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British India and Pre-1970 Public Education in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman

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This paper explores the history of government-funded education in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman prior to the beginning of the country's modern era in 1970. In doing so, it offers a brief history of British attempts to assert control across the sultanate, before presenting an account of the plans put in place by the British supervised and funded Developmental Department to build a country-wide education system following its founding in the late 1950s. Similarities between education developments sponsored by the department and those occurring on the subcontinent during British colonial rule in previous generations are explored.

Keywords: Muscat and Oman; British India; education; developmental department

Introduction

The issuing of an order in support of the recommendations of the Macaulay Minute on Education in India by Governor-General William Bentinck on March 7, 1835, significantly altered the course and development of formal education in British India (Thirumalai, 2003). The major tenets of Macaulay's Minute included that, while vernacular education should be preserved for the masses, "higher branches" of knowledge, such as science, philosophy and literature, should be taught in the medium of English. Moreover, only a select group of Indian students were to be the beneficiaries of English-medium education, although the Western knowledge to which they had privileged access would eventually filter down through the various social strata of Indian society to their countrymen (Rashtriya, 2008). However, perhaps more importantly than this educated class's position as conduit of enlightened learning and "advanced" knowledge in Indian society, was their ability to act as intermediaries between the foreign rulers and the ruled.

Macaulay's Minute represented perhaps one of the most well known and, in many ways, influential precedents in the development of education in India under British rule. Even when, as the twentieth century approached and the events of the Indian Uprising ushered in a new era of direct rule from London, it became clear that the class of intermediaries Macaulay envisioned had failed to materialise, attempts to reorient Indian education often matched the expansion of vernacular schooling with the kind of stricter rationing of English-medium learning that was far from disparate with Macaulay's stance. In fact, although the Wood Despatch of 1854 dismissed Macaulay's "downward filtration" theory (Rashtriya, 2008) and Lord Curzon, some fifty years later, derided the "cold breath of Macaulay's rhetoric" (cited in Evans, 2002, p. 277), English-medium education was increasingly confirmed in Indian society as the language of higher education and gateway to social opportunity.

It is in these ways that the influence of Macaulay's Minute on education in British India is perhaps most readily recalled. However, it is also important to note here that the recommendations put forth by the Minute also, to an extent, reverberated across the entire

empire. In fact, Phillipson (1992, p. 111) describes it as "a seminal influence on language policy throughout the British Empire", while Arthur King, the former Deputy-Director General of the British Council's English language division, even went so far as to claim Macaulay "determined the use of English from Hong Kong to the Gambia" (King, 1961, p. 23).

Even though the extent of these claims has been questioned by a number of scholars (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Evans, 2002; Howatt, 2004), it is nonetheless informative to apply them to some of the colonial possessions falling into British India's sphere of influence. In particular, it is interesting to examine parallels between developments in education in British India and those that occurred in its close neighbours in the Gulf region. That such areas of overlap have often been overlooked is due to a number of reasons. However, perhaps the most important of these is the simple fact that domestic issues within the British Gulf protectorates were largely left to the discretion of local tribal rulers.

Due to this overall lack of British concern with the internal matters of the Gulf protectorates, pre-independence education in the region is often divided into three main areas: madrassas with their focus on studies in the Qur'an, Arabic and basic mathematics (Al-Khwaiter, 2001); formal schools, such as those in Dubai, Sharjah, Qatar and Bahrain, following Egyptian curricula and funded, until the 1930s, by the region's pearling industry (Verde, 2010); and, though far less influentially than in the Levant, missionary schools typified by the American-run Arabian Mission (Al-Misnad, 1985). The scope for Macaulayian-style influence within this context, therefore, may appear exceedingly limited.

However, that is not to say that developments in British India were completely irrelevant across the entire Gulf region. In fact, an examination of the nascent government-funded education system in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman during a period when British officials assumed more or less direct control of the country's internal

affairs from the late 1950s to 1970, reveals a number of parallels between developments in the sultanate and those that had begun in the Bengal more than a century before.

