

A MARITIME HISTORY

Edited by

ABDULRAHMAN AL SALIMI

AND ERIC STAPLES

***STUDIES ON IBADISM
AND OMAN***

Edited by

***ABDULRAHMAN AL SALIMI
AND HEINZ GAUBE***

VOL 9

A MARITIME HISTORY



Georg Olms Verlag
Hildesheim · Zürich · New York
2016

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Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the
Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available
in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Printed on durable and acid-free paper
Cover design and Typesetting: Weiß-Freiburg GmbH – Graphik & Buchgestaltung
Printed in Germany
Cover Image: “Beden Seyad hâlant des filets, Baggala et Dungiya navires arabes dessinés à Mascate”
by François Edmund Pâris. Image courtesy of Musée national de la Marine.
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ISBN 978-3-487-15390-2

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PART 4:
THE MODERN ISLAMIC
PERIOD 1650 CE–PRESENT

Oman's Maritime Activities throughout the Indian Ocean: 1650–1856 CE

Beatrice Nicolini

Introduction

The study of the history of the Indian Ocean can no longer be considered merely as hagiographic reconstructions, but must take into consideration a number of historical-political-institutional aspects. These include: the presence of different cultural, social, and religious groups, together with the affirmation of the Omani Ibadi dominance between the mid-seventeenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth CE;^{1,2} the fundamental influences of the Indian mercantile and other Asian communities; and the impact with the Swahili population of the Eastern African coast and the Sub-Saharan regions.³ All of these issues should also be considered, during the time frame in question, in relation to links with Europe and with the emerging United States of America.⁴

The Ya'rubid (sing. Ya'rubi, pl. Ya'ariba) dynasty originated in Oman around 1624.⁵ They created and extended a prosperous empire. During the eighteenth century, the Ya'rubids gave life to a flourishing mercantile power that connected Oman's coastal cities with the principal islands of Eastern Africa. The Ya'rubid domination of the East African littorals, which included Mombasa and the Island of Pemba, was characteristic of quite normal changes in dominion over the seas, without resulting in substantial alterations in commercial organization.⁶ This institution had its roots in the tribal system of exercising power, as well as in political agreements with local authorities. In this regard, the Ya'rubids, financially assisted by merchants from the western coasts of India and militarily defended by south-central Asian soldiers, carried to the littorals of East Africa their traditional tribal system. It was under the strong and prosperous rule of the Ya'rubid dynasty, until approximately 1748, that the distinguishing characteristics of Omani military architecture began to crystallize. The Ya'rubid rulers, effectively uniting Oman for the first time in many centuries, rebuilt the old irrigation systems (falaj pl. *aflāj*),⁷ renovated the towns, revitalized agriculture, and spurred the pace of trade.

European maritime powers of the time started to extend their territorial ambitions, both on land and at sea. The rise in commercial power in the Indian Ocean of the Netherlands and Great Britain marked the start of the progressive decline of the Portuguese empire in the East Indies.⁸

In the eighteenth century, the Al Bu Sa'id defeated the Ya'rubids and were destined to extend their political and commercial power in the Indian Ocean, and along the Eastern African littorals throughout the nineteenth century. The gradual emergence of new Omani maritime dynasties resulted also from the numerous polarizations that followed the struggles against the Portuguese presence in the Gulf and in the Indian Ocean. This gave rise to gradual and discontinuous processes of unification among the Omani tribes, traditionally divided and in conflict with each other, which came to the fore in the progressive affirmation of the international power of the Al Bu Sa'id in the Gulf and in the Indian Ocean.

Within this multiplicity of scenarios, land and maritime realities, and migrating movements, constituted crucial issues throughout the history of the Indian Ocean. The history of Omani maritime relations has been closely connected mainly to the maritime routes across the Indian Ocean: sailing the Gulf and the Indian Ocean had always been dependent on the fact that the winds occur in an annual sequence with great regularity.⁹ The balance created by the monsoons was achieved over the span of a solar year with a well-established rhythm. From December to March, the monsoon blows from Arabia and the Western coasts of India in the northeast, pushing as far as Mogadishu. The winds are light and constant, the climate hot and dry. In April, the monsoon starts to blow from the southwest, from Eastern Africa towards the coasts of the Gulf. The climate becomes cooler but much more humid. The rains are mainly in April and May, while the driest months are November and December. Moreover, along the East African coasts and in the islands of the Indian Ocean, the tropical climate is always tempered by sea breezes.

Until the second half of the nineteenth century,¹⁰ sailing from the Gulf and from the Arabian Peninsula in November in a south-southwesterly direction took thirty to forty days in ideal weather conditions, while, in December, thanks to the stabilization of the monsoon, the voyages took only twenty to twenty-five days. Consequently, because of the monsoons, Oman's international relations had historically been conducted via the sea, although it must be remembered that Omani connections and exchanges were intense by land as well. Maritime coastal trade, as well as long-distance trade, constituted the expressions of an economy that was sophisticated, developed, and organized. Therefore, the need to control these sea trade routes represented a crucial element: a political element.



Figure 1: Muscat port. Image courtesy of the British Library.

The Ya'rubid Dynasty of Oman, 1624–1744

From the seventeenth century, the Ya'rubid dynasty empowered Oman's foreign trade through an active naval policy against the Portuguese, and with a great expansion of their mercantile influence along the littorals of Eastern Africa. The Ya'rubid Imamate, founded in 1624, represented a new phase inside the Islamic world, despite the dynastic disputes and rivalries that characterized Omani history in the subsequent period.¹¹ The Portuguese conquered Muscat on 1 April 1515 and held it until 26 January 1650, although the Ottoman Turks were present in Muscat in 1552 and 1581. In about the year 1600, Nabhanid rule was temporarily restored to Oman, although that lasted only to 1624 with the Ya'rubid dynasty. The latter recaptured Muscat from the Portuguese in 1650 after a pres-

ence on the northeastern coast of Oman since 1507. By the 1720s, Sayf b. Sultan al-Ya'rubii II (lived c. 1706–1743) saw an escalating rivalry and a civil war between the two major tribes, Hinawi and Ghafiri, with the Ghafiri supporting Sayf b. Sultan II. This factionalization tended to work in favor of the Persians, who occupied Muscat and Sohar in 1743.

As mentioned above, the Ya'rubid dynasty emerged in Oman in 1624 and became an extended and prosperous empire. During the eighteenth century, the Ya'rubids represented a flourishing mercantile power, which was closely linked to the coastal cities and to the principal islands of East Africa.¹² One of the chief protagonists of the new Omani world was Nasir b. Murshid al-Ya'rubii (r. 1624–1649), who was elected Imam in 1624¹³ and took control of the two forts of Nakhl and Rustaq. The new Imam was not universally accepted and faced a potential threat from the Nizar tribes. To assert control over the interior of the country, Nasir b. Murshid built up his army and took the main towns, as well as the forts. He conquered the Rustaq fort, which was held by his cousins following the death of his grandfather Malik b. Abu al-Arar, in 1620. In 1625, Nasir b. Murshid gathered a force that he led to Nakhl, which he captured from his great-uncle Sultan b. Abu al-Arar. He was attacked in this position but broke out and returned to Rustaq. After conquering the two strategic oases of Izki and Nizwa,¹⁴ he decided to move the capital to Nizwa, the former capital of the Ibadi Imamate.

Nasir b. Murshid continued his successful campaigns, eventually feeling strong enough to attack the Nizar tribes, who controlled the al-Dahirah region. The campaign lasted several years, but it was militarily successful, although the Nizar tribes remained hostile. Around 1630, Nasir b. Murshid faced a new challenge from a group of Nizar tribes led by the Bani Hilal under Shaykh Nasir b. Qatan al-Hilali. The Bani Hilal raids soon became a menace that the Ya'rubid leader was unable to suppress. At this time, the Portuguese still controlled large parts of the Omani coast, while control of the interior was divided among at least five tribal groups. Nasir b. Murshid saw that the country could only be united against a common enemy, and determined to defeat the Portuguese. This fight against the Portuguese lasted for twenty-five years. Nasir b. Murshid was able to unify Omani tribes through the common goal of expelling the Portuguese, who had taken control of the coastal cities of Sur, Qurayyat, Muscat, and Sohar.¹⁵ Around 1633, Nasir b. Murshid raised a large army, which he dispatched in an unsuccessful attempt to take Muscat. He next sent an army against Julfar (today's Ras Al Khaimah).¹⁶ This port was defended by two forts, one under the authority of

the Persians, and the other under the Portuguese. Both forts were captured and the Persians were defeated.¹⁷ In 1633, Nasir b. Murshid sent an army against Sohar, also held by the Portuguese, but he was defeated. Following a temporary truce, Nasir b. Murshid took Sur and Quriyat from the Portuguese, who were then seriously weakened and discouraged. In 1643, he took the fort at Sohar, and in 1646, he signed a trade agreement with Philip Wylde of the East India Company.¹⁸ In 1648, the fighting continued against the Portuguese, who held only Muscat. Another treaty between Oman and the East India Company was agreed in October 1648, very much to the Omani advantage. Nasir b. Murshid died on April 14, 1649, and was buried at Nizwa.

He was succeeded by his cousin, Sultan b. Sayf (r. 1649–1680), who defeated the Portuguese and took Muscat a year later, ending a century and a half of Portuguese presence and dominance along the coast of Oman. Sultan b. Sayf built a powerful fleet throughout the waters of the Indian Ocean. Soon, what had started as a war of liberation led to the establishment of a wealthy and centralized state, with revived trading colonies in East Africa and a merchant class dependent upon a strong government. In 1659, Sultan b. Sayf signed a new Treaty of Amity and Commerce with Colonel Rainsford of the English East India Company.¹⁹ Sultan b. Sayf fortified his capital at Nizwa and appointed local officials in the towns and villages who owed him their obedience. He spent large sums on repairing and extending the *falaj* system, which greatly added to the prosperity of Oman. He constructed the aqueduct of Birkat Al-Mawz, between Izki and Nizwa. He used to walk without a guard, and sit and converse with the people.²⁰

Sultan b. Sayf died on October 6, 1680, and his body was interred where Nasir b. Murshid was buried. He appointed his son, Bil'arab b. Sultan (r. 1680–92), as his successor. This prince was generous and beneficent. He moved from Nizwa to Jabrin, where he built a magnificent fort and turned it into a flourishing place. However, his brother Sayf challenged him and besieged and eventually took Jabrin fort; Bil'arab b. Sultan died during the resistance to the siege.

