

الوثيقة

يصدرها
مركز الوثائق التاريخية
بدولة البحرين

العدد الخامس - السنته الثالثه - المجلد الرابع - المبريدون ١٩٨٤ م

مجلد

involved in the survey work carried out during the laying of the line in the 1860s.⁽¹⁷⁾ Their general chart of the Persian Gulf was published in two sheets, together with a memorandum, in 1862. It was thought by Admiralty officials to be so good that it was sent to the International Exhibition in the same year as a specimen of English chart drawing, although Constable himself described it as 'not on nearly a large enough scale'. On his return to England Constable used the information he had been collecting for the previous twenty years in the Persian Gulf Pilot, also published by the Admiralty in 1864. Constable's chart and memoir included general hydrographical information on Bahrain but his work was supplemented by the survey and memoir produced by Lieutenant Whish in 1859-60.

In 1863 the abolition of the Indian Navy put a temporary stop to survey work in the Gulf. In theory hydrographical work was to be transferred to the Admiralty and Royal Navy. Constable even supplied the Admiralty with a memorandum in 1862 on the state of the Indian marine surveys and a list of those which still needed to be done.⁽¹⁸⁾ In practice, however, the Royal Navy had hardly enough ships and men available to carry out regular patrols of the Gulf without taking on the

ostensibly more peripheral survey work, and for the following decade, apart from the submarine telegraph drawings and memoirs, the fruit of expensive surveys, were lost'. It was ironic that the hiatus in hydrographic surveying coincided with the tenure of office as Political Resident in the Gulf, of Sir Lewis Pelly whose personal involvement and interest in the area displayed all the qualities of the best surveyors and explorers of the time.

The Arabian and Gulf surveys outlined above provided a considerable body of new information for the British on the navigation of the waters surrounding the Peninsula. However, the work of many of the surveyors went far beyond merely charting the reefs, rocks and shoals of the sea. The manuscript memoirs which accompanied the most important charts provided political and statistical information on the coastal areas of Arabia. Furthermore, after the 1820 peace treaties, a number of Survey officers went beyond the call of duty and independently travelled inland, later recording their experiences in the form of journals, diaries and accounts which they submitted to the British government and often to the newly formed geographical societies in India as well as in England. The political impetus

were re-visited in November 1828 by Brucks and Haines in the **Benares** during a break in the survey of the Persian coast. (14)

This first Gulf survey took nine years to finish. Although there were some omissions and inaccuracies it was a remarkable achievement and resulted in a set of new charts and accompanying descriptive memoirs covering almost all of the coastline from Ras Masandam to the Shatt al-'Arab and down again to southern Baluchistan. (15)

The Persian Gulf survey was followed between 1829 and 1834 by a similarly comprehensive survey of the Red Sea led by Captains Moresby and Elwon in the **Palinurus** and **Benares** and subsequently, between 1833 and 1848, by a survey of the southern coast of Arabia under Haines, J.R. Wellsted and Charles Cruttenden, during which both Wellsted and Cruttenden journeyed to inland Yemen and Wellsted travelled extensively in Oman. At the same time, from the 1820s onwards, survey work was continuously being carried out in the Euphrates and Tigris valleys in connection with the development of steam shipping and the overland route to India.

In spite of the gathering momentum which the work had now built up, the 1840s saw a temporary decline in surveying.

The south Arabian coast survey was interrupted between 1837 and 1844 and for a few years lack of money, pressures on the service from commitments elsewhere and, perhaps most significantly, the official discouragement of Sir Robert Oliver (Superintendent Indian Marine, 1838-49), who believed the surveys to be both useless and a waste of public resources, put surveying work almost completely in abeyance. In 1857, however, the Court of Directors took the decision to revise the Persian Gulf survey of 1820-29 to correct the errors and omissions which had subsequently come to light. The work was carried out by Captain Charles Constable, the son of John Constable, the distinguished English landscape painter. Constable had entered the service in 1839 and since the re-commencement of surveying work in 1844 he had been continuously employed in surveying. He had already, in 1856, submitted a paper to the Bombay Geographical Society pointing out the errors in Guy and Brucks' work which he said had come to his knowledge during his service in the Gulf. (16) Constable was assisted in the **Euphrates** and later the **Marie** by Lieutenant A.W. Stiffe, who after the abolition of the Indian Navy became a Director of the Persian Gulf telegraph line and was involved in the survey work

sophisticated instruments available to the surveyors. It was used by James Horsburgh, Dalrymple's successor as East India Company Hydrographer, in early editions of his **India Directory**. Horsburgh excused the absence in information on the Arabian side of the Gulf with the comment: 'this side of the Gulf is always avoided by European vessels, for it is little known and considered unsafe.' (10) McCluer's charts obviously do not include Bahrain, although it is mentioned briefly both in his Memoir and in Horsburgh.

