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Salil-IBN-Razik

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History of the Imâms and Seyyids of 'Omân

From A.D. 661-1856

SALÎL-IBN-RAZÎK



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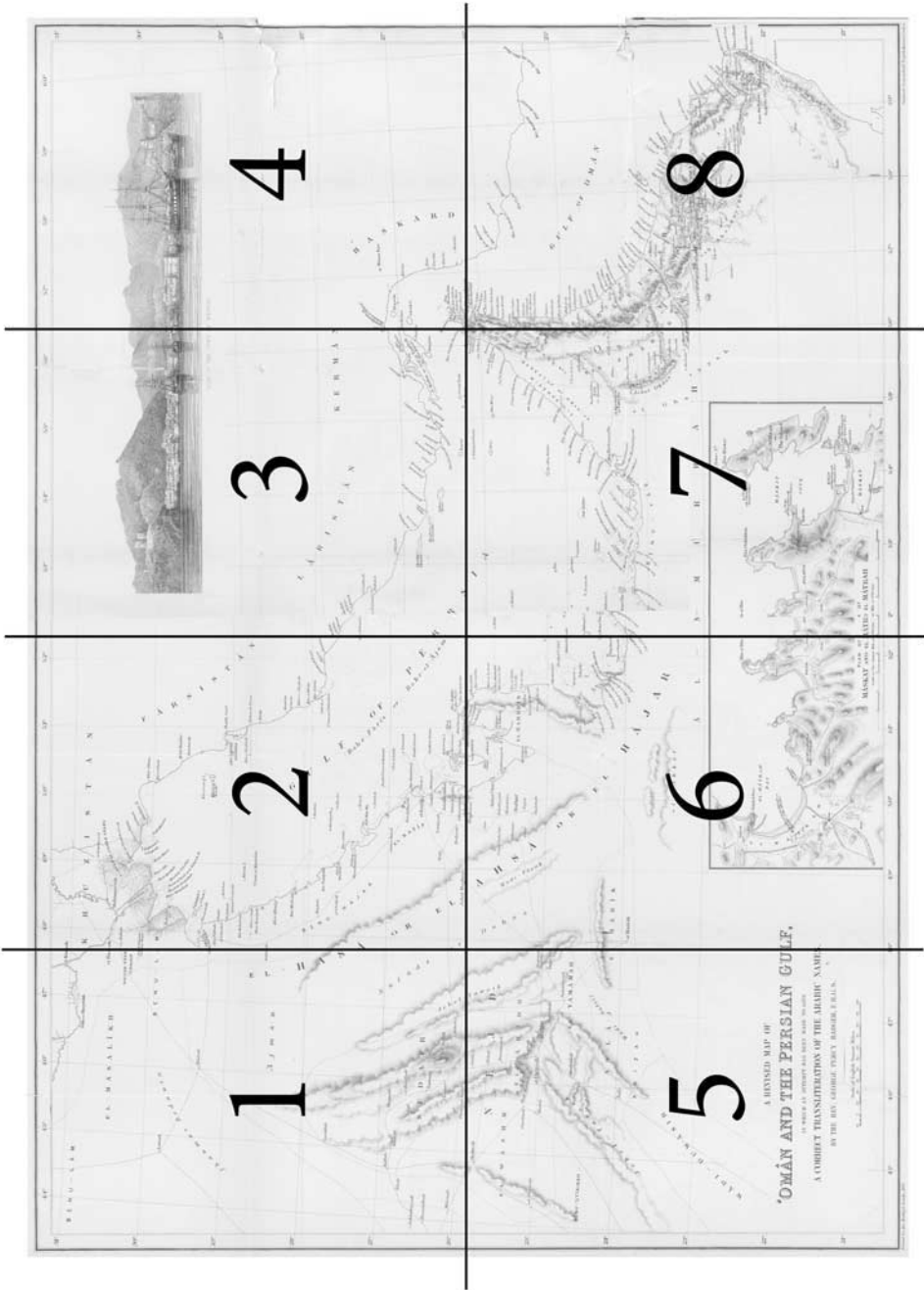
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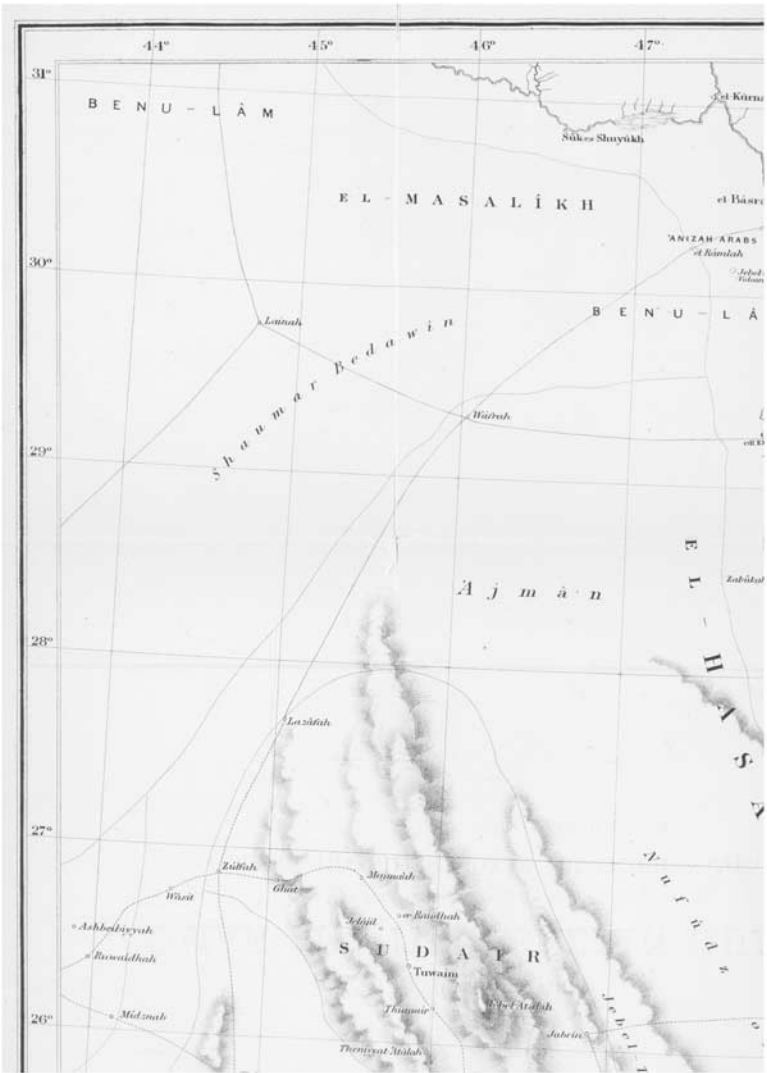


