



1 (B)

PERSIAN GULF

(11) Muscat By MAJOR T. L. C. TOMKINS



2A



2B

FOR our last port of call, we come to a town which, although not strictly on the Gulf, has nevertheless played a very large part in shaping the destiny of these parts, and whose history is by far the most complicated and interesting of all the Gulf Ports. Muscat itself is the principal town and port of Oman, situate practically on the Tropic of Cancer, and in consequence one of the hottest ports of the Arabian coast. S. M. Zwemer, writing in the *Geographical Journal* in 1902, says: "Historically, politically and geographically, Oman has always been the most isolated part of Arabia. The people are even more primitive than Arabs in general. Only Muscat has its eye open to the wide world; Ottoman rule never extended to Oman, not even under Suleiman the Magnificent; nor did any of the early Caliphs long exercise their authority here. The whole country has for centuries been under independent rulers, called Imams or Sultans." Little is known of the history of Oman in the early centuries, beyond that they embraced the Moslem creed about 630 A.D., and from then on were engaged for some centuries in repelling attempts by the Caliphate to subdue the country—usually with great success. The first impact of the West upon Muscat and Oman generally, came, as in most of the Gulf ports, from the Portuguese. Albuquerque's expedition of 1506, having attacked and burnt shipping at Quryat, "Hence he sailed eight leagues farther to Mascate, a place stronger than any of the others, and well manned with People, who resorted to it from all Parts, hearing the destruction of Quryat". After a bombardment from some of his ships, the defenders yielded, but not being able to pay the 10,000 xerafins (about £625) demanded as tribute, the town was plundered and finally burnt. Muscat, at this time, is described by Albuquerque in his 'Commentaries' as: "A large and very populous city surrounded on the inner side with very large mountains, and on the sea-board it is close to the water's edge. . . . The harbour is small, shaped like a horseshoe, and sheltered from every wind; it is the principal entrepôt . . . into which all the ships which navigate these parts must of necessity enter, to avoid the opposite coast, which contains many shallows". By 1515 Portugal had strongly established herself at Hormuz, Muscat and several other ports, but in 1522 a revolt by the natives broke out, in which many of the defenders of the fort at Muscat were killed. This was followed in 1526 by fresh risings, none of which were successful. Muscat was attacked by the Turks in 1550, and the Portuguese garrison compelled to surrender after a bombardment lasting eighteen days, but in 1553 a greatly augmented Portuguese fleet, met the Turks off Muscat and practically annihilated it, thus re-establishing their supremacy in the Gulf. As a matter of fact, the history of Muscat in this century seems to have been one long record of sacking and burning, for in 1581, the Turks under Ali Beg made a surprise attack on the town and sacked it. On the expulsion of the Portuguese from Hormuz and other Persian ports in 1622, Muscat was about the only stronghold left to them, and even this was not destined to last, for in 1643 the Imam of Oman besieged the town, and after two months Muscat surrendered, and by 1650 the Portuguese were finally evicted from the Arabian coast for good.

Muscat was occupied for a few years in the early part of the 17th century by the Persians, but they in their turn were chased

out by Ahmad bin Said, who was elected Imam in 1741. The Muscat Arabs now extended their influence not only over the Gulf, but also in Mombasa and Zanzibar. Ahmed bin Said founded the present dynasty of the Al Bu Saidis, and when in 1798 his successor, Sayyid Sultan seized power, a treaty was made with the East India Company, aimed principally at undermining the influence of the French, with whom we were at war. Extracts from this treaty are not without interest as you will see:—

"Deed of Agreement from the State of the Omanian Asylum (sic) under the approbation of the Imam, the Director, Syud Sultan, whose grandeur be eternal! to the High and Potent English Company, whose greatness be perpetuated! as comprehended in the following articles;—

Article 3. Whereas frequent applications have been made, and are still making, by the French and Dutch people for a Factory, i.e. to seat themselves in either at Maskat or Goombroom, or at the other ports of this Sircar, it is therefore written that whilst warfare shall continue between the English Company and them never shall, from respect to the Company's friendship, be given to them throughout all my territories a place to fix or seat themselves in, nor shall they get even ground to stand upon within this state.