McCluer's work was only a prelude to the first serious survey of the Gulf which was undertaken by Lieutenants John Michael Guy and George Barnes Brucks between 1820 and 1829. The Court of Directors of the East India Company sent orders at the end of 1815 for a systematic survey to be carried out but the disturbed state of the Gulf made it impossible for several years. In the meantime, however, in November 1817 Lieutenant Thomas Tanner visited the ports and pearl banks of Bahrain and his memoir and survey were published in the third edition of Horsburgh's **India Directory**. (11) The main survey was begun at Ras Masandam, after the conclusion of the third expedition against the Qawasim, by Captain Philip Maguhan in the

Discovery assisted by Lieutenant Guy in the **Psyche**. Maughan gave up the survey because of ill-health in November 1821 and Guy succeeded to the direction of the project. He continued the survey up to Qatar where his place, again vacated because of ill-health, was taken by Lieutenant Brucks who completed the survey of the Arabian coast, including Bahrain and Kuwait, in 1825. (12) During the survey of the Arabian coast Guy reported to the Bombay Government on the help he had received from the Bahrainis:

The Chieftains have invariably behaved in the most friendly manner, especially Shaik Tahnoon of Aboothabee; and the Shaiks of Bahrain who have kept up a communication apprizing one of the parts of the coast we might be likely to be surprized by the Bedouins, with express orders to those under them to afford us every assistance we might require. (13).

Early in 1826 Brucks began work on the Persian coast and islands and by 1828 he had reached the Gulf of Oman. The work was finished at Karachi in 1829 by Lieutenant S.B. Haines, who was later to achieve fame as the surveyor of the southern Arabian coast and first British Resident in Aden. The pearl banks of Bahrain

with a stretch of the Arabian coast between Muscat and Ras al-Hadd. This survey was followed in 1777 with a further one of the Kathiawar coast and the Andaman Islands, by Lieutenant Archibald Blair. At the same time, provoked by the continued loss of East Indiamen in uncharted waters, the East India Company acknowledged the importance of hydrographic surveying in 1779 by appointing Alexander Dalrymple as Company and introduced it to the Admiralty when he was appointed Admiralty Hydrographer in 1795. (7) At the turn of the century a Marine Surveyor-General was also appointed by the Government of Bengal in Calcutta. In Bombay, after the reconstitution of the Marine in 1798, executive control of the service was vested in the Superintendent of Marine, assisted by a Master Attendant and Commodore. The Superintendent was responsible for the civil branch of the service and consequently for its continued surveying activities which for the following half century tended to fluctuate according to the level of enthusiasm of successive incumbents of the post. (8) The main constraints on survey work were, however, the vagaries of war and the consequent financial restrictions placed on the Marine by active service. After the outbreak of war with France

in 1795 surveying operations ceased until the Peace of Amiens in 1802; conditions during the operations against the Qawasim were not really conducive to survey work although, as we have seen, those operations increasingly emphasised the need for better charts. Generally, however, once the survey work had been started and its value to British imperial interests recognised, it continued unabated even when Bombay Marine and Indian Navy vessels were occupied in fighting a war or patrolling the peace.

Survey work in the Gulf proper began in 1785 under Lieutenant John McCluer. Since the departure of the Portuguese, the main shipping line had run up the Persian coast of the Gulf, the Arabian side generally being avoided because of its uncharted currents, rock, shoals, reefs and islands. McCluer, a selftaught surveyor, confined himself to correcting the existing charts (mainly Niebuhr's map of 1765) and produced new charts of the whole north-eastern (Persian) side of the Gulf and of the Shatt al-'Arab as far as Basra, together with a memoir and plans of Muscat cove and Mattrah harbour and views of the coast from Ras al-had north-eastwards. (9)

Low described McCluer's work as 'surprisingly accurate' and 'a great benefit to navigation', in spite of the lack of

1838 the cruisers also increasingly carried out anti-slavery duties and occasionally saw active service, as in the Persian War of 1856-57.

