

THE TRUCIAL STATES

The Trucial States have for decades effectively been ridiculed by “serious” philatelists. The reasons are understandable and the ridicule perhaps justifiable. However the history of the region and reason for the reputation earned by it’s stamps are worth mentioning. Over the following pages I have tried to summarise this history , the stamps and postal history and end with an elegantly written article reproduced from Stamp Collecting August 6th,1965.

The southeastern Persian Gulf coast was called the "Pirate Coast" by the British, who argued that raiders based there - particularly the 'Qawasim' or 'Joasmees' - now known as the Al Qasimi (the Ruling families of Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah) - harassed British-flagged shipping.

The first in a long series of maritime skirmishes between the Al Qasimi and British vessels took place in 1797, when the British-flagged snow Bassein was seized and released two days later. The cruiser Viper was subsequently attacked off Bushire. The Al Qasimi leader, Saqr bin Rashid Al Qasimi, protested innocence in both cases.



Ras Al Khaimah under attack by the British Expeditionary Force in 1809

British expeditions to protect British Indian trade and interests around Ras al-Khaimah, close to the Strait of Hormuz, led to campaigns against that headquarters and other harbours along the coast in 1809, and again (with far greater destructive force) in 1819. The next year, 1820, a peace treaty was signed to which all the sheikhs of the coast adhered.

The Trucial States (Arabic: الساحل المهادن *As-Sāḥil al-Muhādin* or المتصالح *al-Mutaṣāliḥ*), also known as Trucial Coast, Trucial Oman, Trucial States of the Coast of Oman, and Trucial Sheikhdoms, was the name the British government gave to a group of tribal confederations in southeastern Arabia whose leaders had signed protective treaties, or truces, with the United Kingdom between 1820 and 1892.

The sheikhdoms included:

Abu Dhabi (1820–1971), Ajman (1820–1971), Dubai (1835–1971), Fujairah (1952–1971), Ras Al Khaimah (1820–1972), Sharjah (1820–1971), Umm Al Quwain (1820–1971). The sheikhdoms permanently allied themselves with Great Britain through a series of treaties, beginning with the General Maritime Treaty of 1820 and including the Perpetual Maritime Truce of 1853, until in 1892 they entered into "Exclusivity Agreements" with the British — following on from Bahrain in 1880 — which put them under British protection. This was an unclear status which fell short of a formal protectorate, but required Britain to defend them from external aggression in exchange for exclusive British rights in the states.



1892 Exclusive Agreement

Primarily in reaction to the ambitions of France and Russia, Britain and the Trucial Sheikhdoms established closer bonds in an 1892 treaty, similar to treaties entered into by the UK with other Persian Gulf principalities. The sheikhs agreed not to dispose of any territory except to Britain and not to enter into relationships with any other foreign government without Britain's consent. In return, the British promised to protect the Trucial Coast from all aggression by sea and to help in case of land attack.[citation needed] This treaty, the "Exclusive Agreement", was signed by the Rulers of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah and Umm Al Quwain between on 6 and 8 March 1892. It was subsequently ratified by the Viceroy of India and the British Government in London.

The Advent of Aeroplanes

In the 1920s, the British Government's desire to create an alternative air route from Great Britain to India gave rise to discussions with the rulers of the Trucial States about landing areas, anchorages and fuel depots along the coast. The first aeroplanes to appear were Royal Air Force (RAF) flying boats, used by RAF personnel to survey the area, and by political officers to visit the rulers. Air agreements were initially resisted by the rulers, who suspected interference with their sovereignty, however they also provided a useful source of revenue. In 1932, the demise of the air route through Persia (today's Iran) led to the opening of an airfield at Sharjah. In 1937, Imperial Airways flying boats began to call in at Dubai, and continued to do so for the next ten years.

The Trucial States Council

The Trucial States Council was a forum for the leaders of the emirates to meet, presided over by the British Political Agent. The first meetings took place in 1952, one in spring and one in autumn, and this set a pattern for meetings in future years. The council was purely consultative and had no written constitution and no policy making powers, it provided more than anything a forum for the Rulers to exchange views and

agree common approaches. The British managed to provoke considerable irritation amongst the Rulers, especially Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah, when the Ruler of Fujairah, recognised as a Trucial State by Britain on 21 March 1952, attended his first Trucial States Council.

