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United Arab Emirates



what about the trickle of UAE students who have been educated abroad and are beginning to return home with strange ideas? Shaikh Zayed's respected foreign minister, Ahmed Khalifa al-Suweidi, was nonplussed when confronted by a group who had been invited to ask him questions. Instead of the anodyne remarks he anticipated, they said, 'Why can't we vote?' and 'Why should the ruler dispose of oil money in any way he likes?' Visibly shaken, he muttered to a British friend, 'I suppose that is what you call democracy. It is not something we are used to.'

More quotes here
with graphic

Zayed thinks the British are partly to blame. 'The tragedy remains that they did not prepare the area or its people for independence of any sort. We were suddenly left on our own. It was a hasty decision. What worried me most was the failure of Britain to fulfil its responsibilities.'

'We shall learn by our mistakes,' says Zayed, whose emirate contributes ninety per cent of the whole country's budget and who refused to be re-elected president in 1976 unless there was more co-operation from the others. 'How can we build a union when we cannot agree on a new hospital without first determining if the site is on the soil of Dubai, Sharjah, or any other emirate?'

It is the blashy-minded attitude which worries him. Although he resents subsidising his old enemy Shaikh Rashid, now seen publicly as his fraternal good friend, the vice-president, money



The British arrived in the Gulf in the early nineteenth century to protect imperial ambitions and the trade to India. At the time, ships were being hampered unsportingly by the Qawasim tribe of Ras al Khaimah who not only claimed to be descended from the Prophet but had a small armada of 876 vessels and 19000 men with which, they announced, they wanted to protect their coastline.

This, retorted the British, was an excuse for blatant piracy. So, in 1809, after the Qawasim tried to extract tolls from foreign ships and then captured the *Minerva*, killing the crew and ransoming an officer's widow, the British attacked with 2000 Indian troops and a detachment of the Bombay Artillery. They burnt sixty boats and numerous houses, but could find no Qawasim chief to acknowledge a surrender. They tried again in 1811 with equal humiliation. A representative from Bombay returned 'bearing the displeasure of the British government'.

If captured property was not returned. Unfortunately the weather was bad and the representative had to leave before his ultimatum expired. When he returned two days later, he was attacked. He left hurriedly in a gunboat, firing shots which fell short because the powder was damp. No empire is without its small defeats.

Finally a British soldier who could speak Arabic, Captain Thomas Perronet Thompson, was sent out as political agent and, with his wife's calligraphic assistance, drafted the General Treaty for the Cessation of Plunder and Piracy in 1820. Captain Thompson, then aged thirty-seven, was the son of a Methodist lay preacher and he considered one mission in life was to encourage the moral regeneration of the Arabs whom he hoped to convert to Christianity by providing copies of the bible in Arabic. 'If I were called upon to place the different competitors for my father's favour,' his son wrote, 'I should say that a Negro, a Wahhabi, and a chimpanzee run a dead heat for his affections with a Radical tailor a bad fourth.' He was unsuccessful in his attempted reformation, but inspired an evangelical lilt to the treaty, which begins, 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God who hath ordained peace to be a blessing to his creatures.'

The perpetual maritime truce (see Appendix), after which the coast was named the Trucial States, followed in 1853 and was supplemented forty years later, when the Russians and French tried to weaken Britain's hold, with an exclusive agreement in which individual rulers pledged 'on behalf of myself, my heirs, and successors . . . that I will on no account enter into any agreement or correspondence with any power other than the British government . . .' and 'without the assent of the British government I will not consent to the residence within my territory of the agent of any other government'. Now and again the agreements were reinforced by stern warnings, as in 1914 when a Greek merchant looked like becoming too successful. The political resident wrote ominously to the shaihs saying 'it would be altogether disadvantageous if any of you were to grant concessions to foreigners [*sic*] in connexion for pearls or sponges'.