During the 1850s the Indian Navy became increasingly unpopular with the British Government both in India and in London, largely because of the expense of maintaining it. With the exception of the Gulf duties, its primary function after 1830 had become the carrying of mails but the advent of private steamship companies posed a threat to even this activity. The service was abolished in 1863, after which its mail-carrying duties were transferred to Royal Navy under the general control of the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Station.

In addition to its general naval and military duties, between 1772 and its abolition in 1863 the Bombay Marine and Indian Navy also carried out an increasing amount of survey work. Until the 1770s the East India Company had no official charts to guide its captains in eastern waters. It relied on private publishers of charts whose products were often unreliable. Although the Company's primary object was, therefore, to produce more accurate hydrographic charts and consequently safer navigation for its vessels and men, British political interests in the area surrounding India soon stimulated the pro-

duction of more general topographical surveys, and accounts not only of the physical aspects of the coastlines to the east and west of the sub-continent, but also of the inhabitants. Lorimer, in his *Gazetteer*, pointed out that when the Government of Bombay gave their instructions to the commanders of the British expedition against the Qawasim in 1810, the only map with which they could supply the officers was a 'topographical sketch' by a Saiyid Taqi showing the position of eight or nine 'piratical' places to the southwest of Ras al-Khaimah. (5) General knowledge of the Arabian shores of the Gulf was minimal at the beginning of the nineteenth century and this ignorance was thought by the British Government to be the main reason why the Qawasim continued to elude them. After the Bani Bu 'Ali campaign in 1821, Major General Lionel Smith, in command of the British troops, recommended that British ships should cruise 'incessantly' until they came to know the Arabian coast, about which they possessed a 'lamentable ignorance'. (6)

The first surveying expedition was launched by the Government of Bombay in 1772. Under Lieutenants Robinson and Porter in the **Fox** and **Dolphin**, the coasts of Makran, Sind, Kathiawar and part of southern Persia were surveyed, together

formation on Arabia, most of which, because of the authors' training and technical knowledge, is more accurate than that of many of the private individuals. Nor is it limited to topographical descriptions. From the early nineteenth century the British Government of Bombay and the Home Government of the East India Company in London were concerned to find out as much as possible about the areas surrounding the Gulf and the people living there. Any straying from the strict line of duty on the part of its marine officers (for example, excursions inland) was generally condoned by the Bombay Government in the interests of furthering its own stock of knowledge. Furthermore, the attitudes and perspectives of these men who went to the Gulf, the Red Sea and the southern coast of Arabia as part of their Indian Navy service were, in ways which I shall outline below, often more free of the racial and class-based prejudices of their non-official contemporaries and the subsequent accounts they produced — although one could not claim any great literary merit for most of them — offer more information about the object of investigation and less about the authors themselves than those of the more famous private travellers.

The Bombay Marine was

formed in the seventeenth century to protect the East India Company's Surat factory and its local trade. In 1798 it was reconstituted as a regular naval service whose general duties were defined as: protection of trade, carrying Company mails, suppression of piracy and the establishment of maritime peace, and, in time of war, the defence of British possessions in India. (4) In short, its main responsibility was, in the widest sense, the protection of the route to India.

The British expeditions against the Qawasim between 1806 and 1820 established the Marine service as a permanent presence in the Gulf and after the General Treaty of 1820 a Gulf squadron carried out general surveillance duties along both the Arabian and Persian coasts. On 1 May 1830 the Bombay Marine was renamed 'Indian Navy'. It continued its surveillance activities in the Gulf, employing between two and five cruisers which from 1823 were based at Basidu. Between 1835 and 1853 the cruisers patrolled with the specific object of enforcing the 'trucial system' although this duty was not formally recognised until the latter year when the Perpetual Maritime Truce laid down that the peace would be watched over by the British Government who would take steps to ensure its observance. After

OF BAHRAIN

AY MARINE

1785 — 1863

furthermore, to this systematic knowledge was added a sizable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators and gifted travellers. (3)

The other feature of European/ 'Oriental' relations is that Europe, until after the Second World War, has almost always been in a position of strength, if not domination. In other words, that 'systematic knowledge' built up, particularly in the nineteenth century, by the collective enquiring mind of European scholarship can never be divorced from the essential political and social background of European imperialism. Burton, Doughty, Palgrave, the Blunts and others were all products of a particular cultural background which to a greater or lesser extent coloured their outlook on the rest of the world and influenced their perception of the

countries and peoples they visited.

