–4, 115, 141, 157, 164, 181, 243, 247 (n. b)
Amherst 177–8
Clive 181–2
Clyde 159, 161, 241, 243
Dalhousie 156 (n. 70), 158 (n. 77), 159, 241, 243
Eden 57
Favourite 56
Hugh Rose 155 (n. 67), 159, 241, 243
Lapwing 166
Lupin 267 (n. i)
Sinde 159
Sphinx 254
Ternate 175–8
Woodlark 167 (n. 110)
- Gwadar 233, 235
 airfield (Imperial Airways, RAF) 34
 army units 257
 Native Agency (1880–1958) 34, 46, 55, 63, 93, 143, 214–15, 221, 223, 232–6, 253–4, 257
 Political Agency (1863–80) 55, 232–5, 247
 post office 117–19
 telegraph stn, *see* IETD
- Hakim, 'Abd al-Rahim (Gulf Residency Surgeon 1870–99) xxix, 39, 53, 55, 67, 234, 237, 249, 253
 Hamadan Native Agency 63
 Hamilton, Lord (India Office Secretary) 203, 205, 207
 Hardy, Michael (author) 134
- Hasa
 Ottoman govt of 37, 46, 166, 190, 202
 Ottoman occupation of 46, 127, 131, 160
also see Qatif
- Hawalab* xix, 107, 146, 172
 Hawley, Donald (political officer, historian) 47, 50
 Hay, Rupert (PRPG 1941–2, 1946–53) 47, 70, 128, 267
 Heard-Bey, Frauke (historian) 38, 52
 Henjam Island 96
 army guards 257
 naval stn (1911–35) 45, 258
 post office 118
 telegraph stn, *see* IETD
- Hennell, Samuel (Asst. PRPG 1830s, PRPG 1838–42) 66, 180, 238, 263
 Herat Native Agency (Afghanistan) 64
 Hillah, *see* Safar family
 Hiskal, Khojah, *see* Muscat Native Agents
 Hofuf (Ottoman *Kaza*) xx–xxi, 127, 160, 166
 honorary consuls 4, 61, 107, 222
 Hudaydah Native Agency (Yemen) 64, 144, 148
 Hyderabad Residency (India) 14, 38, 40, 226
- Ibrahim Pasha 57
 IETD (Indo-European Telegraph Dept) xvii, xxv, xxvii, 20, 36, 53, 235, 243–7, 282, 286
 Chahabar stn xxv–xxvi, xxix, 53, 55, 117, 119, 214–15, 234–5, 247, 257
 establishment of 36
 Henjam stn xxv, 118, 235, 244, 246–7, 257
 guard for xxvi, xxix, 257, 259
 Gwadar stn 117, 119, 247
 Jask stn xxv–xxvi, xxix, 46, 52, 55, 117–18, 214–15, 234–5, 247, 253, 257, 259
 political duties 52–3, 46, 52, 55, 209, 214–15, 234–5, 253, 255 (n. b)
 postal duties 117–19
 Rishire stn xxv, 257
 Shiraz stn xxv, 117–19
- Ilbert, Courtnay (lawyer, author) 27
 Imperial Airways (*later* British Overseas Airways, BOAC) 34, 119, 218
 imperialism
 Cain–Hopkins theory of 29, 30, 32, 33–5, 196–7
 collaboration theory 71–4, 214, 223
 informal 30–2
 Robinson–Gallagher theory of 29–30, 32, 35–8, 218, 219

- India, *see* British India, British Indian Empire, Princely India
- India, Governors-General/Viceroy, 11, 13–14, 20, 25, 77 (n. 45), 173, 217
- awards to native agents 89, 172–3, Photo 5
- authority of 11, 13, 25–7, 77 (n. 45), 130, 217
- Curzon, Lord (1899–1905) vii–viii, 27–8, 38, 47, 67–8, 104, 130, 192, 205, 207–12, 214, 269
- Elgin, Lord (1894–9) 203, 205, 269
- list of 269–70
- Minto, Lord (1905–10) 172, 270
- Wellesley, Lord (1798–1805) 77, 89
- India Office (IO) 203, 205, 207, 211–12, 221
- Hamilton, Lord 203, 205, 207, 209
- Lee-Warner, William 199, 221
- India Office Records (IOR) 107 (n. 11), 110 (n. 20), 111 (n. 25), 112, 122
- Indian, definition of xx
- Indian Army
- political officers guarded by 88 (n. 81), 164
- political officers seconded from 39, 40, 82, 212, 220
- units stationed in Gulf 46, 53, 88 (n. 81), 164, 239, 242–3, 254, 257
- Indian Civil Service (ICS) 11, 39–40, 48, 220
- Indian Empire, *see* British Indian Empire
- Indian Foreign Dept 46, 212; *also see* Cunningham, IPS
- Indian Medical Service (IMS) xxix, 39, 53, 55, 67, 238, 241, 248–9, 251, 254, 256; *also see* Gulf Residency Surgeons
- Indian merchants, *see* *Banias*, native agents, Parsi
- Indian Navy (*formerly* Bombay Marine) 39, 40, 100, 114, 117, 155, 220
- Indian Political Service, *see* IPS
- Indian Post Office, *see* postal service
- Indian residency system 12–20, 225–7, Map 1 and Indian Empire 20–9
- literature on 28
- misperceptions of 48, 54
- non-Europeans, role of 12, 52
- also see* British Indian Empire, IPS
- Indo-European Telegraph Dept, *see* IETD
