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- 10 Memorandum on Odeyd, op. cit., p.8.
- 11 Foreign Pol. Progs. No. 211, dt Bushire, 16th Sept., 1876 From Capt. Prideaux HBM's Offg. Pol. Resident, Persian Gulf to T.H. Thornton. Off. Secy to the Govt. of India, Foreign Dept. p.5
- 12 Ibid
- 13 Memorandum on Odeyd, op cit., p. 8 Col. Pelly to Bombay Govt., No. 847-218, dt. 31st July, 1871.
- 14 K.V. Political A. Feb., 1877, Nos 1-38, Govt. of India desptach to the Secy. of State, No. 28, dt. 4th Feb. 1876. p 2
- 15 Ibid
- 16 K.V. Pol. A. Feb. 1878. Nos 255-282 op. cit. From the British Agent, Arab Coast Shargah, to the H.B. M's Off. Pol Resident in the Gulf. dt. 17th May. 1877
- 17 Memorandum on Odeyd, op. cit. p. 12. from Lt. Col. Ross to the Govt. of India. No. 1039-209 dt 12th Sept., 1874
- 18 Memordandum on Odeyd. op cit. p 8. Mr. Aitchison to the Govt. of Bombay. No. 1228P. dt 31st May 1872.
- 19 K.V. Pol. A. Feb 1878, Nos 255-282 op. cit. Progs. towards reconciling the Abu Dhabi Chief with the seceders from his tribe. P. 3
- 20 Memordandum on Odeyd. op. cit. p. 10. Ross to Govt. of India. No. 1313-274, dt. 21st Nov., 1874.
- 21 Alleged recent operations against Odeid, P. 3. British Agent's letter No. 72. dt. 17th May 1877.
- 22 From Lt. Col. Ross to Govt. of India, No. 1039-209 dt. 12th Sept 1874 Quoted in a letter from Capt. Prideaux to T.H. Thornton.

## FOOTNOTES



- 1 Foreign Pol. A. July 1876 No. 129/134. Memorandum attached to Trade Report of the Political Agent in Turkish Arabia marked Confidential dt 20th March, 1876.
- 2 Foreign Pol. A Constl. Feb 1879 No. 345-350 Adm. Report of the Persian Gulf Residency and Muscat Pol. Agency for the year 1877-78. From Resident Persian Gulf No. 130, dt 8th July.
- 3 Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf. Oman and Central Arabia, 1, Part 1 B, P. 242.
- 4 Foreign Sec. Jan. 1881 Nos 110/123 K.V. Sec. Jan. 1881 K.V. No. 1 Turkish Jurisdiction in the Persian Gulf. From Secretary of State, Sec. No. 44. dt 12th Nov. 1880.
- 5 Bombay Government Selections, No. XXIV New Series, pp 477-78.
- 6 Bombay Govt. Selections, op. cit. p. 491.
- 7 Memorandum on Odaid by Captain V.F. Prideaux, H.B.M's Political Resident. Persian Gulf, dt Bushire, 14th Sept. 1876, P. 7.
- 8 Ibid, p 8 Col. Pelly to Bombay Government, No. 848-219, dt. 31st July. 1871
- 9 K.V. Pol. A. February 1878 Nos. 255-282. Proceedings towards reconciling the Abu Dhabi Chief with the seceders from his tribe pp2-3.

ernments. Already the naval power of the British Government was supreme in the Gulf by virtue of its accepting the charge of policing these waters. The transfer of a portion of this responsibility to another authority was destined to diminish to some extent British local prestige. Moreover, if the Ottoman Government increased their naval force in the Gulf in consequence of their increased responsibilities, it would lead to further complications. The Persian Government which so far had no vessel of war in these waters, (and it was of great importance to the British that she should have none), was bound to look upon with suspicion the presence of a large Turkish fleet in the

Gulf<sup>34</sup>. These and many other related questions continued to vex Anglo-Ottoman relations throughout the century and needed to be sorted out through a policy of mutual response and reconciliation.