Article 4. As there is a person of the French nation, who has been for these several years in my service, and who hath now gone in command of one of my vessels to the Mauritius, I shall, immediately on his return, dismiss him from my service and expel him."

This agreement was augmented in 1800 by an addition, which allowed the East India Company to maintain a Resident in Muscat:—

"That the friendship of the two States may remain unshook till the end of time, and till the sun and moon have finished their revolving career."

The port of Goombroom (Bandar Abbas) is mentioned above, for the simple reason that as soon as Sayyid Sultan got firmly in the seat of power, he proceeded to extend his dominions by seizing Guadar, Chahbar, Qishm, Hormuz, and Bandar Abbas; from which you can gather that Muscat was quite a power in the Gulf at that time.

The early part of the 19th century was taken up with wars with the Wahhabis of central Arabia, and the suppression of the pirates of the Pirate Coast.

At this time, the ruling Sultan, Sayyid Said, was also Sultan of Zanzibar, and the two countries were not separated until 1861, when after Said's death, one of his sons ruled Zanzibar as an independent Sultan, albeit on payment of an annual subsidy to Muscat, where the other son ruled as Sultan. A British Consulate was established in Muscat in 1867, and in 1891, the Sultan signed the usual declaration referred to in previous articles, whereby he bound himself and his successors not to cede any of his territory to any power without the consent of the British Government.

Sea communications are by the intermediate B.I. Boat, and Muscat is also connected with Jask and Karachi by submarine cable.

(To be continued.)



1 (B)

PERSIAN GULF

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(Continued from page 207.)



2A



2B

The post office was opened about 1856 ; the first cancellation which I have seen being 1 (B) with the figures 309 in a diamond of downward slanting lines from right to left. The number of these bars varies ; specimens having been recorded with either 13, 16 or 17 bars. This was followed by Type 2 (A) and 2 (B) the former with the office name curved in serifed lettering round the top half of the circle, and the latter with the figures 23 in the centre. This was current until about 1872, when it was succeeded by Type 3. This type had two alternative spellings of the office name. In the first instance it was spelt "MASKAT" with an acute accent over the second "A", and in the second type the spelling reverts to the normal "MUSCAT". Whilst Muscat was in the Karachi Circle, Type 3 was used in conjunction with Type 3 (1), which had K-4 between two bars at the top and three at the foot. It can be found either as a duplex, or separately on the same cover, with K-4 cancelling

reason or other there does not seem to be much material about, and I cannot speak with any authority as to what cancellations were in general use. It may even be that the Post Office was closed after the 1914-18 war, as occurred in other parts of the Gulf, but of this I have no knowledge. What is certain however, is that during the 1939-45 war, Muscat came alive with a bang once more, with the issue in 1944 of the famous (or should it be notorious) Al Bu Said commemorative set. These, as is well known, consisted of the current George VI set of India up to the 2 rupees plus the Service set to 1 rupee, overprinted in Arabic "Al Busaid 1363" in black, the occasion being the bi-centenary of the founding of the Al Bu Said dynasty of Muscat and Zanzibar. The exact reason for the necessity of this issue is not apparent to me ; possibly it was a case of political necessity—we were at war you remember—possibly it was a revenue



5



7



M2



8



9

the stamp. On the return of Muscat to the Bombay Circle Type 3 can be found in conjunction with 3 (A) and 3 (B), once again either separately or in duplex. In the early 90's Muscat used Type 4 with four thin bars outside the circle, followed by Type 7, which came into use on the later Queen's head issues and continued during the reign of Edward VII. About 1910 or so, Type 8 was in general use ; a double circle of 30 mm. diameter with the killer arc extending three-quarters of the way round the circle. During the 1914-18 war troops were stationed at Muscat, as it was an important point on the Mesopotamian lines of communication. Active Service covers have been seen from there without stamps, and with a new type of cancellation, Type M.2, a single circle of 25 mm. diameter.

