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### 'Muscat succession'

<b>Holding Institution</b>	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
<b>Reference</b>	IOR/R/15/1/447
<b>Date(s)</b>	15 Oct 1940-24 Dec 1945 (CE, Gregorian)
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<b>Extent and Format</b>	1 volume (34 folios)
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#### About this record

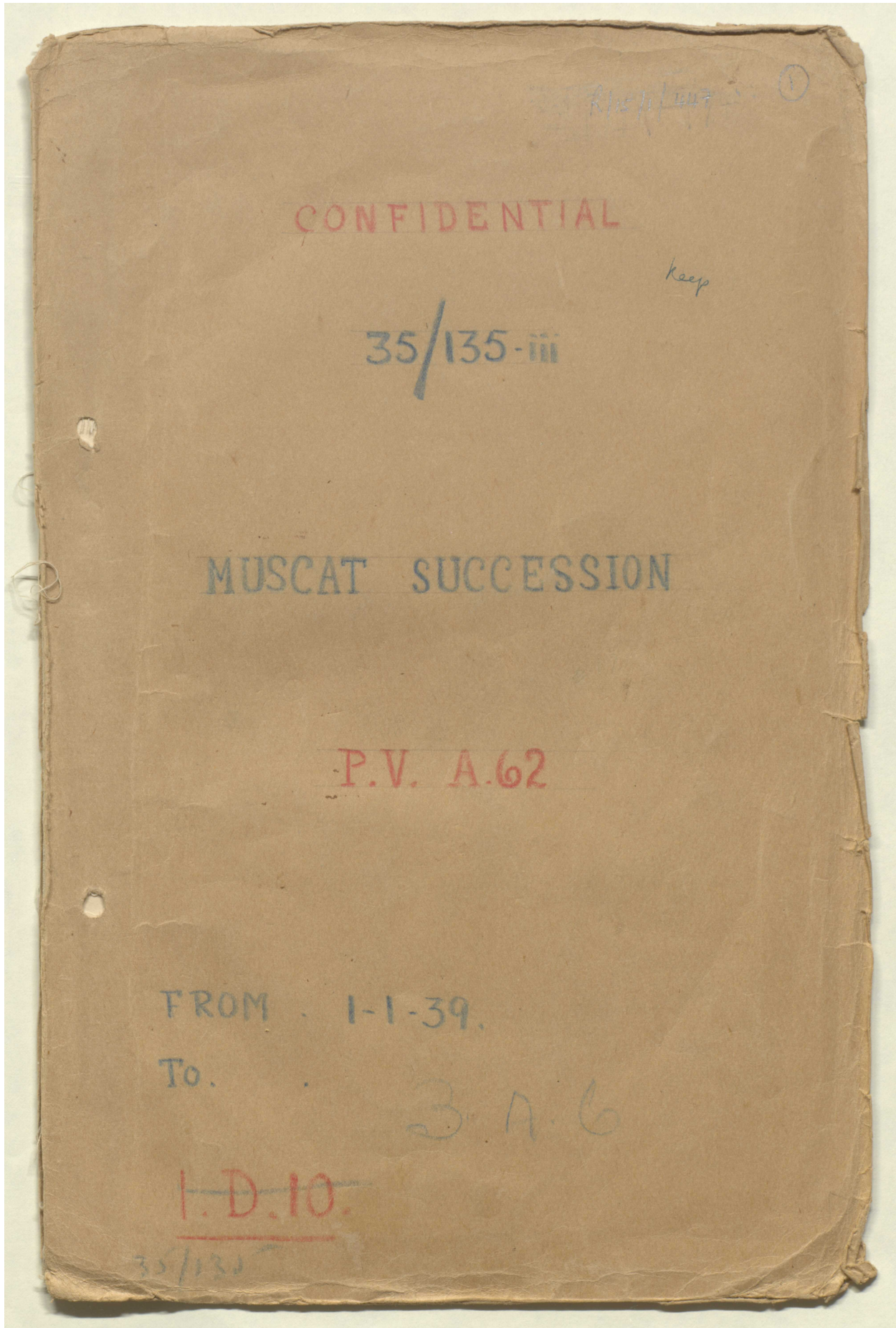
Correspondence relating to the succession to Said bin Taimur [Sa'īd ibn Taymūr], Sultan of Muscat, in the event of his sudden demise. Said bin Taimur felt that no member of the Royal Family met the two criteria required for his successor: to hold the same views as his own about the State's close connection with the British Government and to be personally acceptable to the majority of the people.

Includes notes by Major Tom Hickinbotham, Political Agent, Muscat, on four members of the Al Bu SaRoyal Family: Saiyid Shahab bin Faisal bin Turki [Shahāb Fayṣal bin Turkī]; Saiyid Nadir bin Faisal [Nādir bin Fayṣal]; Saiyid Hamad bin Faisal; Saiyid Tarik bin Taimur [Tāriq bin Taymūr]; Saiyid Majid bin Taimur [Majid bin Taymūr].

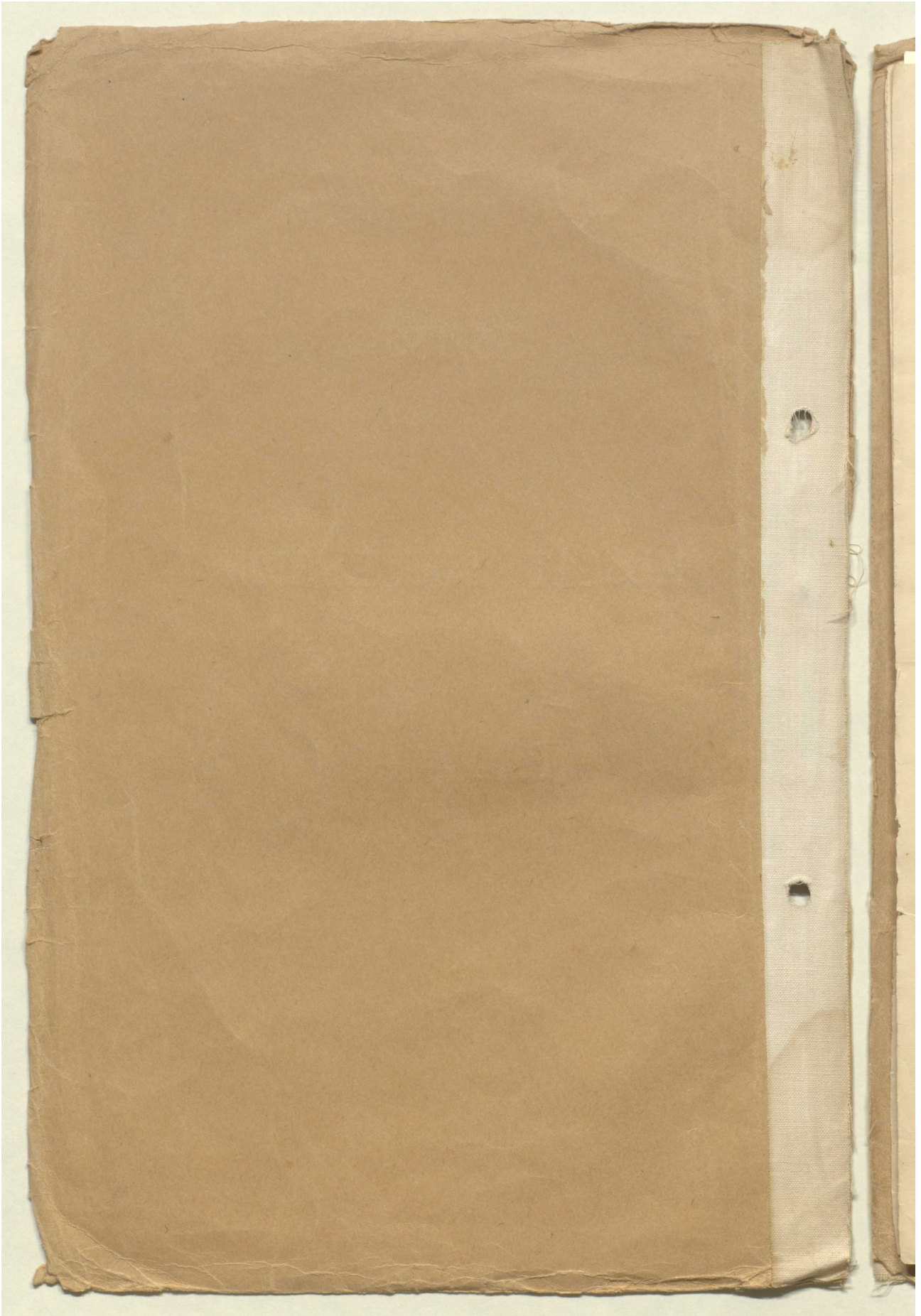
A letter headed 'Most Secret' from the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to the Secretary to the Government of India in the External Affairs Department describes a conversation between the Resident and Sultan Said bin Taimur in which the Sultan intimated that he would prefer a British Officer to fill the post of Regent rather than any members of his family.

Correspondents include Major Tom Hickinbotham, Political Agent and HBMs Consul, Muscat; Political Resident Persian Gulf; R R Burnett, Secretary to the Government of India, External Affairs Department, New Delhi.

'Muscat succession' [front] (1/24)



'Muscat succession' [front-i] (2/24)



'Muscat succession' [2r] (3/24)

CONFIDENTIAL.