Until this period, the Imamate had always been elected, and this departure from custom was perhaps an indication of a new awareness of the need for continuity in the government. Sayf, another son of Sultan b. Sayf, succeeded to the Imamate in 1692 and ruled until 1711, continuing the policies introduced by his father. He enlarged the cultivable area of the Batinah by planting palm trees and expanding the irrigation system; he also increased the power of the Omani fleet until, by 1700, Oman was the dominant sea power in the Indian Ocean.

The Ya'rubids had been expanding since the expulsion of the Portuguese from Muscat in 1650, eventually attacking Portuguese possessions along the East African coast. One of these was Mombasa, whose Fort Jesus was built in 1594–1596 for the Portuguese, who had been opening new littorals to their commercial ambitions in the Indian Ocean.²¹ In 1660, the Ya'rubids attacked Mombasa for the first time, sacking the city but failing to capture the fort.²² In March 1696, Sayf b. Sultan's Ya'rubid army surrounded and laid siege to the fort, whose garrison consisted of between fifty and seventy Portuguese soldiers and several hundred Arabs. Hunger and disease, plus melancholy and depression due to isolation, thinned the garrison and the civilian population who had taken refuge inside the fort. The fort was relieved by a Portuguese expedition in December 1696, but disease soon killed all the Portuguese soldiers. The defense was left in the hands of Shaykh Daud of Faza with seventeen of his family members, eight African men, and fifty African women. Portuguese reinforcements arrived again between September and December of 1697. After another year of siege, on December 13, 1698, the Ya'rubid army attacked and finally captured the fort. Just seven days after its capture, a Portuguese relief fleet arrived to see the fort lost. The siege had lasted almost three years, and Mombasa would remain in Omani hands until 1728.

Ya'rubid society was a rich and powerful one, headed by merchants and landlords. The Ya'rubid epoch was one of internal peace and prosperity, during which wealth increased and learning flourished. It was remarkable also for a sudden and extraordinary development of naval power, and consequent new warfare beginning about 1677.²³ Also, numerous forts were built in Oman during the Ya'rubid period.²⁴ The round fort of Nizwa was started by Sultan b. Sayf I (r. 1649–80), while his son Bil'arab built the magnificent fort of Jabrin.

Sayf b. Sultan I (r. 1692–1711) was the greatest of the princes and was succeeded by his eldest son, Sultan b. Sayf II. In 1718, Sultan b. Sayf II occupied Bahrain, and extended his dominance also to the Kuria Muria islands. In 1719, he was succeeded as Imam by his son, Sayf b. Sultan II, a boy of twelve, whose cousin, Ya'arub b. Bil'arab, proclaimed himself Custodian and then Imam.

This led to an uprising, and a civil war broke out in Oman between two tribes, one claiming descent from an eponymous ancestor of south Arabian origin, the other from an ancestor of north Arabian origin. The tribes were called, respectively, Hinawi, the southern, and Ghafiri, the northern, and hostile relationships between the two tribes lasted till recent times. The then leaders of the two tribes both died during the fighting. The garrison of Sohar and the Ghafiri faction recog-

nized Sayf b. Sultan II as Imam, and he was restored to power. However, a rival faction elected Sayf's cousin, Bil'arab b. Himyar, as Imam.

The constant internal tribal menace that was represented by the Hinawi and Ghafiri, together with the external maritime menaces represented by the Portuguese who captured Muscat port in 1714–19, were deciding factors that led to the progressive decline of the power of the Ya'rubids. With his power dwindling, Sayf b. Sultan II eventually asked for Persian military aid for his conflict against Bil'arab b. Himyar.²⁵ In 1737, Nadir Shah Afshar, Shah of Persia (1688–1747), invaded Oman and, after much killing and looting, returned Sayf b. Sultan II to power before withdrawing to his own territory. The Persians returned again in 1742–43 and besieged, without notable success, Muscat and Sohar.

The governor of the fort at Sohar when the Persians attacked was Ahmad b. Sa'id of the Al Bu Sa'id, a small Hinawi tribe, who emerged from the encounter as a new national leader and the first of a new dynasty. Ahmad b. Sa'id not only resisted the attackers for nine months but also eventually forced the Persian commander to come to terms. He soon succeeded in defeating the Persians, as well as Bil'arab b. Himyar, and was elected Imam about 1749. In 1783, Ahmad b. Sa'id Al Bu Sa'id was succeeded as Imam by his son, who, retaining the title of Imam, withdrew from temporal power and left his son Hamad in charge with the title Sayyid; no subsequent ruler of the Al Bu Sa'id was named Imam.

In 1793, Sayyid Sultan b. Ahmad (r. 1793–1804) took power and resumed the struggle against Persia. He captured Hormuz and Bandar Abbas. In 1798, the Al Bu Sa'id ruler started his involvement in the political and mercantile relationships with European powers of the epoch, signing a treaty with Great Britain that allowed the East India Company to construct a trading post at Bandar Abbas. It was during these years that the country came to be known as "Muscat and Oman," a name mirroring the increasing social and economic divisions between the coastal trading cities and the societies of the interior with their traditions and their deep cultural differences. Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id himself, and his successor, were active and wealthy merchants, but this wealth, and that of the coastal cities, was in patent contrast with the interior, which began to be strongly affected by the influence of the religious and political revival then sweeping the Arabian Peninsula.

The Ya'rubid dynasty ended with the recognition of Ahmad b. Sa'id Al Bu Sa'id as Imam in 1749. Ya'rubid international maritime trade was centered on the semi-circular bay of Muscat, which is backed by mountains with rocks dropping down to the sea, on which fortifica-

tions were built to keep a lookout for enemies. The town was surrounded by hills and rung round with walls, and with a green valley beyond the shore it was a pleasant place. The hinterland of Muscat is so mountainous that, in the eighteenth century, it could only be reached on camel- or donkey-back; just outside the town, the coast was mainly desert, hilly and desolate. Water resources have always been scarce in Oman, and the price of the famous sweet, clean water of Muscat was extremely high. A varied and vivacious world animated Muscat: merchants from all over traveled there, including Arabs, Indians, Jews, Turks, Armenians, Africans, and Persians. The dwellings were simple huts constructed of palm branches or mud, although there were also some in stone and coral. The suq of Mutrah, near Muscat, was spread over a large area, dense with dwellings and narrow winding alleyways. There, every kind of merchandise could be found—silk and linen, spices, dates, coffee brought across the desert by caravans, pearls, green and black grapes, bananas, figs, butter, fowl, goats and cattle, and even delicious mangos imported mainly by sea. The rich Omani merchants wore long, wide robes of extraordinarily clean white cotton, wide sleeves and waists bound by belts from which emerged their beautiful silver knives, the *khanjar*, and swords. Very imposing were the Baloch warriors, naked to the waist and armed with a knife and a double-handed sword, with fierce glares and a threatening presence.²⁶

The town of Muscat, thanks to its strategic position at the entrance to the Gulf, was always held to be the best port of the entire Arabian Peninsula. Muscat is surrounded by volcanic hills, bare of any vegetation, which culminate in high mountain ranges, the highest peak being Jabal Akhdar (9,800 ft.) where snow falls during the winter months. In the past, even grapes were grown on its slopes, from which the Portuguese, during their presence there, made a wine called Muscatel. From the earliest times, the port had always been a lively and bustling place. Its position, almost hidden among the rocks, made it an ideal harbor for merchants, sailors, adventurers, and pirates, who found their fruit and drinking water there. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Muscat was described by the British merchant and explorer Abraham Parsons (d. 1785) as a cosmopolitan city, where the tolerance of the political leaders permitted flourishing trade and multi-religious coexistence.²⁷ Numerous caravans arrived there daily from the interior to unload ostrich feathers, animal horns, sheep and leather, honey and beeswax, spices, rice, sugar, coffee, and tobacco. The British explorer also noted that trade between Muscat and Mocha in Yemen was extremely intense; the Omani city sent 20,000 bales of coffee to Basra, every year,



Figure 2: Map of the Indian Ocean . Image courtesy of the British Library.

destined for Constantinople. Trade towards the interior, instead, was mainly in Persian carpets and silk, pearls, Maria Theresa thalers, and Venetian sequins (zecchini). Parsons further commented on the fact that the mangos of Muscat were better than the Indian fruit, and that drinking water was taken on board ships by barges drawn by oxen as the land was too uneven for barrels to be rolled over it. Many merchants were semi-naked and attempted to cool themselves by the use of ingenious fans since, as Parsons admitted, “Muscat is the hottest place on earth.”²⁸ Lastly, he also remarked how many of the inhabitants were ill or in need of medical treatment.