The cover I have also bears a Censor marking as Type C3 in violet. I presume the "M" in the centre of this stands for Muscat, but it is, of course, possible that the cover was censored elsewhere, and the "M" may stand for Military. This cancellation has also been seen on a 1 anna dated 1916. After the war, and until the end of the George V issues, for some

raising ramp ; but I refuse to believe that these stamps were required for postal purposes. A certain amount of colour is lent to this by the fact that genuine used copies of this set appear to be almost non-existent. I say genuine, advisedly, for I have seen, and indeed, been offered many alleged "used" copies, with an apparently genuine cancellation, which were rank forgeries. The overprint on these is in a dull ink quite unlike the originals, and not always too well printed ; the size of these overprints is by no means constant, and altogether have a fishy look about them. The "wrong 'uns" by the way, abound in inverted overprints, all nicely "used" on piece. I imagine that they were overprinted on copies of ordinary Indian stamps, as the cancellation which is invariably 12 February 45 is as dubious as the overprint. There may, of course be genuine used copies of this issue in existence, but I am like the man from Missouri, and I would like to see an entire which had properly passed through the post from there. However,

(Concluded on page 243.)



3



3 (1)



3A



3B



3 (X)



03

Muscat *(Concluded from p. 239)*

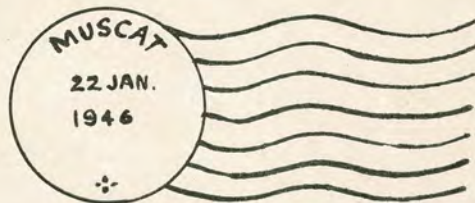
Collectors who are interested to see part of the reference collection on which this article is based should visit the St. Martin's Philatelic Gallery between now and December 1st.

during the same period, ordinary Indian George VI issues were in general use in Muscat, the cancellation being Type 9, which is still in use on the G.B. overprinted issue; and about 1945, Type 14 came into use, similar to that used at Bahrain and Dubai. It consists of a small circle of 25 mm. diameter with seven wavy lines branching off to the right; the year date being given in full.

There is little to be said about either the Silver Weddings or the Olympic overprints, except that used covers seem to be as scarce as from the other ports, and are well worth picking up when seen.

The stamps at present in use are the current G.B. issues with surcharge in annas and rupees, plus the U.P.U. similarly surcharged, though it is quite on the cards that Muscat will follow the example of Aden and change the currency to cents and shillings, however, all that is as the Arabs say "With Allah" or in this case, the Colonial Office, but it would be as well to see that your current sets are complete.

(Final Article to come.)



14

BRITISH COLONIALS

Malta, 31 10/-, 33 ..	20/-	Mauritius, 144 1/-, 145 ..	1/6
39 error w. normal ..	15/-	146 3/6, 147 ..	5/-
112 20/-, 113 ..	35/-	148 ..	40/-
156 15/-, 173 ..	10/-	149 1/6, 161 ..	13/6
217/231 compl. ..	36/6	162 ..	17/6
218/223 (obsol.) ..	4/6	Montserrat, 20 15/-, 25 ..	20/-
226 1/3, 227 ..	2/-	26 2/3, 28 ..	3/-
228 2/6, 229 ..	3/-	29 7/-, 39 ..	2/5
230 6/6, 231 ..	13/-	40 2/9, 40a ..	12/-
Self Govt. ..	27/6	43 7/-, 43a ..	7/-
Mauritius, 77 5/-, 80 ..	5/-	76 12/6, 79 ..	7/6
83 4/-, 90 ..	8/6	81 12/6, 82 ..	17/6
112 2/6, 113 ..	2/6	101/110 ..	50/-
120 2/-, 134 ..	1/-	111 11/6, 112 ..	23/-
141 6/6, 142 ..	3/-	101a/110a ..	11/6