Protecting the Arabs from outside influence and attack was

Protecting the Arabs from outside influence and attack was
the constant theme of the policy which took place



General Maritime Truce 4 May 1853

We, whose seals are hereunto affixed, Sheikh Sultan bin Suggur, Chief of Rass-ool-Kheimah, Sheikh Saeed bin Tahnoon, Chief of Abudhebbec, Sheikh Saeed bin Butye, Chief of Debay, Sheikh Hamud bin Rashed, Chief of Ajman, Sheikh Abdoola bin Rashed, Chief of mm-ool-Keiweyn, having experienced for a series of years the benefits and advantages resulting from a maritime truce contracted amongst ourselves under the mediation of the Resident in the Persian Gulf and renewed from time to time up to the present period, and being fully impressed, therefore, with a sense of the well consequence formerly arising, from the prosecution of our trade at sea, hereby our subjects and dependants were prevented from carrying on the pearl fishery in security, and were exposed to interruption and molestation when passing on their lawful occasions, accordingly we, as aforesaid have determined, for ourselves, our heirs and successors, to conclude together a lasting and inviolable peace from this time forth in perpetuity and do hereby agree to bind ourselves to observe the following conditions:

Article 1

That from this date, viz., 25th Rujjub 1269, 4th May 1853, and hereafter, there shall be a complete cessation of hostilities at sea between our respective subjects and dependants, and a perfect maritime truce shall endure between ourselves and between our successors, respectively, for evermore.

Article 2

That in the event (which God forbid) of any of our subjects or dependants committing an act of aggression at sea upon the lives or property of those of any of the parties to this agreement, we will immediately punish the assailants and proceed to afford full redress to the same being brought to our notice.

honest tribes and within families. Shaikh Rasheed was so
fearless in his raids on Abu Dhabi that travel facilities had to
be stopped for Dubai.



For any time now British and other powers have been
around with

two

where the ruler of a fort and said it had all been a big
mistake. That was the ruler of Rams, a small fishing village. He
wanted independence. It is all very well nowadays to say we
should have drilled for water or started schools, but first we had
to establish peace. Even the oil companies could not explore
without risk to life.'

Thirteen of Shaikh Zayed's predecessors have been murdered
by male relatives. A former political resident, Sir Lionel
Lawford, recalls, 'Some few years ago the shaikh of Abu
Dhabi died and left several sons. The eldest inherited. After
some years a brother asked him to dinner; as the shaikh left
after dinner his brother followed him downstairs and, having
incontinently shot him in the back, reigned in his stead. This
brother was the shaikh when I took over the appointment as
Resident and I have never seen a man with fear so written on
his face. I gave him a year at most to live; he proved me wrong.
He lived eighteen months. He was also asked to dinner by a
brother who, however, did not shoot him in the back; the
shaikh came upon an ambush on his way home and was shot in
the front. The last brother was a wise man and put his nephew
on the throne, and now the sons of the last murdered man are
already maturing their plans to murder the new shaikh.'¹


The new shaikh was Shakhbut, one of four brothers² by the
same mother, Shaikha Salama, a powerful woman who kept a
palm-frond mat hanging on the wall to remind them that it was
once their total worldly possessions. After her husband was
assassinated in 1926, she made the sons promise never to fight
against each other. Islamic punishment for breaking such an





oath is to forfeit the right to paradise and, for this
others, the Saudis were unsuccessful in attempting to bribe
Zayed with £30 million to sell out to them on the Buraimi dis-
pute, and it took longer than anticipated to depose his brother
- forty years.

At first, there was little problem. Life continued in the same
meagre way as it had for centuries. Abu Dhabi, with a popula-
tion of 15000 most of whom lived in *barastis*, had a small in-
come from the sale of postage stamps. The British raised an
army, the Trucial Oman Scouts, mostly rejects from Aden who
murdered their first commanding officer and sold their weapons
to tribesmen. A desultory five-year development plan was
started in 1956 with £381000 provided by Britain.

Then, in 1962, oil was discovered.



Shakhbut, soon overwhelmed with money, refused to spend
any. He crammed it in boxes under his iron bed. When finally
persuaded to use a bank deposit he demanded to count the notes
after a week and was flabbergasted to discover he was paid
interest. He thought it was some form of prank. On holiday in
London, he ran out of cash and sent his secretary back to Abu
Dhabi for another sack of rupees. 'Why didn't he write a
cheque?' asked the bank manager. 'He did,' replied the secre-
tary. 'I've brought it with me.' In Paris in 1960, he was
astounded to be told by his hotel that they would not accept
rupees in settlement of the bill.



Sir Hugh Boustead was sent from Oman to encourage a more
positive attitude to development, without much success as only
one scheme was accomplished during his three and a half years.
This was for piping water from the interior. Shakhbut refused
to commission an initial survey because of the expense - he
knew where the water was, he said. And he was correct - so a
respected American firm who had completed similar work in
Kuwait were asked to tender for the £1 million contract. Un-
happily they were not warned of Shakhbut's aversion to signing
his name to anything that resembled a contract. When one of
their directors brought a legitimate letter of intent for signa-
ture, Shakhbut tore it up, handed back the pieces, and declared,
'You are trying to trick me.'