In much the same way, the accounts of British official travellers in Arabia, some of which are the subject of this paper, were conditioned both by the practical political need of the British imperial government to find out more about the people with whom they were dealing and by an inbuilt and often unquestioning attitude in the minds of those officials that their presence could only be regarded as a beneficial and civilizing influence on the indigenous population.

I have chosen in this paper to look at the work of the Indian Navy and its predecessor, the Bombay Marine, largely because the charts, maps and narrative reports produced by its officers during the first half of the nineteenth century constitute a body of source material which has been only partially tapped and which has generally been overshadowed by the memoirs and accounts of the private travellers and scholars. Yet the work of J.R. Wellsted, Charles Constable, S.B. Haines and their contemporaries together deserves as much attention as that of the earlier Niebuhr or later Burton, Doughty and company. As in the work of the independent travellers, the writings, of these British naval officers contain invaluable topographical in-

SOME BRITISH VIEWS

THE WORK OF THE BOMB

AND INDIAN NAVY

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In the past decade numerous books and articles have been published describing, summarising and often lavishly illustrating the accounts of European travellers in Arabia from the sixteenth century onwards. (1) Many of the original memories and diaries of explorers have been reprinted and the accuracy of their descriptions checked and re-checked. New biographies have been written to meet a seemingly insatiable demand for historical information on the Arabian Peninsula and, incidentally, to provide an otherwise ailing publishing world with lucrative copy.

More recently the work of Edward Said, Kathryn Tidrick and others has begun to look critically at the motives and assumptions of European travellers in the Middle East, at the images and perspectives created or reinforced by 'scholars', artists and writers and at the legacy of 'Orientalism' which they have bequeathed to us. (2) Said describes two principal elements present in the relations

between East and West since the middle of the eighteenth century. One has been:

a growing systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology and history:

- 24 *On the dynasty of the sultans of Hormuz see J. Aubin, "Les princes d'Ormuz du XIII au XV siecle", in Journal Asiatique 241 (1953), 77-138; and the same, "Le royaume d'Ormuz au debut du XVI siecle", in Mare Luso-Indicum 2 (1972; appeared 1973), 77-179, especially pp. 134-138.*
- 25 Cf. Rentz (as cited in footnote 23), p. 234; al-Humaydan (dto.), pp. 39, 64.
- 26 See al-Humaydan (op. cit.), pp. 53ff.; cf. also Aubin (1972, as cited in footnote 24), pp. 111-123.
- 27 See al-Humaydan, op. cit., and genealogical table on p.86 there.
- 28 See the sources cited by Al-Humaydan, op. cit., p. 96 note 61; further: G.P. Badger, **History of the Imams and Seyyids of 'Oman**, by Salil-ibn-Razik, from A.D. 661-1856, London 1871 (Hakluyt Society).
- 29 See Badger, op.cit., pp. cxxv and 48; E. de Zambaur, **Manuel de Genealogie et de Chronologie pour l'histoire de l'Islam**, Hannover 1927 (also in Arabic translation, by Z. M. Hasan Bek. H.A. Mahmud et al., **Mu'jam al-ansab wa-lusarat al-hakime fi l-ta'rikh al-Islami**, cairo 1951), table 113.
- 30 Badger, op. cit., p. 50. There is an open contradiction in Salil ibn Raziq's report on the Omant events of these years. First, he mentions the year 887 (1482 A.D.), as falling into the period of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab's second appointment (Badger, op. cit., p. 49 below), but a few lines later (p. 50 on top) he states that 'Umar was appointed for the second time in 894 (1489 A.d.). since the latter date is corroborated by Ibn Majid's contemporary record of 895 we may assume that 894 is the correct date.
- 31 Badger, op. cit., p. 51.