The Anglicists and Orientalists in British India

British interests in the Gulf region were initially developed as a response to the threat of Qawasim piracy to Indian maritime trade, with a "General Treaty of Peace" concluded between the British government and tribal rulers of the Gulf coast in early 1820. Articles of this treaty provided for a British Resident in the Persian Gulf to police the region's waterways and to use Royal Navy vessels to enforce the end of slavery and piracy (Aitchison, 1865). For the duration of British control, the chief resident in the Gulf reported first to the governor of Bombay, and then, following the establishment of the Raj in 1858, the viceroy of India. This arrangement was in place until Indian independence in 1947, upon which time the resident was relocated from the Persian city of Bushehr to the island kingdom of Bahrain, where it became directly subordinate to the Foreign Office.

At the same time the modern-day Gulf states were being pulled, slowly but irrevocably, into the British India sphere of influence, a number of important developments were occurring in the debate between the anglicists and orientalists in relation to the future direction of public education in the Bengal. In his examination of the history of English language teaching across the world, Howatt (2004) claims an important rallying point for the orientalists was the establishment, in 1800 under Governor-General Sir Richard Wellesley, of the Fort William College in Calcutta. The driving philosophy of this college was the instillation in newly arrived graduates from the company's Haileybury College public school near London of the principles of good government and Christian values necessary for their new company roles.

Added to this education in the provision of good Christian governance, Howatt (2004) continues, was the study of the ancient languages of India and the Middle East, including Sanskrit and classical Arabic, as well as oriental cultures and histories.

Moreover, thirteen years after the founding of the Fort William College, the company also began investing in the translation of a number of basic science texts into the dominant oriental tongues – evidence of clear and direct support for the orientalist position.

However, as Howatt (2004) notes, by 1833, these policies in favour of orientalism had failed. The Fort William College was attacked on the basis that its instruction in the oriental tongues was an impediment to India's progress, while the popularity of the few translated texts available remained limited. Moreover, developments across the Bengal, and especially in Calcutta where the East India Company was headquartered, offered a clear sign that the demand for education in English among the Indian middle-classes was growing. In fact, Ferguson (2003) notes that one of the first of many private colleges offering Western-style education, the Hindu College, opened in Calcutta in 1817. Demand for such colleges among the aspiring Indian classes was driven by the desire of many families to secure their children's futures through placement in clerical positions that required knowledge of the English language.

Within this context, the East India Company engaged the services of the poet, historian and politician, Thomas Macaulay, as a member of the Supreme Council of India. According to Thirumalai (2003), Macaulay's arrival in India saw him take up, in addition to his appointed role on the Supreme Council, the presidency of the Committee of Public Instruction – perhaps the most influential bureaucratic battleground in the orientalist versus anglicist controversy at the time. Thirumalai states that any policy decisions regarding education in company-ruled India were blocked due to an irreconcilable difference of opinions among the ten committee members. That is, five wanted to maintain the traditional course of encouraging learning in and translation into the oriental languages, while the remainder believed that, while vernacular tongues should be retained for teaching most subjects, employing English as the medium of instruction for "higher branches" of knowledge was an important part of England's mission abroad.

Macaulay refused to act on the impasse until both sides were given the opportunity to present their cases before the Supreme Council. This they did in January, 1835, with Macaulay's resultant Minute on Indian Education expressing official support for the anglicist position produced in February of that year (Thirumalai, 2003). The Macaulay Minute, as it is commonly known today, is perhaps most immediately recalled for its support of the provision of English-medium education for a select group of Indian subjects. This class, "English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" was to act as a class of interpreters "between us and the millions whom we govern" (cited in Broughton, 1864, p. 6) and was intended to have a civilizing influence, through the downward filtration of Western knowledge from the English-educated to the previously "benighted" masses, on the great majority who would remain without access to English-medium education

Ferguson (2003) states that within three years of the publication of the Macaulay Minute there were up to forty English-based seminaries under the control of the Committee. The system of education the company introduced to India, moreover, was reinforced with the handover of control of the subcontinent from the East India Company to the Raj following the Indian Uprising beginning in 1857. In fact, despite the strike against Macaulay's position ostensibly contained the 1854 Wood Despatch recommendation of mass vernacular and English-language education across the Bengal, Ferguson states that by the 1870s Macaulay's vision had nonetheless been largely realised as "six thousand Indian students had enrolled in higher education and no less than 200,000 in Anglophone secondary 'schools of the higher order'" (p. 190).

Moreover, within the half century following the Wood Despatch, Evans (2002) claims the number of English and Anglo-vernacular secondary schools run by either missionary societies or private Indian institutes continued to grow rapidly, even as the vernacular-language primary school system remained limited. This growth was driven by a strong demand for English within Indian cities. However, contrary to Macaulay's targeted middle classes, Evans states this demand came mostly from the lower social

stratum of metropolitan dwellers; people who sought the language skills necessary to secure clerical jobs both in the ranks of colonial government and in private enterprise.