A British firm, Paulings, was then suggested. 'Having heard

of them, the ruler said he would not deal with a common person as general manager, but that he must have a lord,' recalls Sir Hugh. The request, relayed tactfully to Paulings, was for a 'gentleman of eminence and integrity not connected with the firm'.

Alas, they could think of no one until a director remembered that his father, who was chairman of the South African Automobile Association, had spoken highly of a man with the same job in Britain. What was his name? Ah, Lord Brentford. He became chairman *pro tem.*, and went to Abu Dhabi. 'Shakhbut and I got on well,' he recalls. 'He said, "I am a bedou. All my people are bedou. We are accustomed to living with a camel, on a goat, in the desert. If we spend this money it is going to ruin my people and they are not going to like it." He has been proved right. The character of the people has changed, and I think for the worse.'

Nevertheless Shakhbut had to go. It was no use having a miser as ruler of a fabulously wealthy country. His income was approaching £50 million a year and by 1966 he had spent only £1.75 million. He was even niggardly about paying for his own private army, the Abu Dhabi Defence Force, formed by a British officer, Colonel R. B. 'Tag' Wilson.

Wilson had to struggle with the ruler's miserly ways. 'I had to send a man to count the money to each soldier, checking the numbers and checking their pay. I had to see that the equipment bought in the desert was of the best. One gentleman's steel helmet, and even a British helmet, was in the desert. But I come from Yorkshire and I know something I'm determined to succeed. I got the ruler to let the force was 6000 strong with thirty-six weapons, 1000 motor boats, an armoured car regiment and two machine gun regiments.

Encouraged by the British, Zayed decided finally that there was no alternative to a peaceful overthrow of his brother. Colonel Wilson helped in the planning. 'I would not allow the soldiers to have anything physically to do with removing the ruler because that would set a precedent. We just seized the telephone exchange. Later, I broke into Shakhbut's room. On every pillar there was a mirror, and in the middle of the floor

was a Louis Quinze chair. He obviously sat looking at himself around the room. And there were tins and tins of money; some of it nested in by mice and rats.'

Zayed spoke to his brother on the telephone for an hour, apologized for the inconvenience and said he had no real alternative. Four hours later an RAF Pembroke was taking Shakhbut on the exile route to Bahrain and then London, where he lived in a Kensington mews house for a few months before returning quietly to Al Ain where he now lives contentedly, some say smugly, watching the money rush and its problems pass by. For weeks after the coup Zayed did not dare tell his mother what had happened. When at last he was courageous enough to do so she thought he was joking and refused to be convinced he was telling the truth. The subject was never raised again.

The coup coincided with British withdrawal from Aden and the establishment of a new military headquarters in Bahrain. Forces there and in Sharjah were doubled to six thousand but soldiers were told to be discreet and forbidden to wear uniforms off duty lest they encouraged anti-imperialist thoughts. There were worried murmurings amongst Gulf shaikhs that the fashion for Arab nationalism and Britain's declining status might combine to leave them stranded without 'protection', vulnerable innocents in a world full of muggers.

Do not worry, said their *ex-officio* nursemaid, Britain's defence minister Denis Healey, who understood 'the real risk in the Gulf is that much of the oil is produced in tiny countries which cannot protect themselves and which, if we left, might be the subject of an attack by three at least of their neighbouring large countries going in together'.

It would also, he added, result in millions of unemployed in Britain, although such a parochial consideration would not influence him. 'The risk at the moment is that a disorderly British departure before there is an alternative basis for stability in the area could lead to a prolonged conflict. I agree that if our presence there becomes an irritant rather than a stabilizing factor, that would be one of the signals for us to reduce our presence. But that is not the case at present.'

British resident, Sir Charles Belgrave, was a fool.

In the fifties Dubai was a small enclave of semi-literate traders, ancestors or dissidents from the Bani Yas tribe who had left Abu Dhabi in 1833 to form their own community and continue the traditional part-time activity of inter-family slaughter. Those who lost and lived were usually banished a few miles

down the road to Sharjah and, apart from occasional eye gougings and assassinations, had a gentlemanly, almost sportsmanlike, attitude towards the activities.

