GARDENS AND GENERATORS

Demarcating Dubai's modernization

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In 1947, the British government sought a “gift” of land from Dubai’s ruler, Saeed bin Maktoum bin Hasher Al-Maktoum.¹ The process of selecting, securing, and designing for that land plot established architecture as a key component of the British government’s goals in Dubai, particularly to initiate a modernization campaign. On that land grant was to rise the new political agency, future home to both the British political agent and the modernization programme he was appointed to author. After over a century of irregular oversight and efforts to thwart advancement and growth at Dubai’s port, the new agency signalled a more dedicated British intervention into Dubai’s internal affairs and those of other Trucial States, this time for the proclaimed sake of modernization. The site studies, design process, and construction of the new Political Agency Trucial States would in the end presage how subsequent modernization projects were pursued in Dubai. With references to British public record documents, this paper provides evidence that Dubai’s modernization – defined as a centralized authority’s project of urban development and technological advancement – began several years earlier than many histories suggest. Nearly a decade before Dubai’s first hospital and 12 years before the production of Dubai’s first master plan – two oft-cited indications of Dubai’s twentieth-century advancement – the underlying rationale and guidelines that guided Dubai’s modernization were already evident in the creation of the political agency. At the donated site, modern architecture manifested first as a suite of procedures and then as a physical exhibition of modernization’s promises; the approach to both of these aspects of architecture was reflected in subsequent modernization projects.

In establishing the Political Agency Trucial States, the British Foreign Office pursued two seemingly contradictory policies: to further embed itself in the affairs of the Trucial States for the British economy’s commercial gain and to deny any “special responsibility” by isolating itself from local politics. Modern architecture helped achieve and maintain this paradox.² Even before the eventual concrete foundations of modern bungalows and fence posts asserted the agency’s structural fixity, site surveys and drawings helped assemble the British government’s “irrefutable documentary evidence” to support its claim, in legal reasoning created for and by itself, that it rightfully occupied and exploited the site.³ At the same time, the type of intended construction, namely, a fenced-in compound comprising new buildings and more land than necessary, expressed that the site was cut off from the rest of Dubai, both physically and logically. More specifically, the ordering and administration to be pursued within the circumscribed confines of the land grant were expressed as set apart from everything beyond but nevertheless placed within proximity to the city, its apparent “prestige” intended to influence how future efforts of development would proceed.⁴ In this way, the pursuit of

the political agency site both asserted Britain's local legitimacy and proclaimed its legal exception.

Today, the city of Dubai is often criticized for its isolated developments, each pursued without apparent concern for creating links to other parts of the city. As this article will demonstrate, such an approach to urban development was already identifiable in the creation of a British political agency in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As early as 1947, architecture helped assert a British claim to a defined portion of Dubai; it also manifested how a designated site could be distinguished from the rest of the city and transformed for political and commercial gain. The acts pursued at the demarcated site presaged how large-scale development would transform the city, not through long-range plans but rather through the piecemeal assignation of meaning to delineated swaths of land. The isolated fixity of the early compound formulated the systems of modernization and ordering intended to be deployed on eventual sites beyond its fencing. Subsequent modernization efforts, increasingly determined by Dubai's leadership more than the British political agency, included the city's first hospitals, schools, a world trade centre, coastal ports, and the city's first 'free zone'.

Choosing Dubai

Prior to 1947, the British government made its presence known in Dubai and the other Trucial States through navy ships patrolling Gulf waters. British terrestrial control, beyond the sparse camps of oil companies, was limited to the Royal Air Force (RAF) base and a 'political office', both of which were located in Sharjah. The RAF camp was fenced and isolated outside Sharjah's city limits. According to a contract between the British government and Sharjah's ruler, the RAF camp employed local men as guards, instructed as much to keep intruders out as to keep British residents in the compound. In contrast, the political office, consisting of a house and a small assemblage of property unfortified by wall or fence, was located in the city. Here lived the residency agent, usually a foreign Arab in the employ of the British government with which he kept a line of communication via the India Office in Delhi. Proximity to Sharjah's political and economic leadership provided the agent "intimate knowledge" that could be shared with colonial administrators.⁵ Like the other residents of Sharjah fortunate enough to live in the town's more permanent housing stock, the officer could climb up to his roof to catch a breeze and inspect the city around him. If the weather suited him in cooler months, a white British officer sometimes joined him.