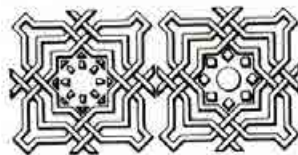
FOOTNOTES

- 1 See the articles "Shihab al-Din Ahmad ibn Madjid" and "Sulayman al-Mahri" (by G. Ferrand) in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, old edition*; and "Ibn Madjid" (by S. Maqbul Ahmad) in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition*; also Tibbetts' introduction to his *Arab Navigation* (cf. below, note 7), p. 7ff.
- 2 See Tibbetts (as cited in note 7), p. 447.
- 3 See Tibbetts, l.c., p. 17ff.
- 4 See Tibbetts, l.c., p. 37ff.
- 5 See Tibbetts, l.c., p. 149, 224, and 267.
- 6 G. Ferrand, *Instructions nautiques et routiers arabes et portugais des XV et XVI siecles, t. i, Paris 1921-23*.
7. G.R. Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean Before the Coming of the Portuguese, London 1971*; cf. a review, by P. Kunitzsch, in *Der Islam* 51 (1974), 344-353.
- 8 Shihab al-Din Ahmad ibn Majid al-Najdi, *Kitab al-fawa'id fi usul ilm al-bahr wa-l-qawaid*, ed. Ibrahim Khuri, Damascus 1971 (*Matbuat Majma al-Lugha al-Arabiya bi-Dimashq. al Ulum al-bahriya inda l-arab, II, I*).
- 9 The section Bahrain in the 10th faida is in Kuri's edition on p.300-302, in the facsimile of the Paris MS. on fol. 69v-70r, and in Tibbetts' English translation on p. 221f.
- 10 The Paris MS (fol. 69v,13) clearly has (not); not indicated in Khuri's edition, p. 300, note 4. The better reading obviously is tarayya a, as in the printed text, Tarabha a not giving a reasonable sense here.
- 11 Khuri's print has Uwalin (p. 300, 5), and in note 5 he quotes from all the three MSS. the reading . This, however, is not correct, because MS. Paris (loc. cit.) clearly has Awaylin , with points and vowels). I follow the Paris reading.
- 12 Besides, the form Awaysl also occurs, see above.
- 13 Citation from the Qur'an, sura 25 (al-Furqan), verse 53; not recognized, and properly translated, by Tibbetts, p. 222.
- 14 Khuri prints , adding (p. 301, note 6) that two MSS. have . The Paris MS. (one of these two) even puts a Fatha over the h (fol. 70r, 2).
- 15 MS. Paris (fol. 70r, 2) has the spelling Sarghal, and this was adopted by Khuri in his print (p.302,1).
- 16 In the last quarter of this section, Tibbetts' translation is somewhat defective, perhaps due to bad MS. tradition since he mostly relied on the Paris MS.
- 17 See *Geographie d'Aboulfeda. Texte arabe par M. (J) Reinaud et M.G. de Slane, Paris 1840, p. 370f., no. 5 Geographie d'Ismael Abou'l Feda, publ. par Ch. Schier, Dresden 1846, p. 206f., no.5; transl. by J. Reinaud, Geographie d'Aboulfeda, vol. ii, 2 (by St. Guyard), Paris 1883, p. 129.*
- 18 Ibn al-Mujawir, *Sifat bilad al-yaman ... al-musammāt bi-ta'riḫ al-mustabsir*, ed. O. Lofgren, i-ii, Leiden 1951 and 1954, see vol. ii, p. 301, 1. The number of 360 villages was also discussed, and declared "manifestly absurd", by G. Rentz, article "Ibn al-Mudjawir", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition*, vol. iii.
- 19 Yaqut, *Mu'jam al-buldan*, ed. F. Wustenfeld, vol. i (Leipzig 1866 reprint Teheran 1965), p. 506 ed. Cairo 1323/1906, vol. ii, p. 72.
- 20 Ibn al-Mujawir, *op. cit.*, p. 300.
- 21 Cf. Yaqut, *op. cit.* in footnote 19, ed. Wustenfeld i, p. 395 ed. Cario I, p. 365, s.v. Awal (who also mentions the gardens, basatin); Abu l-Fida, as cited in footnote 17.
- 22 Similarly, he reports on the contemporary situation on the island of Socotra, cf. Tibbetts, *op. cit.*, p. 223f.
- 23 Cf. W. Caskel, "Eine 'unbekannte' Dynastie in Arabien", in: *Oriens* 2 (1949), 66-71; G. Rentz, article "Djabrids" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed., Supplement, fasc. 3-4* (Leiden 1981), pp. 234f.; Aubin (1972, as cited below in foot-note 24), pp. 123-129; 'Abd al-Latif N. al-Humaydan, "al-Tarikh al-siyasi li-imarat al-Jubur fi Najd wa-sharq al-jazira al-arabiya", in *Majallat Kulliyat Al-Adab, Jamiat al-Basra*, no. 16 (1980), pp. 31-109; and the numerous sources cited in these papers. (I am greatly indebted to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Basra, Dr Qahtan 'Abd al-Sattar Al-Hadihi, for kindly supplying me with the relevant issue of the Basra Majalla.).