- informal empire, *see* British Empire
- intelligence-gathering, *see* Bahrain Native Agents, British Govt of India, Gulf Residency
- IPS (Indian Political Service) xx, 11–20, 38–43, 52–3
- Curzon on 211–12
- definition of 39
- gazetted officers xix, 78, 83, 96
- graded officers 39, 40, 55, 205
- Gulf, opinion of 68
- non-Europeans in 11–12, 77–83, 220
- racial hierarchy in 77, 82, 142–3
- salaries 219–20
- Indian Army officers in 39, 40, 82, 212, 220
- also see* Indian residency system, native agents, political officers
- Iran, *see* Persia
- ʿIraq (Turkish Arabia)
- Agent/Resident in Baghdad 18–19, 69, 119, 160, 166
- Agent/Resident in Basrah 20, 44, 166, 168, 229
- British Empire, part of 19, 31–2
- British extra-territorial rights in 26
- British trade 33–4, 161, 209
- Consul/Con-Gen in Baghdad 15–16, 18–20, 226
- French encroachment in (1790s) 36
- German encroachment in (1890s) 207
- Ottoman govt of xx–xxi, xxxiii–xxiv, 160, 166, 168
- native agents in 63, 86, 101
- postal service 118–19
- also see* Baghdad, Basrah, Safar family
- ʿIsa bin ʿAli Al Khalifah, *see* Al Khalifah
- ʿIsa bin ʿAbd al-Latif, *see* Sharjah Native Agents
- Isfahan
- Consulate 208
- Factory 33, 43, 69, 228
- Lower Gulf Agent, death of 262 (n. d)
- Native Agency (c.1840s–89) 50, 63, 115, 208
- Italian Empire viii, 25, 61, Map 1
- Jasim, Hajji, *see* Bahrain Native Agents
- Jask
- Persia Agency HQ (1616–23) 18, 33, 43, 69, 228
- Station Manager (*de facto* Political Agent 1880–1931) 46, 52, 55, 214–15, 234–5, 247, 257
- telegraph stn, *see* IETD
- jasuses* (spies) 109
- Jeddah Native Agency 18, 64
- Jewish merchants, *see* merchants
- Jones, Felix (PRPG 1855–62) 6, 97, 129, 262 (n. b), 263
- Joyce, Miriam (historian) 48
- Kabul
- Legation (Afghanistan) 15, 19
- Native Agency 19, 64, 78, 225, Map 1
- Kadhimain Native Agency (ʿIraq) 63
- Kalat State (India) 28, 217, 233, 235
- Kandahar Native Agency (Afghanistan) 64
- Kanguni, ʿAbd al-Rahman (*Munshi* in Bahrain 1870s–1900) 107, 274
- Kanguni, Ahmad (*Munshi* in Bahrain 1872–84) 107, 274
- Kanguni, Muhammad (*Munshi* in Bahrain 1890s) 107, 275
- Kanguni, Muhammad bin Ahmad (*Munshi* in Bushire) 107
- Kanoo, Khalid (Kanoo Archive, interviewee) xxxiii, xxxv, 120 (n. 46), 172 (n. 127), 292
- Kanoo, Yusuf (Munshi in Bahrain c.1898–1923) 172–3, 275, Photos 3, 5
- Karachi
- Makran Coast Agency HQ (1880–1931) 52, 55, 209, 214–15, 234–5, 247, 253
- Sindh Postal Circle 118
- Karbala (ʿIraq)
- Native Agency (c.1850–1914) 63
- post office 118–19
- also see* Safar family
- Kashgar, *see* Chinese Turkistan
- Khargi, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz (*Munshi* in Bahrain 1893–1900) 275, Photo 3
- Kelly, J. B. (historian) 36, 48

- Kemball, Arnold (Asst. PRPG 1841–52, PRPG 1852–5) 67–8, 113, 180–1, 263
- Kemball, Charles (PRPG 1900–04) 68, 70, 264
- Kerman
- Consulate (1895–1951) 208, 235, 247, 257
 - Native Agency (c.1720s–61, c.1840s–95) 33, 46, 63, 80, 208, 235, 254
- Kermanshah
- Consul (1903–51) 209, 215, 257
 - Native Agency (c.1840–1903) 46, 50, 63, 93, 209, 214, 254
- Khalaf, Sayyid (Bahraini merchant) 185–6, 193, 194
- Al Khalifah family (rulers of Bahrain) Photo 4
- British influence and coercion 124, 126, 131 (table), 157–8, 159 (n. 82), 176–82, 180–2, 186, 191, 198, 204
 - Hindu agents, dislike of 141–2, 174–8, 220
 - imprisonment in India 159 (n. 82)
 - rulers, list of 260
 - rulers overthrown 157–8, 159 (n. 82), 162, 180, 182, 260
 - Safar family's ties with 134, 162, 167–9, 188 *also see* Bahrain, family members below
- Al Khalifah, 'Abd Allah (Ruler of Bahrain 1796–1843) 45, 56, 93, 105, 138, 140–2, 153, 174–81
- Al Khalifah, al-'Abd Allah branch of 156–8, 159 (n. 82), 178, 182, 260
- Al Khalifah, Ahmad bin 'Ali (brother of 'Isa bin 'Ali) 165–6
- Al Khalifah, 'Ali bin Khalifah (Govr of Manamah 1843–68, Ruler of Bahrain 1868–9) 157–9, 181