Upon the shuttering of the British Indian government and the creation of the independent Indian state in 1947, British administration of the Trucial States transferred to the Foreign Office in London. The handover made for a moment to review how the British government exerted control in the region.⁶ Within a matter

of weeks, a redetermination of policy towards the region was deemed "a matter of the greatest urgency", primarily as a means to claim and protect access to potential oil in the region.⁷ "With the development of oil here", the Foreign Office surmised, "the political work of this Agency is more likely to increase than decrease". By no later than 1949, the preferred location for a political office was confirmed no longer to be Sharjah but Dubai "because it is geographically the most central of the Sheikdoms and it is at present the centre of trade and shipping".⁸ In spite of previous British investment in Sharjah and in restraining regional trade networks, Dubai, "far and away the most important port on the Trucial Coast" with an approximate population of 30,000, exhibited attractive economic potential and, in a historical twist, was no longer perceived as a political threat but an economic advantage in service of changing British policy in the region.⁹ In short, Dubai's success in trading would be capitalized upon as the foundation of the British economy's financial gain. While it might not supply the oil reserves, its accomplished port could supply ongoing expeditions elsewhere. According to the Foreign Office, heightened presence in the Trucial States required that its leading representative no longer be an Arab expatriate; instead, it needed to be a white British officer, whose accommodations became of immediate concern.

Accounting for deficiency

Before scouting for a new site in Dubai, it first had to be corroborated that the deficient condition of the Sharjah residency necessitated a new home for the future British official. In November 1947, less than three months after India's independence, the British political residency in Bahrain requested that H. S. Walters, a Cairo-based estate surveyor for the British government, inspect the living and working quarters in Sharjah. The request for consultation came with its anticipated findings already well outlined, referring to an index of the office's "amenities, or rather its lack of them". The electricity supply, "generally defective", could sustain only a bulb or two of light on the ground floor; the upper floor's electricity was of a "purely temporary arrangement". Walters was warned that there were no electric fans and no refrigerators. Whereas nearby accommodations for the white residents of the RAF camp and oil companies had "air-conditioned rooms with modern conveniences", the Sharjah premises did not.¹⁰

Walters arrived in Sharjah on 8 November 1947 and left within 24 hours with his findings.¹¹ The property, he recorded, was rented from a landowning family in Sharjah. That meant it was an "Arab style two storied house with courtyard and outbuildings", recognizable as one of Sharjah's most expensive houses. The house was among the minority of Sharjah's housing stock not made of palm fronds and salvaged materials, or as a Foreign Office

official described it, the “slum of native palm-huts”.¹² Beyond being one of the larger and better equipped houses of Sharjah, the house was also prominently located on Sharjah Creek. Walters found it comprehensively deficient and referred to its “poor construction”, but that might have just meant it was made of locally sourced materials, including coral, a local lime mixture, mud, straw, and a sparse use of wood imported from India. The “primitive kitchen (native style)” adjoined a dining room with “no curtains or covering to the mud floor”. Furniture was “locally made in Sharjah, and is primitive indeed”; the dining table’s two wooden chairs were said to be “borrowed”. The bathroom contained little more than a galvanized iron tub.¹³ Walters indexed the discomforts and confirmed Jackson’s assessment that Sharjah was “a place where dysentery is endemic and the streets are used by all classes as latrines [and provide] such efficient breeding grounds for flies and fleas”.¹⁴ The environment in sum was “a constant menace to the health of the agency staff”. Just getting a sufficient night’s sleep, Walters estimated, “must be an ordeal”. What was locally considered drinking water was sourced from an uncovered well three miles inland, delivered in petrol cans that added lead and aftertastes of petrol to the already brackish water, “unfit for drinking”. For Walters, these conditions were “the worst I have seen yet”. Sharjah, he summarized, was “such a dreary place”.¹⁵

