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Daʿwa, Dynasty, and Destiny in the Arab Gulf

NADAV SAMIN

Department of Anthropology, Dartmouth College

INTRODUCTION

This article considers the question of collective identity formation in the Arab Gulf by looking at the distinctive ways in which the genealogies of the dominant kinship collective of the United Arab Emirates, the Banī Yās confederation, have been represented publicly by that country's cultural and heritage-making institutions.[1] Social scientists who work in the Arabian Peninsula have demonstrated the richness of the region's genealogical discourses, as entry points for considering a range of significant themes in the study of the Islamic world, including but not limited to the religious imagination of transnational migrants,[2] the contested nature of tribal historiography,[3] and the politics of kinship and identity in modern Gulf societies.[4] Shryock, Ho, and Sowayan[5] have demonstrated convincingly that kinship identities—the way they are imagined, articulated, retrieved, or reinvented—remain of significant consequence for understanding modern Middle Eastern societies. Works by other scholars have called attention to the continuing influence of locally derived

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[1] The Arab Gulf states include Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia.

[2] Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[3] Andrew Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[4] Nadav Samin, *Of Sand or Soil: Genealogy and Tribal Belonging in Saudi Arabia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[5] Saad A. Sowayan, *al-Ṣaḥrāʾ al-ʿArabiyya: Thaqāfatuhā wa-Shiʿruhā ʿabr al-ʿUṣūr* (Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2010).

conceptions of kin identity,[6] and invite us to reconsider the prevailing arguments of the postcolonial literature that see kinship or caste identities as being constituted wholly by modern states for their own centralizing political ends.[7]

As representations of kinship identities, this article demonstrates, Gulf genealogies resist monopoly by any single social or political force. They are, rather, the product of an ongoing interaction between centralizing states, preexisting textual-religious traditions, and local imaginations. Approaching the public representation of genealogies through this integrative framework sheds light on important themes in modern Emirati and broader Gulf social and political life, including the complicated place of religious norms in a newly fashioned Muslim nation, the influence of gender on conceptions of kinship and nationhood, and the challenge ethnic heterogeneity poses to an Arab ethno-national project.

I explore these themes by looking at two examples of how genealogies are represented publicly at the Emirati national level, one spatial or architectural, and the other textual. The space I consider is the Family Tree Room of the Al ʿAin Palace Museum, in the hinterland Emirati city of al-ʿAin. The Tree Room celebrates the lineage of the ruling family of Abu Dhabi, the most powerful of the United Arab Emirates's seven emirates or federated states. I demonstrate how the Tree Room's function as a public, pedagogically oriented space for the celebration of the Abu Dhabi ruling family's lineage reflects the successful elaboration of an Emirati nation-building project in kinship terms. With my second case, I consider a government-sponsored, genealogical study by the Emirati folklorist Ḥammād al-Khāṭirī that documents the lineage of the UAE's dominant tribal confederation, the Banī Yās, from which the ruling families of Abu Dhabi and Dubai descend. The book in question, *The Most Authoritative Measures of the Lineage of the Banī Yās and Manāṣīr* (henceforth *Awthaq*, after the first word of its Arabic title), was released to some fanfare by the country's archival authority in 2007 and banned from circulation shortly thereafter. The *Awthaq* text represents an approach to collective identity building that is distinct from the purposes of the Tree Room. With this deliberately crafted urtext, we see a failed effort on the part of the state and its ruling family to extend the genealogical conception of nationhood by encompassing a broader mass of the Emirati population.

Multiple attachments connect our site to our text. In patronage terms, both were produced under the auspices of Manṣūr b. Zāyid Āl Nahyān, who, among other titles, is the current head of the National Center for Documentation and Research (NCDR), Abu Dhabi's historiographical and archival authority, and is an influential son of the state's founder, Shaykh Zāyid. The projects are linked genealogically as well. The Family Tree Room is designed to affirm the linkages between the nineteen sons of Zāyid and their Arab tribal eponym, Yās. Khāṭirī's text, by contrast, treats Yās as the terminal node in a project meant to antiquate Emirati Arab ethno-nationhood by attaching that quintessential Emirati ancestor (i.e., Yās) to Quḍāʿa, an ancient tribe mentioned in the classical Arab genealogical works.[8] The common genealogical thread running through these two high-profile heritage projects is not coincidental. In the Gulf, as elsewhere, genealogy is an appealing material for establishing ideological cohesion on the basis of shared heritage. It enables the linking of blood and soil in culturally resonant terms. In the absence of an Emirati urtext, genealogy and territory are mustered to produce a new kind of history.