Still to Do

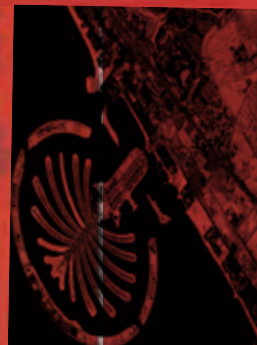
A wide, open sewer euphemistically called a creek separated the town from a rival village, Deira, which had been established a hundred years earlier by merchants seeking refuge from a plague in Dubai. There had been continual arguments about who should collect Customs revenue from the *dhow*s which navigated the creek so, one day in 1939, Shaikh Rashid of Dubai accepted an invitation to dinner and ordered his men to attack during the festivities when his hosts were unprepared. He later excused his abuse of Arab hospitality as a necessary preventive action: if he had not done it to them, they would have done it to him.

His victory was consolidated by marriage in the normal way.

Shaikh Rashid succeeded his father as ruler in 1958, although he had in fact been in control for the previous seventeen years, and began to develop Dubai with a shrewdness which has made him one of the most respected rulers in the Gulf. He borrowed £400,000 from Kuwait in 1961 to dredge and narrow the creek so the water flowed faster, and then he married his daughter Miriam to Shaikh Ahmad of Qatar, a profligate car collector (he is said to have had 452 at one time) whose Byzantine family disputes make Dubai seem as docile as Pleasantville on a Sunday morning, but who was wealthy enough to give Rashid £190,000 to build a bridge across the creek.

Next, a harbour was needed. Rashid's advisers said that four berths would be sufficient. He ordered fifteen, anticipating the unprecedented demand that the money rush would create. 'You could never tell him what to do,' says a former British political resident for the area. 'With Shaikh Zayed it was different - a few stern words, and he did as he was told.'

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In spite of the development, Dubai was still a very small town when Mahdi al-Tajir arrived to work in the Customs office. It had few amenities - only one bank - and was known to seamen as 'the light' because of the solitary electric illumination over the offices of Gray, Mackenzie, the British shipping agents. Customs dues were £37,000 a month.

The main trade was 're-exporting' gold to India and Pakistan, where its importation had been banned since 1947. The gold was ordered through the British Bank of the Middle East or the First National City Bank of New York (Citibank) and was supplied by Mocatta and Goldsmid, Samuel Montague, or the Swiss Bank Corporation. It was sent to Dubai legally in 10-tola bars (3.75 ounces) where it sold for \$35 an ounce, and was then taken by *dhow* 1200 miles across the ocean and smuggled into India where the price was \$68 an ounce.

A couple of years after al-Tajir's arrival, Dubai was importing four million ounces of gold, watches worth \$15.4 million (enough to supply each inhabitant with at least two dozen), and 5.5 million ounces of silver. Customs duty was 4.625 per cent, providing revenue of £3 million in 1958, and £70 million twelve



with goods from ninety-four countries. As well as gold and jewellery, there were textiles from the Far East, tinned food from Eastern Europe, rocket launchers from Northern Ireland routed deviously and presumably secretly to Southern Ireland, rifles being sent to China, 'pharmaceuticals' (although everyone denies any connection with drugs), construction and electrical equipment. The gold trade declined after Mrs Indira Gandhi's emergency powers, which were in force until March 1977, effectively stopped smuggling although gold is still plentiful and relatively inexpensive.³ Some shops sell a kilo of gold bracelets a day with a mark-up of twenty to thirty per cent, compared with 300 per cent in Western Europe and the United States.

Other bargains reach Dubai in a curious way. A Japanese electrical company had one million \$25 transistor radios for sale at \$1.50. They went first to Iran where they were treated with acute suspicion and found no takers. They increased the price in Dubai to \$5.50, formed a joint partnership with a local businessman, and sold the lot. It was no trick. The radios had not been popular in Japan, so the manufacturer held a lottery with the transistors as a prize. The lottery raised \$8 million - the cost of production. As the winner preferred cash, the firm bought back the radios for \$1 million and would have been satisfied to make a modest profit by selling them at \$1.50 each.

Throughout the rest of the Gulf, Dubai became known as a pirate's lair





tive, Shaikh Zayed's status within the Arab world increased as rapidly as his income – £2.5 billion in 1978, ten times the amount of pre-money-rush days.

He has tried to encourage his people to join the bonanza by providing them with free housing, medical care, electricity and up to £50 a month for sending their children to school. He also gives out bits of land on which they can build gimcrack apartments and thus join the entrepreneurial élite by renting at exorbitant prices.