Among the many Indian merchants trading at Muscat and in the Gulf there were the Bhatta, originally from Rajasthan (from Bhatti, Subhatta, Hindu warriors of the Vaishnavit sect). Another group of Bhatta were the Kutch, again Hindus, who, in the seventeenth century, enjoyed great prestige at Muscat and who were exempted from taxation. Together with these groups of merchants, there were also the Khoja, who were Ismaʿilis. In foreign and seagoing trade, mainly Muslims were employed (Bohra and Khoja), while Jainists and Hindus (Banya and Bhatta) were dominant in the banking and finance fields. These merchants were described by European explorers of the nineteenth century, who took note of their complexion, fairer than that of the Arabs, their fine features, long moustaches but no beards, and a Chinese pigtail at the base of a shaved head. Stress was also laid on the elegance and sumptuousness of their attire, silk tunics with long, ruffled sleeves, a clear sign that they were not involved in any form of manual labor. The role of these merchants was one of the essential and deciding factors in the extraordinary development that also occurred during

the succeeding nineteenth century on the island of Zanzibar, where they were extremely active. They were called banyan²⁹ (*vaniya*, in Gujarati *vaniyo*, man of the merchant caste, from the Sanskrit *vanij*, merchant, later Anglicized as banyan, a term used to indicate Hindu as opposed to Muslim merchants). There were, moreover “money tasters” and “sarruf,” moneychangers (from whence we have the English term shroff). In their accounts and in the communiqués of the East India Company representatives, the British used the term banyan to identify both the Hindu castes and the Indian Ismaʿili communities, and this confusion was quite frequent.³⁰

The Maritime Power of the Al Bu Saʿid

The Sea of Oman and its ports have been an integral part of the Indian Ocean trading network from time immemorial. This was due to the fact that the Sea of Oman ports were the first or last place where ships could take on fresh water and supplies on their way to or from the Indian Ocean. In the mountains of Muscat, there are shepherds with flocks, and boats sailing from there to India could lay in meat on the hoof for their voyages. Moreover, given the subsistence nature of the Omani economy, it was vital for the Sea of Oman ports to exchange their dates, fish, dried fruit, and pearls for rice from India. Its inhabitants also served as sailors on local and foreign ships. The Omani coast formed part of the Sasanian province of Mazun, and its inhabitants formed part of its navy. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the Sea of Oman acquired more importance due to increased trade that made use of its strategic position and its ports. When the Sea of Oman fell under Portuguese control, the town of Muscat became one of the most important ports. In addition to the traditional products, Omani ports also served as transit points for the very important trade in horses with India. They would play the same role for coffee later, from the seventeenth century well into the nineteenth century.

With the advent of the Yaʿrubid dynasty (1624–1747), the Imams tried to attract foreign transit trade by offering better tariffs than Persian ports. The Dutch also had a trading station for some time in Muscat, and the rulers of this port tried to induce both the Dutch and the British to conclude an anti-Portuguese agreement with them on several occasions.

As a result of the international character of the Sea of Oman, many different groups lived in its ports, including Baloch (who served on ships), Khojas, Hindu Banyans, and Persians, who traded and were generally free to exercise their own religion. As a result, Persian and Hindi



Figure 3: Maria Theresa Thalers. Author Private Collection.
Image Courtesy By P. Pescasio

were as frequently spoken as Arabic. In addition to international trade, the local inhabitants mainly earned their living through fishing, pearling, and coastal trade.

With the growth of the Al Bu Sa'ïd power after 1749, the dynasty extended control over the Persian side of the coast and eventually acquired Gwadar. With the upheaval in Persia, by 1775 Omani ports such as Muscat had become the main entrepôts between the Persian Gulf hinterland and the Indian Ocean trading network.

As a result, strong ties were formed with the Malabar Coast, in particular with Tipu Sultan of Mysore (Fateh Ali Tipu, 1750–1799, known as the Tiger of Mysore).³¹ During the early nineteenth century, the Sea of Oman trade and pearl fishing were endangered by the persistent maritime warfare between rival Omani tribes. Great Britain was drawn into these disputes as guarantor of maritime peace, which was fundamental for British trade. Under the Al Bu Sa'ïd, the port and the town of Muscat imposed its power upon the region and extended it over both the Persian and Omani sides of the sea.

From the end of the eighteenth century, the Al Bu Sa'ïd empowered mercantile expansion toward the coast of Eastern Africa, and developed within the Indian Ocean a new cultural synthesis represented by continuous migratory flows. The dominions of Muscat consisted of the island of Bahrain, the coast of Makran,³² some areas along the Persian coast such as Chah Bahar, the island of Socotra, the islands of Kuria Muria, the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, and adjacent ports of the East African coast from Cape Delgado to Cape Guardafui. The presence of numerous economic opportunities on the East African littorals was a factor that led the Al Bu Sa'ïd towards Africa.

Makran, since ancient times, held a historical strategic position as the most direct route between the Middle East and the riches of the Indian Subcontinent, and held close connections with Oman. Covering an area of

62,000 square kilometres, Makran forms the southernmost strip of Balochistan province. As there is hardly any rain there, the few villages and settlements depend on spring water and wells (*qanat/kariz*).³³

The coast had several little fishing villages, while main towns like Gwadar, Ormara, Jiwani, and Pasni had small fishing harbors, where Makrani Baloch used to trade with the Indian Ocean maritime world.³⁴ The port of Gwadar lies on the Makran coastal area,³⁵ whose dry climate and natural geographical features make it one of the most daunting environments for successful human habitation. It is, therefore, sparsely populated. The case of Gwadar³⁶ was of particular interest, as the town, its port, and the surrounding territory were granted as a *jagir* (a temporary grant of land exempted from taxation) from the *khans* of Kalat to the Al Bu Sa'ïd of Oman. From a *jagir*, Gwadar soon assumed the status of an enclave of the Sultanate of Oman. The Omani presence in the Makran region eased the control of the local trade and of the regional and tribal mechanisms of power.

The strategic role played by the port of Gwadar in the illegal traffic of arms and ammunition coming from Europe to the Gulf and directed to East Africa and Central Asia was essential. The Makran coastal area, where Gwadar lies, has always been viewed as a marginal and frontier region, scientifically defined as “terra incognita,” distinct from India and different from Persia. For centuries, Makran was a place of refuge for innumerable dissidents, rebels, and fugitives. Among the first were certain Omani leaders, who gradually imposed their power on the main coastal centers. The role of the port of Gwadar was crucial within the ivory and spice trade between the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa on the one hand, and Central Asia on the other. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Gwadar was at the same time a dominion of the sultans of Oman, a source of income for the Gichki from Kech, a strategic observation post for the British Government along the coast of Makran in the direction of Persia, and a staging-post of the Indo-European telegraph line.

In the eighteenth century, Makran came under the nominal control of the khanate of Kalat, which was ruled by Nasir Khan I. The khanate of Kalat was a refuge for waves of invaders coming from southwest Asia towards India. Once it had subdued the sedentary agricultural tribes and enforced tribal authority on pastoral nomadic groups, the khanate began developing a centralized bureaucratic apparatus through territorial expansion that included Makran. But it was not until the nineteenth century that the British became interested in this area during the two Anglo-Afghan Wars (1839–42 and 1878–80) and the Great Game with Russia.³⁷ A Brit-

ish expedition was sent into the region to pave the way for the building of the Indo-European telegraph line, which passed through Makran. On its conclusion in 1863, Major-General Frederick John Goldsmid was posted to Gwadar as British Assistant Political Agent. In 1872, a new boundary between Persia and British Balochistan was established.³⁸ The Qajar dynasty came into power in Persia in the nineteenth century. The Anglo-Indian Government penetrated within Persian territory, following its domination of the Sindh region, under the pretext of extending telegraph lines from India to the Oman Sea and guarding the whole area. Great Britain separated a part of Balochistan from Persia, later known as British Balochistan, in 1871.³⁹

The the Al Bu Sa'id dynasty emerged at the end of the eighteenth century into this already fully-functioning system with its wide range of links and connections. It enjoyed the mediating roles and loans of the various Asian communities present in Eastern African realities.⁴⁰ The Al Bu Sa'id extended their influence into the interior and into part of the present-day United Arab Emirates. They also collected tribute from as far away as Bahrain and today's Iraq. The Al Bu Sa'id conquered the Dhofar region, which is part of present-day Oman but was not historically part of the region of Oman. From the eighteenth century onwards, groups from the interior gradually began to settle in the new coastal centers.

Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id established an important mercantile empire in the Indian Ocean. The main factors involved in the rise of a powerful maritime trade network were the expansion of the spice trade, especially by the cultivation of cloves in Zanzibar and the Pemba islands (*Unguja*), ivory exportation, and through their relationships with the European powers of the nineteenth century. The creation of a new niche of agricultural exploitation in Zanzibar itself and in Pemba was destined to transform Zanzibar and Pemba into new centers of global mercantile interests. Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id spoke Arabic, Hindi, Persian, and Swahili; he saw the island of Zanzibar for the first time in 1802, when he was only eleven years old, and he was completely enchanted. He saw the spice trade as a means of creating a new power elite through a significant expansion of the cultivation of cloves in Zanzibar. This highlights one of the first major steps towards the importance of spice. At the end of the eighteenth century, the introduction of cloves (*Eugenia Caryophyllata*, from the *Myrtaceae* family, *kavafuu* in Kiswahili) onto this tropical island determined a new perception of economic-commercial potential in the eyes of the Al Bu Sa'id. The creation of a new niche of agricultural exploitation in Zanzibar itself and in Pemba was destined to transform the islands into new centers of

global mercantile interests. In 1825, the income of Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id amounted to 522,000 Maria Theresa thalers, of which 120,000 came from Zanzibar.

Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id had numerous secondary wives, an infinite number of concubines, and at least thirty-six children. Among his secondary wives was 'Azza b. Sayf b. Imam Ahmad, who lived in the palace at Mtoni on Zanzibar; the niece of the Shah of Persia, Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar, whom the sultan married in 1827 on the condition that she could spend long periods at her father's court in Teheran, from whence she no longer returned following a ferocious argument in 1832; and Shahruzad b. Irish Mirza b. Muhammad, great granddaughter of Shah Muhammad of Persia, who Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id married in 1837. Shahruzad arrived in Zanzibar with a valuable dowry, a following of 150 men, and numerous horses for hunting. She had Persian baths built at Kidichi and Kizimbani, the ruins of which still today bear witness to the artistic sensitivity of the Sultan of Zanzibar's last secondary wife.