No. C/562.

35/135  
13 (2)  
Political Agency & H.B.M's Consulate,  
Muscat, the 15th October 1940.

From

Major T. Hickinbotham, O.B.E.,  
Political Agent & H.B.M's Consul,  
Muscat.

To

The Hon'ble the Political Resident  
in the Persian Gulf,  
Bushire.

Subject :- Muscat Succession.

Sir,

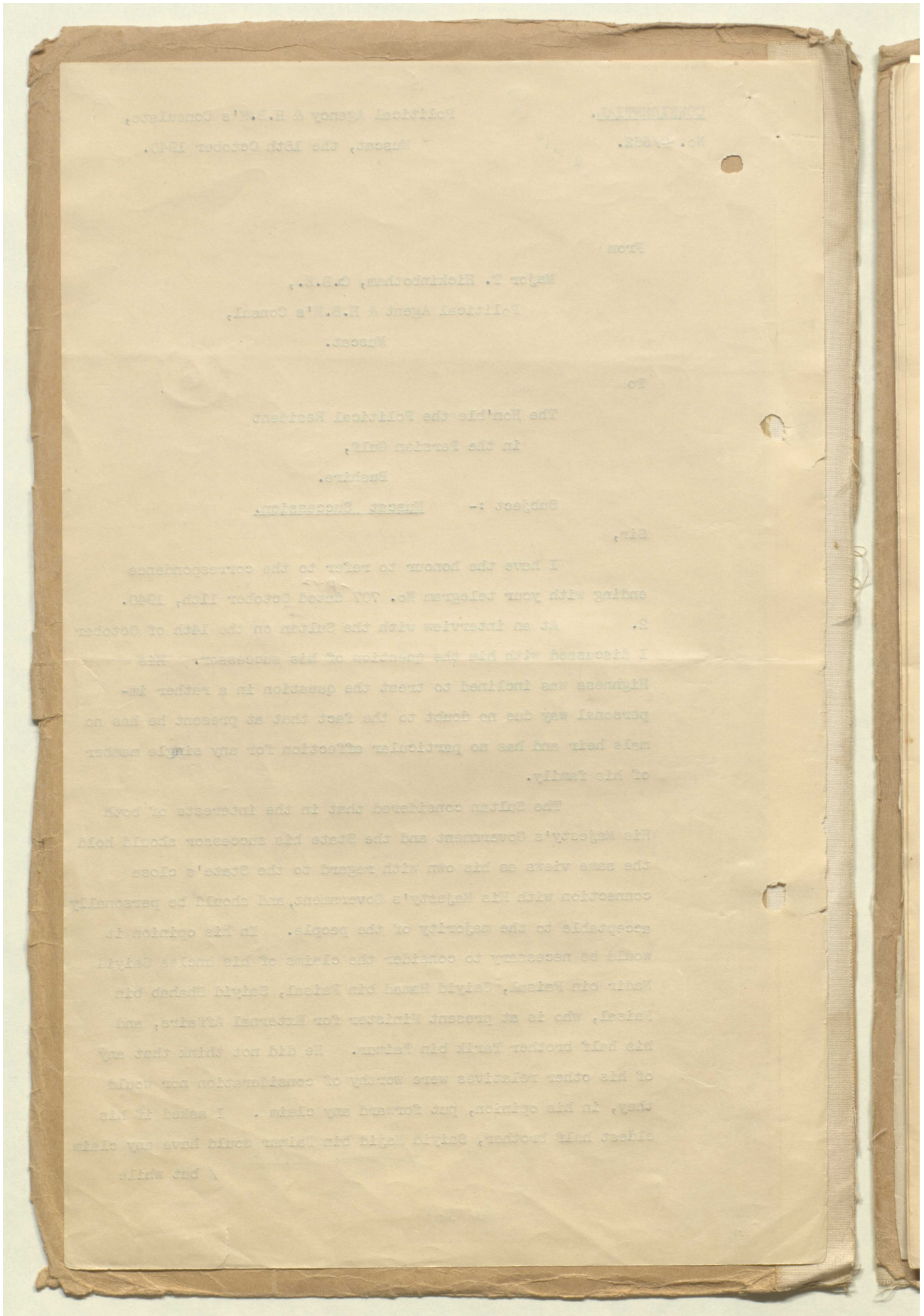
I have the honour to refer to the correspondence ending with your telegram No. 707 dated October 11th, 1940.

2. At an interview with the Sultan on the 14th of October I discussed with him the question of his successor. His Highness was inclined to treat the question in a rather impersonal way due no doubt to the fact that at present he has no male heir and has no particular affection for any single member of his family.

The Sultan considered that in the interests of both His Majesty's Government and the State his successor should hold the same views as his own with regard to the State's close connection with His Majesty's Government, and should be personally acceptable to the majority of the people. In his opinion it would be necessary to consider the claims of his uncles Saiyid Nadir bin Faisal, Saiyid Hamad bin Faisal, Saiyid Shahab bin Faisal, who is at present Minister for External Affairs, and his half brother Tarik bin Taimur. He did not think that any of his other relatives were worthy of consideration nor would they, in his opinion, put forward any claim. I asked if his eldest half brother, Saiyid Majid bin Taimur would have any claim / but while

(4 se)

'Muscat succession' [2v] (4/24)



'Muscat succession' [3r] (5/24)

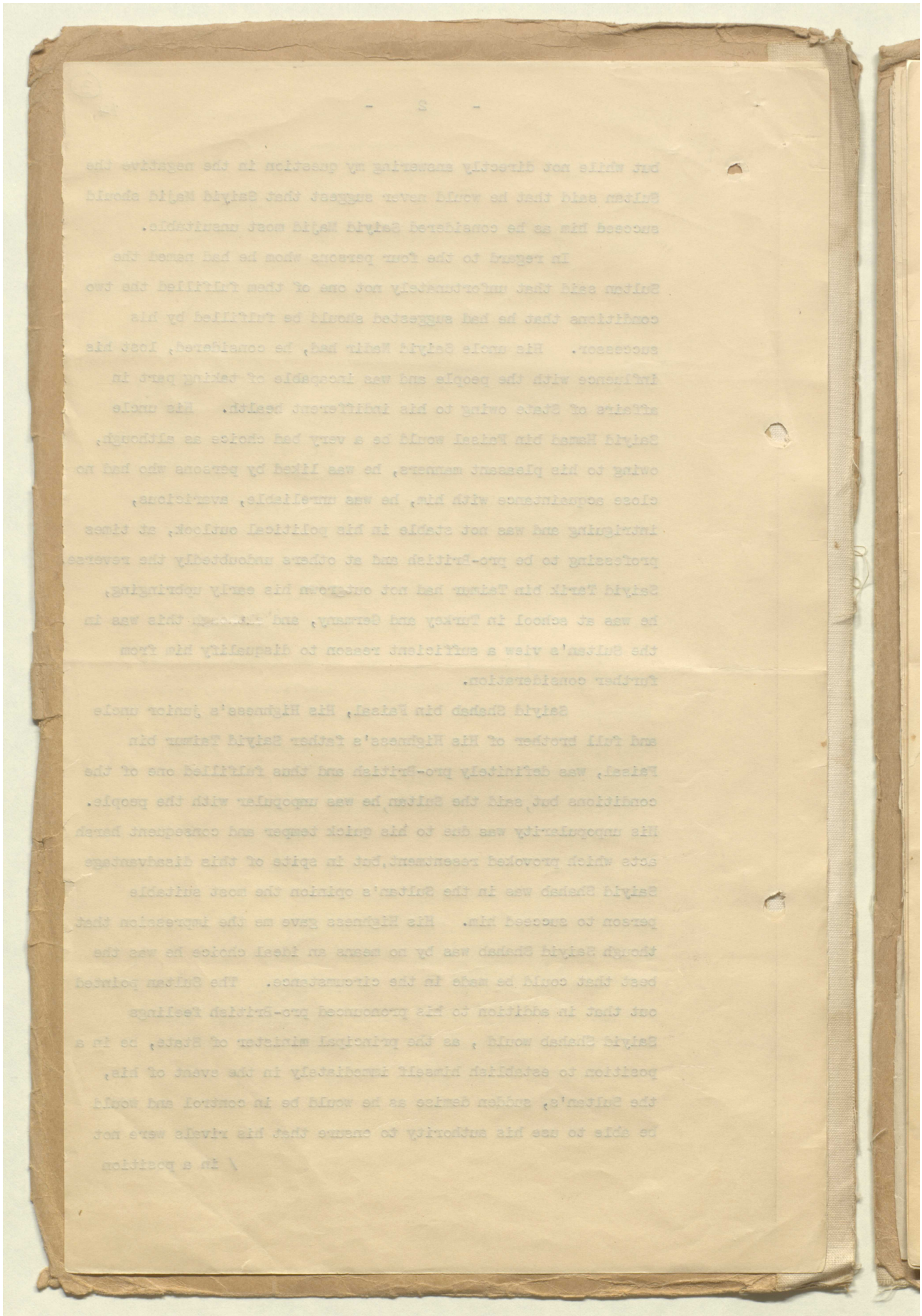
- 2 -

3  
14

but while not directly answering my question in the negative the Sultan said that he would never suggest that Saiyid Majid should succeed him as he considered Saiyid Majid most unsuitable.