...since the money rush in the
Spate currency is now...
...the capital Abu Dhabi, an island about the size of
Manhattan, has a per capita income of £18000, a bank branch
for every two thousand people, inflation of 166 per cent over
three years, and is the most expensive city in the world for
visiting businessmen.¹ That is significant to economists and to
American diplomats whose embassy is crammed into the only
reasonable accommodation they could find: four single-room
apartments on the top floor of a decaying octagonal building
identified only by the words Oriental Sun Flower, and costing
\$60000 a year rent. The British, whose embassy has 400000
square feet of overgrown garden in the most expensive area, are
building their ambassador a £550000 residence, modest appar-
ently as it 'falls somewhat short of the normal standards for an
ambassador of his rank', explains the Foreign Office.

'It would save everyone a lot of trouble and expense if all the
locals went to live in the south of France or Switzerland and left
the place to a few technocrats in air-conditioned offices,' says
one diplomat. 'The trouble is, they actually like the place. They
are devoted to this basically uninhabitable land.'

That being so, the civilized world is quick to bestow all its
glittering credentials, and the UAE has been admitted to
membership of the UN, WB, IRC, AL, UNESCO, UNICEF,
IMF, ILO, ICAO, FAO, OPEC, OAU, and so on. Every-
one rushes to pay obeisance. John Butter, a Scotsman who
became the ruler's financial adviser in 1970 after twenty years
in Kenya (he spoke no Arabic when he arrived), rationed himself
to a maximum of four bankers a day, and saw 437 in two years.
'It is educative,' he says. 'I realized then that if I did the
opposite to what the experts said I would probably be right.'

But experts provide prestige and the President now has at
least 35000 of them, bureaucrats who announce numerous en-
lightened projects oblivious to the inconvenient fact that only
one in three is carried out, and have devised a constitution with
grand-sounding institutions - supreme and consultative councils,
- regardless of continuing shaikhly rule. Why, he even has a
British-style honours system, with six classifications.

...less in
...the 5-1 ratio, ...
...because the Gulf



SMILE. YOU ARE IN SHARJAH.

Sharjah, down the road, tries hard to be more sophisticated and competes with prestige projects which flatter important foreign countries. There are no taxes, no unions, no foreign exchange controls, and no prohibition on land-owning. 'We are the ultimate in the free enterprise system,' says Bert Paff, an American who was the ruler's adviser until 1978. 'There are lots of opportunities here, but we don't want to become just another tax haven with brass plates and post office boxes. We want to attract major international corporations that can stand on their own feet and contribute something to the economy.' Between 1976 and 1978 the number of hotel rooms increased from 249 to over 1,000 and official brochures boast, 'Sharjah isn't too good to be true. It only sounds that way.'

The office is a sign, 'It is *nice* to be important but it is more important to be *nice*.' Shaikh Sultan of Sharjah, whose degree in agriculture from Cairo University qualifies him as the best educated Emirate ruler, is apologetic. 'It was a mistake,' he says. 'These disputes are one of our teething problems.' Like his father, he was shot dead in 1972 when his older brother, Khalid, was shot dead in a family squabble and Sultan became ruler.

Nowadays, most animosity between the families is relieved in a commercial rather than warlike manner, although federal police had to control the over-excitement when Shaikh Rashid bin Humaid, ruler of Sharjah, had planned a forty-four-storey building to replace his own mini-skyscraper. The Dubai ruler immediately bought the land, and construction was halted. Billboards near the site now proclaim mockingly, 'SMILE. YOU ARE IN SHARJAH.' After her husband was assassinated in 1926, she made the sons promise never to fight against each other. Islamic punishment for breaking such an



What to do in Ras Al Khaima

...in the tiny emirate of Ras al Khaimah, whose ruler is rumoured to be the actual owner of London's Dorchester Hotel, installed one of the world's most advanced earth satellite stations capable of operating 972 telex channels and able to transmit colour television programmes live from anywhere in the world. It does seem like overkill, as there are only twelve telex subscribers and 660 telephones, but Ras al Khaimah has a precedent for such ambition. Its airport – funded, like many other projects, by Saudi Arabia, which needs a friend at the mouth of the Gulf but finds Shaikh Rashid too independent and worries that Sharjah has large financial contributions from Iran – has a runway 3760 metres long to take two jumbo jets at a time. But who wants to go there? Since it was opened in March 1976, its five fire engines, control tower, Customs and immigration have been on twenty-four-hour duty. At first, this was in honour of just one flight a week – from Kuwait.

Shaikh Rashid's meetings set up, and he really works hard.