The sultan, himself a great sailor, possessed a fleet that included the *Liverpool*, a magnificent vessel built in Bombay in 1826, with seventy-four cannon and a crew of 150. In 1834, with the object of consolidating his international relationships, he sent this ship as a gift to the King of Great Britain and Ireland, who renamed the ship *Imaum*. A further eighteen ships were also at his disposal. The Al Bu Sa'id's good relationships with Great Britain were also evident on numerous occasions through luxury gifts sent to British representatives and to ships of the Royal Navy and the Bombay Marine.

Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id's international maritime relations extended to the young United States as well. Edmund Roberts (1784–1836), an American diplomat, arrived in the port of Zanzibar in October 1827 and, the next year, had an audience with the newly arrived Al Bu Sa'id ruler, who asked Roberts to escort some vessels to the United States to petition for trade; Roberts promised to bring the matter up with his government. Upon returning to the United States, he wrote Senator Levi Woodbury, a personal friend, of the aggravations endured by American shipping that might be alleviated by negotiating commercial treaties.⁴¹ Since the creation of the Marine Society in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1782, trade relationships between Oman, Zanzibar, and the United States were a determining factor in the mercantile balance of the Indian Ocean. American cotton was silently making its way not only into all parts of Central Africa, but also into Eastern Africa and toward India. Therefore, considerable benefits would result from negotiating treaties with the powers bordering the Indian Ocean: this was the American policy that regulated the

succeeding mercantile exchanges between Oman, America, and Eastern Africa.

In 1832, the seventh U.S. president, Andrew Jackson (1767–1845), sent Edmund Roberts, aboard the American ship *Peacock*, to arrange treaties of navigation and commerce with the principalities along the Indian Ocean. A treaty was arranged with the Sultan of Oman and signed at Muscat on September 30, 1835;⁴² it was later ratified by the United States Senate. The Muscat treaty was originally drawn up in English by Roberts, and it was translated into Arabic by the Al Bu Sa'ïd secretary, Sa'ïd b. Khalfan b. Sa'ïd. The two texts differed somewhat, particularly as to jurisdiction in case of disputes between Americans and the subjects of the Al Bu Sa'ïd. The same concessions to France and Great Britain were enjoyed by the United States. This treaty represented the first step towards a friendship that was destined to become stronger between the two countries.

Five years later, on April 30, 1840, the Omani ship *Al-Sultanah* sailed into New York harbor after a voyage of 87 days from Zanzibar.⁴³ The *Sultanah* was the first embassy ship to travel from African and Arabian states. The crew of the *Sultanah* was a mosaic of the Indian Ocean world: a Goan cook, African sailors, two Englishwomen, and two French passengers. Its most important passenger, Ahmad b. Na'aman, was the first emissary and accredited representative of the Al Bu Sa'ïd ruler to the eighth president of the United States, Martin Van Buren (1782–1862).

Al Hajj Ahmad b. Na'aman b. Mushin b. 'Abd Allah al Ka'abi el Bahrani (born between 1784 and 1790) was secretary to the Al Bu Sa'ïd sultan. He spoke English and he was used to trading with American merchants from Salem, Massachusetts. While Ahmad b. Na'aman's mission was interpreted as mainly mercantile, it soon revealed its diplomatic and political goals. The city of New York was the commercial center of the United States, and goods were the main motivation for political agreements during the nineteenth century. Ahmad b. Na'aman arrived in New York with Arab horses, cloves, gum, copal, coffee, ivory, dates, hides, and Persian carpets. The Omani secretary was looking for chandeliers, pineapple and orange syrup, confectionary almonds, glass plates, watches, shotguns, lamps, and mirrors for some rich residents in Zanzibar.

The *Sultanah* also bore letters and gifts for President Van Buren. The latter included two well-bred Arab horses from the Al Najd, a string of 150 pearls, two large pear-shaped pearls, 120 assorted brilliants (18.25 karats), one silk carpet, one bottle of oil of roses, four cashmere shawls, five demijohns of rose water, and one gold-mounted sword. The horses were sold at auction, as they could not be kept. The other presents could not be ac-

cepted by the American president either, as the Constitution of the United States forbade it. Following a series of debates in the U.S. Congress, the gifts were sold and the proceeds deposited in the U.S. Treasury.

The Arab ship was repaired and refitted in the New York Navy Yard and returned with some presents sent by the American government to the Sultan of Oman, including the largest mirrors manufactured in the United States, chandeliers, and a range of firearms. The *Sultanah* was the only Arab vessel that had crossed the Atlantic to that point. Later in 1840, a portrait of Ahmad b. Na'aman was painted by Edward Mooney; it hangs today in the Peabody Museum in Salem, Massachusetts.

In another portrait, painted by Henry Inman in 1842 and currently hanging in the White House, Angelica van Buren (1818–1877), the daughter-in-law of the American President Martin van Buren, who was designated as first lady because the president lost his wife and never remarried, is depicted wearing a string of pearls, that may have come from the Gulf and been given by the Al Bu Sa'ïd ruler. She was a very elegant lady, as shown in the Inman portrait. And through these images and precious objects it is interesting here to contemplate the intersections of different worlds: Oman, Eastern Africa, and the United States of America—linked perhaps through a string of pearls around the neck of the First Lady of the United States in 1842.

Among the reasons why the *Sultanah* crossed the two oceans there was the traditional wider breadth and the cultural awareness of trading with the outside world. Oman was able to build new connections with new worlds: a strong curiosity led the Omani emissary to America, and an irresistible desire to expand and explore the liquid world has always been the defining feature of Omani leadership.

Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd died in 1856 when he was 65 years old aboard a dhow that was taking him from Muscat to Zanzibar.⁴⁴ His death marked the end of an epoch, but not the end of the multiple and deeply rooted cultural ties, as well as of the numerous mercantile routes vitalized by the Omani red flag across the Indian Ocean. The Al Bu Sa'ïd dominions in Muscat and on Zanzibar were divided under the terms of the settlement of May 13, 1861—with Zanzibar having to pay 40,000 Maria Theresa thalers to Muscat annually—and formalized by the Canning Award, confirmed by the Anglo-French Agreement of 1862: a further formal step towards the construction of the Omani State. With this division, the possessions were assigned to the sons of Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd: Majid b. Sa'ïd Al Bu Sa'ïd (r. 1856–70), of an Ethiopian mother, on Zanzibar, and Thuwayni b. Sa'ïd Al Bu Sa'ïd (r. 1856–66), of a Georgian mother, in Muscat.⁴⁵



Figure 4: Cloves. Image courtesy of the British Library.

The lucrative movement of goods traded by Oman throughout the Indian Ocean included every type of merchandise and spice. To name but a few: rhubarb, borax, ginger, sesame, ivory, tortoise shell, rhino horn, beeswax, opium poppies, exotic animal skins, birds of prey, diamonds, vermilion, gold, horses, raffia, and silk. The Omanis regarded many products as having protective powers against disease and parasites: castor oil, tamarind, cloves, vanilla, curry, nutmeg, rubber, tropical fruit, Mocha coffee (very much in fashion in Europe at the beginning of the second half of the seventeenth century), Chinese ceramics (sometimes used as precious containers for dates in Oman), musk from Tibet and China, enormous quantities of ambergris⁴⁶ bought on the shores of the island of Zanzibar or the nearby islands, considered a delicacy by

the Omanis who even put it in the sorbets! We know that ivory was exported from the eastern coast of Africa in considerable quantities from an early date, and also rhinoceros horn and tortoise shell, as was rock crystal. In 1800, the principal products exported from the Eastern coast of Africa were cloves, copal, ivory, hides, red pepper, sesame, copra, coconut oil, tortoise shell, cowries, beeswax, and tallow. Goods imported included cotton, arms, powder, Venetian beads, clocks, spirits, wheat flour, refined sugar, brass wire, glassware, chintz, and chinaware. Major exports from Zanzibar to Oman were ivory, cloves, copal, sandalwood, coconuts, hippopotamus teeth, cowries, rafters, rhino horn, beeswax, and ebony. The Omani seafarers from the Red Sea carried Venetian beads, coffee, aloes, and dragon's blood; those from the south coast of Arabia sold dried fish, fish oil, ghee, and onions; and those from Oman and the Gulf brought to East Africa dates and raisins, donkeys and horses, Muscat cloth, Persian carpets and silks, nankeen, crude gunpowder, almonds, and drugs (mainly saffron and asafoetida). The Omanis also brought honey, water jugs, ready-to-wear clothes, rosewater, gold, and silver thread. Arab purchases from Africa included ivory tusks, cloves, coconuts, and rafters. Oman bartered with Europe and, starting from 1833 as above described with the new United States of America, coconuts, tortoise shell, red peppers, and beeswax in exchange for hardware, cotton, wool, and fabrics.