In regard to the four persons whom he had named the Sultan said that unfortunately not one of them fulfilled the two conditions that he had suggested should be fulfilled by his successor. His uncle Saiyid Nadir had, he considered, lost his influence with the people and was incapable of taking part in affairs of State owing to his indifferent health. His uncle Saiyid Hamad bin Faisal would be a very bad choice as although, owing to his pleasant manners, he was liked by persons who had no close acquaintance with him, he was unreliable, avaricious, intriguing and was not stable in his political outlook, at times professing to be pro-British and at others undoubtedly the reverse. Saiyid Farik bin Taimur had not outgrown his early upbringing, he was at school in Turkey and Germany, and although this was in the Sultan's view a sufficient reason to disqualify him from further consideration.

Saiyid Shahab bin Faisal, His Highness's junior uncle and full brother of His Highness's father Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal, was definitely pro-British and thus fulfilled one of the conditions but, said the Sultan, he was unpopular with the people. His unpopularity was due to his quick temper and consequent harsh acts which provoked resentment, but in spite of this disadvantage Saiyid Shahab was in the Sultan's opinion the most suitable person to succeed him. His Highness gave me the impression that though Saiyid Shahab was by no means an ideal choice he was the best that could be made in the circumstance. The Sultan pointed out that in addition to his pronounced pro-British feelings Saiyid Shahab would, as the principal minister of State, be in a position to establish himself immediately in the event of his, the Sultan's, sudden demise as he would be in control and would be able to use his authority to ensure that his rivals were not / in a position



'Muscat succession' [4r] (7/24)

- 3 -

in a position to offer any serious opposition.

During the course of the interview the Sultan never once suggested that any recognition private or public should be accorded to Saiyid Shahab bin Faisal as his successor by His Majesty's Government and I do not consider that any such recognition would at the present time be in accordance with the Ruler's own wishes.

At the end of our discussion on this subject His Highness mentioned that he had recently received letters from Dhofar and that in consequence of the news contained in them he might possibly wish to make a further statement on this subject in the near future. The Sultan visited his southern province in April of this year and has a wife living there.

3. The future is doubtful, the Sultan may have a son, an event which will probably change his whole outlook, or in the course of two or three years Saiyid Tarik bin Taimur may develop into an ideal successor, but for the time being I consider that Saiyid Shahab bin Faisal is the most suitable choice and should be looked upon as the future Sultan.

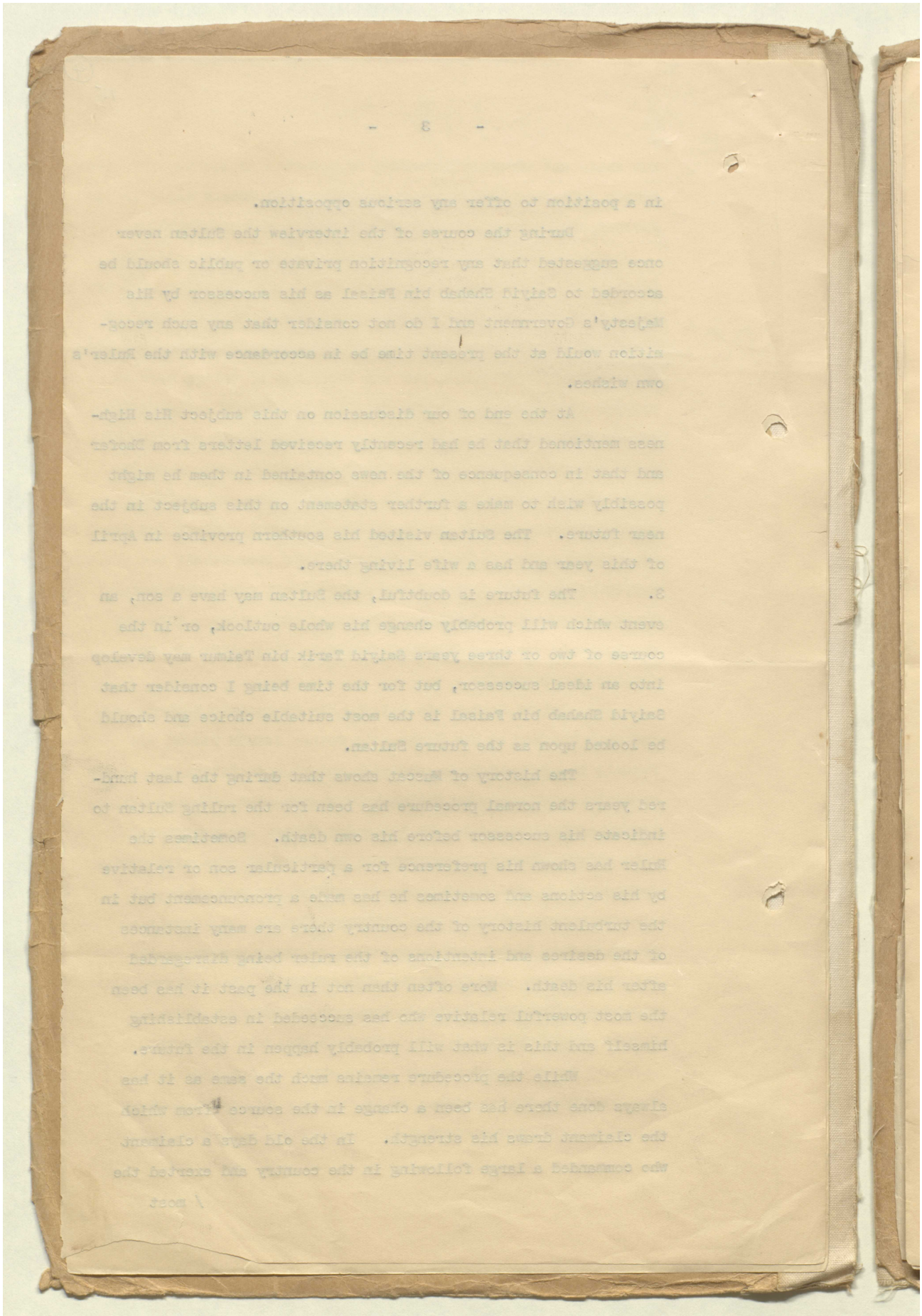
The history of Muscat shows that during the last hundred years the normal procedure has been for the ruling Sultan to indicate his successor before his own death. Sometimes the Ruler has shown his preference for a particular son or relative by his actions and sometimes he has made a pronouncement but in the turbulent history of the country there are many instances of the desires and intentions of the ruler being disregarded after his death. More often than not in the past it has been the most powerful relative who has succeeded in establishing himself and this is what will probably happen in the future.

While the procedure remains much the same as it has always done there has been a change in the source from which the claimant draws his strength. In the old days a claimant who commanded a large following in the country and exerted the

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'Muscat succession' [4v] (8/24)



'Muscat succession' [5r] (9/24)

16 (5)

- 4 -

most influence over the tribes of Oman was generally able to establish himself and hold his position as Sultan until his death, which was sometimes untimely, but the increase in the influence of His Majesty's Government and the election by the Omani tribes of a separate leader, the Imam, has reduced the value of tribal support and increased the strength that the claimant has derived from his close association with and good intentions towards His Majesty's Government so that today the actual succession will be largely determined by the expressed or presumed favour with which the claim of a particular individual is looked upon by His Majesty's Government.

Therefore while I do not consider it desirable that any recognition should be accorded to Saiyid Shahab as the heir presumptive, I do suggest that, in order to prevent possible strife, arrangements be made to ensure that provided he accepts the required obligations and agreements recognition as Sultan be accorded immediately on his accession.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