Defining the agency

A white British agent, it was made clear, would “justifiably refuse to work” in the conditions provided for the Arab agent for the last six decades. With “no gardens or recreational facilities whatsoever”, this was no place for him to bring his family, who also needed to be accommodated, not because the Foreign Office was mindful of hospitality towards its staff but because families were at least a diversion in a landscape deemed to offer no others. The Foreign Office understood it needed “to provide living accommodation for the European rather than the Arab”.¹⁶ “Any British officer or a clerk, who is posted to such a dreary place, and such a climate, without any amenities, ... will need the very best of accommodations for himself and his wife if he is to maintain his health, or even his mental balance, throughout the summer”.¹⁷ “A new Agency”, it was concluded, “must be erected as a matter of the greatest urgency”.¹⁸ Later it was added that it required “the usual amenities – tennis courts and a swimming pool”.¹⁹ The regional environment was defined as barren, brutal, unhygienic, and generally uncomfortable. In order to make the environment amenable, even just bearable, a new environment had to be created within it. The appeal for a “new” agency connoted not only a temporal shift but also a paradigmatic one towards manufactured materials and technologies imported from abroad and away from sources and methods associated with local practices and customs.

On 4 March 1948, a British architect employed by the Ministry of Works, K. W. Judd, arrived at the Sharjah base to inspect three potential sites in Dubai.²⁰ Although Sharjah was supposedly a candidate location, no candidate site there is mentioned.²¹ Equipped with paper, pen, and a camera and driven in a government-owned Land Rover, Judd recorded notes about each site that had been defined and nominated by the British political resident in Bahrain. It is not clear what kind of conversations might have informed Dubai's Sheikh Saeed selection of the potential gift sites, but each was known to be "unencumbered by squatters", which translated to their being under the control of Dubai's ruler. In another seeming paradox, British officials perceived the land as "unencumbered" and "unobstructed" yet also fairly definitively bound by an understanding of property ownership that pre-dated British interest in Dubai's systems of determining land ownership. British officials wrote of having to create administrative systems "from scratch", but there clearly seemed to be a system by which the ruler could distinguish land he controlled from that which he did not.

Two of the sheikh's sites measured about 20 acres, the third measured 5 acres. One was near an outer landmark, Burj Nahar, not far from the Sharjah border, and two others were along Dubai Creek on land beyond the built-up parts of the port and city. The architect created a matrix to analyse each site and to compare it to the others across criteria that included subsoil; "aspect" (views towards the port); "communications" (access to roads, jetties, and telegraph stations); and "surroundings". Judd's reporting also included a local builder's initial estimate of building material costs, though these rates were considered "very erratic" – and the local building industry inadequate for the job. Both materials and labour, it was reported, would have to be imported in order to convert the future site into the new agency.²²

Some histories claim that Dubai's ruler offered the British government a piece of land beyond the city limits so that the British "should not impinge too closely on the affairs of Dubai's population".²³ British files contest this reasoning, revealing that British political officers and government-employed architects reviewed at least three sites beyond "the built up areas of Dubai" and "recommended without hesitation" "the most suitable site", referred to as "Site No. 1". The stated preference for distance from the built-up city granted a plot size large enough for a compound; and as Judd's matrix points out, the site afforded "good views" towards Dubai's piers and warehouses, ones "particularly clear and pleasant as sun always behind". From his eventual on-site jetty, the future political agent, amidst his prescribed comforts and conveniences, maintained a comfortable view of the city he was mandated to make a more profitable trade hub.²⁴

Survey

Perhaps one of the most foundational documents in tracing Dubai's history of modern architecture is one of the simplest, produced in July 1950 and titled "Site of Proposed Agency – Dubai", a drawing that recorded the survey of the eventual compound. At the risk of "morally [offending] the Shaikh", London officials wanted a more recognizable guarantee, "a detailed *aide memoire* with a plan annexed", so that the ruler's spoken promise could be more legally recognizable, at least by bureaucrats in London.²⁵ The British Ministry of Works created the document for the Sheikh's written approval. ● It makes no reference to a co-ordinate system but includes measurements of each side of the quadrilateral site and contextual references to a soon-to-be decommissioned oil-company compound and loose designations of "palms" and a cemetery.

fig.1

This is not the first surveyed site plan to accompany a land sale or lease overseen by the British in the Trucial States, and it did not mean that all future agreements would always have such a graphic supplement. However, it did precede any known accurate survey of Dubai and its environs, and it signalled the use of surveying to record and document agreements "to be preserved". Whereas textual description relating to the whereabouts of a property continued to be standard throughout the 1950s, the survey drawing signified the Foreign Office's heightened interest in this agreement and others after it. Ten years after the issuance of this drawing, a British architect produced the city's first town plan intended to outline the legal bounds of a burgeoning real estate market universally regulated by such surveying actions.²⁶