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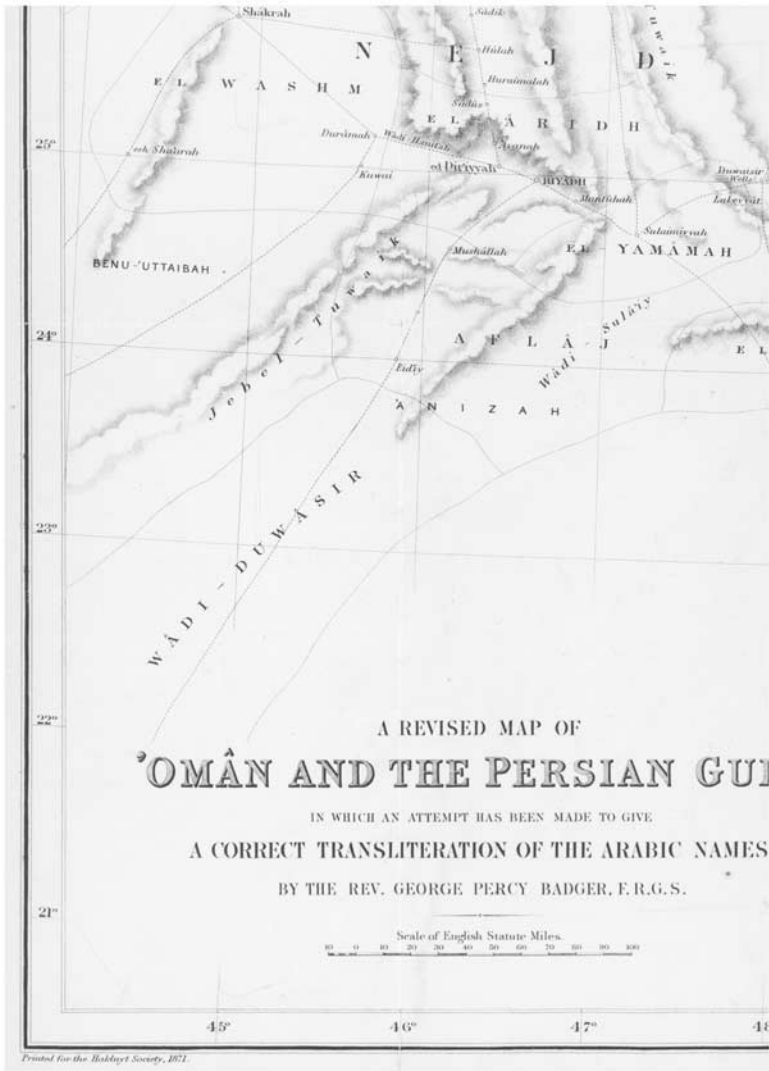
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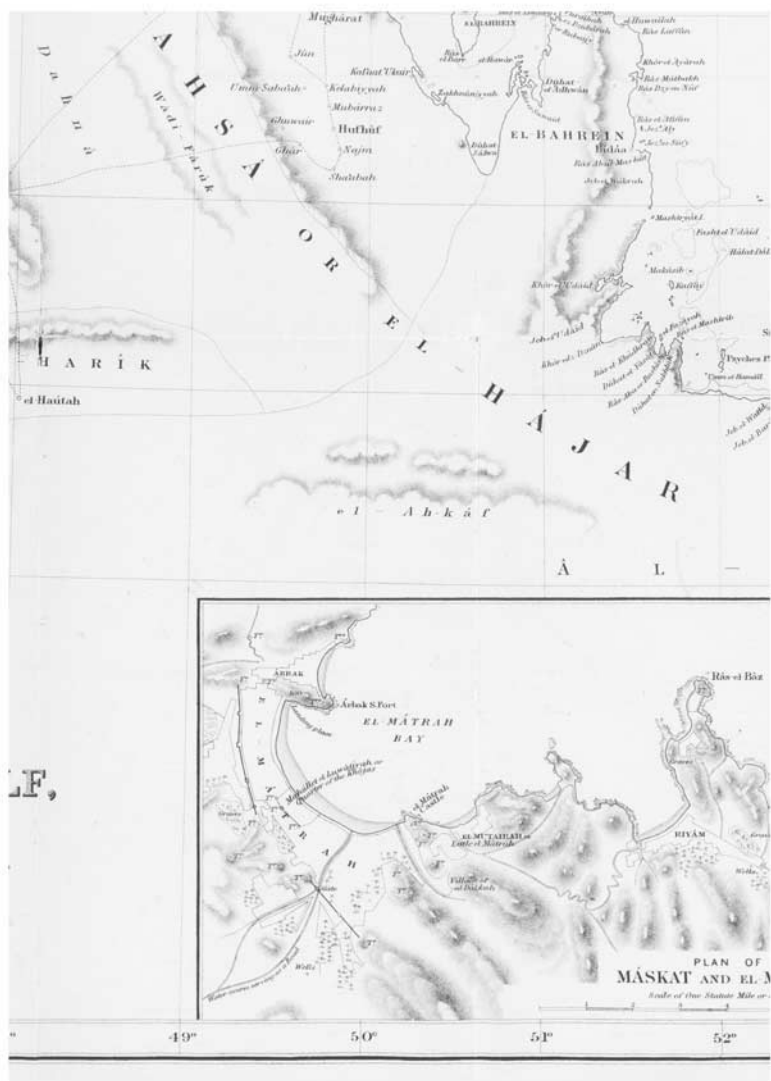