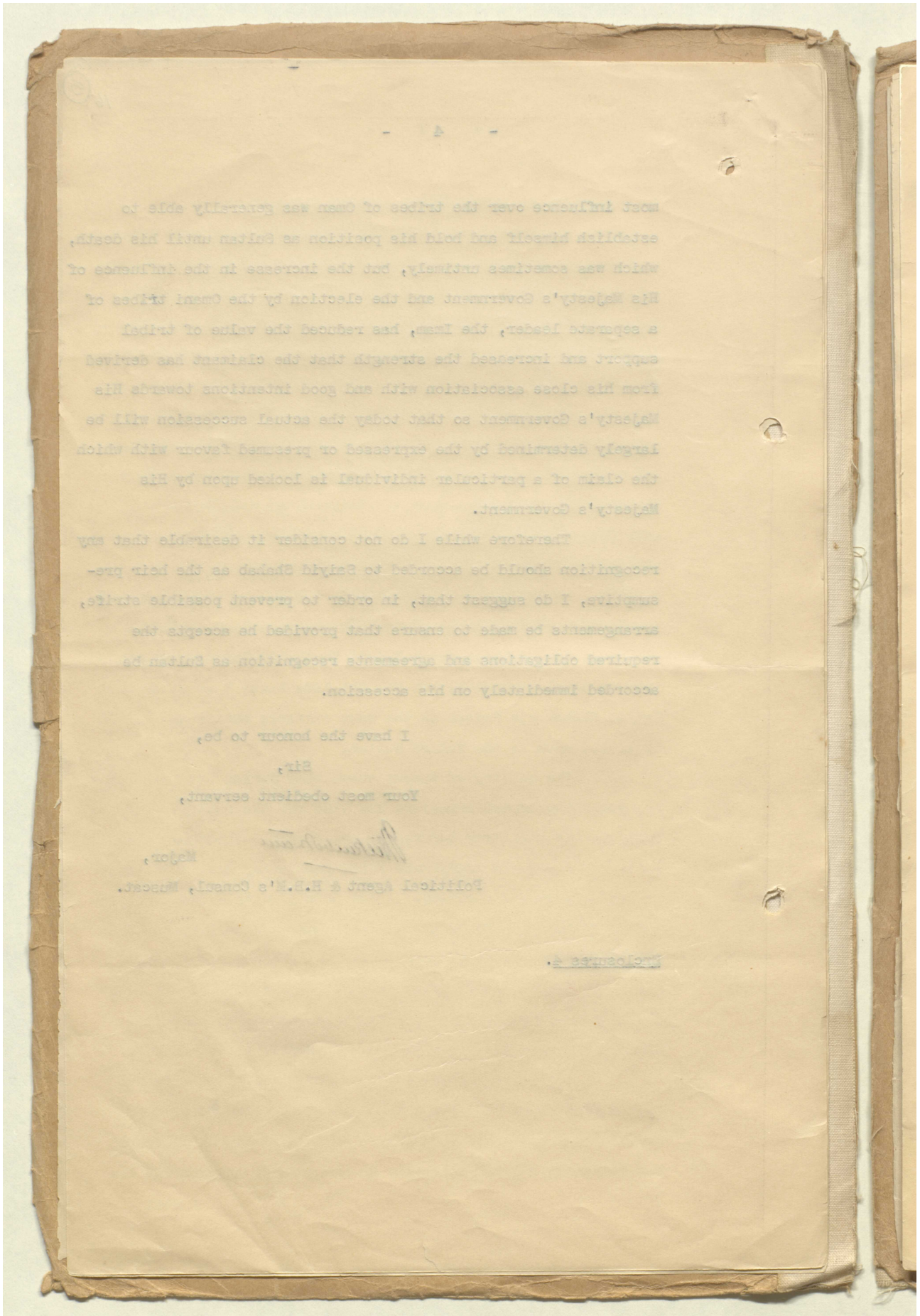
*Richard Owen*

Major,

Political Agent & H.B.M.'s Consul, Muscat.

Enclosures 4.

'Muscat succession' [5v] (10/24)



'Muscat succession' [6r] (11/24)

(Enclosure 1)

17 (6)

Saiyid Shahab bin Faisal bin Turki.

Born. 1902.

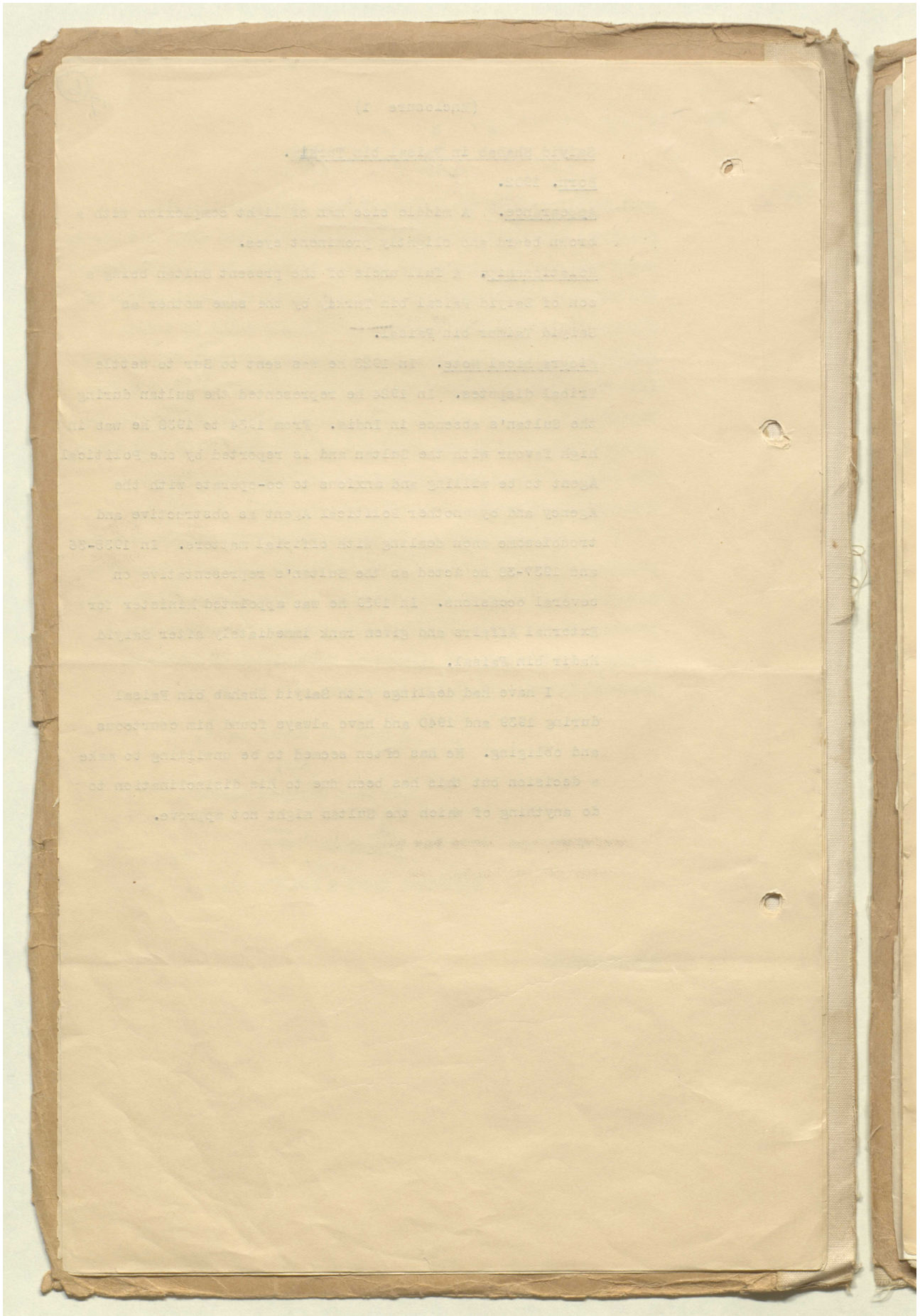
Appearance. A middle size man of light complexion with a brown beard and slightly prominent eyes.

Relationship. A full uncle of the present Sultan being a son of Saiyid Faisal bin Turki by the same mother as Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal.

Biographical Note. In 1923 he was sent to Sur to settle Tribal disputes. In 1924 he represented the Sultan during the Sultan's absence in India. From 1934 to 1938 he was in high favour with the Sultan and is reported by one Political Agent to be willing and anxious to co-operate with the Agency and by another Political Agent as obstructive and troublesome when dealing with official matters. In 1935-36 and 1937-38 he acted as the Sultan's representative on several occasions. In 1939 he was appointed Minister for External Affairs and given rank immediately after Saiyid Nadir bin Faisal.

I have had dealings with Saiyid Shahab bin Faisal during 1939 and 1940 and have always found him courteous and obliging. He has often seemed to be unwilling to make a decision but this has been due to his disinclination to do anything of which the Sultan might not approve.

'Muscat succession' [6v] (12/24)



'Muscat succession' [7r] (13/24)

(Enclosure 2)

7  
12

Saiyid Nadir bin Faisal.

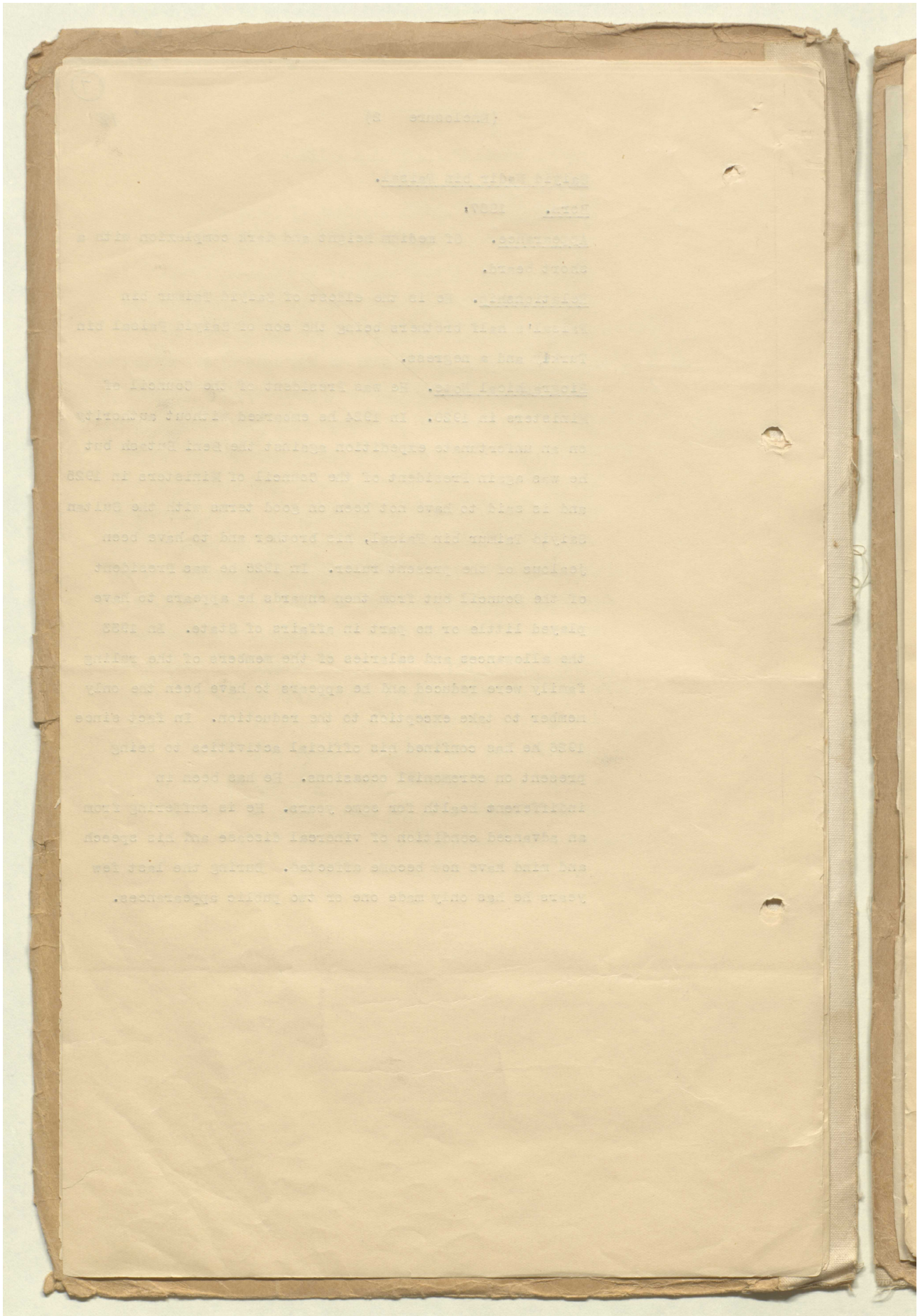
Born. 1887.