- Al Khalifah, Bushab (Ruler of Bahrain's *Wazir* 1820s–43) 114, 176–7
- Al Khalifah, Hamad bin 'Isa (Heir Apparent 1890s–1923) 175, 206, Photo 4
- Al Khalifah, 'Isa bin 'Ali (Ruler of Bahrain 1869–23/32) 82, 124, 126, 134, 140, 162–4, 167, 170, 186, Photo 4
- allegation of improper conduct against Muhammad Rahim Safar 193
 - arms importation 195–200
 - concession of 1% awarded to Safar family (1869) 162, 194–5
 - rift in relations with Muhammad Rahim Safar 189–92, 194–5, 213
- Al Khalifah, Khalifah bin Salman (co-Ruler of Bahrain 1825–34) 140, 175
- Al Khalifah, Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah (Ruler of Bahrain 1869) 141, 157–9, 174–5, 182
- Al Khalifah, Muhammad bin Khalifah (Ruler of Bahrain 1843–68) 121, 123, 126, 157–9, 177, 179–82
- Al Khalifah, Salman bin Ahmad (co-Ruler of Bahrain 1796–1925) 45, 138, 260
- Al Khalifah, al-Salman branch 178–80, 260
- Kharg Native Agency (c.1840s) 63
- Khojabs* 86, 137, 143
- Khorasan Consulate-General (1889–1951) 15, 18, 225, 235, Map 1; *also see* Mashhad
- Khushtal, *see* Bahrain Native Agents
- Knox, Stewart (Kuwait Political Agent 1904–9) 173, 187 (n. 179), 265
- kran (currency) 107, 161
- Kuwait
- airfield (Imperial Airways, RAF) 34, 46
 - BI Line 34
 - British protection of 21, 24, 169
 - British trade with 34
 - Dickson, Harold (Agent 1929–36) 132–3
 - German encroachment 37, 207
 - Indian Empire, part of 21, 24–5, 32, 47, 169
 - Knox, Stewart (Agent 1904–9) 173
 - Native Agency (1899–1904) 21, 24, 25, 32, 34, 46, 55, 63, 93, 143, 204, 214, 248, 253
 - oil 34
 - Political Agency 46, 132–3, 173, 205
 - post office 117, 118
 - Safar, Muhammad Rahim (1899 Agreement) 169
 - Sharif, Muhammad Khalil (*Munshi* 1904–9) 6, 173
 - treaties 21, 37, 47, 169
- Lahej Native Agent (c.1839–1967) 64
- Lansdowne, Lord (Foreign Secretary), 1903 Gulf declaration 37
- Lee-Warner, William (India Office civil servant, author) 199, 221
- Lingah Native Agency (1830–1910) 46, 50, 55, 63, 71, 93, 101, 108, 114, 119, 129, 131–2, 204, 214, 232–5, 237, 239–40, 243
- arms trade 196
 - Bandar 'Abbas Consulate responsible for 204, 209
 - Bashir, Muhammad (Agent c.1869) 243
 - Bushiri, Muhammad Amin (Agent 1877–1902) 166, 273
 - district of 108
 - duties of 129, 131–2
 - intelligence-gathering 114
 - post office 117–19
 - salary of Agent 71, 248, 253
- Lingah Vice-Consulate (1902–51) 215, 257
- Loch, Francis (SNOPG and Capt of HMS *Eden* in 1819) 57, 98–9, 138–9
- Lorimer, John (IPS officer, author) 5, 47, 66, 112, 137, 139, 166, 170, 180, 165
- Low, D. A. (historian) 28
- Lower Gulf Agency (1820–2) 18, 35, 63–4, 83, 91–2, 231, 262
- Agents, list of 262
 - organization (chart) 231
 - native agents 91–2, 231
 - Thompson, Perronet (1820–1) 91–2, 262 *also see* Bushire Residency, Gulf Residency
- Lynch & Co. 161
- MacLeod, John (PRPG 1822–3) 61, 64, 69, 92–3, 263, 267 (n. 8)
- Madras Presidency 13–14, 40, 225
- Mahdi 'Ali Khan (Bushire Resident 1798–1803) 87–91, 131, 135, 169, 221, 261
- Majlis al-Tujarah*, *see* Bahrain
- Majlis al-'Urf*, *see* Bahrain
- Makran Coast Agency (1880–1931) 52, 55, 209, 214–15, 234–5, 253; *also see* Chahabbar, Gwadar, Jask
- Malcolm, John (Envoy to Persia 1800) 85, 268

- Malta Colony 31
- Manesty, Samuel (Basrah Resident 1786–1810) 86, 261
- Manock Nowrosji, *see* Surat Native Agents
- Marcar, Khojah, *see* Baghdad Native Agents
- Maritime Truces, *see* treaties
- Mashhad Native Agency (c.1840s–89) 50, 63; *also see* Khorasan
- Meade, Malcolin (PRPG 1897–1900) 28, 83, 98–9, 126, 169–70, 185–6, 187 (n. 179), 189–214, 264
- concern over French influence in Bahrain 191–2, 195
- concern over Ottoman influence in Bahrain 190–1, 195, 202–03, 206
- court case against (1901) 199
- and Muhammad Rahim Safar 83, 98–9, 126, 193–5, 197–200
- proposal for Political Agency in Bahrain 200–7, 210–12, 213
- merchants