The heart of Oman's African dominions during the nineteenth century was Zanzibar, an archipelago made up of Zanzibar and Pemba Islands, plus several islets. The archipelago is located in the Indian Ocean about 25 miles from today's Tanzanian coast and 6° south of the equator. Zanzibar Island (known locally as *Unguja*, but as Zanzibar internationally) is 60 miles long and 20 miles wide, occupying a total area of approximately 650 square miles. At that time, the island of Zanzibar was administered by governors representing Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id and exercising all power on his behalf. The military support provided to these representatives over the island consisted of special troops of proven trustworthiness, that is to say, the Baloch corps closely tied to the Al Bu Sa'id by strong economic agreements. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Baloch were known to Europeans as ferocious freebooters, and they protected and hid the Al Bu Sa'id rulers of the dynasty of Oman in their desolate lands. They were mainly employed on the dhows of the Muscat rulers or sent on military expeditions into the Omani deserts. It is worth noting that the Baloch not only served the Al Bu Sa'id, but also the preceding dynasties of Oman, such as the Ya'rubids during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the permanent bodyguard of the Sultans

of Oman was composed of 300 Baloch who lived in huts. They were considered to be so cynical that they ignored the political struggles within the Arabian Peninsula and naturally obeyed the orders only of the princes who paid them. Due to the Omani mercantile expansion along the Sub-Saharan East African littorals, many Baloch settled in Zanzibar and other African port towns, where they were called Bulushi in Kiswahili.⁴⁷ Along East Africa's coasts, local governors had the support of the local Swahili aristocracy, which was composed of numerous merchants. These came under the *Mwinyi Mkuu*, subdivided into *diwan*, *jumbe*, *wazee*, and were tied as well to the Omani elite by mutual interests in the exploitation of the resources offered by the island and the eastern shores of Africa. This mercantile empire, with Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id, progressively moved its economic and political center of gravity to Zanzibar, making control of the neighboring islands and the nearby African coast one of the cornerstones of its vast system of interests. Many years later, the British explorer Richard F. Burton (1821–1890), would claim: "If you play the flute in Zanzibar it will sound as far as the Great Lakes."⁴⁸ Without a shadow of a doubt, European rivalry in the Gulf and the western waters of the Indian Ocean from the start of the nineteenth century onward, combined with related upheavals in power and strategy, had an impact also on the progressive deviations of the several maritime routes. Clearly, however, the ability of Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id to exploit such political contingencies was great.

The Maritime Power of Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id (r. 1804–56)

Since 1800, when Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id received the model of a seventy-four-gun ship as a present from the visiting British envoy, Major-General John Malcolm (1769–1833), he recognized the importance of cultivating British friendship. And this was a relationship that Britain valued as well. This was an important factor that played a part in the economic-commercial growth of the Indian Ocean.⁴⁹

An important item of this growth was represented by the delicate and precious material that had been exported throughout the Orient from time immemorial: ivory.⁵⁰ Since the second century BCE, ivory had been exported from eastern Africa to the Mediterranean. From the seventh century CE, India and China emerged as the main markets for African ivory. Superior to Asian ivory in quality, softness, and color, African ivory had followed the maritime routes of the Indian Ocean until the end of the eighteenth century, departing from Mozambique. New fiscal burdens and taxes, however, imposed

by the Portuguese at the beginning of the nineteenth century and termed "suicidal" by Sheriff,⁵¹ together with the mercantile ascendancy of France and Great Britain in the Indian Ocean, caused a gradual shift in the ivory trade. The ports of Mozambique having been gradually abandoned, the dealing and sale of this precious material would henceforth be conducted on the island of Zanzibar.

Starting from the second decade of the nineteenth century, Europe entered the ivory market with its considerable demands. The splendid, shining African ivory, pure white and strong but at the same time easily worked, was increasingly desired in Europe for luxury items, such as elegant elements of personal toilette, billiard balls, piano keys, elaborate jewels, fans, cutlery, and clothing accessories. In that particular atmosphere of a *fin de siècle* Europe increasingly fascinated by all things Chinese or exotic, ivory was a must. This was clear by the fact that British imports of ivory rose from 280 tons in 1840 to 800 in 1875.⁵² During the first half of the nineteenth century, the demand for ivory came mostly from India.⁵³ The Al Bu Sa'id reopened the ancient trade routes to the interior, bringing new groups of people to the coast of East Africa with elephant tusks. The Mrima was the major source of ivory's export for the Zanzibar economy.

The economy of the East African interior thus witnessed a decisive growth in the demand for *pagazi*, free men recruited from among the African tribes allied between each other (mainly Yao and Nyamwezi), and for porters. The high demand resulted in the transportation of elephant tusks in huge quantities. A complex exchange network soon developed between the East African interior and the coast, leading to the introduction of rice cultivation in the interior in those areas under Arab dominion, such as Tabora (in modern-day Tanzania) and Nyangwe and Kasongo (in today's Congo).

Later, thanks to the entrepreneurial ability of Tippu Tip (Hamad b. Muhammad b. Jum'a b. Rajab el Murgibi, 1837–95), the greatest and most powerful ivory trader of the nineteenth century, the borders of what had been identified by the British pushed further to the northwest into modern-day Rwanda and Burundi.⁵⁴

At that time, these mercantile connections grew rapidly. There were three major sets of ivory trade routes to the interior often safeguarded by Baloch forces:

- 1 The "southern" route from southern ports such as Kilwa to Lake Nyasa and the highlands of the southwestern interior where the Nyamwezi carried tusks and other goods;
- 2 The "central" ivory route from Bagamoyo to the west and northwest, where the caravan trade became

progressively monopolized by the Omanis and by the Asian merchants; and

- 3 The “northern” route, the Masai route from Mombasa and Malindi towards Kilimanjaro, where the Mi-jikenda were ivory hunters together with the Kamba.

The Saadani caravan route did not develop an Arab merchant community, while the Pangani route led to the foundation of Ujiji around 1840 and passed through the Bondei hills and along the foot of the Usambara and Pare mountains, well-watered and preferred by travelers from other towns of the northern Mrima. Large quantities of ivory, *pembe*, of soft and high quality, came from Pare and the Rift valley, and this route became the second in importance after Bagamoyo. The Taveta trading station was never controlled by coastal Muslims, as it was too dangerous. Caravans arrived usually in September and porters announced their approach by blowing horns and beating drums.

Another protagonist in this chapter of Indian Ocean maritime history, Jairam Sewji (or Jeram Sewjee, 1835–1866, master of the custom house), was the leading pioneer of the merchant capitalists in Zanzibar during the nineteenth century, and he also profited greatly from this opening up to western markets. A member of the Topan family, he was the richest and most influential merchant in Zanzibar and personally financed almost all of the caravan traffic, accepting responsibility for all the risks and possible losses this entailed. He actually became a state banker, and he lent huge sums of money.⁵⁵ Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Jairam Topan was the financial and political kingpin of all activity occurring on Zanzibar (around the year 1840, for example, he had four hundred Africans in his personal service). A somewhat singular political-financial phenomenon thus came into being in the figure of Jairam Topan, who concentrated Arab, Asian, and European interests in his own hands, conducting as though with a baton the ancient, admirable, and sophisticated system of commercial currents, connections, and links of the Indian Ocean.⁵⁶

A further factor, and no less important than ivory, was the extraordinary and revolutionary expansion of clove cultivation on Zanzibar island. The creation of a new niche for agricultural exploitation on Zanzibar and Pemba was destined to transform the twin islands into a true commercial empire. According to available historiography of the time, at the end of the eighteenth century the introduction of cloves altered the perceptions of the economic and commercial potential of the islands—not in the eyes of the Europeans, but in those of Sayyid Sa‘id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa‘id and his Asian allies.

Since the second century BCE, envoys from Java at the Han court of China had sucked cloves to sweeten their heavy garlic breath during audiences with the emperor. Clove plants, originating in the Moluccas, were first exploited by the Dutch who grasped the commercial value of this precious, perfumed spice that also possessed medicinal properties. Around the year 1770, the French merchant, Pierre Poivre (1719–1786), succeeded in obtaining a few seeds with which to start cultivation on the Mascarene Islands in the southwestern Indian Ocean east of Madagascar. It was, therefore, the French who introduced cloves onto the island of Zanzibar.

These initial attempts proved successful, the environment being perfectly suited to this cultivation, which led to Zanzibar becoming the primary producer of cloves in the world. From available accounts, it appears that Sayyid Sa‘id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa‘id decided to invest his wealth and energy in such an ambitious and challenging project. Such a move required both courage and faith, as the plants take from seven to eight years to reach maturity and produce the first blooms, and ten years for the first crop. As budding does not occur at regular periods and the buds themselves must be removed before flowering, harvesting occurs in three phases, between August and December. This requires numerous and skilled labor, especially as the plantations also need to be weeded continually.⁵⁷

The cultivation of cloves was very similar to that of dates practiced in Oman and well understood by the Omanis, who proceeded to acquire land on Zanzibar. The land of Zanzibar was organized in three different categories: *wanda*, natural scrubland; *kiambo*, areas suitable for building upon; *msitu*, rural areas and lands surrounding villages.

The *mashamba* of the Al Bu Sa‘id, initially concentrated around Mntoni and Kizimbani, gradually grew to include Bumwini, Bububu, and Chiwini. In 1835, Sayyid Sa‘id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa‘id possessed as many as 45 *mashamba* on the island.

Clove fever, with its high profit on initial expenditure, produced an Omani landowning aristocracy, continually financed by Asian mercantile communities, that progressively replaced the old Swahili aristocracy. This did not, however, cause a sharp rupture, thanks to the dexterity of the Asian exponents who gradually involved the local East African elite by delegating to them certain tasks and responsibilities, thus making them active participants in this major Indian Ocean business.

On the coasts of the African continent, on the contrary, local societies experienced significant changes due to the high influx of Africans from the interior and of Omanis and Asians from abroad. Tabora, a key site on the commercial route towards the heart of the continent,

practically became an Arab town with a considerable Baloch presence. Thus, profound differences developed between the cultural identities on the islands, on the one hand, and the continent, on the other, where, from the third decade of the nineteenth century onwards, the opening up of caravan routes wrought a true revolution in economic, military, social, and cultural terms. This agricultural turning point rapidly undermined the traditional order, and the plantations led to the phenomenon known as clove fever. By 1822, the plants had grown to a height of roughly four and a half meters. It was the clove plantations that would prove vital to Zanzibar's economic growth. Profits, in fact, rose phenomenally from 4,600 Maria Theresa thalers in 1834 to 25,000 in 1840.⁵⁸ For Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd, it was a triumph.