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HISTORY
OF THE
IMÂMS AND SEYYIDS OF 'OMÂN,

BY
SALÎL-IBN-RAZÎK,

FROM A.D. 661-1856;

TRANSLATED
FROM THE ORIGINAL ARABIC,
AND EDITED, WITH
NOTES, APPENDICES, AND AN INTRODUCTION,
CONTINUING THE HISTORY DOWN TO 1870,

BY
GEORGE PERCY BADGER, F.R.G.S.,

LATE CHAPLAIN IN THE PRESIDENCY OF BOMBAY.

With a Map.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY.

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SHORTLY after the death of the Seyyid Sa'îd-bin-Sultân, the sovereign of 'Omân and its East African dependencies, who died A.D. 1856, war became imminent between his two sons, the late Seyyid Thuwainy, who had succeeded to the Principality of 'Omân, and the late Seyyid Mâjid, who claimed Zanzibar, the neighbouring islands, and the Arab settlements on the adjacent mainland. Actual hostilities were prevented by the friendly intervention of the Government of Bombay, and the rival brothers eventually agreed to submit their differences to the arbitration of Lord Canning, then Viceroy of India, and to abide by his decision. As a preliminary measure, a Commission, composed of Brigadier, now Sir William Coghlan, K.C.B., and myself, was appointed to report on the matters in dispute, a duty which involved personal interviews with the Seyyids both at Máskat and Zanzibar. It was while so engaged at the former place, in 1860, that the Seyyid Thuwainy presented me with the original manuscript of this History.

The work embraces the annals of 'Omân from the rise of Islâm down to a very recent period, and is, I believe, unique in the continuity and fulness of its

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narrative. The native records from which the earlier portions are compiled, if they ever came within their reach, have never, to my knowledge, been utilized by foreign authors either in the East or West. Moreover, the dearth of information from other sources respecting 'Omân in bygone ages is extraordinary. The most eminent Arabian historians, such as Abul-fêdâ, el-Belâdzory, et-Tâbary, el-Makîn, Ibn-Khaldûn, and others, contribute little beyond incidental notices of the country, either before or during its dependence on the Eastern Khalîfate. Of its subsequent progress under an indigenous Imâmate they afford us no glimpses whatever.

It is not surprising, therefore, that European scholars have hitherto failed to supply the deficiency. Although the Portuguese held Máskat and several other towns on the coast for a century and a half, yet their annalists, as usual, throw scarcely a ray of light even upon the contemporary government of 'Omân, and we are indebted to the famous Carsten Niebuhr, who visited Máskat in 1765, for the first retrospective insight into the political condition of the 'Omânis. His *résumé* of its antecedent history from the commencement of the sixteenth century, beyond which it does not extend, is substantially authentic, and surpasses in general accuracy the independent researches of subsequent writers. The *Bombay Government Selections*, No. xxiv, for 1856, comprise several papers on 'Omân, past and present : one prepared by the late Colonel Robert Taylor in 1818, entitled *Extracts from Brief Notes containing his-*

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torical and other Information respecting the Province of Oman, opens with an account of the early immigration of the Arab tribes from Yemen and Nejd; but the process of extraction which the *Brief Notes* appear to have undergone has deprived them of any real value which they may have possessed as a contribution to the ancient history of 'Omân. The same *Extracts*, in a very diluted form, with a few glosses designed to be explanatory but positively erroneous, re-appear in the same volume of the *Selections*, dated four years later, under the signature of Mr. Francis Warden, Member of Council at Bombay. In 1835-6, Lieutenant J. R. Wellsted of the Indian Navy visited a considerable portion of 'Omân, and has given us in his *Travels in Arabia* the only trustworthy delineation which we possess of the geography of the interior. Unfortunately, Wellsted's acquaintance even with colloquial Arabic was very limited, and he frankly avows that the difficulties which he had to encounter in the attempt to draw up an historical account of the province were insurmountable. The brilliant pages of Mr. William Gifford Palgrave's *Central and Eastern Arabia* supply the latest addition to our scanty knowledge of 'Omân and the 'Omânîs. Well-read in Oriental literature, thoroughly conversant with Arab customs, a shrewd observer and an accomplished writer, it is to be regretted that his experience of the Principality was confined to a short sojourn at two or three towns on the coast. Equally is it to be deplored that, with such qualifications, he had no authentic records at