- Banias* 80, 84, 103, 108, 120, 122–3, 125–6, 129, 137–43, 158, 171, 174, 178–9, 181, 187–8, 191–5, 200–1, 206, 218–19
- Bushire 80, 82, 103, 138, 143, 143 (n. 31), 145, 166
- Crystal's theory about 95–6
- grades of 277–9
- intelligence network 80–1
- intermarriage 150–1
- Jewish 86, 152
- as native agents 3–4, 74–5, 80–103, 114, 218
- Parsi 74–5
- Persian 86–91
- protection of 100–2
- rulers, relationship with 95–6
- status and influence 95–6, 145, 153
- also see Majlis al-Tujarah*, Safar family, Sharif family
- Midhat Pasha (Ottoman Govr of Baghdad Province) 160
- Mocha Native Agency 64, 87, 144, 148, 152, 162–3, 165
- Monroe, Elizabeth (historian) 32
- Mosul Native Agency 63, 86
- Mughal Empire 26–7, 74–9, 130
- Mughu
- Gulf Sqn headquarters 92–3
- Native Agency 63, 86, 93, 108
- Muhammad Khan (Persian Foreign Office Agent in Bushire 1870s) 182–5
- Muhammarah
- Consul (1890–1951) 52, 55, 214–15, 234–5, 253, 257
- post office 117, 118
- Shaikh of 147
- also see* Safar family
- Mullah Husain, *see* Sharjah Native Agents
- Mullah Jafar, *see* 'Aden Residency
- Munjib bin Darwish (Ruler of Bahrain's Agent 1868–9) 157, 158
- munshis* xxvii, 41, 75–7
- deputed as agents 81–3, 112, 157, 188
- intelligence-gathering 54, 75–7, 109, 111–12, 187, 219
- Safar family 143–4, 148, 152, 165, 167
- Sharif family 149, 150–1, 173
- also see* Bahrain Native Agency staff, Bahrain Political Agency, Behbahani, Gulf Residency, Kanguni, Kanoo, native agents, Safar, Sharif
- Muscat
- arms trade 196
- army units stationed in 46, 257
- Bania* community 84–5, 88, 99, 137–8, 228–30, 232, 273 (n. a)
- BI Line 33
- British control of 24, 37, 47, 196
- British interests in 29, 33–7, 217–18
- climate of 66–7
- commercial intelligence 114
- Curzon on 28, 217
- customs management in 202
- France 24, 35–7, 47, 84, 88, 192, 207, 212
- Gulf Sqn HQ (1821–3) 258
- Indian Empire, informal part of 28, 217, Map 1
- Malcolm's visit to (1800) 85
- post office 117–18
- treaties 24, 35–8, 47, 88, 102, 169, 196
- Muscat Native Agency (c.1758–1800, 1810–40, 1843–61, 1866–7) 33, 34, 35–6, 37, 46, 55, 63, 84–5, 80, 86, 88, 92, 93, 108, 143, 273 (n. a)
- Anandadas, Gulab (1809–20s) 138, 273 (n. a)
- Bashidu, Vishandas (1798–1800) 85
- charts of 228–30, 232–5, 237
- Hiskal, Khojah (c.1850s) 86
- Joshi/Raoji, Narottam Ramachandar (c.1758–98) 84–5, 88, 99
- salary of 85
- Rubin, Khojah (c.1840s) 86
- Muscat Resident/Political Agent (1800–9, 1840–3, 1861–1971) 52, 85, 232–6, 251–5, 257
- na'ib tabsildar* xxx, 41
- Najd 47, 110–11, 127, 160; *also see* Al Sa'ud
- Narottam Ramachandar Joshi/Raoji, *see* Muscat Native Agents
- Nasratabad Native Agent (Persia) 208
- 'native', use of word 4
- native agency system xxvii, 3–5, 62
- advantages of 93–7, 187–8, 221
- diagrams and tables of 63–4, 214–15, 237
- decline of 126–7, 222
- definition of xxvii, 62
- disadvantages of 97–9, 214
- foundation in the Gulf 83–93
- in Asia 62–4
- in Bahrain 54–7, 272–3 (list)
- in Gulf 55 (list), 64–6, 91–5, 214–5, 237 (chart)
- in South-West Asia 63–4 (list)
- Indian origins of 74–80
- politicization of 80–3
- postal service 117–19, 127
- staffing lists 53–4, 238–55, 272–6
- also see* individual native agencies
- native agents xxvii, 3–4
- authority 77, 79, 96, 99, 130–2, 164, 221
- advantages and disadvantages for the 100–3, 220

- awards/honours given to 89, 172–74, 176–7, 199, 205, Photo 5
- Banias* xxvii, 57, 80, 82, 84–5, 88, 99, 103, 136–43, 174–8, 187–8, 218, 228–32, 237, 272, 273 (n. a)
- British motives for employment of 66–71
- as brokers 13, 43, 57, 65, 74–5, 80, 81, 84–5, 88, 139
- buildings used by 104–6
- challenges to 174–87
- confidential agents xxv, 54–5, 65, 81–2, 112–13, 136, 144, 157, 161, 163, 165, 210, 247
- conflict of interests 85, 88, 97–8, 103, 172–3, 192–200, 213, 220, 222
- controversies 83, 89–91, 125, 221
- cost of 94, 98
- expenses of 102, 107
- family members employed as 107–8
- financial benefits enjoyed by 102–3