Textiles imported from India were given by the Arabs as presents to significant African chiefs of the interior. These gifts represented a clear sign of prestige and superiority within their communities. Agriculture remained for long periods the primary source of trade revenue along the Swahili coast, long before the booming introduction of commerce. Salted and smoked fish became an important item of trade: Zanzibar and Pemba soon developed the production of fish to provide the porters to the interior and for the very profitable exchange with ivory. Also the demand for copal resin grew during this period, and the resin was produced in the Bagamoyo area and bought by the Asian traders, along with mangrove poles to be transported by vessels to Oman and the Gulf.

Another important item destined to change deeply the hinterland power balances was represented by firearms. During the first half of the nineteenth century, matchlocks began to appear in the hands of Omani troops, who imported them from the Ottoman Empire and Europe.⁵⁹ The Shirazi, the rich and prestigious Swahili families, gradually lost their power and were pushed apart by the Al Bu Sa'ïd within the growing trade of Zanzibar. Even though they retained control of the northern caravan trade, the greater wealth soon passed into Omani and Asian hands. As the central route was the most controlled by Omanis, Tabora, near the heart of Unyamwezi, as we have seen above, became an Arab town, together with Ujiji. The impact of the Al Bu Sa'ïd political power and of the Asian military power in Zanzibar on the African hinterland was, therefore, destined to influence the lives of East African men and women. As already explained, considerable modifications took place in East African traditional elite patterns of power relationships, where client-patronage perspectives were never to be the same, and where new actors were destined to emerge on the new Indian Ocean scenario in its connections with the East African hinterland. In this regard, the ivory trade became

a means of travel, adventure, and wealth offering a way to modify the status within the coastal communities. Everybody could share this ambition, but at the same time new tensions were introduced between the rich Swahili families, struggling to preserve their domination.

When Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd rose to power in Muscat in 1806, he was fifteen years old and had few friends and many enemies. The prosperity built by his father had ended, and he soon understood that the only possible wealth for himself and for his country was the sea.⁶⁰ He soon revealed himself as a keen-minded and clever sovereign; in fact, Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd immediately saw the importance of the expansion of the African trade. He also grasped the significance of the creation of an Omani merchant fleet for patrolling the East African trading ports. But to arm a fleet strong enough to fight against his enemies in Arabia, he needed a substantial financial basis, and the necessary revenues came from Africa, not from Oman. His modernity was characterized by a great mobility among three littorals: Asia, Arabia, and Africa. Moreover, the unsettled state of his power, both in Muscat and in East Africa, enabled him to open a new phase of history in the Indian Ocean, in that microcosmic world that would soon become global.

At the time of his accession to power in Oman, the French menace to British India led to the involvement of the Al Bu Sa'ïd of Oman within European rivalries in the Indian Ocean. This led to the Treaty of October 12, 1798, between his father, Sultan b. Ahmad Al Bu Sa'ïd, and Great Britain, where Oman agreed to exclude the French from its ports.⁶¹ But the result was that the French started to attack Omani ships in the Indian Ocean. Nevertheless, Napoleon, after Austerlitz, renewed his Oriental policy, which led to the signing of the Treaty of Finkenstein with Persia on May 4, 1807, and to a new Agreement with Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd.⁶²

In June 1807, Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd sent one of his agents, Majid b. Khalfan, to the Île de France (modern-day Mauritius) with the task of restoring political relations, and most of all, precious commercial links with the French. Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd, claiming the neutrality of his country, accepted the establishment of a French consul, M. Dallons, in Muscat. In addition, on June 16, 1807, he signed a treaty of amity and commerce with General René Decaen, Governor of Île de France, where France had privileges of the most favored nation in his African dominions, because from a trading point of view "the French were great favourites in Zanzibar."⁶³ Moreover, voices had reached Bombay with regards to the renewed receptiveness of Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd to French advances.⁶⁴

Jonathan Duncan (1756–1811), Governor of Bombay, was instructed by London not to involve Britain in direct interventions in the internal affairs of the Oriental potentates. Consequently, he decided to use the same policy adopted by John Malcolm, political agent in the Persian Gulf, with the father of Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd and gave the Omani ruler the following warning: the consequences of his political choices in favor of the French would mean less of a warm welcome to Omani ships in Anglo-Indian ports. From then on, any French presence in the Gulf would be considered as a hostile presence and, consequently, attacked.

As stated above, the new architecture developed by Napoleon, based on new plans for the invasion of British India, included the enforcement of the strategic base of Île de France as a center against British trading routes to India, and as a maritime base to a land invasion through Persia and Balochistan, with the alliance of Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd.

On January 27, 1807, the Governor of Île de France met Napoleon in Paris, who welcomed him warmly and sent him back to his island with nine men-of-war, eleven other vessels, and 4,600 soldiers. In October of the same year, these were increased by three more ships and 12,000 soldiers. In the meantime, the French supplied Muscat with weapons and instigated attacks against the British East Indiamen of the East India Company.

In July 1807, Lord Gilbert Minto was appointed Governor General of India. Minto was a proponent of the Enlightenment, a Whig, supported both by the Tories and the Directors of the East India Company,⁶⁵ and his scope was not limited to “counter-attack Napoleon’s power,” but to “destroy it.”⁶⁶ Since Minto understood that the East African scene was only part of the picture and could not be considered in isolation from the other shores of the Indian Ocean, he prepared a very detailed plan, which included an exhaustive examination of the possibilities of attack against Île de France and Île de Bourbon (modern-day Reunion). Yet, the British navy did not have nautical charts of the Mascarene islands, where Île de France and Bourbon are located: this necessary information was obtained from the Portuguese, loyal allies of the British in this delicate moment, fully informed of the plans against the French and perfectly in agreement with the British decision to occupy these two islands. The intelligence of the East India Company communicated that the best attack against Île de France and Bourbon would be by surprise.⁶⁷ During the summer of 1810, without waiting for official confirmation from London, 4,000 soldiers left the island of Rodriguez for Bourbon and Île de France, and conquered the islands in July.⁶⁸ Île de France was renamed Mauritius, its former Dutch name.

On April 4, 1821, Captain Fairfax Moresby⁶⁹ was instructed by the Governor of Mauritius, Robert Farquhar, to report on the slave trade conducted by the French between Zanzibar and Bourbon. Moresby communicated that “the French are guilty of the most atrocious crimes in the neighbourhood of Zanzibar by carrying off the Negroes and murdering those who resisted.”⁷⁰ On May 10, 1821, Farquhar wrote to Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd that French vessels had left from Zanzibar with 400 slaves on board heading for Bourbon. The dispatches written by Farquhar, as well as those written by Moresby, were intentionally exaggerated with the object of drawing the attention—and, consequently, military intervention—of the British Government.

On October 1, 1821, Farquhar informed the Marquess of Hastings (1754–1826), the Governor General of India from 1813 to 1823, that it was necessary to persuade Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd to sign a new agreement, with the aim of convincing him to exercise his influence on his slave merchants and, most of all, “gain the cooperation of the Native Chiefs in forcing France also to abandon the slave traffic.”⁷¹

During the fall of 1821, after a close correspondence between Farquhar in Mauritius and Montstuart Elphinstone (1819–1827), Governor-General of Bombay, a draft treaty was prepared. In December 1821, the ruler of Oman accepted a British representative of the East India Company. Following this decision, he received compliments from Farquhar and Elphinstone for his enlightened policy. On August 27, 1822, Moresby called at Muscat, and, alluding to the privileged relationships of amity, commerce, and alliance subsisting between Britain and Oman, convinced Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd to sign a treaty composed of six articles, full of political implications for both countries.

The first article of the Moresby Treaty of 1822 prohibited the slave trade to all Christians of all nations,⁷² and defined a corridor in the Indian Ocean where British patrolling would be in effect. The Moresby Line started from Cape Delgado in the south and ran to the border with Mozambique, passing along the East African littoral, then turning in the direction of India at a distance of about 60 miles east of Socotra Island, and arriving at the western Indian port of Diu. The violation of the Moresby Treaty within this line would lead to the immediate confiscation of any ship in question and to the same penalty given for acts of piracy: “death without benefit of clergy.”⁷³

But the Moresby Treaty included another interesting article. An additional condition of the Treaty declared that Sayyid Sa'ïd b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'ïd would have full sovereignty and authority over the waters of the East Af-

rican littoral. In this, Great Britain officially recognized the power of the rich mercantile empire founded by the Al Bu Sa'id of Oman.

Needless to say, the Moresby Treaty hid many ambiguities; in fact, there were serious contradictions between the English version and its official Arabic translation made in Bombay; for example:

- 1 The English text provided penalties that would go into effect four months after the signing of the treaty—that is, starting from January 1823—a clause totally omitted in the Arab version;
- 2 According to the English text, as the waters of the East African littoral were under the sovereignty of Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id, the responsibility for applying the penalties was totally within his jurisdiction; however, the Arabic translation delegated this ungrateful task to the British navy.

The Moresby Treaty represented the territorial acknowledgement of Al Bu Sa'id dominions. The political advantage for the Al Bu Sa'id was that of the official recognition of their dominions, especially before its local enemies. With regards to the slave trade, the boundary line from Cape Delgado to the Persian Coast left the main channels of this commerce intact.

The British Government was determined to ban the trafficking of slaves conducted by the French in the Indian Ocean. But the Moresby Treaty was revealed to be ineffective, as the slave trade continued to take place on neutral vessels.

Yet, on January 1, 1823, Farquhar defined the Moresby Treaty as a “successful result of those measures of impressing upon the Imaum the solid advantages which he must expect to derive from the continuance of the friendship and protection of Great Britain.”⁷⁴

At the beginning of 1829, Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id decided to move his court from Muscat to Zanzibar, where he ordered the building of a magnificent palace in Mtoni, at a distance of about three miles from Zanzibar town. This decision was the final act of a series of events, caused by four factors, all of equal importance:

- 1 The Moresby Treaty of 1822 with Great Britain;
- 2 The gradual political-financial fall of the Al Bu Sa'id in the ports of the Gulf;
- 3 The Owen episode in Mombasa and the defeat inflicted by Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id on the Mazrui along the East African coasts;⁷⁵ and
- 4 The new commercial and financial expansion of Zanzibar Island.