Modernization projects require borders and the mechanizations that circumscribe, express, and enforce them. More than an aesthetic expression or material manipulation, architecture provides these edges. It is a kit of strategies, including the logistical organizing of capital and labour and, most essentially, of land into 'site'. By the time the survey drawing was made, British officials sought "to secure [the] fairly spacious site". "Secure" in this case can be read to mean 'to acquire', if in rather presumptuous terms, land from other parties who might lay claim to it. A second meaning can suggest protecting the site from unauthorized entrance. The designation of land for a defined purpose, the bounding of allegedly unclaimed terrain into enclosed territory, is perhaps the antecedent to any modernization project. Of course, land was designated, claimed, developed, and fortified before any British interests in Dubai real estate as evidenced in the ruler's ability to claim this site and not others. Having such claim backed by surveys, plans, and other bureaucratic recordings, however, was a crucial moment in negotiations between Dubai's local leadership and the British government towards realizing such administrative acts. Bureaucratic ordering, as much as any physical development

fig.1 "Site of Proposed Agency – Dubai". Survey drawing based on early surveying of Dubai and created as part of agreement eventually signed by Dubai's ruler Sheikh Saeed bin Maktoum bin Hasher Al-Maktoum, 1950 (Source: National Archives, UK, Work 10/124. Reuse not permitted).

proposals for Dubai's landscape, was integral to initial modernization programmes that British officials pursued in Dubai. With this in mind, architecture was more than a physical manifestation; it was also an administrative ordering, especially evident in the creation of a site plan that is shared with and approved by municipal agencies. Submitting such a plan to the ruler was a precursor to gaining similar approvals from an eventual Lands Department.²⁷

In order to prepare it for an administrative understanding both legible to London officials and prescient of bureaucratic reforms to come, the site had to be made void of its potential pre-existing meanings. In finding the site "unencumbered", British officials clearly overlooked signs of cultivation and integration of the land in Dubai's existing society, despite the evidence supplied in their own documentation. K. W. Judd's photographs and notes take account of palms on the site, which can only survive with human cultivation. In addition, there were known wells on the site, therefore providing an essential source of water for Dubai's population. Both the palms and the wells are evidence that the site was used, perhaps necessarily so, by nearby residents. Photographic documentation also captures further use of the site: an anchor,

a slight wooden wharf, and sails, laid out for drying and mending. These all marked the site as integrated in Dubai's fishing and ocean trade industries. By ignoring the site's role in Dubai's economy, the inspectors endorsed a false narrative that the site was outside Dubai's social and economic existence.

Fence

In regard to the second meaning of "secure" – to protect the edges from unauthorized entrance – architecture also played a role. While at first the new headquarters was imagined to be a two-storey building outside the city (with living quarters above a ground-floor office), it was rather quickly decided that the agency would take the form of a compound. While an armed "security zone" was deemed unnecessary, it needed to "be reasonably difficult to penetrate". It was well understood that the 20 acres was "a little too large to begin with". Less than a third of the site would be used at first. While "the practice of manning guard towers" was deemed unnecessary, security of the site meant the safeguarding of land for future growth within understood bounds.²⁸ It ensured that no other party could claim the land, and future growth within the site would remain unaffected by escalating real estate markets responding to projects the British pursued.

The fenced-off compound as a spatial model had already been implemented by British interests in the region: at the Sharjah air station in 1932 and later by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company camps, including the one adjacent to the agency compound site. While the political agency was not the first compound, it marked how Foreign Office officials were implementing a form reminiscent of the colonial governor's grounds, or plantation, a historical colonial form of delineation and isolation.²⁹ Extending from historical uses of space for power and control, the built form of the political agency expressed, more importantly, the materiality of ordering processes that the agency would urge upon Dubai's leadership and its landscape. Consequently, the processes of defining and creating the political agency informed how large-scale development was pursued in Dubai, with decreasing British political influence but often with increasing influence from British private industry.