The above survey of Anglo-Ottoman relations with reference to al Udaid from the year 1836 to 1876 is illustrative of the fact how a major dispute between two Arab Chiefs which might otherwise have been mutually settled, became in the long run a game of power-politics and Big Power rivalry in the Gulf in which the British and the Ottomans became inextricably involved on grounds of their respective political, economic and strategic interests in the area.

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seventies were proof of the evasive and inconclusive policy-making by British officialdom. The refusal of the British Government to discuss the sensitive issues of the day for fear of disturbing the status quo and provoking Ottoman intervention, and the difficulties of dealing with a Government like Turkey who exercised power without responsibility in the Gulf, needed to give way to a more concrete policy of defining the respective spheres of influence of the Ottomans and the British in order to maintain the balance of power in the Gulf. Thus towards the close of 1878, Col. Nixon, the Political Agent at Baghdad recommended a set of policies to be followed by his Government. His suggestions were that the responsibility for disturbances in the interior of Arabia should be cast on the Ottoman authorities, and disjointed action on the part of British offices as far as possible avoided. That British vessels of war should continue to perform maritime police

duties in the Gulf; but that, as between the tribes, the British should not interfere except through the medium of the Turkish Government<sup>33</sup>.

Though the above proposals were well accepted, yet they contained certain important loopholes. For example, unless the extent of the Port's authority was clearly demarcated it was impossible to determine at what point of the coast the responsibility of the Ottoman Government ended, and that of the Resident in the Gulf began. The next question was what action was taken by the British Government if the maritime peace of the Gulf was disturbed by expeditions proceeding from acknowledged Ottoman ports, and which the Ottoman authorities were unable or unwilling to put down. And finally, a far more important consideration was the effect which the recognition of Ottoman rights and obligations was likely to produce upon the other two parties interested in the Gulf — the British and the Persian Gov-

terference to maintaining the peace at sea. But if the Chief of Udaid was compelled to submit to Abu Dhabi, then the task of keeping him to his allegiance would also devolve upon the British in view of the long distance separating the two places. So the best course for the British Government was to demand reparations by force if necessary from the Udaid Chief, but not to take any further step to compel him to submit to Abu Dhabi. Thereby the British "may easily and with honor escape" from the humiliating position created by the refusal of the Udaid Chief to submit to Abu Dhabi<sup>30</sup>.

In the year 1878, the Ottoman Empire and the British Government were on the brink of a direct collision when Col. Ross accompanied Zayed in an attack on Udaid and the Qibaisat fled to al Bidaa. As Udaid was calimed as Ottoman territory and the Porte protested and demanded an explanation. The British Government viewed this claim "to be open to ques-

tion" and refused to discuss with the Porte in regard to the status of Udaid<sup>31</sup>. In further defence of their operations, Commander Wodehouse of Her Majesty's Ship

Teazer quoted at length from an earlier letter of Col. Prideaux to the Government of India that the independence of the Trucial Chief of Abu Dhabi was recognized by the treaties signed by the British with him. "It would be injurious both to our interests and our prestige if we allowed that independence to be infringed" by permitting a section of his tribe "to shelter itself under the protection of a foreign power whenever it may have a difference with the superior Chief."<sup>32</sup>.

Notwithstanding this change in British policy, the spread of Ottoman influence over the Trucial states, and the unsettled state of affairs continuing in Qatar and al Udaid emphasized the need for clear-cut policies. But far from solving the basic problems, protracted discussion throughout the decade of the

Secretary of State for India, Lord Salisbury instructed the British Ambassador at Constantinople M.r Layard to inform the Ottoman authorities that the Government "would not permit the peace of the Gulf to be disurbed by expeditions which either proceed from ports like El-Bidaa, in actual Turkish possession, or are organized by tribes recognizing Turkish supremacy and despatch from the territories of independent Chiefs who are too weak to prevent the abuse of their ports." <sup>26</sup>. The result was that the Ottoman Government replied saying that the inquiries which they had made from the Governor of Bussorah, had not only failed to corroborate the allegations in Mr. Layard's letter, but that perfect tranquillity reigned in the Gulf. The Chief of Udaid too characterized the accusations of the British Agency on the Arab Coast as "malicious fabrications" <sup>27</sup>. Faced with this situation the British Government at length decided to adopt a more hard-line atti-