Once such skills had been developed to a reasonable level, it was not uncommon for these students to abandon their studies and seek employment. However, Evans (2002) states that a lack of employment opportunities combined with the growing number of students processed through these institutes to create an unemployed and disaffected class of English-speakers. They were viewed with suspicion by colonial authorities who feared they could become politically active and eventually challenge British rule.

Perhaps inevitably, the Raj responded through a return to pro-vernacular education policies that sought to limit the accessibility to English both as a language and a medium of instruction. This repositioning is perhaps best exemplified by the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies 1925 draft report entitled "The place of the vernacular in native education", in which the view was promulgated that vernacular education, insofar as possible, should dominate primary education while English should be taught as a second language at the secondary level and only used as a medium of instruction at the "highest levels" (Whitehead, 2003). The policy that was eventually formed from this report was endorsed by the Imperial Education Conference in 1927 and thus espoused a clear aim of "restricting as far as possible the teaching and learning of English" (Evans, 2002, p. 279).

The development of public education in British India, therefore, was a contentious area dominated by orientalist and anglicist positions. Whether Phillipson (1992) is correct in asserting that the British sought to maintain power through policies promoting the privileged position of English in colonial societies, or Evans (2002) in claiming colonial authorities were far more concerned with curtailing this spread, it appears that the education system in British India could be summarised in the following terms: The masses were to receive their educations in vernacular tongues; select students were to develop English language skills before being exposed to instruction in other subjects in the language; English was to be the medium of instruction for higher level studies, such

as upper secondary school and university; and, finally, English was to be restricted to only those whose access would most greatly benefit, or perhaps least threaten, British rule.

In this short and somewhat rudimentary summary can clearly be seen aspects of both the orientalist and anglicist positions. This is perhaps not surprising. After all, the contest for influence in the formation of education in British India lasted well over a century. Moreover, despite their airs of mutual hostility, the anglicists and orientalists essentially shared the same aim of employing education as a tool of reinforcing colonial rule. What may be more surprising, however, is that developments occurring in education in colonial India displayed a number of parallels with those implemented by British authorities in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman more than a decade after Indian independence.

British Influence in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman

By the time the Macaulay Minute was receiving official support within the upper echelons of the East India Company, the kingdoms of the Arabian Gulf were in the process of entering the "protection" of the British Empire. However, unlike the direct control the colonisers were eventually to extend over vast areas of the subcontinent, British influence in the Gulf region was largely concerned with matters of foreign policy. This concern is perhaps best exemplified by the signing of the Exclusive Agreement with the Trucial States in 1882, which prescribed that no agreements with foreign powers could be entered into without British approval (Federal Research Division, 2004).

This increasing level of influence was equally felt in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. Contemporary reports from the sultanate describe a country that was a virtual, if destined to remain unofficial, British dominion. The roots of this influence could be traced to 1798 when the East India Company, concerned primarily with securing its flanks from hostile European powers and with one eye on the expansion of the Ottoman

Empire and another contemporary rival, the French-backed Egyptian Empire under Mohammed Ali, concluded a treaty with Sultan bin Ahmed to the effect that the sultan:

> would always take the part of the British government in international affairs, deny any commercial or other foothold to the French and Dutch, dismiss employees of French nationality, exclude French vessels from Muscat (British Embassy Muscat, 2011, para. 4).

Another important assertion of British influence in the country was the 1861 settlement by Lord Canning, Governor-General of India, between Sultan Thwain of Oman and Sultan Majed of Zanzibar, in which it was agreed the two previously united lands should be divided into separate entities (Kechichian, 1995). As part of the Canning Agreement, Sultan Majed was to compensate his brother for the loss of income derived from the lucrative east African slave trade, of which Zanzibar was a major hub, with an annual payment of 40,000 Maria Teresa silver dollars. However, after Zanzibar defaulted on this payment in 1871, the British assumed responsibility for the debt and continued paying these instalments to Muscat until 1956.