HERBERT LEESER,

52 PALMER STREET, LONDON, S.W.1

ABBey 3280



Type 2

PERSIAN GULF

Guadur

By MAJOR T. L. C. TOMKINS



Type 2 (B)

FOR once we are dealing with a port which, although by no possible stretch of imagination can be said to be on the Gulf, has yet a great connection with Muscat. Actually, Guadur (or Gwadar, or Gwadur) is on the Makran Coast of Baluchistan, about 300 miles West, as the crow flies, from Karachi. The purist may argue that as Baluchistan was part of India, Guadur is not "used Abroad" in the accepted sense of the term, but indeed Guadur and an area some 300 square miles around the port are very much "extra territorial" as you will see.

It was in the year 1793 that a certain Sayyid Sultan got what the French would say "Des idees au-dessous de sa gare" (or would they?). At any rate, he usurped the throne of Muscat from the lawful ruler, and proceeded to enlarge his domains in no mean manner, so much so in fact, that within a comparatively short time he had reduced not only Bandar Abbas and Bahrain, but also Chahbar and Guadur on the Makran Coast to the status of dependencies of Muscat.

Although the first three now belong once again to their rightful owners (the last one Chahbar being attacked and taken by the Persians in 1872), Guadur has remained a possession of the Sultans of Muscat ever since.

By the treaty of 1839 between the Government and the Sultan trading houses and factories were allowed to be established in the Sultan's domains, the relevant Article (No. 2) of the Treaty reading: "British subjects shall be at liberty to purchase, sell, or hire land or houses in the dominions of His Highness the Sultan of Muscat". This included Guadur, and thus when the East Indian Company opened their trading station there, Indian stamps were naturally used.

There was an Assistant Political Officer stationed at Guadur, for in 1865, when a Convention regarding the construction of a Cable was signed, the following clause stated: "Should any disagreements arise in the possessions of the Sultan of Muscat, situate in Mekran between the Telegraph officials and the subjects of His Highness, the said disagreements shall be referred to the Assistant British Political Officer at Gwadur if they cannot be satisfactorily settled on the spot".

The original treaty of 1839 was amended by a new treaty in 1891 and a further one in 1939, neither of which concern us here.

On the splitting up of India in 1948, Baluchistan became part of the Dominion of Pakistan, and Guadur came directly under the British Government so far as Postal arrangements were concerned.

Guadur itself, once the principal port on the Makran Coast, is situate near the southern end of an isthmus connecting

Guadur head to the mainland. The bay is shallow, being for the most part between two and three fathoms deep; ships using the port have to anchor a fair way out, and the port is not so much used as formerly.

The post office opened about 1868, and I have not seen any cancellations of an earlier type than Type 2 (with the office name curved round the top of the circle, in serif type). This is usually found as a duplex with Type 2(B), the number in the second half being "24". This was followed during the time when Guadur was in the Karachi circle, by Type 3 (a) (in which the office name is either GWADUR or GUADUR either used alone or with 3(I) the number in this case being K-4/I, Guadur being sub-office 1 under Muscat. I cannot trace Guadur ever having come under the Bombay circle, and consequently I have never seen either Type 3(A) or 3(B). In the early nineties, Type 4 came into general use with four small bars at the corners.



Type 4



Type 7

This in turn was followed during the early years of the 20th century by Type 7 and in the reign of K.G. V by Type 8 with the killer arc. Round about the start of the '14-18 war, the spelling was changed to GWADUR, this appearing in Type 9. This type also appeared later with the original spelling of GUADUR. Shortly after 1930, Type 8 appeared in a slightly larger size, and was apparently used on non-registered mail only, whereas Type 8 (GUADUR) was used for all purposes. I cannot trace Type 14 having been used at Guadur, although it was common in Muscat during the '39-45 war.

Between October, 1947, and March, 1948, the stamps of India overprinted Pakistan, were in use at Guadur, and were succeeded in April, 1948, by British stamps with surcharge in annas and rupees, as at Muscat.



Type 8



Type 9



Type 3 (a)



3 (I)

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 by the author of this article. ORDER NOW!