'At present the classic Miami Beach law is creeping in. Two years ago, no one would have given a \$10 bet that the Marbella Beach Club would have a branch here. It didn't make sense at all. Yet it is practically over-subscribed before it opens. There will be a greater demand for de-luxe facilities like that, and those which don't maintain standards will slowly peter out.

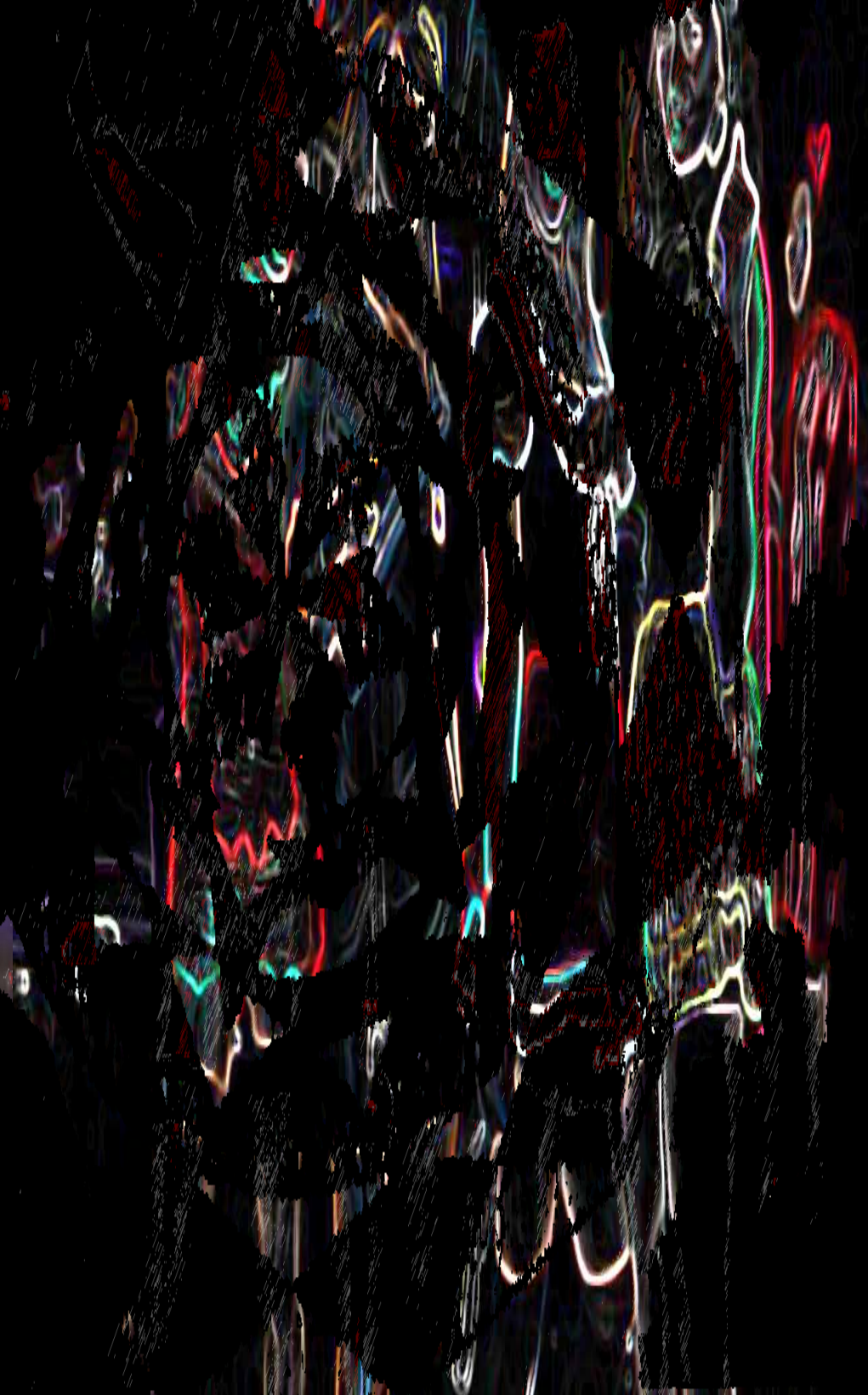
'I explored the possibility of tourism two years ago, and there was a tremendous response from the package-tour operators because there is a mystique about the place. But it's too expensive, even on reduced fares. The minimum package would be about \$1500, and you can't really do it for less than \$2000 to \$3000. For sun worshippers it's a great place. You can see an oasis, souks, and the waters – if they are not polluted.