The names of the Omani rulers are also attested by other sources.²⁸ Umar ibn al-Khattab al-Yahmadi al-Kharusi is mentioned as **imam** of Oman first in the year 855 (= 1451 A.D.).²⁹ But the Omani chronicle of Salil ibn Raziq reports that, after a longer rule of Sulayman ibn Sulayman ibn Muzaffar al-Nabhani, he was appointed as **imam** a second time in 894 (= 1489 A.D.).³⁰ This date fits exactly together with Ibn Majid's statement who says that Sayf (ibn Ajwad) ibn Zamil invested an Ibadī **imam** in Oman in 893, and after some internal struggles there appointed Umar ibn al-Khattab instead. That points well to the year 894 mentioned in Salil ibn Raziq's chronicle. All these events fall into the period of 893-895 when Ibn Majid was composing his **Kitab al-fawa'id** so that his testimony gains its historical weight — and the more so as it is mostly congruent with what is found in the historical sources proper. It should be added, however, that the Omani chronicle does not mention anything of the role played by the Jabrids in Umar ibn al-Khattab's second appointment.

The activities of Ajwad's son Sayf in Oman, in 893-894, took place at a time when Ajwad was about seventy years old. It seems quite natural that, at this high age, he did not take upon his own shoulders such a military task as a campaign in Oman but that he committed it to one of his sons. The consequences of the Jabrid intervention in Oman did not last for long because the **imam** Umar ibn al-Khattab died soon afterwards. The land then fell back into its internal struggles, and Sulayman, ibn Sulayman al-Nabhani came back to power again and continued to exert his influence in Oman until he was killed in 906 (= 1500 A.D.).³¹

In a concluding evaluation, we can assign Ibn Majid's short description of Bahrain the rank of a valuable historical source. His notice on the political situation in Bahrain and the neighbouring Gulf region around 1490 A.D. results from the author's own contemporary experience and can, thus, well serve to either corroborate or contest the records in other historical works. But also his report on Bahrain's geographical and economical situation at that time, though proved to be largely compiled from the older geographical literature, culminated in the phrase that it was "perfectly well developed" (**fighayat al-amara**), a judgment which Ibn Majid most probably had not adopted and transmitted in his book — even if merely copied from older works — if it was not fully congruent with what was generally known of Bahrain in his time.



Thus, about 1490 the ruler of Bahrain is Ajwad ibn Zamil ibn Husayn al-Amiri, a name well attested in several other sources.²³ He is one of the rulers of the Banu Jabr who were in power in eastern Arabia from the first half of the fifteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century. There is a slight difference in the spelling of his grandfather's name who, in two of the three manuscripts of the **Kitab al-fawaid**, is written with a **sad** (instead of a **sin**), and in one of them even vowelised with a fatha over the first letter, that would be: Hasin instead of the common Husayn (cf. here, footnote 14). Perhaps this is another case of the many misspellings in the manuscripts of the **Kitab al-fawaid**.