tude. Accordingly the measures which the Resident was instructed to take were – a) to use his best endeavours to promote a reunion between the seceders and the main body of the Beni Yas; b) to assist, if necessary, the Trucial Chief of Abu Dhabi in coercing the seceders <sup>28</sup>. But so far as the particular case of Udaid was concerned, Lord Salisbury advised that no reference should be made to it by Mr. Layard in his address to the Ottoman Government. Because "it was doubtful whether that Government exercised any substantial authority over Odeid, and inexpedient to provide discussion of the point" <sup>29</sup>. The decision of the Government of India taken in May 1877 to exercise coercion on the Udaid Chief started on a fresh line of policy "perhaps insensibly" according to C.V. Aitchison. Because till then the British Government had endeavoured to keep clear of entanglement in the disordered politics of the Arab tribes and to limit their in-

ernment that "the question of the relations existing between Guttur and the Turkish Government should remain in abeyance." On the contrary, Capt. Prideaux was more inclined to accept Col. Ross's opinion "that the British Government should in some formal way recognise the pretensions of Turkey to territorial sovereignty upon the Arab Coast up to a certain point, and no further"<sup>23</sup>. The Resident further argued, that the possession of the Qatar coast with Al Bidaa, Wakra, Udaid and one or two other little ports situated on it, but which are almost inaccessible to vessels of any size, will confer no advantage whatever upon the Ottomans. He therefore suggested that it would be very advantageous to British interests "if in a spirit of friendly concession the Turkish Government could be induced to waive their claims to all that portion of the Arab coast which lies beyond a point somewhat to the southward of Ojair in the elbow of the Bay of

Bahrain"<sup>24</sup>.

The Government of India supported Col. Prideaux's view that the Ottoman Government should be held responsible for the disturbances committed within its jurisdiction in the Gulf, and should therefore be moved to enforce the payment of compensation by the Chief of al Bidaa for the Abu Dhabi boat plundered by his subjects, while the British Government should itself deal with Udaid. But with regard to the question of delimitation of Ottoman sovereignty on the southern shores of the Gulf, the Government of India did not support Col. Prideaux. There were many objections to this proposal primarily among which was that the state of affairs was "not of sufficient gravity to warrant the adoption of so important and delicate a step as the opening of negotiations for the purpose of marking off the exact limits of Turkish supremacy on the Arabian Coast of the Persian Gulf would be"<sup>25</sup>.

But at the same time, the

In 1874, Lt. Col. Ross wrote to the Government of India that Shaikh Zayed had received a letter from the local officials to the effect that the Ottoman Government claimed Udaid as under their protection<sup>20</sup>. But no action being taken on these letters by the British Government, the Chief of Abu Dhabi was neither able to take any measures by sea against the Qibaisat, due to his treaty engagements with the British Government, nor was it possible for him to do so by land, because of the impossible nature of the land between Abu Dhabi and Udaid. Taking advantage of these difficulties, the Udaid Chief refused to submit to the terms of "unconditional allegiance" demanded by Shaikh Zayed and even went to the extent of threatening to place himself under Ottoman protection if coercion was used against him. Writing on this subject, the Acting Political Resident, Col. Prideaux pointed out that the Chief and the people of Udaid were actually paying

a small sum annually toward the support of the Turkish Zaptiehs at al Bidaa<sup>21</sup>. With the ascendancy of Ottoman interests and a corresponding decline of British influence along the Qatar coast, Col. Ross pointed out that the chief cause of embarrassment as regards the maintenance of peace and neutrality by sea in that quarter was in the uncertainty as to the question with whom the actual responsibility lay<sup>22</sup>.