'The future? Banks themselves have little confidence in the area. They don't care to touch another pennyworth of hotels, and I think they are right. Look at Klondikes in the past. They

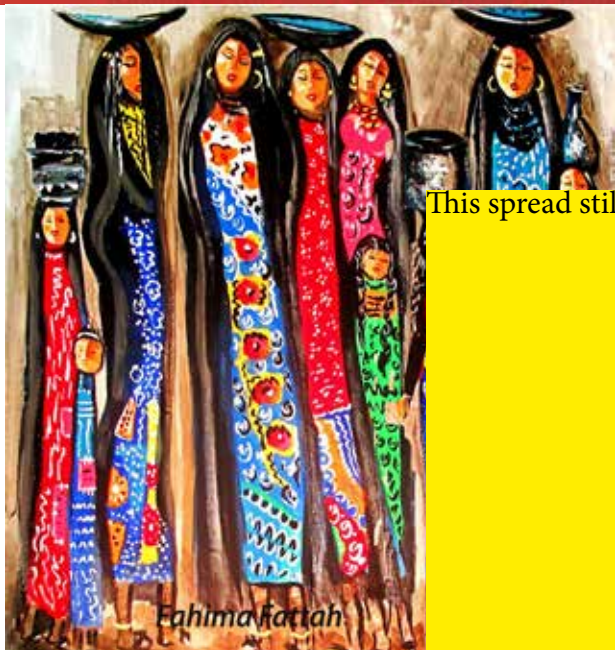
The rush to respond to feminist pressure has its peculiarities. Aisha Ali Sayyar, director of social services in Abu Dhabi, keeps her veil in the bottom drawer of her desk as a precaution. She feels that some men expect her to wear it, she told me.

with surprising severity. The Saudi-born ruler has reacted with implacable enthusiasm to public opinion polls and a youth flogged in 1977 for kissing a girl on the cheek. There is a mandatory forty lashes for any Muslim caught drinking alcohol and an attempt is being made to apply Sharia law to Westerners and locals alike for seven Koranic sins: murder, theft, adultery, robbery, adultery, slander, promiscuity and the use of alcohol.

Shaikh Rashid's liberal attitude has made Dubai the most acceptable resting-place for foreigners on the money-rush circuit, more relaxed than Abu Dhabi, less prissy than Bahrain, not so tumultuous as Tehran.² There is no religious authoritarianism - Christmas Day is a public holiday and the ruler himself laid a foundation stone for the Anglican church. Although expatriate drunk drivers are deported immediately, alcohol is not banned and there is a pub, the Rose and Crown, and a country club three miles out of town which provides a haven of darts playing, drinking and slot machining for expats.



These Canute-like intentions are supported by a security system which provides the normal vigorous checks on entry into the country. Only those who can prove their prime motive is money-making (bankers, businessmen, lawyers, football managers) are given easy access. Temporary visitors must leave passports with airport immigration to prevent them departing from any of the country's other proliferating airports. The motive is to hamper illegal immigration, the bureaucratic mind being unable to conceive of anyone not living by forms and regulations, but the result is a pile of 16000 unclaimed passports, and frustration for genuine travellers whose only transport within the 'united' country is by private plane or taxi.



This spread still To do

Sitting by the swimming pool of the Intercontinental, I met a thirty-three-year-old woman from Brighton whose husband is a senior government official and whose three children were away at school. 'I'm pissed off,' she said. 'My husband is told what to do by eighteen-year-old boys. He is humiliated by people who know nothing and are only powerful because of their money. He dare not say anything because what would he

do if he left? Go back to England and become a bus driver if he's lucky. He only knows this part of the world.

'I can't stand it here, but I don't fit in at home any more. The only thing they seem to say there is "Oh really?" If I told them I walked through the desert the other day and was raped by five tribesmen, the only reaction would be "Oh really? Did you know Monica's adding an extension to her house?" Property prices and the cost of food. That's all they ever discuss. Well, we have to stay in Dubai now because of the children. We could never afford the fees if we lived in England.'

It is ironic to consider the thousands of British living abroad because they have convinced themselves it is the only way they and their children will ever be able to afford an eventual good life in England. They assuage their doubts in gin (Dubai must be the only Arab city where Alcoholics Anonymous, under the name of the Dubai Clocktower Group, is allowed to thrive), good works (the annual church fête takes £8000), and sport (the ruler has given them some land on the outskirts for rugby and polo. There is also the Darjeeling Cricket Club, and golf can be played quite well on sand if you don't forget to bring a portable strip of synthetic turf for the tee).