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[6] Ceren Belge, "State Building and the Limits of Legibility: Kinship Networks and Kurdish Resistance in Turkey," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, 1 (2011): 95–114; Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

[7] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

I make three claims in this article. My first concerns the interplay between what I term here *daʿwa*, dynasty, and destiny. Unlike neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia and Oman (or northern Yemen), the United Arab Emirates lacks a distinctive theological tradition that anchors it in a particular *daʿwa* or religious orientation in the period preceding modern state formation.[9] The dual conservative or conservatizing anchors of *daʿwa* and dynasty that are present in the Saudi and Omani cases are absent for the United Arab Emirates.[10] This absence, I argue, allows for some creativity and improvisation in the way the symbols of Emirati public life and national identity have developed. In the geographical location and design of the Family Tree Room, moreover, I identify overtones of an unorthodox sacrality that would appear out of step with most variants of Islamic modernity in the Gulf. These subtly subversive overtones, I suggest, are made possible by the lack of a distinctive *daʿwa* associated with the colonially conceived United Arab Emirates, a fact that in turn opens up the terrain to variant suggestions of what is sacred.

My second claim has to do with the question of gender, patrilineal ideology, and the female genealogical imagination. Female genealogies are absent from both the Tree Room and the *Awthaq* text. Yet Emirati women contribute in important ways to the construction of a kinship-based Emirati national identity, expanding upon and enhancing official state narratives. My interactions with Emirati female museum guides and certain Emirati male genealogists underscored the centrality of matrilineal linkages to the imagined cohesion of the Emirati body public.[11] When maternal linkages are glossed over, ignored, or treated lazily, this sense of cohesion is weakened, my female informants suggested. Specifically, while family trees and genealogical texts tend to obscure or ignore the importance of Zāyid's wives, the latter's positions on the informal genealogical chart of the ruling family were the focal point of my female informants' representations. Considering *ansāb* (genealogy) through Emirati women's eyes thus reveals alternative kinship truths, truths that occupy a central position in the nation-building process, but are out of place in relation to patrilineal ideology.

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[8] The best known of these works begin to appear around the ninth century CE.

[9] By *daʿwa* I do not mean, as the term is commonly understood to mean, Muslim proselytizing or missionary work, whether among fellow Muslims or non-Muslims. *Daʿwa* in this article refers to the articulation of a particular Muslim creedal or communal orientation as a sphere of political and social influence, as in Wahhabi Saudi Arabia or Ibāḍī Oman. The implication is that the differing *daʿwas* of the Arabian Peninsula remain salient as political categories, and cannot be neatly circumscribed by territorial boundary lines and the Westphalian assumptions that underpin them.

[10] While it might be fruitful to explore the implications of my argument for the remaining Gulf states (e.g., Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain), I do not do so in this article. It should be noted in passing that these states all lack an autochthonous *daʿwa*, and seem also to have embraced development strategies that are comparable to those of the UAE, to greater or lesser degrees.

My third claim emerges from the first two, and concerns the interplay between religious truths and kinship truths in the project of national heritage formation. If the relatively weak religious gravity of Emirati history enables unorthodox representations of Emirati kinship identity at the state level, it is equally the case that the genealogically derived nature of the UAE's political system demands such representations. Both the Tree Room site and the *Awthaq* text are examples of state spectacle, designed to reinforce harmonious associations between ruling lineage, Emirati nationhood, and the state-building project.[12] Yet when the state lineage project is extended to encompass a broader swathe of (non-ruling) Emirati lineages, as occurred with the *Awthaq* text, genealogy proves far less stable as ideological material. The *Awthaq* text's ambitions to draw an expansive circle around the Emirates's dominant lineage (Banī Yās) failed because it called undue attention to the state's ethnic heterogeneity and the contested territoriality of its boundaries, thus weakening its claims to cohesion around an Arab ethno-national core. While the precise reasons for the text's censorship remain murky and convoluted, my interviews with a range of Emirati informants on this question convey a clear sense that the book's conclusions violated the implicit terms of the Emirati social contract. The production of heritage in the form of national genealogies, it emerges, is constrained less by the norms and expectations of Islamic religious culture than by the unsettled oral traditions of an ethnically diverse Emirati society.

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[11] For more on women and genealogy in the Arabian Peninsula, see Gabriele vom Bruck, "Names as Bodily Signs," in Gabriele vom Bruck and Barbara Bodenhorn, eds., *The Anthropology of Names and Naming* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 225–50.

[12] On the idea of political spectacle, see Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Naomi Schiller, "'Now That the Petroleum Is Ours': Community Media, State Spectacle and Oil Nationalism in Venezuela," in Andrea Behrends, Stephen Reyna, and Günther Schlee, eds., *Crude Domination: An Anthropology of Oil* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 190–219; Julien Brachet and Judith Scheele, "Fleeting Glory in a Wasteland: Wealth, Politics, and Autonomy in Northern Chad," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, 3 (2015): 723–52.