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hand to aid him in compiling his comprehensive sketch of its history. He candidly tells us that he recounts the tale as he heard it from the inhabitants, and therefore it is no disparagement to him personally to say, that it is a tissue of fallacies from beginning to end, proved to be such by the whole tenour of this work, the general authenticity of which is admitted by the intelligent of all parties in 'Omân.

Respecting the Principality during the last half century, especially in its relations with the neighbouring Arab tribes and also with the Wahhâbis of Nejd, the volume of the *Selections* above referred to contains much miscellaneous information, communicated to the Indian Government by successive Residents in the Persian Gulf. Some of these papers are admirable as records of current events along the coast, but they are either conspicuously meagre or decidedly misleading as regards the domestic concerns and institutions of the country. For instance, it is impossible to learn from the entire collection what were the functions and prerogatives of the Imâmât; and until within the last ten years the order of succession to the sovereignty over 'Omân was still a moot point with our politicals, which required to be determined by special investigation. Even the native nomenclature is generally so distorted that it is frequently impossible to identify the transliteration with the original. In this respect the latest official dispatches are even worse than those of an earlier date, and betray an utter ignorance of the elements of the Arabic language.

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The course which I have taken with the author's narrative is this :—In the first place, I have omitted the opening Book, which upon examination was found to consist mainly of elaborate genealogies of the Arab tribes of Yemen, interspersed with occasional sketches of their migrations and subsequent settlements, copied for the most part from sources familiar to European Orientalists. From these genealogies, however, I have carefully culled every notice relating to the origin of the tribes now occupying 'Omân, and have availed myself of them in the Introduction to connect the period at which the author sets out with the antecedent history of the country, as far back as documentary evidence carries us.

With the exception of the above named omission and a few irrelevant episodes and laudatory poems, I have given a translation of the whole work. Many readers will probably be wearied with the details of petty wars and intestine broils, which constitute the main feature of the narrative ; on the other hand, however, it is only by a close study of a people, as they describe themselves, that a trustworthy appreciation of their modes of thinking and acting, of their social economy, and of their way of conducting themselves towards other people can be formed. Incidental remarks and coincidences in connection with such matters, however trifling they may at first sight appear, on reflection are frequently found to shed light by which we are enabled to solve satisfactorily more important questions. To the true inquirer with a political or historical object, particulars of the

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kind referred to are always valuable, for on them alone, in Lord Bacon's phrase, can he safely proceed to generals. Nevertheless, to assist those who prefer reading Oriental history relieved of its native tediousness, I have compiled in the Introduction to the translation a tolerably full analysis of the original, together with the conclusions which a careful collation of the different portions of it has enabled me to arrive at.

In the next place, I have availed myself of all the materials within reach, both ancient and modern, to corroborate, modify, or illustrate the author's statements. These will be found in the foot-notes ; and I have thrown into Appendices three dissertations, also a genealogical table of the ruling Âl-Bû-Sa'id dynasty, and a Postscript, in which the Persian Gulf terminus of the Eastern trade, prior to the capture of the Island of Hormûz by the Portuguese, is discussed. The first Appendix, on the *Imâmate*, will, I flatter myself, dispel the many fallacies which are still entertained respecting that institution as it existed in 'Omân. The second, on the *Ibâdhiyah*, contains a more satisfactory account of their creed than any hitherto published, and will serve to correct Mr. Palgrave's serious misconceptions of their origin and doctrines. I am indebted to my esteemed friend, Frederick Ayrton, Esq., of Cairo, for having procured for me, from an authentic source, a summary description of their peculiar tenets. The document is the more valuable owing to the rare mention of the sect even by standard Muslim schoolmen and divines.