In addition to the "Zanzibar subsidy", by the end of the nineteenth century the British government had extended a loan of 60,000 Maria Teresa dollars to the sultanate, thus further indebting a country already severely impoverished by the loss of the slave trade. By the time the Zanzibar subsidy ended in the late 1950s, reliance on British grants had become acute, with Allen and Rigsbee (2000) claiming they reached a level of between one and two million pounds a year, in exchange for a controlling hand in the sultanate's administration.

One of the first explicit expressions of the role of the British resident as the power behind the throne could be seen in the military intervention in a rebellion lead by the Nizwa-based Imam between 1913 and 1920. This armed rebellion against Sultan Taimur ended in the British-mediated Treaty of As-Sib, in which the autonomy of the interior of the country, known as the Imamate of Oman, was officially recognised. When, in 1954, the Saudi-backed Imam Ghalib re-ignited the rebellion against Sultan

Sa'id, British special forces were again called on to subdue the interior in operations that continued until early 1959 when Ghalib was ousted from his Jabal Akhdar stronghold (MacKenzie, 2011). This intervention eventually resulted in the introduction of a draft resolution before the United Nations in 1960 calling for the "independence of Oman" from Great Britain (Oran, 1961). The resolution, introduced by the Imam in exile in Syria and Saudi Arabia and backed by ten independent Arab countries, was only narrowly defeated with the somewhat disingenuous British defence that Sultan Sa'id enjoyed full sovereignty in all internal matters.

As the military and financial power of the British resident continued to grow, so did the visible indicators of British influence. These included the placement of British public servants and military men in positions of power within government ministries. One of the best-known of these was Neil McLeod Innes who, under the title of Minister of Foreign and External Affairs, claims to have acted as Sultan Sa'id's "military secretary, staff officer, liaison officer, political officer, passport officer, director of medical services, and secretary for development" (Innes, 1987, p. 10). Other indicators of British control included the expansion of the RAF airbase on Masirah island, the use of British Raj era rupees and annas, in addition to Maria Teresa dollars, as currencies in circulation throughout the country (Ashmore, 2010), and the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II adorning postage stamps until 1966 (Holes, 2007).

The strongest indicator of British power in the sultanate, however, came at a time when the conflict with the Imamate of Oman coincided with the end of the annual payment of the Zanzibar subsidy. The precarious financial and strategic position Sultan Sa'id found himself in eventually resulted in a British delegation, under Julian Amery, arriving in Muscat in 1958. According to Allen and Rigsbee (2000), this visit produced an agreement which was later formalised as the Exchange of Letters between the Government of Great Britain and Northern Island and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman concerning the Sultan's Armed Forces, Civil Aviation, Royal Air Force Facilities and Economic Development in Muscat and Oman.

Allen and Rigsbee (2000) state this Exchange of Letters granted Sultan Sa'id financial and military assistance in exchange for the re-organisation of the country's armed forces and the introduction of a civil development program, both directly under British supervision. British control in the internal affairs of the sultanate, therefore, came to be exercised in a direct manner. Evidence of the extent of this control can be seen in the British government's directive to David Smiley, the newly appointed head of the Sultan's Armed Forces, that any orders from Sultan Sa'id deemed to run contrary to British interests should be appealed through the Persian Gulf resident. In fact, in his memoirs of his time in the country, Smiley wrote, "I was an officer not only of the Sultan but of the Queen, and my first duty was to the Queen" (Smiley & Kemp, 1975, p. 92)

Allen and Rigsby (2000, p. 19) summarise the circumstances of British colonisation imposed on Sultan Sa'id through the Exchange of Letters in concise terms:

> Despite a 25-year effort to secure his independence of British control and a decade after the withdrawal of the British raj from India, Sa'id now found himself relegated to a similar status to that of the rulers of the old Indian 'native' states. A flood of British expatriates assumed control of the affairs of his state while he maintained a largely puppet administration.

Given the virtual state of colonisation the British held the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman in, therefore, it may stand to reason that the education policies introduced to help resolve the "Oman question" in a way that would bolster faltering British power in the Middle East, may reflect the developments in education in colonial-era India described above.

The Developmental Department

Perhaps the two most important specifications set out by the 1958 Exchange of Letters were the re-organisation of the Sultan's armed forces and the founding of a Developmental Department to oversee improvements in a wide array of areas, including health, agriculture, roadways and education. Sultan Sa'id's opposition to the development of a government-funded education system in the country is well

documented (Peterson, 2004). In particular, it is widely accepted today that the sultan was pressured into opening the first two public-funded schools in Muscat and Muttrah, in 1940 and 1948 respectively, in an attempt to assuage British demands that he take the first steps in the country's modernisation. Within these schools students hand-picked by the sultan could receive the equivalent of a primary school education with classes from grades one to five. The medium of instruction was Arabic although the study of English as a foreign language was "required in the upper grades" (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, p. 11).