End of the Trucial States

Harold Wilson's announcement, on 16 January 1968, that all British troops were to be withdrawn from "east of Suez", signalled the end of Britain taking care of foreign policy and defence, as well as arbitrating between the rulers of the Eastern Persian Gulf.

The decision pitched the rulers of the Trucial Coast, together with Qatar and Bahrain, into fevered negotiations to fill the political vacuum that the British withdrawal would leave behind.

The principle of union was first agreed between Abu Dhabi and Dubai on 18 February 1968. The two agreed to work towards bringing the other emirates, including Qatar and Bahrain, into the union. Over the next two years, negotiations and meetings of the rulers followed—often stormy — as a form of union was thrashed out. The nine-state union was never to recover from the October 1969 meeting where British intervention resulted in Bahrain and Qatar were to dropping out of talks, leaving only six emirates to agree on union on 18 July 1971.

On 2 December 1971, Dubai, together with Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain and Fujairah joined in the Act of Union to form the United Arab Emirates. The seventh emirate, Ras Al Khaimah, joined the UAE on 10 February 1972

Source: *Trucial States* - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

Britain managed the Trucial States' external relations (a result of the 1892 'Exclusive Agreement' treaty), including the management of posts and telegraphs - the states were not members of the UPO - the Universal Postal Union). The Government of India opened its first post office in Dubai in 1941 and its operation was taken over by British Postal Agencies, a subsidiary of the GPO (General Post Office) in 1948. Stamps of the time were British stamps surcharged with Rupee values, until in 1959 a set of 'Trucial States' stamps was issued from Dubai.

British postal agencies in Eastern Arabia

Following the Partition of India, the British postal agencies in Eastern Arabia were established. The British agency stamps issued in Muscat were sold in Dubai until 6 January 1961. The agency issued the Trucial States stamps on 7 January 1961



In Abu Dhabi, an agency was opened on Das Island in December 1960 and in Abu Dhabi City on 30 March 1963, using British agency stamps issued in Muscat. The Trucial States stamps were not used in Abu Dhabi. As each emirate took over its own postal administration, the offices closed

Source: *Postage stamps and postal history of the United Arab Emirates* - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

Dunes Stamps

In 1963, Britain ceded responsibility for the Trucial States' postal systems to the Rulers of the Trucial States. An American philatelic entrepreneur, Finbar Kenny, saw the opportunity to create a number of editions of stamps aimed at the lucrative collector's market and in 1964 concluded a deal with the cash-strapped emirate of Ajman to take the franchise for the production of stamps for the government. Kenny had made something of a specialty out of signing these deals, also signing with the Ruler of Fujairah in 1964, and getting involved in a bribery case in the U.S. over his dealings with the government of the Cook Island

These stamps, luridly illustrated and irrelevant to the actual emirates they came from (editions included "Space Research" and "Tokyo Olympic Games", with two odd editions issued from Umm Al Qawain including "British Kings and Queens" and, with summer temperatures in Umm Al Qawain reaching 50° C, "Winter Olympics"), became known collectively as "dunes"

The sale of postage stamps was for a short time a lucrative trade for the emirates, most of whom (with the exception of Abu Dhabi, which struck oil in 1965) had few other sources of revenue. Revenues of up to £70,000 for the poorer states fell, however, to £30,000 with the inevitable saturation of the market. Their sale by 1966 constituted the main source of revenue for the northern Trucial States. Their proliferation eventually devalued them and, because of this, many popular catalogues today do not even list them. Among these editions, following the opening of a "post office" in Manama on 5 July 1966, were nine editions published from 'Manama, Dependency of Ajman'. Few collectors would realise Manama was a remote agricultural village consisting of a few adobe houses on a plain overlooked by the Hajar Mountains.

Kenny's arrangements ended when the United Arab Emirates was formed in December 1971.



Manama Post Office in 2017

Source: *Dunes (stamps)* - <https://en.wikipedia.org>