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I am under obligation to the same gentleman for the comprehensive narrative given in Appendix C, of the *Murder of the Khalifah 'Aly-ibn-Abi-Tālib, Muhammad's Cousin and Son-in-law*, the event above all others in the history of Islām which gave rise to the primitive *Khawārij*, or Schismatics, of whom the Ibādhiyah are an offshoot. A right conception of these several topics is so indispensable to a clear understanding of the politico-religious system of the 'Omānis, that the reader is advised to peruse the first three Appendices before taking up the narrative.

I have endeavoured as far as possible to identify the localities occurring in the author's narrative; but our very limited knowledge of the geography of the interior has obliged me to pass over, without comment, very many of which even the names are new to us. It is remarkable, and by no means creditable to the British Government in India, that notwithstanding our intimate political and commercial relations with 'Omān for the last century, we know actually less of that country, beyond the coast, than we do of the Lake districts of Central Africa. Wellsted's is the only map of the province which we possess, drawn up from personal observation; and although he has incorporated into it two separate land journeys made by his companion, Lieutenant White-lock, from Barkah to el-Masna'ah and from Shinās across the promontory to Shārjah, it affords little or no certain indication of the numerous towns and villages beyond the restricted routes of the travellers. Its value, however, as a guide to the relative position

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of important places mentioned in these annals is considerable, and the latter have enabled me to make some additions to the native nomenclature of the provincial subdivisions. I have also revised Wellsted's very imperfect spelling of the Arabic names throughout, and have comprised in the revision the littoral of the Persian Gulf and the parts adjacent included in the map accompanying this work. Some improvement in that respect over the "Chart of the Persian Gulf," constructed by Captain Brucks of the Honourable Company's Marine, was made in the chart published by the Admiralty in 1860, which embodies the more recent surveys by Commander C. G. Constable and Lieutenant A. W. Stiffe, both of the Indian Navy; but a great many of the names remain uncorrected, which if pronounced as transliterated into English would not be recognized by the Arabs. It is to be regretted that the Admiralty have omitted the names in the Arabic characters, which in Brucks's chart are printed together with the English. The view of Máskat on the map is from a photograph by the late Surgeon Welsh, who was attached to the Máskat-Zanzibar Commission.

A few words respecting the translation: the Arabic copy from which it is made is written in a legible hand and in an easy style, which I have striven to preserve. The general absence, however, of vowel-points has rendered it very difficult to ascertain the correct pronunciation of names, especially those of obscure localities. The original is undoubtedly the work of Salil-ibn-Razik, but several addi-

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tions appear to have been made to it by a different hand—notably the proem to the Biography of the late Seyyid Sa'id—which I am inclined to attribute to the Muhammad-ibn-Razik, probably the author's brother, mentioned in the first colophon at the end of the volume. The concluding colophon gives the name of the transcriber, who has been very careless about dates.

As a recognized transliteration of the Arabic into Roman characters is still a desideratum, I have eschewed any attempt at etymological exactness in that respect, and have simply endeavoured to convey the correct sound of the original as nearly as possible, without resorting to expedients unfamiliar to the general reader. I give to the *consonants* the same power as in English; to the *vowels* the same sound generally as in Italian: *a* as in *far*; *e* as in *beg*; *i* as in *pit*; *o* as in *store*; *u* as *lunar*. The diphthongs *ai* and *ei*, like the *ie* in *pie* and the *ei* in *vein* respectively. The vocal sound of *ow* in *how* I express by *au*; when doubled in the same word, by *auw*, as in *Tawwām*.

The Arabic suffix when used to denote an ordinary or gentile adjective I have represented by *y*, which somewhat in the same way constitutes the formative of many of our English adjectives, *e.g.*, *windy* from *wind*, *stormy* from *storm*, etc. This terminal *y* should be pronounced with a ringing Italian *i* sound.