The occurrence of certain disturbances in 1876 in the harbour of al Bidaa and in the ports belonging to the Udaid Chief led the officiating Political Resident, Capt. Prideaux to realize that it was imperative for the British to regain their influence in an area where their interests were so largely involved. Considering the relative positions of the British and the Ottoman Governments and in view of the danger of undefined responsibility, Prideaux was not in favour of Sir Lewis Pelly's opinion stated earlier (27th Oct, 1873) to the Gov-

In order to avoid the violation of the Maritime Treaty, the course of action which the British Government decided to undertake was to instruct Col. Pelly not to interfere, in the Udaid dispute unless he apprehended a breach of the peace at sea between the parties. But at the same time he was ordered to report at once if there was any overt action indicating the intention of the Ottomans to establish their supremacy at Udaid<sup>18</sup>. So far as the Chief of Abu Dhabi was concerned, he was to be told that not only would the Government of India give no countenance to any expedition on his part by sea, but that they would take active measures to prevent it. The policy of the Government of India was not to go beyond enforcing the Udaid seceders or recognize the supremacy of the Abu Dhabi Chief. On no account did the Government of India intend to support the chief of Abu Dhabi in his designs against the continued existence of the settlement of

Udaid. The reasons behind this policy were that if the Udaid settlement was destroyed and its inhabitants deported, then much against the desires of the Government of India, the coast would be left free for the operations of certain tribes, nominally dependent upon the Ottomans, which only the Chief of Abu Dhabi could prevent. Secondly, the restoration of Udaid to Abdu Dhabi would have "the effect of delimiting the authority of the Porte on the southern shore of the Gulf," which might provoke Turkish intervention<sup>19</sup>.

Thus the two questions which henceforward began to feature prominently in Anglo-Ottoman relations in the Gulf and over which British official opinion continued to be divided were:- a) the dependence of Udaid upon Ottoman Turkey and the obligations of the British Government towards the Trucial Chief of Abu Dhabi; and b) the general limits of Ottoman supremacy on the Arabian shore of the Gulf.

an Ottoman officer was stationed at al Bidaa and Jassim paid revenue to the Pasha at al Hasa.

In such a situation, the difficulties that confronted the British Government were multifarious. On the one hand, the chief of Abu Dhabi was a Trucial Chief with whom the British had treaty relations. But on the other hand because al Bidaa did not belong to any tribe having treaty relations with the British Government the latter had no valid ground to object to what extent the Chief submitted to Ottoman authority, as long as he did not disturb the peace by sea or avoided interference with the allies of the British.<sup>15</sup> So far as Udaid was concerned, the British Agent of the Arab Coast at Sharjah ascertained on good authority that "the Udedites are so afraid of Jassim b. Thani and the Turks in Guttur, that they will not revert to allegiance to Abu Dhabi and forsake the Turk. Their subsistence besides is dependent on Guttur which is

another preventive"<sup>16</sup>. To make matters even more complicated, the Ottoman authorities had not till then assumed the government of al Bidaa. In fact, according to Col. Ross, "it is very probable that they are not prepared to assume responsibility for the maritime proceedings of the Chief of people of Bidaa"<sup>17</sup>. The shadowy kind of supremacy which the Porte then claimed over this area and which was represented in a concrete form by the petty force at al Bidaa, caused great injury to British interests "by interfering with that protectorate over legitimate trade which the British have exercised with such beneficial results for nearly 60 years, and by exciting a lawless and defiant spirit among the Arabs of the coast." Moreover the chances that many of the mainland Shaikhs would also shelter themselves under Ottoman protection, whilst the latter power had not formally assumed governmental duties further added to the British apprehension.

like the Shaikh of Al Bidaa, Muhammad b. Thani, he was powerless to prevent the more turbulent sections of his clan to take advantage of the unsettled state of affairs on the Qatar coast<sup>12</sup>. In such a situation, if the questions at issue were simply between the Chief of Abu Dhabi and his refractory tribesmen, it could have been satisfactorily arranged without any great difficulty. But it was to some degree complicated by the fact that Col. Pelly alluded to a report which was current that an Ottoman flag had been transmitted to the Chief of Udaid at the same time as one was received and hoisted by the son of the Chief of Qatar at al Bidaa. What the British feared most at this juncture was that if Shaikh Buti accepted Ottoman protection, his relations with Abdu Dhabi would become further complicated<sup>13</sup>.

