

DIARY EXTRACT: 25th May 1953

“An urgent banging at the door late last night. It was Saif to tell me in his dramatic and matchless style, “He has come!” Who? Saif would never say, or didn’t know. To my surprise it was Shaikh Shakhbut’s secretary-cum-general-aide, Khalifa bin Yusif, who had accompanied Shakhbut when he left Abu Dhabi recently to attend the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June 1953 — his first visit to Europe.

“Why are you here?” I asked him in a most direct and un-Arab way before he was even seated, as I was greatly puzzled by his return. Shakhbut was still in London, he told me but had sent him back to get money and some thaubs (long white shirts). I felt a twinge of guilt, for I had been foremost among those who had persuaded Shakhbut to open a bank account (even though there was no bank in Abu Dhabi), but no-one had taken the trouble to explain how it operated, and that he could have cashed a cheque in London as easily as in Dubai. As for the shirts, they had obtained some ordinary white thaubs in London, but Shakhbut wanted some like the ones he always wore, with little tassels of gold thread hanging from the collar-band.”

*Right. Khalifa bin Yusif, secretary and head of Diwan to Shaikh Shakhbut, photographed on top of the Ruler’s fort in Abu Dhabi. Later he became a well-known merchant.*

*Below. Shaikh Shakhbut bin Sultan bin Zayed.*