The acute accent (´) over a vowel denotes the syllable to be accentuated; attention to this expedient

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will prevent such mispronunciations as Maskát instead of Máskat. The circumflex (^) over a vowel prolongs it: *í* is equivalent to ee, *ú* to oo. The apostrophe before a vowel is intended to express the guttural 'ain; before a consonant the ellipsis of a preceding vowel.

I have retained the prefix demonstrative article *el* wherever it exists as a substantive compound of the designation. Inattention to this peculiarity on the part of Europeans has frequently led to their being misunderstood by the Arabs. As no Arab would say el-Máskat or el-'Aden with the article, so neither would he say Rasták or Bahrein without it.

The word *Ál* before a proper name is not the Arabic article, but a noun signifying family or progeny, e.g., *Ál-Wahíbah*, the Family of Wahíbah. *Bin*, son, is an ellipsis for *Ibn*; thus, *Sa'id-bin-Ahmed*, Sa'id the son of Ahmed. *Benu*, the plural of *Ibn*, prefixed to a proper name, means the children or descendants of the person indicated, and is moreover equivalent to our *tribe* or *clan*. *Bú*, father, an ellipsis for *ábu*, is sometimes prefixed to the name of a man's son, and applied to the father instead of his own, (see notes, p. 156), and sometimes apparently when the pedigree is not well ascertained, or not supposed to be eminent beyond the name given, which I conceive to be the case as regards the reigning dynasty of 'Omân, the *Ál-Bú-Sa'id*, the Family of the Father of Sa'id.

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INTRODUCTION AND ANALYSIS.

ANCIENT Western geographers afford very slight information respecting 'Omān.¹ Ptolemy's account of the Eastern Coast of Arabia contains little more than a list of names, and his map is meagre and distorted. He mentions a *Moscha portus* in latitude 14 deg. N., one degree and a half to the westward of his *Syagros extrema*, and an *Omanum Emporium* in lat. 19 deg. 45 min. These localities are also mentioned by the author of the *Periplús*, who says: "Adjoining to *Suágros* there is a bay which runs deep into the mainland [of] Omana, 600 stadia in width; after which there are high mountainous rocks, steep to and inhabited by a [wild] race that live in caverns and hollows of the cliffs. This appearance of the coast continues for 500 stadia more, at the termination of which lies a harbour called *Moscha*, much frequented on account of the *Sachalitic*² incense which is imported there."³ According to this statement, *Suágros* was at one end of the bay and *Moscha* at the other, 1,100 stadia farther north, or rather north-east, the two places being separated by the mainland of *Omana*. As the *Syagros extrema* of Ptolemy and the *Suágros* of the *Periplús* undoubtedly represent the

The natives usually pronounce the word "'Amān," and Palgrave says that "'Omān" is "our customary European misnomer;" but he is wrong. Ibn-Batūta, it is true, writes it "'Ammān;" but the author of the *Mardsid-il-'Ittila'*, and Arab lexicographers generally, vocalize the name thus: "'Omān," with a *dhāmmah* over the first letter.

² Obviously a Greek form of the Arabic *Sawākhily*,—literally, belonging to the coast,—a designation still commonly applied by the Arabs to the residents on the east coast of Africa.

³ Vincent's *Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients*, vol. ii. p. 344.

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modern Râs-Fârtak, it is clear that the *Moscha* of neither can be Máskat,¹ which is at least 480 miles to the north of that cape. There is no port answering to Ptolemy's *Moscha* where he locates it; but the *Moscha* of the *Periplús* may stand for Bunder-Resût, with which Mr. H. J. Carter identifies it.²

Dean Vincent was puzzled at the occurrence of the names Omanum and Omana on that part of the coast. Mr. Carter, also, who describes a remarkable natural division in the bay of el-Kámar³—the two mountainous tracts there being separated by forty miles of low land—is not surprised that the northern district should bear a specific designation, but inasmuch as the territory now called 'Omân lies so much farther north, he is at a loss to account for the ancient name so low down on the coast. This difficulty disappears when we come to the old Oriental geographers, who make 'Omân conterminous with Hadhramaut, just as Ptolemy makes his *Syagros Extrema* the northern boundary of his *Adramittarum regio*. So el-'Idrîsy:—"and next to the land of Hadhramaut, on the east, is the land of Shájar, in which are the Máhrah tribes. Next to the land of Máhrah is the country of 'Omân, which adjoins it on the north."⁴