The most explicit evidence that the political agency was conceived as a plantation isolated from the rest of Dubai is found in two proposed site plans from 1948. ●

fig.2

With slight variations, they reveal a multi-purpose compound on a large site focused on accommodating and serving its white British residents – including housing for British officials, housing for the "natives" who worked on site, a waterside esplanade, tennis courts, flower gardens, a swimming pool, and even a "future hospital". Within the compound, narrow roadways connected various aspects of the site, insulating private areas for high-ranking officials even more in the isolated site.

fig.2 One of two 1948 proposed designs for new political agency compound in Dubai. It included a hospital which was eventually scrapped once work began on Al-Maktoum Hospital (Source: National Archives, UK, Work 10/124. Reuse not permitted).

In the plans, one reads a self-sustaining, miniature city that operated on technologies and services not available outside the compound's perimeters.³⁰

Neither of the 1948 plans was pursued as they were deemed too extensive for the immediate needs of the agency and too extravagant for the project's limited budget. In place of a one-off design, the Foreign Office determined that the new quarters would be based on templates, specifically the "Type A Bungalow". Relying on pre-existing templates supplied more than just cost efficiency. It also signified political administrative continuity. "Type A Bungalow" had already been executed in creating housing at the British political residence in Bahrain, the location of the British government's highest-ranking officer in the Gulf region. That the political agency in Dubai was based on a template, and specifically one deployed in Bahrain after oil discoveries there in the 1930s, signalled that what the British government pursued in Dubai, in terms of political control and commercial gain, was systematically connected to its pursuits in Bahrain. Even certain personnel classification codes were connected to the housing type. Architecture substantiated that Dubai, in this way, was a logical continuation of things already underway in Bahrain. Specifically, what was supplied inside the new political agency had more to do with spaces of British political control beyond Dubai than anything occurring just outside the surveyed bounds.³¹

Prestige

As mentioned earlier, the securing of the political agency did not have so much to do with arming the site – it would not withstand any “local upheaval”. Rather, it had to do with distinguishing the site from everything beyond it. ●

fig.3

“In a country where prestige is a paramount consideration”, one official observed, “the offices and quarters of the chief British Political representative for the entire Trucial Coast should show such a ludicrous contrast”. In order to manifest that “ludicrous contrast”, people other than British officials and their servants had to observe what was provided inside the compound. The political agent’s living quarters were adjacent to his offices. Though cost-cutting dramatically reduced the agent’s entertaining capabilities, the built premises offered ample spaces for hospitality, including a dining room and living area. Assemblies of Trucial States leaders were held at the house, where leaders could meet the agent and his family, inspect the furnishings and the buildings’ “up-to-date lines”, enjoy the air-conditioned drafts from “American hermetically sealed room units”, and test the running water imported by ships and stored with a week’s reserve.³² Amidst these dramatically modern interiors and architectural details, the leaders had their first discussions about modernization “schemes” that would eventually supply the infrastructure to sustain such visible enhancements to other parts of Dubai and the region. The agency’s fence therefore distinguished the site but did not make it impenetrable.

One important landmark at the agency was the flagstaff that kept the British flag hoisted, perhaps Dubai’s tallest structure at the time of its erection. While the bungalows, described by one resident as “low sheds that blended in the surrounding sand”, were not designed to be seen from afar, the flagstaff was.³³ It could be seen from at least a kilometre on the other side of Dubai Creek. It visually marked the British presence in Dubai and, besides that, signalled the existence of another and potentially superseding political power in the city. No local flag flew higher. Sometime after the flagstaff was erected, it became known – whether more than just by word of mouth is not clear – that, if a slave, of which there still were some in the Trucial States, made it through the agency’s gate, crossed the gardens, and placed his or her hand on the flagstaff, it was considered as much as a request to the British government by that person to be made free. Part of the political agency’s self-determined functions after locating in Dubai was to provide manumission papers for those who made it to the agency flagstaff.³⁴ As it was reported that some of Dubai’s merchants still trafficked human beings up and down the Gulf coast, the British government professed to work against such trafficking as part of its constraints on regional trade. Broader than the flagstaff’s role in ending the practice of slavery, it highlighted the way distinct

borders defined distinct areas of jurisdiction that could overrule or ignore coexisting ones. The agency's interiorized logic was not only a distinct political space but also a realm that could transform the contractual obligations that occurred beyond its borders, influencing how someone might negotiate his or her life beyond the political agency.