ANTIQUATING EMIRATI HISTORY

Compared to the Mediterranean countries of the Middle East, the Arab Gulf states are not often thought of as rich places for anthropological or historical inquiry. The gilded commercialism of Dubai and its sister Gulf cities has tended for the most part to repel the energies of contemporary social scientists and historians of the region.[13] Saudi Wahhabi religious culture is by contrast seen as too bleak or uninviting to merit the fieldwork that successive generations of scholars have invested in North Africa, Egypt, or the Levant. When social scientists do pay attention to the Gulf oil states, it is often for the purposes of dissecting the influence of rentier economic and political models on Asian temporary migrant laborers who, over the past four decades, have fashioned the region's new cities by hand.[14] When we consider, however, that the Arab Gulf states are new nations, whose collective national identities are still very much in the process of formation, it becomes clear that to study modern Gulf societies is to track and observe the shaping of imagined communities in something approximating real time.

When investigating the nature of nationhood in the Gulf region, we might first consider the influence of pre-state historiography on modern Gulf narratives of collective identity. This is by one measure a very ahistorical move, since it conjures up a Saudi Arabia, Oman, or United Arab Emirates out of a context in which no such political constructions existed previously. Yet the foundations of a nation, as Anderson famously instructed us,[15] are conceptual or imagined, and most often they are imagined out of a synthesis of earlier ideas of ethnicity, religious identity, language, or territory,[16] some more localized, and yet others more expansive than the modern nation-state itself.

Saudi historiography, for example, commences in the middle of the eighteenth century with the emergence of the Wahhabi revivalist movement and its chroniclers, Ibn Ghannām (d. 1810) and Ibn Bishr (d. 1871). In Saudi history one has both *daʿwa* and dynasty, a distinctive creed and political identity spanning more than 250 years. Oman's history as a *daʿwa* and a dynasty dates back even earlier, even if modern Oman is, as some scholars argue, a British invention.[17] By contrast, the United Arab Emirates, which achieved independence from Britain only in 1971, has no such urtext, no autochthonous premodern chronicle that antiquates UAE identity. The dominant tribal confederation of the UAE, the Banī Yās, is accorded two or three fleeting mentions in the premodern textual record, and these in historically Omani (Ibāḍī) texts. The earliest Arabic source for the mention of the Banī Yās tribe is the *Sīrat al-Imām Nāṣir b. Murshid*, a biography of the founder of the seventeenth century Yaʿāruba dynasty written in 1640 by an Omani historian, ʿAbdallāh b. Khalfān al-Ṣuḥārī.[18] The Banī Yās are presented in the text as a nomadic community on the margins of Omani influence, who have temporarily aligned themselves with a rebel against the Omani writ. "A band of the Bānī Yās people (*qawm*) attached themselves to [the rebel's] cause, and they are a people of severity, firm will, and strength."[19] From the seventeenth through the mid-twentieth centuries, the historical presence of the Banī Yās was felt only on the periphery of Omani and Saudi sedentary power and textual culture.

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[13] Important exceptions include: Peter Lienhardt, *Shaikhdoms of Eastern Arabia* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001); and Andrea B. Rugh, *The Political Culture of Leadership in the United Arab Emirates* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

[14] Syed Ali, *Dubai: Gilded Cage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); and Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

[15] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

[16] Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[17] Abdel Razzaq Takriti argues this point in a recent study: *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman, 1965–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

THE FAMILY TREE ROOM OF THE AL-ʿAIN PALACE MUSEUM

How have the rulers of the modern United Arab Emirates compensated for this absence? By fashioning new authoritative sites and authoritative texts through which to historicize UAE nationhood. The location chosen for the Family Tree Room, the city of al-ʿAin, reflects this effort in subtle yet significant ways. Al-ʿAin is one of three pivotal sites for the history of the Bānī Yās and thus the political history of the United Arab Emirates. Līwā Oasis, which is situated in the desert Ẓafra region near the Emirates's southern border, is the first known place of Banī Yās habitation. It is in Līwā that the origin myths of the Banī Yās are fixed. Sections of the Banī Yās are believed to have migrated in the eighteenth century from Līwā to the coastal town of Abu Dhabi, which would become the Banī Yās commercial and political center into the colonial era. Despite the material and symbolic importance of these other centers of Banī Yās influence, it is the oasis town of al-ʿAin that constitutes the true birthplace of modern Emirati nationhood.

Al-ʿAin is today a city of around a half million inhabitants situated close to the UAE's border with Oman. Home to the country's oldest university, it is a city of manicured hedges and traffic roundabouts, a reflection of its British colonial past and quiet, provincial present. Al-ʿAin has attracted few of the blockbuster development projects that have helped reshape Emirati cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi. In the shadow of the Gulf's mega-museum projects like the Louvre and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and the Museum of Islamic Art in

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[18] Sixteenth-century Portuguese maps refer to the presence of Banī Yās in the region. Mohamed Hameed Al-Salman, "Arabian Gulf in the Era of Portuguese Dominance: A Study in Historical Sources," *Līwā* 4, 7 (2012): 13–36, 16.