Appearance. Of medium height and dark complexion with a short beard.

Relationship. He is the eldest of Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal's half brothers being the son of Saiyid Faisal bin Turki and a negress.

Biographical Note. He was President of the Council of Ministers in 1920. In 1924 he embarked without authority on an unfortunate expedition against the Beni Butash but he was again President of the Council of Ministers in 1925 and is said to have not been on good terms with the Sultan Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal, his brother and to have been jealous of the present ruler. In 1926 he was President of the Council but from then onwards he appears to have played little or no part in affairs of State. In 1933 the allowances and salaries of the members of the ruling family were reduced and he appears to have been the only member to take exception to the reduction. In fact since 1926 he has confined his official activities to being present on ceremonial occasions. He has been in indifferent health for some years. He is suffering from an advanced condition of venereal disease and his speech and mind have now become affected. During the last few years he has only made one or two public appearances.

'Muscat succession' [7v] (14/24)



'Muscat succession' [8r] (15/24)

(Enclosure 3)

19 (8)

Saiyid Hamad bin Faisal.

Born. 1893.

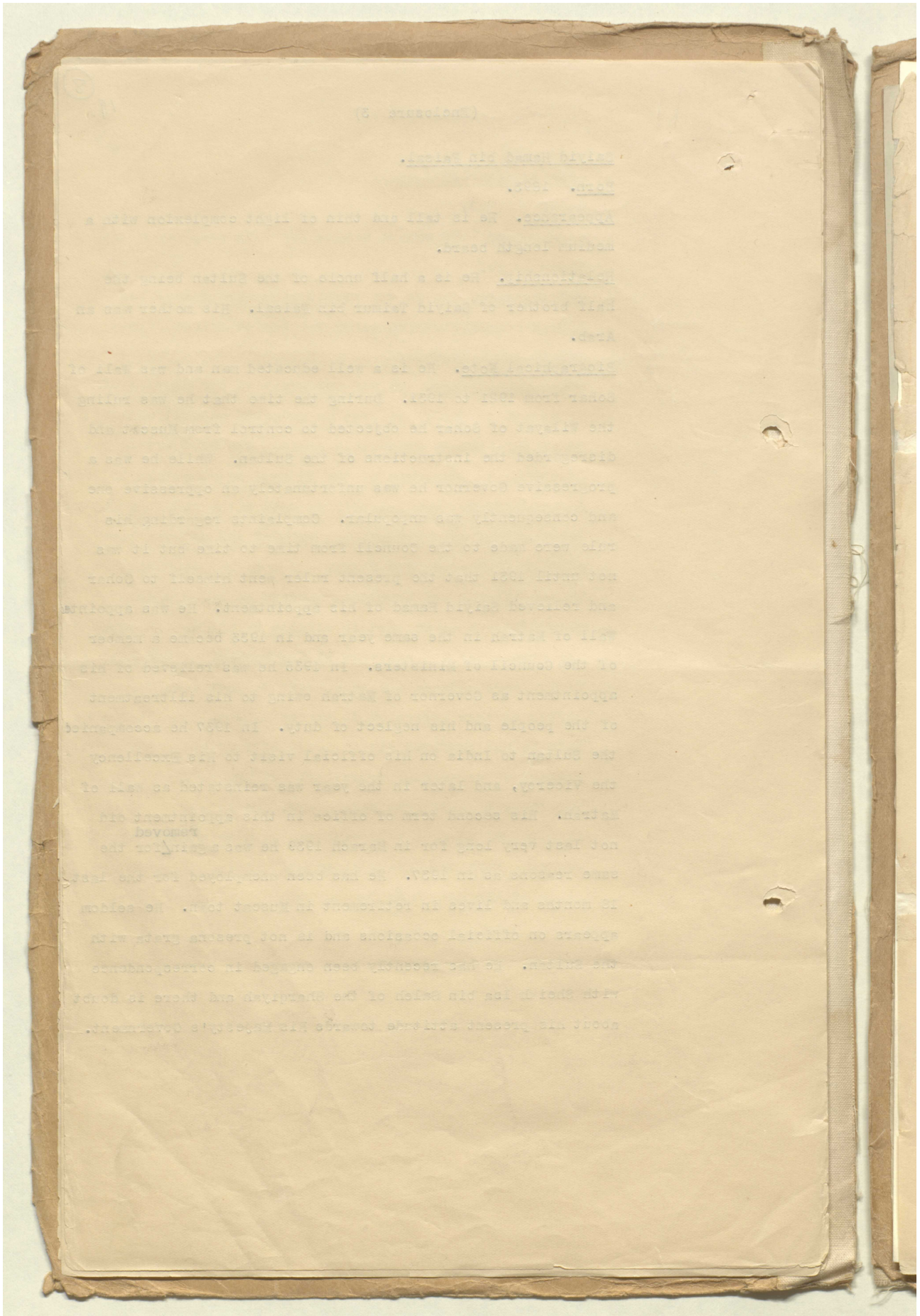
Appearance. He is tall and thin of light complexion with a medium length beard.

Relationship. He is a half uncle of the Sultan being the half brother of Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal. His mother was an Arab.

Biographical Note. He is a well educated man and was Wali of Sohar from 1921 to 1931. During the time that he was ruling the Wilayat of Sohar he objected to control from Muscat and disregarded the instructions of the Sultan. While he was a progressive Governor he was unfortunately an oppressive one and consequently was unpopular. Complaints regarding his rule were made to the Council from time to time but it was not until 1931 that the present ruler went himself to Sohar and relieved Saiyid Hamad of his appointment. He was appointed Wali of Matrah in the same year and in 1933 became a member of the Council of Ministers. In 1935 he was relieved of his appointment as Governor of Matrah owing to his illtreatment of the people and his neglect of duty. In 1937 he accompanied the Sultan to India on his official visit to His Excellency the Viceroy, and later in the year was reinstated as Wali of Matrah. His second term of office in this appointment did not last very long for in March 1939 he was again <sup>removed</sup> for the same reasons as in 1937. He has been unemployed for the last 18 months and lives in retirement in Muscat town. He seldom appears on official occasions and is not persona grata with the Sultan. He has recently been engaged in correspondence with Sheikh Isa bin Saleh of the Sharqiyah and there is doubt about his present attitude towards His Majesty's Government.



'Muscat succession' [8v] (16/24)



'Muscat succession' [9r] (17/24)

(Enclosure 4).

9  
20

SAIYID TARIK BIN TAIMUR.

Born. 1922.

Appearance. Tall, heavily built of light complexion with a brown beard and straight nose.

Relationship. A half brother of the Sultan being the son of Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal and a Turkish woman.

Biographical Note. Saiyid Tarik's mother was divorced by Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal and returned to her native country where he was born. He was at first at school in Istanbul but in 1934 he was sent to Germany and to school at Frankfort-on-Maine, where his maternal uncle was a medical practitioner. Saiyid Tarik remained at school in Germany until he was brought to Muscat by the Sultan in 1937. Saiyid Tarik speaks German and according to the Sultan has imbibed certain of the Nazi ideas. When he arrived in Muscat he was unable to speak Arabic and unused to eastern manners and customs. His education in Islam and Arabic was taken in hand and he has been kept under strict control. It is the Sultan's intention to send Saiyid Tarik to Bait-al-Falaj to be under the charge of the Military Adviser and to acquire some knowledge of Military matters and acquire firmness of character.

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SAIYID MAJID BIN TAIMUR.

