

identifies the *afandiyya*'s war on sex work and ban on prostitution in 1943 as an important moment for the urbanization of Egypt, but fails to explain why the push for social conservatism and criminalization of prostitution were significant. The state banned sodomy among heterosexual married couples, and thus did exert influence over the private lives of its citizens (174). However, upper class men accused of sexually assaulting women and children were often acquitted by the courts, which Hammad argues exempted them from the sexual discourse and norms the state enforced on the working poor (173). Hammad could have explored the role of religious leaders and institutions, like al-Azhar, in the codification of laws regarding sex and their application. The lack of greater context left this reader curious about the relationship between the efforts to police sexual activity, specifically among migrant labor, and the larger political stakes of the 1940s.

Hammad's research sheds light on how local and newcomer women and men's lives in a strategically important urban and industrial sphere changed drastically as a result of socio-economic shifts in the 1930s and 1940s. Her most prominent contribution is in bringing the agency of working class men and women to the forefront, despite their dire conditions and regime of state surveillance. The book could have benefited from greater attention to the impact of the religious establishment on these changes, to the role of religious-nationalist discourses, and to the sexual practices in al-Mahalla before the 1920s. Despite this criticism, the meticulous nature of Hammad's work yields a worthy read. ✎

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2018.42](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2018.42)

Maro Youssef
University of Texas at Austin

JEREMY JONES AND NICHOLAS RIDOUT, *A History of Modern Oman* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Pp. 303. \$30.99 paper. ISBN: 9781107402027.

For a country with a history as rich and diverse as 'Oman, surprisingly little has been written in English about the historical and transnational processes that have shaped its modern development. Moreover, the 47-year rule of Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id al-Sa'id has fed into a state-cultivated narrative of a national "renaissance" that takes 1970—the year Qaboos seized power from his father—as Year Zero for the creation of the modern 'Omani state. Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout push back against this overly-deterministic trend in popular discourse on 'Oman, and emphasize instead the many continuities

that connect 'Oman's past to its present. The result is a persuasive and compelling account that adds to the existing literature on 'Oman and, by extension, the myriad processes of state formation across the Arabian Peninsula.

From the beginning, Jones and Ridout set out to challenge and overhaul the "linear process of development" in 'Oman's post-1970 passage from a "backward" state to a "recognizable condition of modernity" (1). They identify instead a series of "underlying features of this contemporary Omani modernity [that] can be traced back to a much earlier period in the country's history" (2). Among these features are the consolidation of a "traditional" national identity and hereditary monarchy based around the principle of *shura* (consultation) as well as participation in global trading networks that, in each case, extend back to the mid-eighteenth century. Thus, Ridout and Jones begin their "modern history" in 1749, when Ahmad bin Sa'id al-Busa'id, the first ruler of the al-Busa'id dynasty that continues to rule 'Oman today, came to power following a period of civil strife after the collapse of the earlier Ya'ariba Imamate (1624-1742).

As a welcome antidote to much analysis of 'Oman that tends to skip over much of the country's historical development, Jones and Ridout focus extensively on the expansion and later contraction of 'Oman's transnational and maritime links with Zanzibar and the wider Indian Ocean littoral. The extension of 'Omani influence to East Africa and the western coastline of the Indian sub-continent resulted in the creation of what the authors term a "thalassocracy" (64) in which cosmopolitan networks of trade, settlement, and exchange thrived during the early- and mid-nineteenth century. The reach of 'Omani leverage at this time was reflected in the early growth of commercial and diplomatic relations with the United States. The signing of a trading treaty with the US in 1833 and an exchange of Consuls, the arrival of an American envoy in Zanzibar in 1837 and an Omani Consul sailing to Washington, D.C. in a ship laden with gifts for President Martin van Buren in 1840 indicate the intensification of these relations.

Part I of the book ends with an exploration of the factors behind the start of 'Oman's long decline that began in the 1850s and lasted for the better part of a century. In addition to mapping out the factional and ruling family power struggles that led to a succession of short-lived rulers, Jones and Ridout situate this period of decline against the backdrop of shifting trade patterns that drove 'Oman and its dependencies to the brink of bankruptcy and subsequent economic marginalization. Hostilities between rival claimants for political power divided 'Oman into coastal and interior spheres of competing influence, with coups occurring in 1868 and 1913,

and Zanzibar's separation from 'Oman by the Canning Award in 1861. This emphasis on decline notwithstanding, a particular strength of Jones and Ridout's analysis is their examination of the "spiritual and political bonds of the two 'Omani communities" (i.e. in Oman and in Zanzibar) that "persisted long after the split" (76).

Part II of *A History of Modern Oman* focuses on the lengthy periods of rule of Sultan Sa'id bin Taimur (1932-70) and Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id (1970-present) and the Jebel Akhdar rebellion in the 1950s, the Dhofar rebellion between 1962 and 1976, and the changes in 'Oman's political economy caused by the discovery and export of oil. Once again, Jones and Ridout illustrate underlying continuities in the patterns of governance that overturn the dominant narrative of the period, which contrasts the modernizing rule of Sultan Qaboos with that of Sa'id's supposed "backwardness." Thus, in their examination of Sultan Sa'id's rule, the authors note that "he largely avoided entrusting significant power to senior members of his own family and built instead enduring alliances with prominent commercial figures" (103); both traits that Sultan Qaboos has also followed to the letter. Another thread that runs through 'Oman pre- and post-1970 is the practice of rehabilitating and re-integrating political dissidents into public life, with Yusuf bin 'Alawi, Sultan Qaboos's longstanding Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs but, in the 1960s, the Cairo representative of the Dhofar Liberation Front, the most visible but by far the sole example.

One of the most interesting facets of Sultan Qaboos's long rule has been the "Meet the People" tours that began in 1977 and often continued for a month or more each year. These tours contributed to the growth of a modern national identity synonymous with the rule of Qaboos, as "part of a general mobilization of the discourse and practice of *shura* of a limited but tangible kind" (200). However, while the accompanying authors' note correctly states that Qaboos's accessibility to his people "contrasted strongly with the near invisibility of Sultan Sa'id after 1958" (200), Jones and Ridout could also have drawn a parallel between the aging Qaboos's gradual isolation from public life over the past decade with his father's similar withdrawal in the 1960s. Sultan Sa'id's life ended in exile in London whereas Sultan Qaboos's will likely end in confusion over succession arrangements at a time of mounting economic uncertainty. The looming end of the oil era in 'Oman means that the next phase of the Sultanate's political development is likely to be very different from the one described so ably in *A History of Modern Oman*. ✂

DOI:10.1017/rms.2018.43

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen
Rice University