Despite the apparent lip service paid to the value of starting a government-funded system to educate the country's populace – or at least those of his subjects living in and around the capital, as the third government school in Salalah wasn't opened until the year of the sultan's abdication – reports by foreign public officials and correspondents from the day describe a ruler deeply suspicious of what education would mean. For example, although the Muscat school was, according to the British writer Ian Skeet (cited in Al-Hajri, 2006), reportedly the better of the two institutions operating during his visit in the 1960s, the school building appeared almost derelict – a place with cracked and broken windows and covered in a thick layer of dust.

Perhaps more damning, however, is the recollection of a conversation between the first president of the Developmental Department, the Ceylon-born Hugh Boustead, and Sultan Sa'id, in which Boustead attempted to convince the sultan of the necessity of establishing primary schools to educate the sons of tribal chiefs and provincial governors to allow them to eventually take part in government. Sultan Sa'id, himself educated in British India's exclusive Mayo College in the 1920s and known to other Arab rulers of the time as "that Indian" (Townsend, 1977, p. 63), however, dismissed the suggestion with the riposte, "That is why you lost India, because you educated the people" (Al-Hajri, 2006, p. 273).

The sultan's objections were to be put aside as the British administrators expanded their control. In the wake of his public acquiescence to the British-order not to attack Saudi forces that had occupied the Baraimi oasis in 1952, the sultan apparently put

himself into a symbolic self-imposed exile in his palace in distant Salalah (Townsend, 1977). With the anti-reform minded ruler thus far from the British machinations of government in the capital, the Developmental Department, with an annual budget of around 500 million rupees for its work across all areas of interest (Peterson, 1978), devised a string of ambitious education projects that would, it was hoped, help build a modern education system.

With this budget, the department funded teacher salaries in the two government schools in operation in the capital area. In addition, it introduced a scholarship program which paid for select groups of boys from notable tribal families to continue their educations as teacher-trainees in the recently re-designated former Colony of Aden, with the first group of about four students leaving Oman in 1963 (Rabi, 2006). In addition to this program, the department also funded the construction of a boarding school in Muscat for the sons of sheikhs from the interior. The building itself was completed in 1964, although, Pridham (1986) states, never used for its intended purpose. Another purpose-built school for girls was also underway by the time Sultan Sa'id abdicated in 1970 (Peterson, 2007).

Other unrealised plans put forth by the department during this period included the building of more elementary schools across the country, expanding the elementary school in Muttrah to act as an institution for continuing studies, and the construction of a commerce school. However, for a complex array of reasons – including the hostility to the development of the education system openly expressed by the sultan, the uprisings and rebellions occurring in various parts of the country, and, perhaps no less importantly, the withdrawal of Foreign Office support for the sultan to continue in his position as the country's figurehead – these plans were destined to remain unfulfilled during Sultan Sa'id's reign.

Parallels with British India

There do, therefore, appear to be a number of similarities between the education policies implemented in British India and those in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman during the post-Exchange of Letters British administration. Perhaps the most prominent of these is the rationale, put forth by the chief political resident, Hugh Boustead, that elementary schools be created in Oman for the sons of prominent tribal and political leaders to ease their transition into government service later in life.

This rationale is strikingly similar to the recognition of the value of creating a middle class to act as intermediaries between the foreign masters and local populace that was so famously supported by Macaulay in 1835. That this may have been one of the ultimate aims of the British-funded expansion of public education in the sultanate appears even more likely in light of Allen and Rigsby's (2000) assertion that one consequence of the Exchange of Letters was the de facto takeover of the sultanate by British public servants who were ultimately answerable to the Persian Gulf Political Resident. With Sultan Sa'id, much like the rulers of the Indian native states under the British Raj, having accepted his role as a figurehead, the British administrators may have viewed the forging of a small, literate and sympathetic middle class as one of their first priorities.