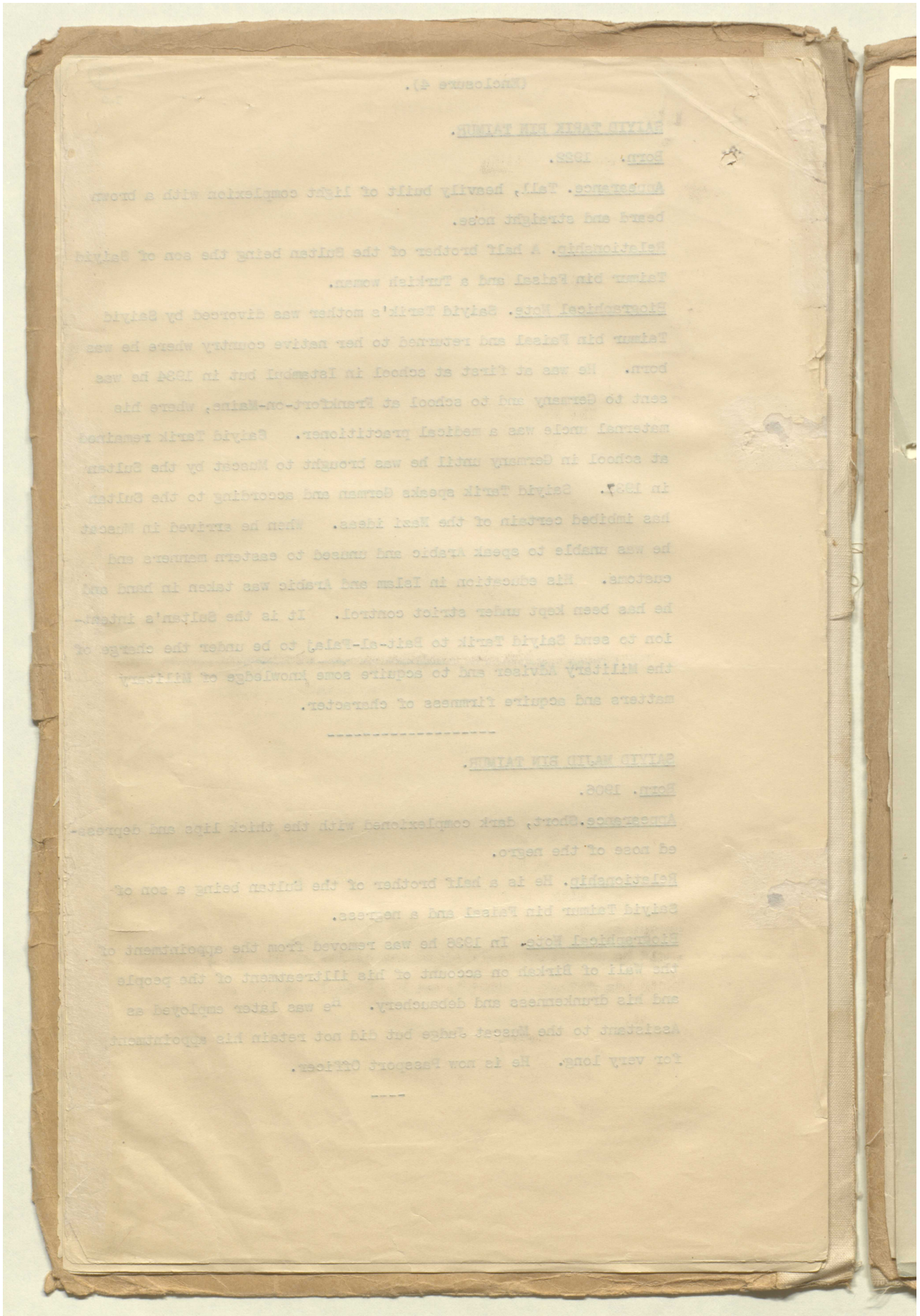
Born. 1906.

Appearance. Short, dark complexioned with the thick lips and depressed nose of the negro.

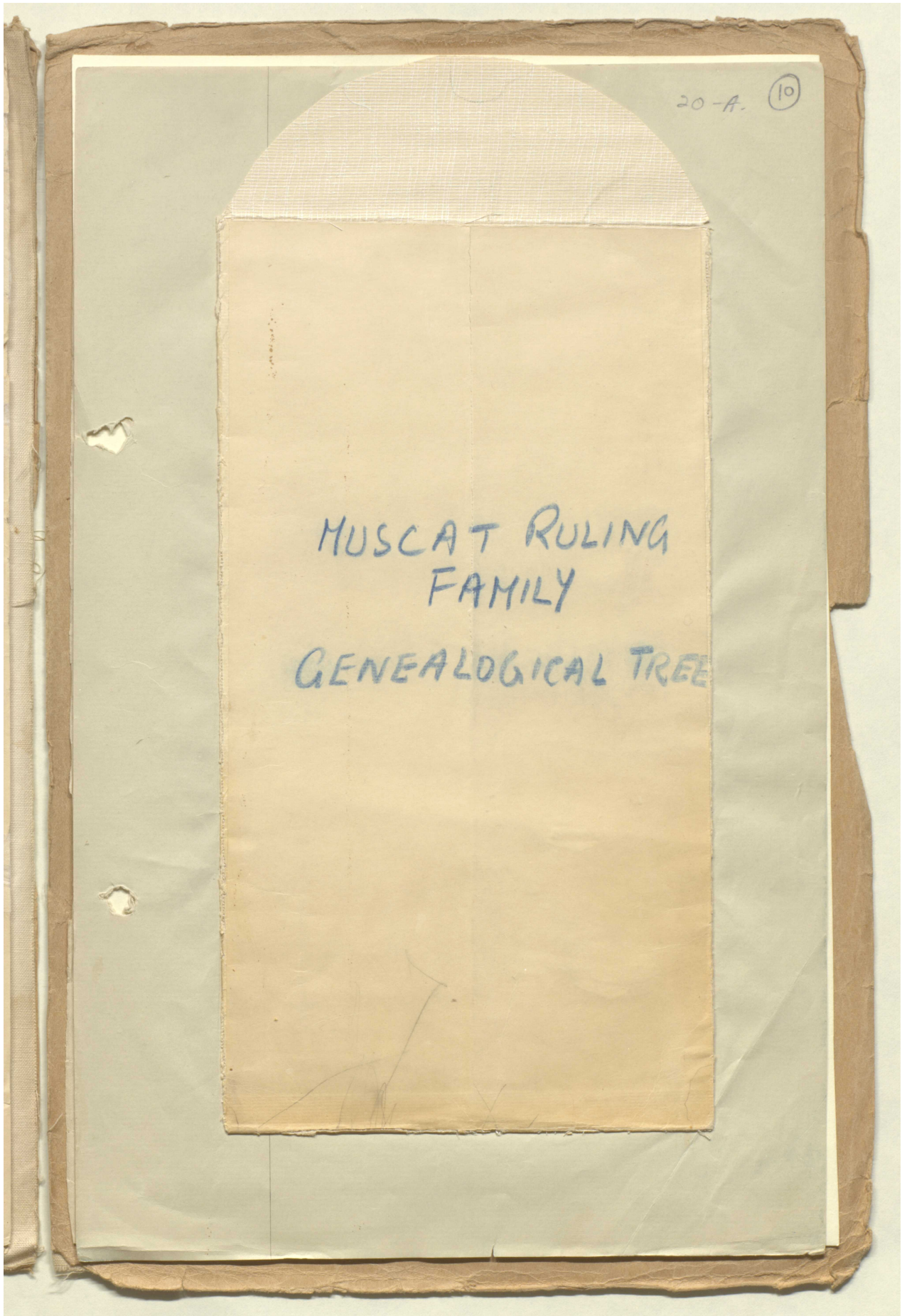
Relationship. He is a half brother of the Sultan being a son of Saiyid Taimur bin Faisal and a negress.

Biographical Note. In 1936 he was removed from the appointment of the Wali of Birkah on account of his illtreatment of the people and his drunkenness and debauchery. He was later employed as Assistant to the Muscat Judge but did not retain his appointment for very long. He is now Passport Officer.