Limits and prestige

One removed component of the initial design proposals for the compound was a hospital. British officials based in the region were aware of the lack of modern health-care facilities in the Trucial States, whether for the broader public or for the future British staff at the agency. Officials working on the proposal appeared to agree that the suggested hospital would be at least partially accessible to non-British residents. Despite there being "political and prestige value" without "an extravagant contribution" in supplying modest healthcare to Dubai's residents, the hospital proposal was rejected by treasury department officials as too expensive and beyond any British Mandate: there was "no obligation to provide, or help to provide, a hospital for the local inhabitants".³⁵

Even before the officials could get internal approvals in order for the simplest of bungalow structures for the agency site, work was already underway on a new hospital at one of the sites rejected for the agency compound. While the hospital eventually received funds from the British government and other British concerns including what was soon known as British Petroleum, the project was launched with proceeds from the ruling family and other wealthy families of Dubai. It was hastily conceived and completed by the single British contractor in the region, with whom the British government could not negotiate the subsequent contract for the construction of the agency.³⁶

From his carefully selected venue on Dubai Creek, standing at his private pier, the political agent could inspect the goings-on of Dubai Creek, its daily business schedule determined by the ebb and flow of the coastal tide. And beyond, across the water, towards the district of Deira, he could also locate the new, barracks-like building that housed the hospital the British treasury had refused to fund. More important than the agent's view of the hospital, however, was the view from the hospital back at the agency and its waving flag. The visual connection was essential to British power in Dubai. The first structure of Al-Maktoum Hospital, as it was soon called, was not built with British money, but its placement outside the built-up parts of the city allowed it to advance and grow according to the rules set up inside the agency. No later than 1959, a fence encompassed the hospital and a good deal of land around it, once again protecting it less from marauders and more from development into something else. Fortifying future growth potential, the fence was the hospital's most valuable asset until it could

fig.3

Elevation drawings of proposed residential bungalow and offices, including the flagstaff, for new political agency in Dubai, 1952
 (Source: National Archives, UK, Work 10/124. Reuse not permitted).

d, residences and offices.

50 60 70 80 90 feet

W. M. S.
 Drawing number DB/9
 R. P. Mills A.R.I.B.A. Senior Architect
 H. B. M. Ministry of Works
 Abell House London S.W.1.
 May 1958

APPROVED BY C.A. S. G. S. L.

afford to be more than a primitive dispensary. The fence encircled the opportunity for expansion and technological advancement. Without ever fully funding the hospital's development, the British channelled its growth well into the 1960s, overseeing the hiring of medical professionals, supplying the necessary equipment (often second hand), and formulating a master plan for how the hospital would grow as locally sourced funding became available.³⁷ At that newly fenced site, beyond the ways and buildings of the built-up part of the cities, modern architecture was manifested as it had been at the political agency, isolated and sealed from its environs and according to discreet contracts and schedules. It would play out once more according to the rules of a British-led modernization. As a result of Al-Maktoum Hospital's fence, other boundaries were made manifest around it, each one distinguishing claimed ownership from the claims surrounding it. In similar fashion, plot by plot, and in manageable swaths that took into account both current and future needs, Dubai "[emerged] from its mediaeval status of a few years ago into the modern world". Whatever was created within the boundaries of a delineated project was expected both to exist upon its own rules and to influence how the rest of the city functioned and grew beyond.

Rather than by sweeping master plans or a coordinated infrastructural strategy, Dubai continued to expand this way, by gradations and delineated allotments. Each component was designed as an autonomy. For each project – a hospital, a district of villas, a resort, an airport – site was defined against what lay outside it. Inside each plot was protected and assured; outside was at best undetermined, and at worst harsh and unbearable. Each swath was a controllable site, its dimensions recorded on cadastre maps, its ambitions limited by the capacity of its contracted expertise, and its funding doled out according to bank documents. Many of these sites contained their own water supplies, power stations, and menus of bespoke amenities that assured users they need not leave. Outside each block, tendrils of new asphalt roads, trimmed in green landscaping, connected new development sites to other ones; the accumulation of sites led the city away from the creek and its compression of people and services towards a vast and seemingly unreachable horizon, easily carved into for new sites of designed environments against the backdrop of an uncherished desert. The city of Dubai would be interiorized.