- gazetting of 83, 96–7
- Gulf Residency 46, 53, 55 (list), 63 (list), 101, 114, 221, 223, 214–15, 223, 237
- India 61–6, 74–82
- Indian rulers' views of 77, 142–3
- Indian agents 57, 75, 80, 82, 84–5, 103, 136–43, 174–8, 187–8, 218, 220, 228–32, 237, 272
- intelligence-gathering duties 4, 12, 49–50, 57–8, 64–5, 74–6, 79–81, 84–5, 92–3, 95, 98–9, 103, 108–19, 132–4, 136, 138, 164, 167, 219, 222
- judicial duties 119–27, 128
- letters of commendation given to 6–7
- Parsi merchants (Surat) 75
- political duties 127–32
- powers, use of 61, 74
- protected-persons status 2, 21, 88, 100–2, 124, 156, 161, 184
- published accounts of 48–52
- records of 62, 93, 106–7, 111–12, 122–3, 289, 291
- religion/race of 82, 141–2, 220
- religious/racial discrimination against 82, 141–2, 174–8, 187, 220
- residency agents xxviii, 41, 83, 79, 82–3, 98
- salaries of 70–1, 72, 85, 94, 97–8, 107, 155–6, 194, 201, 205
- social duties 132–4
- South-West Asia 63 (list)
- staff employed by 71, 107
- status of 83
- theory of collaboration 71–4
- titles of 65, 163, 174
- trade and politics 97–8
- Wellesley's dislike of 77
- also see* individual native agencies
- navy, *see* Gulf SqN (Royal Navy), Indian Navy
- Nawab family, *see* Shiraz Native Agency
- Nepal
- Indian Empire, part of 25, 28, 217–18
- native agents 62
- Residency/Legation 5, 11–12, 15, 17, 19, 227
- North-West Frontier (India) vii, 11, 42, 196, 218
- Nowros Rustumji, *see* Surat Native Agents
- oil in the Gulf 34, 218, 282–3, 286
- 'Oman
- definition of xxii
- also see* Muscat
- O'Shea, Raymond (RAF officer, author) 49
- Ottomans, *see* army, Bahrain, Baghdad, Basrah, Dohah, extra-territoriality, Gulf region, Hasa, Hofuf, Iraq, Meade, Midhat, Qatar, Qatif, Trucial States
- Palestine Mandate 31
- Palgrave, William (traveller, author) 48–9, 50, 105
- Paman, *see* Bahrain Native Agents
- Paramount Power, *see* British Govt of India
- Pelly, Lewis (PRPG 1862–72) 6, 97, 123, 126, 155–62, 165, 241, 263–4
- Persia 20, 26, 31, 87–8
- British commercial and diplomatic districts 18
- British interests in 33–7, 161
- British trade 33–5, 91, 204, 208–9
- native agencies 55, 63 (lists)
- native agents, protection of 101, 182–5
- Russian encroachment 37, 207–9
- Shah of 45, 196
- treaties 35, 102, 196
- also see* individual agencies, Fars, native agents, Safar family, Tehran
- Persia Agency/Agent (1616–1763) 13, 18, 33, 43–4, 55–6, 63, 69, 228 (chart)
- Persian
- architecture 105
- definition of xxii
- Gulf, name of xxii, 2 (n. 4)
- language 38, 76, 146
- merchants 86–91
- subjects in British employ 182–5, 187
- Petrus, Khojah, *see* Baghdad Native Agents
- piracy 35, 37, 44, 121
- political officers (IPS) 2, 4, 52
- categories 39–42, 55
- duties 20, 134, 206–7
- gazetted xix, 78, 83, 96
- graded 39, 40, 55, 205
- Gulf, opinion of 68
- Indian experience 28–9, 29 (n. 24), 75
- killed by Gulf climate 69, 93, 218
- Indian Army, guarded by 88 (n. 81), 164
- Indian Army, seconded from 39, 40, 82, 212, 220
- reasons for low numbers in Gulf 66–71, 216, 218
- as residency agents 82–3, 163–4
- salaries 70, 97
- political residencies (diplomatic districts) 2, 4, 12–29, 40, 52, 77–8, 80, 82, 188, 216, 219, 225–7
- Portuguese in the Gulf and India 43, 61, 74, 243–6
- postal service
- in the Gulf xxvi, xxviii, 31, 53, 104, 108–9, 114–19, 118–19, 156 (table), 243, 245–6
- in India xix, 109, 116–17, 119
- Prideaux, Francis (Asst. PRPG 1897–1900) 194, 201, 206, 212, 265, Photo 6
- Prideaux, William (offg PRPG 1876–7) 123, 264
- Princely India 14, 38, 25–9, 74–83, 201, 217, 226–7, 280

- protected-person status 21, 88, 100–2, 121, 124, 156, 161, 285
- protected states 21, 24–6, 31, 217, Map 1
- Protecting Power (British Crown) 27–8
- protection 2, 3, 184
- Bahrain 121, 130
- dakhlah* (protector–protégé relationship) 3, 47, 101, 130, 217, 223
- against maritime aggression 47