Life is enlivened by the occasional scandal such as when Don Revie arrived incognito, disguised in a cloth cap, muffler, and dark glasses to renege on a five-year contract as English football manager in return for £340000 over four years as UAE coach. 'An offer I cannot refuse, an unbelievable opportunity to secure my family's future,' he said, whilst others were more sceptical of the money rush's real rewards. 'Will you really be satisfied studying your bank balance and watching those no-hopers gallop lazily up and down the forlorn strips they call pitches?' asked the *Sun* newspaper. Forlorn strips? The UAE is building a \$43 million national stadium twice the size of Wembley.

More serious scandals were not mentioned. The expats are, naturally, managers. They need people to manage and, as native Dubaians are scarce and rich, workers have to be imported in increasing numbers from India and Pakistan. They are forbidden by law from forming unions and are not allowed to bring their families. As in Saudi Arabia, they are flown home immediately there is any unrest.

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They have little incentive to complain. Many are illegal immigrants lured by the money rush and unaware of the true conditions.³ They spend their savings on a boat trip to opportunity and are sometimes off-loaded on to a sandbank by unscrupulous *dhow* captains who do not want to take the risk for which they have been paid. On one occasion, in September 1976, two hundred people died when two ferryboats built to carry a maximum of 350 people each but with a total of 1150 on board became stuck in the sand and were then surprised by a police patrol launch. During the journey, which took three times the anticipated four days, the sick had been forced overboard at gunpoint, and others died from hunger or thirst.

Those who escaped arrest from the UAE police managed to find jobs eventually. For their unskilled labour in the broiling sun, helping to develop tomorrow's ghost town and inflate the profits of British construction companies, they are paid between £2 and £3 for a 10-hour day, and housed in primitive tents hidden from sight of the casual visitor. The justification, usually given over a few drinks costing about £20 in a local hotel, is age-old: 'You see, old boy, they are better off than at home.'

Not every Pakistani suffers such humiliation. Twenty-one of them dress in kilts and play bagpipes in the Abu Dhabi Defence Force band at social events like camel racing. Others make a fortune from re-exporting. Hajji Ashraff is one of the richest. He arrived in Dubai in 1966, 'because general business was good here'. Actually, he means gold smuggling although he denies it. 'You cannot call it smuggling because this is a free country. These days the gold trade is not good because the price is high, so I import rice, cement, and steel.' He does not own a car and works from a small unostentatious office. When he visits London, as he does, he is treated as a respected guest.

Spread still to do



whose livelihood depends upon maintaining the myth that Babulha is not far short of the Garden of Eden which legend suggests it could be. If they need help, it is provided by the Arabs.

'There is nothing fundamentally contradictory about the Arabs practising democracy. It is not just for Western countries and we will probably learn in a shorter time than it took the West. At the moment we are under pressure from local fanatics – not from Saudi Arabia – but it is clear you cannot really run a modern state on shaikhly lines.'

Shaikh Zayed knows that. He realizes that when he and his contemporaries have gone the social changes could be as vast as the economic ones have been but less comfortable. He just hopes that nothing happens before that. He reads in the newspaper, for instance, about the Shah's 'help' to Oman. He prays that such 'help' will not be needed here, that he can keep his country free for the pure, unpolitical gathering of money.

Like other Arabs, he suspects the Shah's intentions in spite of protestations of brotherly love. The UAE has already been flicked like a pin-ball when it became a hindrance to British domestic policy or Iranian military aggression. Now that the Shah has taken over Britain's nanny role, it must be tempting for him to covet this diamond necklace of a country, shaped like a *khanja* along the west bank of the 'Arabian' Gulf.

What, wonders Zayed, does the Shah really think?

'A patch of sand,' said His Imperial Majesty, the Shahanshah etc., casually in a way that would have given His Highness Shaikh Zayed palpitations. 'In twenty years' time the oil will be finished and then what? They must see it that way and some of them do.'

Shaikh Zayed has his attitude to the Arabs, and I mentioned it had been told that his lips actually curled into a sneer when they are mentioned. 'Was he contemptuous of the Arabs?' That is a fair question. But I have to say that we always help them and never receive anything in return. We help them locally, in the international scene, in the United Nations, in our



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Bahrain. He was infuriated by an accurate Reuters account of a fire at the two-storey Chase Manhattan building in the centre of the banking district. He berated the journalist concerned, saying it should never have been reported – particularly as the local fire brigade was inert. National security, otherwise known



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