Of greater interest are the details told by Ibn Majid on how Ajwad ibn Zamil came into the possession of Bahrain some fifteen years earlier. As it seems Bahrain had been tributary to the sultan of Hormus, whereas the independent territory of the Banu Jabr originally did not include the island of Bahrain and the region of al-Qatif. Following a written contract with the aspirant to the throne of Hormus, whom Ajwad assisted in his struggles against his brothers to gain power there, he was given Bahrain and al-Qatif in 880 (= 1475-76 A.D.) and thus extended the dominion of the Banu Jabr on the eastern coast of Arabia to these two places. After the successful completion of these struggles, when Salghur Shah had become sultan of Hormus, he fulfilled that condition of the contract and gave the island of Bahrain and the region of al-Qatif to Ajwad ibn Zamil.

The name of the sultan of Hormus is given in the manuscripts of the **Kitab al-fawaid** as Sarghal ibn Nurshah which is an obvious distortion, in the manuscripts, of the true name Salghur ibn Turanshah who is well attested in historical sources and who, after the death of his father Fakhr al-Din Turanshah (875 = 1470-71) and the successive short reigns of three of his brothers, had to fight against a fourth brother, Shah Wis, in order to obtain the throne of Hormus for himself.²⁴

Since it has been stated elsewhere that Ajwad ibn Zamil was born in 821 (= 1418 A.D.)²⁵ he was in the age of about fifty-seven when obtaining Bahrain, and seventy-two at the time when Ibn Majid wrote his **Kitab al-fawaid**.

Further we learn from Ibn Majid's description that the Banu Jabr about the same time expanded their field of interest towards the south. It is reported that the son of Ajwad (**waladuhu**), called Sayf ibn Zamil by Ibn Majid, took away Oman from its ruler Sulayman ibn Sulayman ibn Nabhan in 893 (= 1488 A.D.), and invested as a new ruler there an Ibadi **imam** who had to transfer to the Banu Jabr the revenues of the land. It has been pointed out elsewhere that the name Oman here obviously refers to the inner part of that region, the coast-line and the harbours being under the jurisdiction of the rulers of Hormus.²⁶ The name Sayf ibn Zamil cited for Ajwad's son by Ibn Majid necessarily must be an abbreviated form of the full name Sayf ibn Ajwad ibn Zamil, adding the grandfather's name alone and leaving out the father's name. It is confirmed also by other sources that Ajwad had several sons, and Sayf was one of them.²⁷ After a period of internal struggles in Oman, Sayf invested another **imam** there, viz. Umar ibn al-Khattab.

This lively description of the island of Bahrain falls into two distinct sections, a geographical and a historical section.

The geographical section, lively as it may appear to the reader, nevertheless seems to be largely compiled from books, that is from older records in the geographical literature of the Arabs. The most striking item here is the mention of the number of 360 villages (*qarya*) said to exist on the island. It is obvious that a sea captain visiting the harbours in the Persian Gulf hardly could know such a number from his own experience, or from the people contacted by him there. Looking around in the geographical authors cited by Ibn Majid himself by name in his *Kitab al-fawaid*, we find this detail also mentioned in some of their books. Thus, Abu l-Fida (died 732/1331) in his *Taqwim al-buldan* (completed in 721/1321) reports that on the island there are "nearly threehundred country estates and more" (*taqdir thalathmiat daya wa-ma yazidu*).¹⁷ And even before Abu l-Fida, Ibn al-Mujawir (died 690/1291), in his *Tarikh al-mustabsir* (not quoted by Ibn Majid), related that on the island there were 360 villages (*qarya*) of imamite observation, except one of them.¹⁸

The extraordinary high number of 300 or 360 villages on the island of Bahrain, in this tradition, seems to be absurd, as has also been stated elsewhere (see footnote 18), but it can easily be explained from a divergence in the understanding of the name *al-Bahrayn*. In the older Arabic sources, the island known today as Bahrain was usually given the individual name of *Awal* while the name *al-Bahrayn* generally referred to all the land in East Arabia that lies between Basra and Oman (see, for example, instead of many other authors, the *Mujam al-buldan* of Yaqut (died 629/1229)).¹⁹ It is, therefore, obvious that the authors cited before as, following them, also our Ibn Majid, have mistakenly transferred the number of 300 or 360 villages from the land of *al-Bahrayn*, that is the East Arabian coast in its full length, to the island that previously had been known as *Awal* but which, in their times, had attracted the name *al-Bahrayn* upon itself.