After 1826, the Al Bu Sa'id ruler realized that he could not count on British military support in his personal struggles in Arabia and in East Africa. Between 1827 and 1828, Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id was defeated at Basra and in Bahrain. He then asked for a permanent political agent from the Governors of the East India Company in order to advise him daily on the best political line. In 1833, the Wahabi menaced the town of Muscat, and it was agreed that the Muscat government would pay them a tribute of 5,000 German crowns per annum.

The Charter Act of 1833 abolished the commercial privileges of the East India Company (with the exemption of those on salt and opium), ensuring the loss of their monopoly in the Indian Ocean; it was the beginning of free market competition. During these years, the Russian advance in Central Asia led to a new British policy in the Indian Ocean. Within this new changed political situation, starting from 1839, Lord Palmerston (1784–1865) at the Foreign Office revised and completed the chessboard of British strategic security in the Indian Ocean. The capture of the island of Socotra in 1834 and the conquest of Aden in 1839 were part of British political interventions within new European rivalries.

But Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id remained an important protagonist of the Great Game. In this sense, the diplomatic interventions of the Anglo-Indian Government were two: on December 17, 1839, Lieutenant Samuel Hennel (1852–1856), British Resident in the Gulf, obtained from the Al Bu Sa'id the signing of three articles completing the Moresby Treaty of 1822:

- 1 Article 1 defined a new line for patrolling the slave trade that started from Cape Delgado and reached Pasni, an Omani enclave in south-central Asia, and, together with the port of Gwadar, an important center for trade coming from Africa and directed to Central Asia;
- 2 Article 2 provided within this new line the confiscation of all vessels found within it with slaves on board; and
- 3 Article 3 prohibited the selling of free Somali women—in open contrast with Islamic law on slavery—equating this act to piracy and following the same penalties as indicated in the Felony Act of 1811.

The second diplomatic step of the new European relationships with Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id soon followed. On 3 May 1839, Captain Robert Cogan, entrusted by the Governor of Bombay, Lord Auckland (1786–1849), and on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, signed with the Al Bu Sa'id ruler a treaty of commerce composed of seventeen articles.⁷⁶ The first article gave to Great Britain

the privileges of most favored nation, with commercial concessions of five percent duty ad valorem. A British consul was appointed as political agent and advisor for political matters at the court of the Al Bu Sa'id.

At that time, France attempted to obtain from the Omani ruler the same privileges given to the British. In fact, in June 1840, the French received the agreement of Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id for the appointment of a French consul in Zanzibar. The French explorer Charles Guillain called on the island together with Noel, the French consul. But the Al Bu Sa'id ruler was, by chance, in Muscat, and both French representatives were sent back to Bourbon by the son of Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id, Hilal b. Sa'id Al Bu Sa'id, who could not assume this responsibility. However, the sudden French occupation of the port of Nossi Bé in Madagascar in 1841, followed by Mayotte in the Comoro Islands the following year, convinced Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id of the importance of a strong alliance with Great Britain.

Around the second half of the nineteenth century, thanks to the development of clove cultivation in Zanzibar, the growth of slave and ivory trade with the interior of the African continent, and through a wide net of international treaties and agreements with European powers, Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id found himself at the head of a mercantile empire in the Indian Ocean.

On May 4, 1841, Captain Atkins Hamerton (1804–1856) of the 15th Native Infantry of Calcutta was appointed British consul and political agent in Zanzibar. Following an agreement between the East India Company and the Foreign Office, Captain Hamerton had the twofold task of surveying commercial interests of the Company and of corresponding with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in London, as well as with the Government in Bombay, referring “any intelligence of a political nature which it may be interesting to HMG to be made acquainted with.”⁷⁷

In this regard, the intent of British policy was to control Muscat, not Zanzibar; the proof was Bombay's appointment of Hamerton in Muscat. However, the British consul soon had to leave for Zanzibar due to the sudden, and unpredictable, decision taken by Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id to move his court to the East African island. The consequent presence of Atkins Hamerton in Zanzibar cemented a great friendship between Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id and the British consul, who was the only one among corresponding European representatives who spoke Arabic.

In 1845, Broquant was appointed French consul at the court of Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id, but his influence was obscured by the eccentric and bizarre personality of Hamerton. In 1847, Broquant fell ill and died, leaving suspicion among the French that he had been

assassinated. The new French consul, Belligny, was appointed only two years later, in 1849, and left the island in 1855, to be succeeded by Cochet.

In 1842, Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id decided to send one of his representatives to London to ask for military aid against Bahrain. He sent to Queen Victoria the following presents: “two pearl necklaces, two emeralds, an ornament made like a crown, ten cashmeer shawls, one box containing four bottles of otto of roses, four horses.”⁷⁸

On November 20, 1844, Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id signed a treaty of amity and commerce with France.⁷⁹ According to article seventeen of this treaty, the French obtained the concession of the construction of “magazines d'approvisionements,” while the British thought they had the concession for storehouses and arsenals for weapons.

Under the Treaty of Paris in 1815, the French regained sovereignty over the island of Bourbon.⁸⁰ A new collaboration thus developed between Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id and France based on a common interest in finding new ports and commercial bases. However, after taking the potential purchase of Zanzibar and Pemba into consideration, Paris instead turned its attention towards Madagascar. Given the by then unrivalled supremacy of the Royal Navy, backed also by the Bombay Marine in the western stretches of the Indian Ocean, France did not really have any other choice.⁸¹ On October 19, 1856, Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id died aboard a dhow that was taking him to Zanzibar. And on July 5, 1857, Atkins Hamerton himself died in Zanzibar.

Conclusion

In the seventeenth century, the Ya'rubid dynasty encouraged Omani foreign trade through an active naval policy against the Portuguese, combined with an expansion of their mercantile influence in Sub-Saharan East Africa. During the eighteenth century, the Ya'rubids stood at the head of a flourishing mercantile reign that was linked to the coastal cities and to the principal islands of East Africa. The presence of Omani governors often had the goal of controlling trade and imposing taxes; this policy had its roots in the traditional Omani system of exercising power, as well as in the political agreements with local East and Central African chiefs and rulers. In this regard, the Ya'rubids, often assisted by merchants from the coasts of western India and defended by Asian troops, carried to the coasts of Sub-Saharan East Africa the Omani political system. After centuries of relative prosperity, the traditional thalassocratic structures that had developed along the shores of the western Indian Ocean were deeply

altered by the Europeans, who started to extend their economic, political, and territorial ambitions from the land to the sea. Starting in the seventeenth century, the level of influence on main strategic routes controlled by Muslim merchants in the Gulf and in the Indian Ocean was high. The growing mercantile importance of the Indian Ocean as a marine highway was soon to become the focal point of world politics, making the whole region the pivot of world affairs. The promotion of the arms trade and its influence was not only a source of complex relationships between different peoples, cultures, and religions, but it also played an important role in searching for peace among all the littorals of the whole region.

The construction and full realization of the Omani identity, both in Oman and in East Africa, represented one of the main issues for a better understanding of the succeeding powers on the coasts of the Indian Ocean during its main historical and political evolutions. The deep forces of the local policies with the European powers of the epoch, on the one hand, and the study of the goals and the steering gears of power of the West from an overwhelming military and technological superiority, on the other hand, were all elements that developed numerous links between the interior populations of Sub-Saharan East Africa and the main ports and trade centers of Western India, Arabia, and Southwest Asia. Since the end of the eighteenth century, the Al Bu Sa'id empowered the mercantile expansion towards the oceanic coasts of East Africa. Soon, new cultural ties developed within the Indian Ocean, represented by continuous migratory movements. During the nineteenth century, the dominions of Muscat consisted of the island of Bahrain, the coast of Makran, some areas along the Persian coast such as Chah Bahar, the island of Socotra, the islands of Kuria Muria, the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, and adjacent ports of the East African coast from Cape Delgado to Cape Guardafui. It was in this very period that the presence of many economic opportunities in East Africa was a potent factor that led Oman more and more towards Zanzibar. Oman itself, under its dynasties and throughout the progressive evolution of the internal struggles, as well as through the exogenous elements represented by the new regional and international challenges, became a positive example of a true and open and tolerant country to different cultures, economies, and religions.

Notes

- 1 Henceforth, unless otherwise indicated, all dates in this chapter are Common Era (CE).
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- 3 The intense debate on the role of the Swahili culture and civilization is not the main focus of this study. Amongst the many, T. Spear, D. Nurse and T.J. Hinnenbush, M. Horton, T. Spear, R. L. Pouwels, C. M. Eastman, P. Caplan and F. Topan, F. Shami and G. Pwiti, J. Middleton, E. Gilbert, C. M. Kusimba, S. Rockel, T. Vernet, B. A. Mirzai, I. M. Montana, P. Lovejoy, G. Campbell, W. G. Clarence-Smith, P. Machado, A. Sheriff, M. Pearson, O. Prakash, B. Schnepel, M. Wink.
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- 10 The monsoon winds were also economically important before, but also after, the introduction of steam navigation around the second half of the nineteenth century in the Indian Ocean.
- 11 (India Office Records) IOR/L/PS/20/C91/2; R. Mathee, “The Portuguese Presence in the Persian Gulf: an overview,” in *Imperial Crossroads: The Great Powers and the Persian Gulf* ed. J. Macris and S. Kelly (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 26–9.
- 12 W. M. Floor, *The Hispano-Portuguese empire and its contacts with Safavid Persia, the Kingdom of Hormuz and Yarubi Oman from 1489 to 1720: a bibliography of printed publications, 1508–2007* (Lovanii: Peeters, 2007).
- 13 P. Lunde, *Oman History*, Aramco World, <https://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/198303/oman-a.history.htm>.
- 14 See excavations directed by Dr. N. Said al-Jahwari, Head of Archaeology Department, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Sultan Qaboos University, and excavations in Oman by D. Kennet, University of Durham, UK.
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- 21 Giovanni Battista Cairati was an engineer, a military architect, and a protégé of King Philip II of Spain. He designed the fort in a human form which was regarded as the most perfect of God’s creations. This is typical of Renaissance theories. There are 63 cannons. Unesco Fort Jesus.
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- 28 *Ibid.*, 9.
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- 33 Qanat major experts: Dale Lightfoot (Oklahoma State), Peter Magee (Bryn Mawr), Hugh Kennedy (SOAS), Carmen del Cerro (Madrid, Autonoma), Morteza Fattahi (Tehran and Oxford), Maurits Ertsen (Delft), Thierry Gonon (EVEHA), and Professors Chris Gerrard, Ian Bailiff, and Tony Wilkinson, Durham, UK.
- 34 I had the privilege of collaborating on field work and archive research in Balochistan with “The Italian Historical, Anthropological, Ecological, and Archaeological Mission in Makran and Kharan,” which, since 1986, has been operating in the Makran districts of Gwadar, Turbat, and Panjgur with the official licence of the Government of Pakistan.