Of course, unlike British India where the "higher branches" of knowledge were taught in the English language, all evidence points to the fact that English, at least in the two government schools established in Oman under Sultan Sa'id, was taught only at the higher levels as a foreign language. However, it is important to recall here that one of Lord Curzon's 1904 recommendations to redress what he perceived as the educational imbalances that had developed in India under Macaulay's influence, was that the teaching of English "should not be prematurely employed as the medium of instruction in other subjects" (cited in Skutnabb-Kangass, 2009, p. 42). This directive found full support in the Advisory Committee's recommendations of the late 1920s that qualified EFL/ESL teachers be employed in the colonies to build students' English language skills before being exposed to instruction in other subjects in the language.

Education in and/or about English within the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, therefore, was apparently aimed at influential tribal families in order to create a select ruling class that could operate between the British-controlled government in Muscat and the masses beyond the capital's walls. Although the system in place may seem extremely limited when held in contrast to that evident in India as early as the 1870s, it should be stated here that the percentage of Indian and Omani citizens in formal schooling was not that different. For instance, Ferguson (2003) estimates that between the 1860s and 1940s, enrolments in primary and secondary schools ranged between 0.5 and 4 percent of the total Indian population.

With an enrolment of around 900 students in government schools in the 1950s, the percent of Omanis in primary schooling during this era could be estimated to be around 0.2 percent. However, when these figures are calculated for 600 or so students of the two government schools in the capital area in and around Muscat, it becomes apparent that attempts to provide a formal education in the seat of government power became more concentrated. In particular, although no census information is available from the era, reports of Muscat and its sister port, Muttrah, in the early 1950s estimate the population of these towns to be around 13,000 people (Boersma, 1991; Lebon, 1970), in which case this figure, excluding those students attending the American missionary school in Muscat (Scudder, 1998), edges above four and a half percent.

Despite these similarities, however, one notable difference between the education system developed in British India and that in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman was the lack of institutions of higher education – be they secondary schools or universities along the lines of those established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in the wake of the Wood Despatch (Tikekar, 2006). However, as stated above, the British authorities did attempt to deal with this issue through the provision of educational scholarships, provided through the Developmental Department, for a select group of boys to attend English-medium colleges in Aden.

How this system would have expanded or become further integrated if not for the uncertainty surrounding the Aden Emergency of 1963 and the ensuing conflict that saw a British withdrawal from the protectorate four years later (Tatchell, 2009) can only remain a matter of conjecture. However, the planned establishment of both an institution of continuing studies and a school of commerce by the Developmental Department, suggests implementing a system of higher level education in the sultanate may have formed part of the British administration's plans.

Conclusion

It is perhaps far too simple to claim, especially from the vantage point of historical distance, a glimpse of the shadow of the education policies formed under the East India Company and implemented, in various guises, by the Raj over those developed in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman during de facto British rule following the Exchange of Letters in 1958. In particular, it is easy to see the cohesion in the necessity outlined in the Macaulay Minute of educating a local elite to act as intermediaries between the foreign rulers and the masses and the assertion, by Hugh Boustead to Sultan Sa'id in the 1950s, that the sons of sheikhs and district governors needed education to develop a country-wide civil service.

Moreover, further developments in education unveiled by the Developmental Department, including paying for Palestinian and Egyptian teachers to work in Oman's government schools, sponsoring small groups of boys from important tribal families to receive a tertiary-level education in Aden, and the building of a boarding school in Muscat for boys from select families from the interior, all add to the appearance of an incipient education system which could claim a number of parallels with that developed in British India.

However, perhaps the clearest overlaps between the system of public education developed under the British Raj and that which emerged in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman came not during the period of overt foreign control of the country, but after the

time when Sultan Sa'id abdicated. It was in the post-1970 era that the education decrees of Sultan Qaboos, including providing government schools across the country where Arabic was the medium of instruction and English studied as a foreign language at higher levels, the end of restrictive regulations placed on private schools under the previous regime, and, eventually, the establishment of a public university where English-medium instruction was employed for the teaching of sciences, medicine, engineering and so on, that the strongest echoes of British India can most clearly be heard.

It is interesting to ponder, then, how far these developments in education under the Sandhurst-educated son of Sultan Sa'id owed to the foundations laid down by the Developmental Department some years before. It is also interesting to consider how these developments would have been realised during the Sa'id years if the civil strife gripping the country didn't combine with the loss of British dominions across the Middle East to result, eventually, in the withdrawal of support for the sultan the Foreign Office had already done so much to drive into exile in the far reaches of his own country.

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