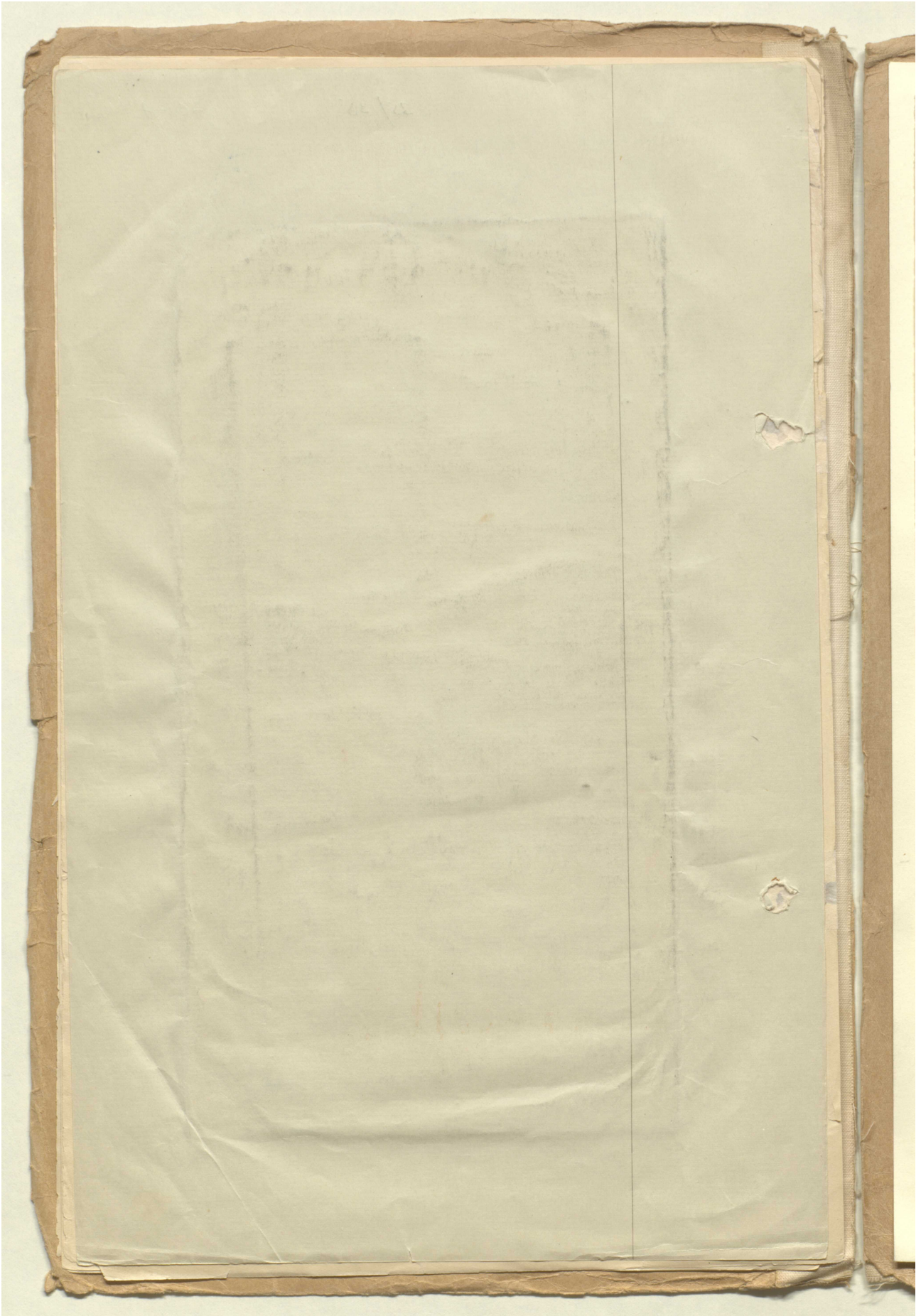
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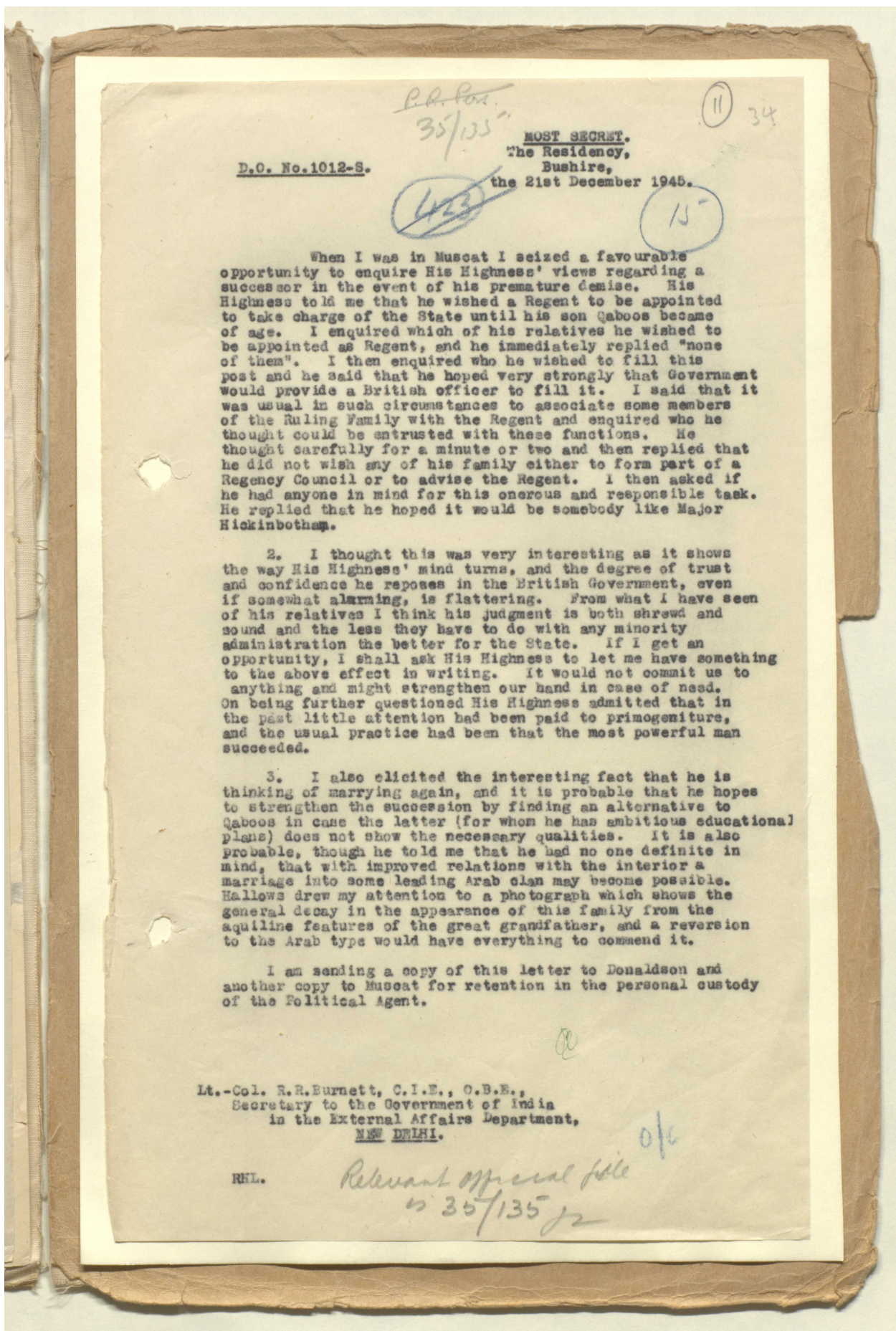
'Muscat succession' [10r] (19/24)



'Muscat succession' [10v] (20/24)



'Muscat succession' [11r] (21/24)



*P.R. Post  
35/135*

**D.O. No. 1012-S.**

**MOST SECRET.**  
**The Residency,**  
**Bushire,**

**the 21st December 1946.**

*11 34*

*423*

*15*

When I was in Muscat I seized a favourable opportunity to enquire His Highness' views regarding a successor in the event of his premature demise. His Highness told me that he wished a Regent to be appointed to take charge of the State until his son Qaboos became of age. I enquired which of his relatives he wished to be appointed as Regent, and he immediately replied "none of them". I then enquired who he wished to fill this post and he said that he hoped very strongly that Government would provide a British officer to fill it. I said that it was usual in such circumstances to associate some members of the Ruling Family with the Regent and enquired who he thought could be entrusted with these functions. He thought carefully for a minute or two and then replied that he did not wish any of his family either to form part of a Regency Council or to advise the Regent. I then asked if he had anyone in mind for this onerous and responsible task. He replied that he hoped it would be somebody like Major Hickinbotham.

2. I thought this was very interesting as it shows the way His Highness' mind turns, and the degree of trust and confidence he reposes in the British Government, even if somewhat alarming, is flattering. From what I have seen of his relatives I think his judgment is both shrewd and sound and the less they have to do with any minority administration the better for the State. If I get an opportunity, I shall ask His Highness to let me have something to the above effect in writing. It would not commit us to anything and might strengthen our hand in case of need. On being further questioned His Highness admitted that in the past little attention had been paid to primogeniture, and the usual practice had been that the most powerful man succeeded.

3. I also elicited the interesting fact that he is thinking of marrying again, and it is probable that he hopes to strengthen the succession by finding an alternative to Qaboos in case the latter (for whom he has ambitious educational plans) does not show the necessary qualities. It is also probable, though he told me that he had no one definite in mind, that with improved relations with the interior a marriage into some leading Arab clan may become possible. Hallows drew my attention to a photograph which shows the general decay in the appearance of this family from the aquiline features of the great grandfather, and a reversion to the Arab type would have everything to commend it.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Donaldson and another copy to Muscat for retention in the personal custody of the Political Agent.