As Udaid is coterminous with Qatar, which was under the authority of the Porte, the peculiar political status of al Bidaa, a small port on the

east of the Qatar Promontory was bound to have significant bearing on the relations of Udaid vis-a-vis the Ottoman Government. The latter had for some years past been occupied in establishing their power and influence at al Bidaa. The port lawfully belonged to the old Chief Muhammad b. Thani, who was well-disposed towards the British and himself used the Arab flag. But being old and infirm he was much influenced by his son Jasim who was known to dislike the policy of the British Government — that of non-interference in disputes on land and maintenance of maritime peace — because it checked his proposed designs against Bahrain. He was said to have hailed the arrival of the Ottomans in Nejd with satisfaction, and to have declared himself to be their subject in the hope that he would be able to prosecute his designs against Bahrain under the protection of the Ottoman Flag<sup>14</sup>. A detachment of 30 Arab Zaptiehs or gendarmes, commanded by

and Udaid showed that the continued existence of the latter settlement was what the Abu Dhabi Chief objected to and desired to prevent. What he really wanted was not a mere acknowledgement of his supremacy, but that the seceders should leave Udaid and return to Abu Dhabi, thereby preventing the resettlement of Udaid which interfered with the prosperity of Abu Dhabi by diminishing its trade. But the argument which the Abu Dhabi Chief actually used to complain to the British Resident was the one most likely to influence the British Government — that “if this were allowed to continue, Odeid would become a nest of pirates”<sup>9</sup>.

The position taken up by the Udaid colonists on the other hand, was that Udaid did not belong to Abu Dhabi, and therefore they refused to submit to the former’s authority; that they were desirous of living as an independent society under the trucial flag; and that they have been offered, but have not as yet declined,

the protection of the Ottoman flag<sup>10</sup>.

The British Government as the guardians of general tranquillity in the Gulf, and with treaty obligations towards the Trucial Chiefs, found themselves thrust in a peculiar position as mediators in this dispute. In 1871, Col. Pelly clearly ascertained that Udaid had always, been considered as an integral portion of the territory of the Chief of Abu Dhabi. The Resident further testified to the “praiseworthy moderation and forbearance” of the Abu Dhabi Chief who was “naturally incensed at the defection of his tribesmen”, but had never attempted till then to enforce his claims by any act which might have been deemed inconsistent with his treaty obligations<sup>11</sup>.

So far as the Chief of Udaid, Shaikh Buti b. Khadim was concerned, Col. Ross believed that he was at heart not ill-disposed towards the British Government, and merely wished to be left to rule his district in peace. But,

the largest tribes in Oman, led many of that tribe to take shelter under the protection of other powers until the heavy demands upon them were liquidated. Amongst these were the clan of the Qibaisat who proceeded to establish themselves at Udaid under their Chief Khadim b. Nahman, having left a considerable number of debts unadjusted in Abu Dhabi<sup>5</sup>. Unable to effect a reconciliation between the Chief of Abu Dhabi, Shaikh Khalifa b. Shakbut who was also the supreme Chief of the Beni Yas tribe, and the Udaid Chief, the British Resident permitted the former to adopt his own measures against the seceders. In 1837, when the first successful attempt was made to bring back the seceders, the Abu Dhabi party destroyed Udaid and took measures to render it uninhabitable. The Qibaisat resided quietly at Abu Dhabi until 1849 when their boats instead of returning to that place at the termination of the pearl fishery, proceeded to

the Qatar coast and sought asylum at Al Bidaa<sup>6</sup>. The tactics employed on this occasion by Shaikh Sayyid b. Tannoun were different from that of his uncle, the late Shaikh Khalifah. In 1850, all communications of the seceders with Udaid were cut off so as to force them to live at Abu Dhabi. The power and the resources of the Qibaisat were so crippled by these means, that no further secession was heard of for twenty years. In 1869 however, a party of the clan under Shaikh Buti b. Khadim proceeded to Udaid and began rebuilding it, which naturally gave great umbrage to the Chief of Abu Dhabi<sup>7</sup>.

The Chief of Abu Dhabi claimed that Udaid belonged to him, but it was colonised by certain Arabs who actually, owed him allegiance. Instead of taking personal action against the seceders, the Chief referred the case to the British Resident in conformity with the terms of the maritime truce<sup>8</sup>. The history of the dispute between Abu Dhabi