Notes

- 1 Jackson to Walters, 4 November 1947, The National Archives, United Kingdom (NA), Work 10/124.
- 2 Neilson to Isaac, 12 September 1949, NA, Work 10/124. Dubai, as well as the rest of the Trucial States, was never a colony within the British Empire. Its status, determined by Britain's unilateral 'truces', was kept undefined though described as a 'protected state'.
- 3 Note from Thorne, 29 November 1950, NA, Work 10/124.
- 4 Walters to Turner, 15 November 1947, NA, Work 10/124.
- 5 Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *The Origins of the United Arab Emirates: A Political and Social History of the Trucial States* (London: Macmillan, 1978), xv.
- 6 As early as 1908, there had been profit-minded efforts to convince the British government to build a more significant presence in the Trucial States. See Zahlan, *The Origins of the United Arab Emirates*, 28–29.
- 7 Jackson to Walters, 4 November 1947, NA, Work 10/124. This paper is based largely on the correspondence and other documents collected in this folder whose contents span the time period from 1947 to 1955.
- 8 Undated report ca. 1947, NA, Work 10/124.
- 9 Hay to Burrows, 30 April 1948, NA, Work 10/124. This assessment of Dubai is further investigated in Todd Reisz, "Writing Sharjah's Landscape".
- 10 Jackson to Walters, 4 November 1947.
- 11 Trucial Coast News Report No. 21, 8 November 1947, Indian Office Records (IOR)/R/15/4/15.
- 12 Application for Treasury Sanction, 17 December 1948, NA, Work 10/124.
- 13 Walters to Turner, 15 November 1947.
- 14 Jackson to Walters, 4 November 1947.
- 15 Walters to Turner, 15 November 1947.
- 16 Shepherd to de Norman, 25 July 1952, NA, Work 10/124.
- 17 Jackson to Walters, 4 November 1947.
- 18 Walters to Turner, 15 November 1947.
- 19 Wilson to Leary, 8 December 1948, NA, Work 10/124.
- 20 Trucial Coast News Report No. 4, 4 March 1948, IOR/R/15/4/15.
- 21 Conventional histories often describe the eventual political agency first being situated in Sharjah and then later, in the mid-1950s, moving to Dubai. While there was some kind of British presence in Sharjah from as early as 1892, the decision in 1947 to advance the British presence in the region was quickly followed with the decision to base it in Dubai.
- 22 Approx. Prices of Materials in Sharjah/ Dubai, 7 June 1948, NA, Work 10/124.
- 23 Julian Walker, *Tyro on the Trucial Coast* (Durham: Memoir Club, 1999), 58. The approximately 20 acres of the political agency are largely the current grounds of Great Britain's diplomatic offices in Dubai.
- 24 Judd to Turner, 7 June 1948, NA, Work 10/124.
- 25 Notes, Thorne, 29 November 1950, NA, Work 10/124.
- 26 See Todd Reisz, "Taking Measures: 1960 Dubai Town Plan", chap. 4 in *Showpiece City: How Architecture Made Dubai* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020).
- 27 The third Political Agent Trucial States, Donald Hawley, advised on the creation of Dubai's Lands Department in 1960. See Reisz, "Taking Measures", chap. 4 in *Showpiece City*.
- 28 Judd to Turner, 7 June 1948.
- 29 Robert Home, "'Planting is My Trade': The Shapers of Colonial Urban Landscapes", in *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London: Routledge, 1997), 38–63.
- 30 Layout Showing Possible Development of Recommended Site, July 1948, NA, Work 10/124.
- 31 Historian Stephen Ramos refers to a "regional blueprint" for how British officials responded to local changes as a result of new oil wealth. While there was no actual blueprint – each location required response to local conditions and later actions learned from earlier ones – it is fair to say that preparing Dubai for impending oil wealth, whether within its territory or beyond, learned from previous engagement with regional cities and new wealth. Stephen J. Ramos, *Dubai Amplified: The Engineering of a Port Geography, Design and the Built Environment Series* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 10.
- 32 Shepherd to de Norman, 25 July 1952. Harris to Shelley, 7 June 1952, NA, Work 10/124.
- 33 Walker, *Tyro on the Trucial Coast*, 58.
- 34 Ibid., 11–12.
- 35 Neilson to Isaac, 12 September 1949.
- 36 The agency's first-phase construction was completed by the British government's own labor pools, a practice it would quickly avoid in future projects in Dubai.
- 37 Reisz, "Piecemeal: Al Maktoum Hospital", chap. 5 in *Showpiece City*.