- of native agents 101–2
- native agent accused of selling 153, 179
- native agent's buildings 106
- Onley's theory of 3, 101–2, 130, 217, 223
- sanctuary for refugees 153, 179, 185, 193, 194, 201
- protectorates vii–viii, 24, 26, 31, 223
- Provincial Civil Service, *see* Uncovenanted Civil Service
- qasids* (couriers) xxviii, 115–16
- al-Qasimi (al-Qawasim) xxii–xxiii, 44–6, 57, 93, 154
- Qatar**
- Bahrain Agent's responsibility for 108–9, 127, 131, 154
- Bahrain, attempted invasion of (1895) 195
- Bahrain, dependency of (1760s–1872) 129–30, 161
- Dohah 22, 46
- Indian Empire, part of 21, 32, 38, 47
- oil 34
- Ottoman occupation of 37–8, 46, 127, 131, 160
- Ottoman garrison 38
- Political Officer/Agent (1948–71) 236
- treaties 21, 38, 47
- tribute payments to Bahrain 161
- Qatif**
- BI Line 34
- British Native Agency (c.1820–3) 34, 63, 86, 92, 165–6
- Mahdi, Ahmad bin (merchant) 165–6
- Ottoman govt of 122, 165–6, 190
- Qishm Island (Persia) 18, 35, 45–6, 56, 68, 91, 95, 153, 231–2, 237, 257–8, 262
- RAF in the Gulf 46, 49, 258–9, 286
- Rajab, 'Abd Allah, *see* BI Agents
- Rajab, Ibrahim, *see* Bahrain Native Agents
- Rajab, Khalil (interviewee) xxxiii, 102 (n. 121), 155 (n. 65), 156 (n. 70), 158 (n. 77)
- Ras al-Jufair, Bahrain
- naval base 45–6
- Residency headquarters (1946–71) 46
- Ras al-Khaimah (Trucial State) xxii, 37, 44, 257; *also see* Qasimi
- Rassam, Christian (Mosul Native Agent 1839–72) 86
- Rassam, Hornuzd ('Aden Native Agent 1854–69) 86
- Regulating Act (1773) 44, 97
- residency agents xxviii, 41, 65, 82, 97, 98 (n. 110), 164; *also see* native agents, political officers
- residency system, *see* Indian residency system
- rial (currency) xvi, 162
- Rich, Paul (historian) 48
- Rifa', battle of (1869) 158
- Rihani, Ameen (traveller, author) 1, 217
- Riza 'Ali Khan (Qatif Agent 1820–3, Sharjah Agent 1823–7) 51, 86
- Robinson and Gallagher (historians), theory of imperialism 29–30, 32, 35–8, 218, 219
- Robinson, Ronald (historian), theory of collaboration 71–4, 76, 79, 214, 223
- Ross, Edward (PRPG 1872–91) 7, 124, 167 (n. 111), 183–4, 264
- Royal Navy, *see* Gulf Squadron
- Rubin, Khojah, *see* Muscat Native Agents
- Russia in the Gulf region 24–5, 36–8, 61, 87, 190, 207–9
- naval visit (1901) 132–3
- Rustum Manock, *see* Surat Native Agents
- al-Sabah, Shaikh Mubarak (Ruler of Kuwait 1896–1915) 169, 173
- Safar family xxxii, 5–7, 95, 104, 143–53, 161–9, 177–80, 188, Photos 2–3
- 'Aden 165
- agents 5–7, 144 (list), 143–53, 161–9, 177–80, 188, 272–4, Photo 3
- Bahrain 6–7, 143, 152, 165
- Basrah 144–5, 148, 151–3, 168
- Bombay 145, 147–8, 150, 153
- Bushire 136, 143–54, 161, 165–7, 170, 172
- concession of 1% in Bahrain 162, 194–5
- family tree 148
- Hamadan (Persia) 146
- Hillah ('Iraq) 144, 146–8, 152, 161
- Hudaydah (Yemen) 144–5, 148
- 'Iraq (Turkish Arabia) 144–5, 146–8, 151–3, 161, 168
- 'Isa Al Khalifah, friendship with 134, 162, 167–9, 188
- Karbala ('Iraq) 146, 150, 173
- Mocha (Yemen) 87, 95, 144–5, 147–8, 150, 152–3, 161–2, 165
- Mubarak al-Sabah (Kuwait), friendship with 169, 173
- Muhammarah 147–8
- Muscat 144–5, 148, 153
- Shiraz 95, 145, 147–8
- also see* family members below
- Safar, 'Abd al-Nabi Khan (Native Agent in Bahrain 1872–84) 6, 94, 102, 107, 115, 123, 124, 133, 144, 147, 161–4, 182–5
- Safar, 'Abd al-Rasul (Mocha Native Agent c.1829–56) 87, 144, 147, 150, 152, 162, 165
- al-Safar, 'Adel (interviewee) xxxiii, 147 (n. 43), 148, 150, 293
- Safar, Ahmad Khan (Bahrain Native Agent 1884–91) 7, 117, 133, 144, 164–6
- Safar, Ahmad (*Munshi* in Gulf Sqdn) 143, 162
- Safar, *Bait*
- Bushire 145, 168, Photo 2
- Manama 104–5, 117, 151–2, 162, 171–3, 178–9
- Mocha 152
- Safar, Hajji (founding father of Safar family) 146, 147
- al-Safar, Jan (interviewee) xxxiii, 146 (n. 40), 147 (n. 43), 148, 150, 151 (n. 51), 152 (n. 53), 164 (n. 99), 293