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- 41 J. Prestholdt, "Mirroring Modernity: on consumerism in cosmopolitan Zanzibar," *Transforming Cultures* ejournal, 4/2 (2009).
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- 44 *Daw* is a Swahili name, not used by the Arabs but adopted by British writers in the incorrect form of dhow. D. Agius, A. Trakadas, T. Gambing, eds., *Ships, Saints and Sealore: Maritime Ethnography of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2011).
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- 46 Ambergris was floating or could be obtained from whales. The Arabs brought this precious product to the West and to China where, starting from the ninth century, it was known as dragon saliva.
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- 48 A claim that has been interpreted in many contradictory ways.
- 49 K. M. Al Balushi, "The Relations between Oman and Baluchistan during Al Yarubi, and Al Bu Sa'id Eras," 57–68.
- 50 The Central Africa Ivory Route, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/2095/>.
- 51 A. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770–1873* (Kenya: Tanzania Publishing House 1987), 81; A. Sheriff, *Dhow and Colonial Economy of Zanzibar 1860–1970* (Oxford: J. Currey, 2005).
- 52 J. Middleton, *The World of The Swahili: An African Mercantile Civilization* (Yale: Yale University Press 2009); A. N. Coutu, "Tracing the links between elephants, humans and ecology during the nineteenth century East African ivory trade: A Bio-archaeological Study," (2013) https://safa.rice.edu/About_SAfA/.
- 53 It has been claimed by some that widows performing *sati*—the ritual suicide by burning, which was officially, but not effectively, abolished on 4 December 1829 by the Anglo-Indian Government under the Bengal presidency of Lord William Bentick (1774–1839)—went to their death wearing their dowry ivory bracelets, forcing every marriage to order new ivory from Africa. Consequently, the demand for ivory was constantly high. This thesis was much debated during the workshop organized by Casa della Cultura, Milan, on 30 June 2015, where Indian history experts from University of Milan affirmed that during the *sati* no ivory bangles were burned, as women took all their jewels off before committing *sati*.
- 54 At the end of the nineteenth century, Tippu Tip owned seven *mashamba* in Africa, a capital worth approximately 50,000 Maria Theresa thalers in total.
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- 56 B. Nicolini, "The Makran-Baluch-African Network in Zanzibar and East Africa during the XIX Century," in *Uncovering the History of Africans in Asia*, ed. S. de Silva and J. P. Angenot (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 81–106.
- 57 The cultivation of cloves in Pemba was less successful than on Zanzibar due to a cyclone that destroyed most of the plants in the first decades of the nineteenth century. S. K. Croucher, *Capitalism and Cloves: an Archaeology of Plantation Life on Nineteenth-Century Zanzibar* (New York: Springer, 2015).
- 58 C. Semple maintained that, since 1763, testimonies of German Crowns minted in Austria came from Yemen and, even earlier, from Jeddah; many coins were sent on from Arabia to India during the nineteenth century. The silver content of the thalers was kept constant at 833.3/1000; therefore, it was considered very reliable, unlike the Spanish dollar which was debased, although it had a higher silver content. Also the Maria Theresa thaler could not be "clipped" because it had an elaborate edge inscription and this made it very popular—spreading throughout the Indian Ocean even reaching Central Asian markets—and people soon began to trust it. C. Semple, *Silver Legend, The Story of the Maria Theresa Thaler* (London: Barzan, 2005).
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- 62 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 63 J. M. Gray, *History of Zanzibar from the Middle Age to 1856* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 180.
- 64 S. B. Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1919, repr. London, 1966), 310–311.
- 65 E. Ingram, *Britain's Persian Connection 1798–1828. Prelude to the Great Game in Asia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
- 66 R. Coupland, *East Africa and its Invaders* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 126.
- 67 B. M. Add. 13772, *Wellesley Papers*, Series I, 5 November 1800–18, Private Secret.
- 68 B. M. Add. 37292, *Wellesley Papers*, Vol. XIX, Proclamation in the Name of His Majesty George III, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, St. Denis, 18 July 1810.
- 69 Fairfax Moresby (1786–1877) was Senior Officer in Mauritius. In 1837, weakened by the tropical climate, he was transferred to the Mediterranean Sea, and in 1862 was appointed Admiral.
- 70 B. M. Add. 41265, *Clarkson Papers*, Letter from Capt. Senior Officer F. Moresby to Gov. Comm. in Chief of Mauritius, Farquhar, 4 April 1821.

- 71 B. M. Add. 41265, *Clarkson Papers*, To Marquis of Hastings, Gov. Gen. of India, 1 October 1821, from Gov. Comm. in Chief of Mauritius Farquhar.
- 72 The original text quotes the date of 8 September 1822. I.O.R. V/23/217/24, Treaties and Engagements concluded between Her Britannic Majesty and His Highness the Imaum of Muskat and between the Honourable East India Company and His Highness, 1799 to 1846; the reprint quotes the date of the signing: 4 September. C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties* (Government of India, 1909), Vol. XI, 245; R. Coupland, *East Africa and its Invaders*, op. cit., 212, maintained that the Treaty was signed on 22 September; see also P. P. Slave Trade Series, 361, Vol. XXV, Correspondence with Sa'id bin Sultan concerning the Moresby Treaty of 1822; R. W. Beachey, "Anti-Slavery and Anti-Slave Trade Decrees and Treaties: Their Aftermath," in *A Collection of Documents on the Slave Trade in Eastern Africa*, ed. R. W. Beachey (London: Africa Book Centre Ltd, 1976), 103–107.
- 73 Penalty confirmed by the Consolidating Act of 1824.
- 74 P. P. Slave Trade Series, Vol. XXV, Correspondence with Sa'id bin Sultan Al Bu Sa'id concerning the Moresby Treaty, Correspondence Relating to Mauritius, n. 1, Copy of Sir R. Farquhar's Despatch dated Mauritius, 1 January 1823, respecting the close of the Slave Traffic by the Imaum of Muscat, addressed to Earl Bathurst. Already laid before Parliament 11 July 1823, n. 556.
- 75 Captain W. F. Owen's expedition had been dispatched essentially because accurate maps of East Africa waters were lacking. When he reached Mombasa in 1824, he prepared plans to eliminate the trade in slaves, and he took possession of Mombasa. London was totally ignoring that the British Establishment at Mombasa had set up a colony of freed slaves, and an order to withdraw Owen's establishment was immediately issued. Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id was bitterly resentful about Owen's enterprise in Mombasa, a feeling immediately exploited by the French. W. F. Owen, *Narrative of Voyages to explore the Eastern Shores of Africa*, 2 vols. (London, 1865).
- 76 Original text sent to Bombay in I.O.R. R/15/1/82, Political Department, Treaty of Commerce between Her Majesty, the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great and Ireland, and Highness, Sultan Seid Syeed Bin Sultan, Imam of Muscat, 24 September 1839. Copy sent to London in F.O. 54/8, Extract from the Convention of Commerce between H.M. the Queen and H.H. the Imaum of Muscat, 31 May 31 1839. Reprint in P. P. Vol. XXXI, The Zanzibar Papers, n. 68, 9–16. The Treaty was to be effective fifteen months after its signing.
- 77 Correspondence concerning Hamerton in *F.O. 54/4 P.R.O.* 1841–42; *F.O. 54/5 P.R.O.* 1843–44; *F.O. 54/6 P.R.O.* 1844–45; *F.O. 54/7 P.R.O.* 1845–46; *F.O. 54/10 P.R.O.* 1846–48; *F.O. 54/12 P.R.O.* 1848–50; *F.O. 54/13 P.R.O.* 1850–54.
- 78 *F. O. 54/4*, Hamerton to Lord Palmerston, 11 February 1842.
- 79 J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1959), vol. 1, 127.
- 80 The Treaty of Paris, 20 November 1815, provided for the restitution of the island of Bourbon. Complete text in G. F. De Martens, *Nouveau Recueil de Trait Martens, 1815, Traitau Recueil de Trait Martens, 1815* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1817–1841), 682ff.
- 81 On 23 March 1819, the Government of Bourbon stipulated a secret treaty with the Sultan of Kilwa: the French would provide military support to the Sultan in exchange for support in retaking Pemba, Zanzibar and the island of Mafia from Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id. In case of success, the French would recognize the authority of the Sultan of Kilwa over the island of Pemba. This treaty was to remain only in French hands to prevent the Sultan from showing it to the British, but it never, in fact, came into effect. The *Ministère de la Maison du Roi* feared British naval superiority and, as a result of further political complications in Europe, the French decided not to place their relations with the increasingly important Sayyid Sa'id b. Sultan Al Bu Sa'id at stake.