'Omân, then, according to this statement, extended as far south as lat. 16 deg. or 17 deg. N. Following the same authority, it was bounded on the east by the Indian Ocean, on the north by the southern shore of the Persian Gulf, and on the west by the province of el-Yamâmah, and therefore comprehended the territory of el-Bahreïn, on the mainland; hence its boundary in that direction may be fixed approximately at longitude 50 deg. 30 min. E. A translation of the

¹ Máskat, with the accent on the first syllable, not on the second, as Englishmen generally pronounce the word.

² See an excellent paper of his, drawn up from personal observation of the coast, and published in the *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* for January, 1851.

³ For the probable origin of this name see note 4, p. 57.

⁴ *Geographia*, Second Climate, section vi. *Rome*, 1619.

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original by el-'Idrîsy from which these deductions are made is given in a foot-note:¹ he describes 'Omân more in detail

¹ "Of the country of 'Omân are the two towns, Sûr and Kalhât, on the shore of the Persian sea; and between Sûr and Kalhât it is a long day's journey by land, less by sea. Between Sûr and Râs-el-Mâhjamah is a distance of five days by land and two days by sea. Râs-el-Mâhjamah is a lofty mountain on the coast, and at Râs-el-Mâhjamah there are pearl-fisheries. From Kalhât by the shore to the town of Sohâr is a distance of two hundred miles, and close to it, on the shore, is the village of Damâr. And from Mâskat to Sohâr, which are both flourishing towns, is four hundred and fifty miles. The town of Sohâr is on the coast of the Persian sea, and it is the most ancient of the towns of 'Omân. In olden times the China ships used to sail from thence, but they ceased to do so. The cause of their discontinuing to sail from the town of 'Omân was this: In the middle of the sea of Persia, which is before Mâskat, is an island called the Island of Kish [or Kaish]; it is a square island, twelve miles wide, and twelve miles long. From Sohâr to this island is two days' run. This island is opposite to the land of el-Yemen, separated from it by a day's run; and on the coast of Kermân are et-Taiz and Shatt. Opposite to Sohâr, on the mainland, at a distance of two days, are two neighbouring districts, near to which is a Wâdi, called Wâdi-el-Falh [Falj, (?) the common designation of a stream or aqueduct in 'Omân]. One is called Sa'al and the other el-'Afr; they are a couple of small but flourishing districts, with palm-trees, cultivation, fruit, and dates. They are about equal in size, and they procure water from the stream of el-Falh [el-Falj]; and the country in which they are situated is called Jezwa [Nezwa?]. And at about half a day is the town of Manj [Manh?]; it is a small town, and below it is the mountain called Sharm, with date-trees and springs of water, and it is situated on the banks of the stream of el-Falh [el-Falj]. And from Manj [Manh] to Sîrr of 'Omân, westward, is two days' journey. It is situated at the foot of Jebel-Sharm, where the stream of el-Falh [el-Falj] takes its rise. It is a large stream, and on it are villages and continuous dwellings, until it falls into the sea near Julfârah. Most of the inhabitants of 'Omân are *Khawârij* [schismatics]. Between Nejd and the country of 'Omân is an extensive desert. From Sohâr to the territory of el-Bahrein is a journey of about twenty days. Adjoining the land of 'Omân to the west and towards the north is the land of el-Yamâmah, one of the towns of which is Hâjar, now in ruins."

It seems strange, at first sight, that el-'Idrîsy should give to the mainland opposite the island of Kaish, (Kishm,) on the south, the name of "Yemen;" but several of the old Arabian geographers included the whole of 'Omân within that province. D'Herbelot notices this fact in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, under the heading of "Iaman." Ibn-Batûta