The further details about the two waters, the sweet and the salty water, and the filling of a water skin under the sea, are also found in Ibn al-Mujawir who, however, calls the respective place *al-Qali* (instead of Ibn Majid's *al-Qasasir*).²⁰ As for the fruit enumerated by Ibn Majid as being grown on the island, most of them were also mentioned in the preceding geographical books as, e.g., *nakhl* or *nakhil*, *laymun*, and *utrujj*.²¹

Contrary to the geographical section which proved to be mainly derived from written records in the older geographical literature, the statements on the contemporary political situation in the Gulf region necessarily were not taken from books but must go back to information actually gathered by Ibn Majid himself in the harbours of Bahrain, Oman, Hormus, and other places involved.²²

This section of Ibn Majid's description of Bahrain sheds some light not only over Bahrain itself, but also over the neighbouring regions of Hormus and Oman and we learn the names of the men and dynasties ruling over them at Ibn Majid's time, and something about their mutual relations.

First, in the preceding section on the seventh island, Zanzibar, Ibn Majid writes, also touching Bahrain: It (*scil.* Zanzibar) is an unhealthy island (*Jazira wakhima*). In their historical writings, the ancients said: There are two unhealthy islands, one of them deep in the south, which is this island (*viz.* Zanzibar), and the other one high up in the north, which is Bahrain, also called *Awal*, and especially so when the sun is in the zodiacal sign of Libra (that is, from 23 September to 22 October). Fever and sickness there begin when the citrons start becoming yellow. About this, the poet said, with reference to Bahrain (in the *kamil* metre):

وإذا تریع من أویل قیظها

ودنا الشتا بها فبئس المنزل

"When the summer turns away¹⁰ from *Awayl*¹¹ (i.e. Bahrain), and the winter there is coming, what a bad place to live in it will be".

Immediately hereafter follows the section on Bahrain itself which reads: The eighth island is the afore mentioned Bahrain, also called *Awal*¹². On it, there are three hundred and sixty villages. And on it, there is sweet water in all directions. The most interesting thing there is a place called *al-Qasasir*; there a man can dive into the salty sea with a water skin and fill it with sweet water while being down in the salt water. God, be He exalted, has said 'One (*scil.* of the two waters) sweet and fresh', tasteful to drink, 'and the other one salty and bitter',¹³ because it is mixed, the salty water above and the sweet water below. It stretches down at a length of three tall men, or three fathoms, the salty and underneath the sweet water. Around it (*scil.* Bahrain) there are pearl grounds, and a number of islands all of them also having pearl grounds. They are frequented by nearly a thousand ships. On it there are many Arabic tribes and a great number of merchants. There are many fruit-bearing palm trees which are described in poetical metaphors and in proverbs. Further, there are horses, camels, cows, and sheep, wells of flowing water, pomegranates, figs, olives, citrons, and lemons. It is perfectly well developed (*fighayat al-amara*). At the time of writing this book (i.e., around 1488-1490 A.D.), Bahrain belongs to *Ajwad ibn Zamil ibn Hasin* (or: *Husayn*, or: *Husayn*)¹⁴ *al-Amiri*. He got it, together with *al-Qatif*, from *Sultan Salghur*¹⁵ *ibn Nurshah* (of *Hormus*) on the condition that he helped him against his brothers and brought him into possession of the afore mentioned island of *Hormus*. (The Sultan) gave him a written document confirming this, with the exception of some of its gardens. Thereupon, (*Ajwad*) acted accordingly and helped him into the possession of *Hormus*, and received Bahrain and *al-Qatif* in the year 880 (= 1475-76 A.D.). His son *Sayf ibn Zamil* took *Oman* by force from the *Nabhan* family, namely from *Sulayman ibn Sulayman ibn Nabhan*, in the year 893 (= 1488 A.D.), and he set over them an *Ibadi imam* who had to transfer to him its revenues; and the inhabitants helped him and supported him. Thereupon he (apparently, again *Sayf ibn Zamil*) destroyed all their fortified places and appointed as their ruler *Umar ibn al-Khattab al-Ibadi*.¹⁶