- Safar, Muhammad 'Ali (Bahrain Native Agent 1834–42) 66, 86, 110–11, 142, 151–4, 161, 162, 178–9, 183
- Safar, Muhammad Hasan (merchant) 153
- Safar, Muhammad Jafar (merchant) 147
- Safar, Muhammad Rahim (Bahrain Native Agent 1893–1900) 6, 7, 98, 101, 124–5, 126, 133, 136, 144, 146, 147, 166–9, 173, 182
- conflict of interest allegations against 192–200
- death of 170, 172, 212
- loss of influence with Shaikh 'Isa 189–92, 194–5, 213
- and Meade 83, 98–9, 126, 193–5, 197–200
- al-Safar, Nader (interviewee) xxxiii, 145 (nn. 35, 37), 146 (n. 40), 147 (n. 43), 148, 150, 151 (n. 51), 152 (n. 52), 164 (n. 99), 293
- Saldanha, Jerome (civil servant, author) 27
- Salisbury, Lord (Foreign Secretary) 203
- Sari Native Agency (Persia) 63
- Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice* 39, 134
- Al Sa'ud family (rulers of Najd and Hasa) xxiv, 110–11, 154, 157
- al-Sayegh, Fatma (historian) 95–6
- Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf (SNOPG) xxiii–xxiv, 45, 52, 55, 92, 98, 141–3, 161, 175–8, 180–2, 209
- Elwon, Thomas (c.1834) 141–3, 177–8
- Faithful, F. (c.1821–2) 92, 262
- headquarters 45
- Loch, Francis (c.1819) 57, 98–9, 138–9
- political duties 55, 232, 234, 238, 262
- Sedley, J. (c.1863) 161 (n. 90)
- titles xxiii–xxiv, 45 (n. 67)
- inaccurate intelligence reports 98–9, 138
- also see* Gulf SqN, Basidu
- Sharidah bin 'Ali (Ruler of Bahrain's *Munshi* 1890s) 185–6, 191
- Sharif family xxvii, 6–7, 150–1, Photos 6–7
- agents, list of 6–7, 151
- Basrah 149, 151
- Bushire 149–51, 172–3, 212, Photo 6
- family tree 149
- also see* family members below
- Sharif, 'Abd al-Nabi 149, Photo 6
- al-Sharif, Isma'îl (interviewee) xxxiii, 150 (n. 49), 151 (n. 50), 293
- al-Sharif, Muhammad (*Munshi* in Bahrain c.1910s–40) 149, 151, Photo 7
- Sharif, Muhammad Karim (*Munshi* in Bushire 1890s) 149, 151
- Sharif, Muhammad Khalil (Deputy Bahrain Agent 1893–1900, *Munshi* in Bushire and Kuwait 1900–24) 6, 149, 151, 162, 168, 173–4, 185–6, 193, 196, 200–1, 210, 211, Photo 6
- Sharif, Muhammad Muhsin (*Munshi* in Bahrain 1893–6, Bushire 1896–1924) 149, 151, 275, Photo 6
- al-Sharif, Muhammad Tahir (BI Agent in Bahrain 1925–50s) 149–51, 276
- Sharjah (Trucial State)
- airfield (Imperial Airways, RAF) 34, 46, 49, 119, 258–9
- arms trade 196
- army units at 46, 258
- BI Line 34
- commercial intelligence 114
- intelligence-gathering 108
- Ottoman threat to 37
- Palgrave's visit to (1863) 48–9
- Political Agent (1948–53) 236
- post office 119
- PRPG's death (1932) 267
- Residency Agents (1937–47) 83, 164, 236
- treaties 37
- also see* Qasimi
- Sharjah Native Agency (1823–1949) 48–52, 55, 63, 86, 92–3, 108, 111, 189, 213–15, 221, 223, 239–40, 248, 253
- British Residency Agents (1937–47) 83, 164
- district 108
- establishment of 86, 92–3,
- protection of agents 101
- reorganization of 205
- subordination to Bahrain 205, 210–11, 213
- Sharjah Native Agents (1823–1949)
- 'Abd al-Latif, 'Isa bin (1919–35) 51, 210–11
- Behbahani, Abu'l Qasim (1880–90) 157, 184
- duties 108, 114, 129, 132
- Kadhmawi, Jasim bin Muhammad (1945–9) Photo 7
- Husain, Mullah (1827–49) 51, 86, 111, 239–40
- Khan, Riza Ali (1823–7) 51, 86
- lists of Agents 50–2
- published accounts of 48–52
- Razuqi, 'Abd al-Razzaq (1936–45) 49
- salary 71, 93, 211, 248, 253
- Ya'qub, Hajji (1850–66) 48–9
- Shiraz
- army units in 257
- Consulate 215, 235, 257
- Factory 33, 43, 228
- PRPG's summer visits to 209
- postal service xxvi, xxviii, 115–18
- also see* IETD, Safar family
- Shiraz Native Agency (c.1800–1903) xxvi, 46, 50, 55, 63, 71, 80, 86, 92–3, 115, 129, 137, 143, 214, 229–30, 232, 234–5, 237, 248
- duties of Agent 129
- Nawab family 86, 137, 143
- salary of Agent 71, 248, 253
- Siam (Thailand) viii, 62
- Chiang Mai Consul (1884–1947) 15, 19–20, 226
- Sikkim Political Officer (1889–1947) 15, 19, 227
- Sistan (Persia)
- Consul 208
- Levy Corps 257
- slave trade, *see* Bahrain Native Agents, Bahrain