*o/c*

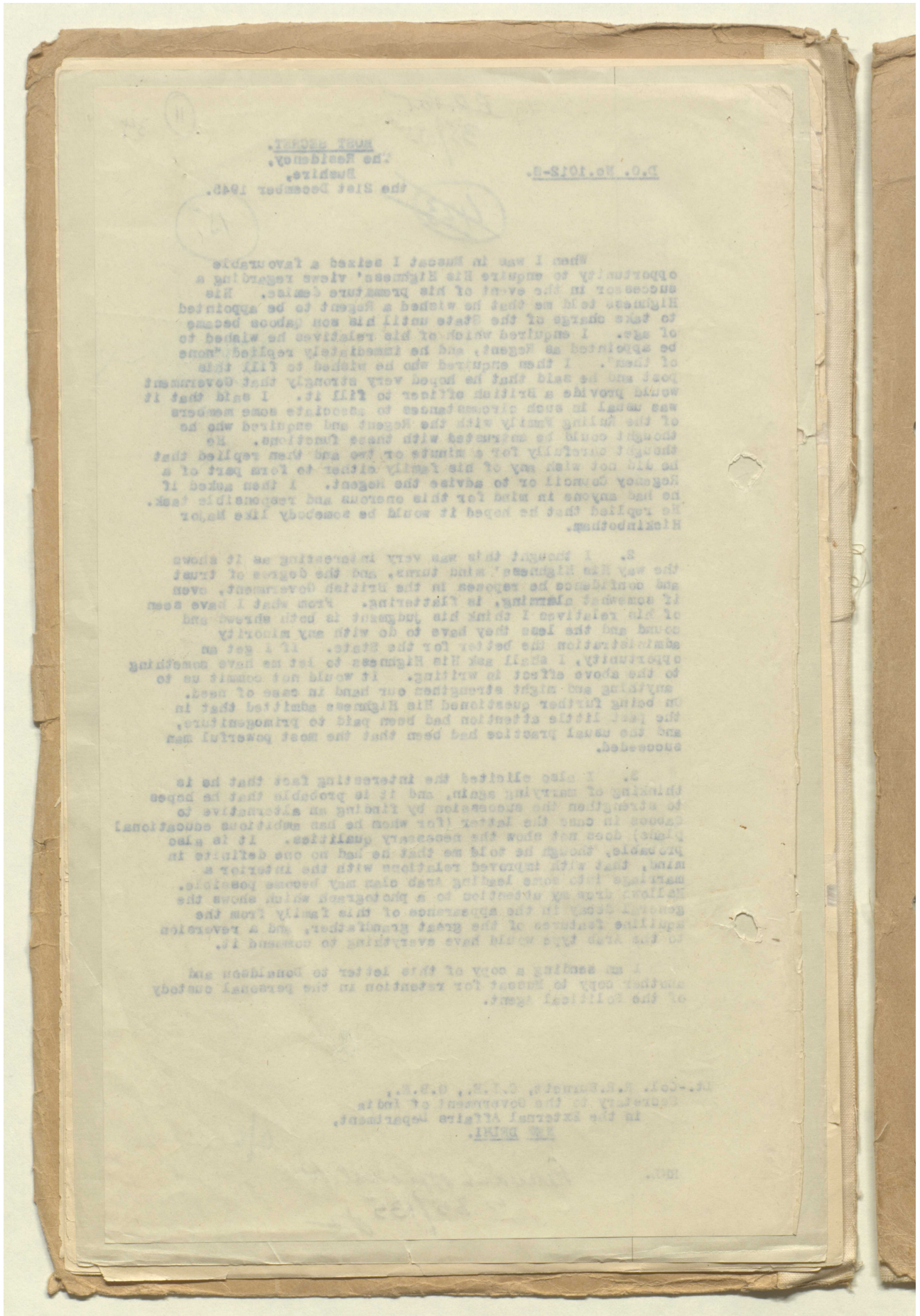
Lt.-Col. R.R. Burnett, C.I.E., O.B.E.,  
Secretary to the Government of India  
in the External Affairs Department,  
NEW DELHI.

RHL.

*o/c*

*Relevant official file  
35/135 jz*

'Muscat succession' [11v] (22/24)



MUST SECRET  
The Resident,  
Muscat,  
the 21st December 1945. P.O. No. 1012-B

When I was in Muscat I seized a favourable opportunity to enquire His Highness' views regarding a successor in the event of His Present Majesty's. His Highness told me that he wished a Regent to be appointed to take charge of the State until his son should become of age. I enquired which of his relatives he wished to be appointed as Regent, and he immediately replied, "none of them". I then enquired who he wished to fill the post and he said that he hoped very strongly that Government would provide a British officer to fill it. I said that it was usual in such circumstances to associate some members of the ruling family with the Regent and enquired who he thought could be associated with His Majesty's. He thought carefully for a minute or two and then replied that he did not wish any of his family either to form part of a Regency Council or to advise the Regent. I then asked if he had anyone in mind for this onerous and responsible task. He replied that he hoped it would be somebody like Major H. H. ...

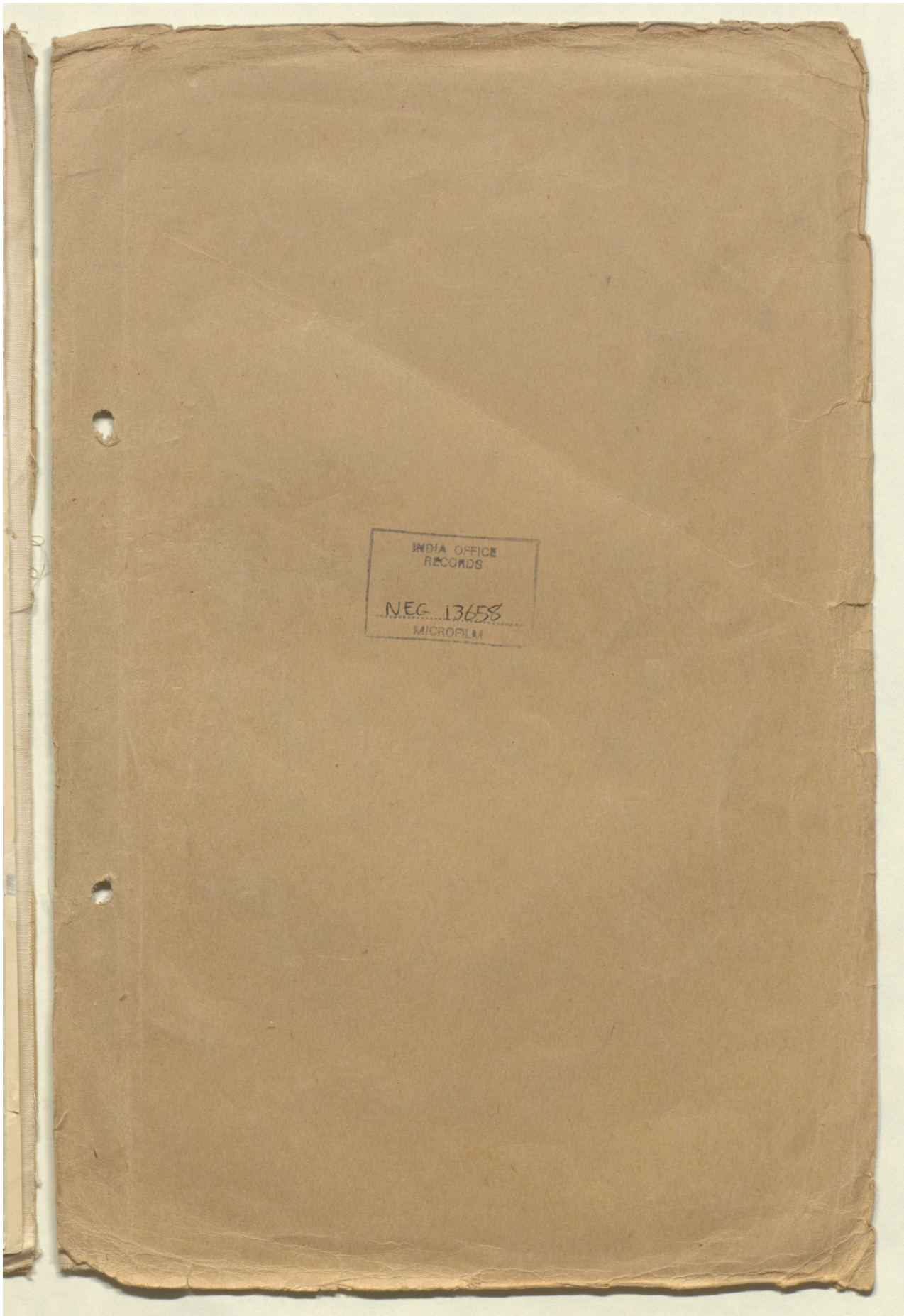
2. I thought this was very interesting as it shows the way His Highness' mind turns, and the degree of trust and confidence he reposes in the British Government, even in matters of a delicate nature. From what I have seen of his relatives I think his judgment is both shrewd and sound and the less they have to do with my Ministry administration the better for the State. If I get an opportunity, I shall ask His Highness to let me have something to the above effect in writing. It would not commit us to anything and might strengthen our hand in case of need. On being further questioned His Highness admitted that in the past little attention had been paid to Primogeniture, and the usual practice had been that the most powerful man succeeded.

3. I also elicited the interesting fact that he is thinking of marrying again, and it is probable that he hopes to strengthen the succession by finding an alternative to cases in which the father has no male heirs. It is also possible that he has some relatives in mind, but he has no one definite in mind, but with improved relations with the interior a marriage with some leading Arab clan may become possible. His Highness' reply to a photograph which shows the Regent's family in the appearance of this family from the Arabian Peninsula of the great grandfather, and a revelation to the Arab type would have everything to commend it.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Donaldson and another copy to H. H. ... for retention in the personal custody of the British Agent.

W. G. ...  
Secretary to the Government of India  
in the External Affairs Department.  
THE DEPT.

'Muscat succession' [back-i] (23/24)





'Muscat succession' [back] (24/24)