- Political Agents, treaties
- Sluglett, Peter (historian) 29
- Smith, Sidney (Asst. PRPG 1869–71) 69, 163, 241, 247 (n. a)
- Smith, Nicholas Hankey (Bushire Resident 1792–8, 1807–08, 1810) 89–90, 221, 261
- Smith, Simon (historian) 48
- SNOPG, *see* Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf
- Standish, John (historian) 48
- Stannus, Ephraim (PRGP 1823–7) 93, 263
- Strait of Hormuz 44–5, 91, 108

- Strang, Lord (civil servant, author) 109, 133
- Subordinate Civil Service of India (SCS) xxix, 41–3, 55, 210, 253, Photo 7; *also see* Uncovenanted Civil Service
- Sudan 31, 48 (n. 78)
- Suez
Canal 31 (n. 29), 36
Native Agent (c.1830s) 64
- Surat Native Agents (c.1700–43)
Manock Nowrosji (1738–43) 75
Nowros Rustumji (1721–2) 75
Rustum Manock (1700–21) 75
- tahsildar* (subdivision officer) 41
- Tehran Legation 15, 63, 115, 183–4, 235
- telegraph, *see* IETD
- Thompson, Perronet (Lower Gulf Agent 1820–1) 91–2, 262
- Thomson, Tylour (British Minister in Tehran 1870s) 183–5
- Tibet viii, 11, 25
Consul for 15, 19
native agents in 62
- trade 44
British India/Gulf 33–5, 87, 113–14, 204, 209, 217
and imperialism 29–30, 33–5, 114
and politics 44, 97–8
protection of 35–8
reports 113–14, 206
- Trans-Jordan 31–2
- treaties 20–1, 24, 26, 47 (n. 71), 217–18
‘Aden Protectorate 24, 26
arms trade 192, 196–8
Bahrain 21, 28, 37, 45, 47, 91, 101–2, 108, 114, 121, 125, 129–30, 154, 158, 163, 196, 198, 201, 281–7
empire by treaty (policy) 21, 26, 31, 217–18
Exclusive Agreements (1880s–90s) 37–8, 47, 119, 163, 169
Friendly Convention (1861) 121–2, 125, 129, 154, 158
General Treaty (1820) 45–6, 91, 114, 140, 201
Kuwait 21, 37, 47, 169
Maritime Truces (Trucial system) xxiv, 46–7, 53, 58, 121, 129, 285
Muscat (‘Oman) 24, 35–8, 47, 88, 102, 169, 196
Persia 35, 102, 196
Qatari 21, 38, 47
slave trade 49–50, 55, 129, 154, 192, 206–7, 282–4, 286
suzerainty 21, 31
Trucial States 37, 46–7, 91, 114, 140, 196
- Trench, Charles Chenevix (IPS officer, author) 47
- Trucial States/‘Oman/Coast (*later* UAE) xxiv, 35, 46
airfields (Imperial Airways, RAF) 34, 46, 49, 119, 258–9
- arms trade 196
- army units in 257–9
- Bahrain Agency assumes charge of (1900) 205, 211
- BI Line 34, 119
- British attacks on (1809, 1819) 35
- British interests in 29, 33–8, 217–18
- British protection of 46, 53
- British trade with 34
- PRPG’s visits to 105
- Indian Empire, part of 21, 24–5, 32
- living conditions 68, 70
- Maritime Truce xxiv, 46–7, 53, 58, 121, 129, 223, 285
- merchants 95
- oil 34
- Ottoman threat to 37, 127, 160–3, 190
- Political Agent (1948–71) 46, 50, 70 (n. 19), 236
- postal service 117–19
- treaties 37, 46–7, 91, 114, 140, 196
also see Abu Dhabi, ‘Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Qasimi, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, treaties, Umm al-Qaiwain
- Trucial system, *see* treaties
- Turkish Arabia (Ottoman ‘Iraq), British Consul/Con-Gen for 15–16, 18–20, 226; *also see* ‘Iraq
- Tuson, Penelope (historian) 48, 51–2
- Umm al-Qaiwain (Trucial State) 37, 46, 110
- Uncovenanted Civil Service of India (UCS) xxx, 40–2, 53, 55–6, 82–3, 170, 212, 242, 248, 253, 256, Photo 7; *also see* Subordinate Civil Service
- United States, *see* America
- viceroy, *see* India
- Victoria, Queen 27
- wakils*, *see* native agents
- Warden, Francis (Bombay Govt, author) 111–12
- Way, Cotton (Asst. PRPG 1860s) 158 (n. 77), 241, 244
- wazirs* xxv, 114, 176–7, 195–7
- Wellesley, Lord (Govr-Gen 1798–1805) 77, 89
- White, David (historian) 74–5, 81
- Wilson, David (PRPG 1827–31) 86 (n. 74), 111, 139–40, 263
- Wilson, Frederick (PRPG 1894–7) 191, 264
- Wilson, Arnold (IPS officer, author) 66–7, 70, 265
- Wright, Denis (author) 47, 50
- Ya‘qub, Hajji, *see* Sharjah Native Agents
- Yazd Native Agency (Persia) 63
- Zahlan, Rosemarie Said (historian) 50–1
- Zanzibar Consul/Con-Gen (1843–83) 15, 19–20, 226