[19] ʿAbdallāh b. Khalfān b. Qayṣar, *Sīrat al-Imām Nāṣir b. Murshid* (Muscat: Oman Ministry of National Heritage, 1983), 76.

Qatar are the comparatively sleepy regional museums of towns and cities like al-ʿAin. The Palace Museum is one such understated preserve of heritage.

Why affix the origins of Emirati nationhood in al-ʿAin, and at the Palace Museum in particular? To begin with, Zāyid b. Sulṭān, the co-founder of the UAE and ruler of its most powerful Emirate, Abu Dhabi, was al-ʿAin's governor from 1946 to 1966. While Zāyid's older and less competent brother Shakhbūṭ (Shkhabūṭ in Emirati dialect) ruled the coastal city of Abu Dhabi, Zāyid led al-ʿAin through periods of armed conflict and instability, most notably the Buraymī dispute, which pitted the British-backed Bānī Yās against the U.S.-supported Saudi monarchy. The second salient fact to consider is that the current political leaders of Abu Dhabi, the key figures among the nineteen sons of Zāyid, were born in al-ʿAin. Muḥammad b. Zāyid, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the most influential political actor in the UAE, was in fact born in the Palace Museum. As Patricia McAnany remarks, a dominant lineage is most often "anchored both symbolically and materially to the use of a particular landscape."[20] More than any other locale, I argue, al-ʿAin and its Palace Museum anchor the Āl Nahyān lineage to the Emirati "heartland,"[21] and thus affirm a compelling and hegemonic prehistory for Emirati nationhood.

A visit to the Palace Museum, which draws sixteen to seventeen thousand visitors per month,[22] is a required component of the Emirati third grade curriculum.[23] Upon their arrival, Emirati students, European tourists, and the occasional researcher are led from the Museum's reception desk toward its most significant space,[24] the Family Tree Room. This room consists of two main elements: a gallery of oil paintings of the nineteen sons of Shaykh Zāyid, arranged in age order,[25] and a floor-to-ceiling, painted ceramic genealogical tree of the Āl Nahyān kinship collective, beginning with the apical ancestor Yās and terminating with the sons of Khalīfa b. Zāyid, the UAE's current president.[26] The Tree Room, situated at the center of the Museum, did not exist prior to the 1998 renovations of the palace, then known as Qaṣr Rubayna, after the village in which it was originally situated.[27] The addition of the Tree Room marks the formal incorporation of symbols of kinship and ancestor veneration into the project of Emirati nation-building.

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[20] Patricia A. McAnany, *Living with the Ancestors: Kinship and Kingship in Ancient Maya Society* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 15.

[21] By heartland, I am referring to the hinterland regions of the Emirates, where nomadic pastoralism was more prevalent. The Bānī Yās were documented by most British travelers as being predominantly sedentary farmers and pearl divers, not pastoralist nomads. Yet in the genealogical discourse of the modern Gulf, attaching one's history to a desert existence of the type prevailing in hinterland regions like the Ẓafra or even al-ʿAin is preferable to a coastal origins narrative, with its allusions to ethnic heterogeneity and arrival by sea from afar. Samin, *Of Sand or Soil*, 173–80.

[22] Author interview with museum administrator, al-ʿAin, Dec. 2014.

[23] Author interview with museum guide, al-ʿAin, Dec. 2014.

[24] A map of the museum, available free to all visitors, is marked with arrows that confirm this route as the recommended one.

[25] Zāyid, his brother Shakhbūṭ, and their father Sulṭān have their own portraits as well.

[26] Khalīfa is Zāyid's eldest son. He was born in al-ʿAin in 1948. From 1966, when Zāyid became ruler of Abu Dhabi, until his father's death in 2004, Khalīfa was governor of al-ʿAin. In 2004, he became ruler of Abu Dhabi. Like the late King ʿAbdallāh of Saudi Arabia, he has no full brothers.

"The practice of ancestor veneration is linked intricately with special considerations of place," McAnany notes.[28] Zāyid b. Sulṭān, who cut his political teeth in Qaṣr Rubayna, was both the founder of the modern Emirati state and the head of his ruling lineage, the Al Nahyān of the Banī Yās tribe. He is thus, in a sense, the *state's* apical ancestor, whose veneration is central to the purpose of the Tree Room. Ancestor worship of the kind solicited by the Family Tree Room calls attention to the lineage structure of the Al Nahyān ruling family, which is also the Emirate of Abu Dhabi's governance structure. A good number of the men depicted in the Tree Room, that is, many or most of Zāyid's nineteen sons, have become cabinet officials or influential advisors.

RECONSIDERING THE SACRED

When entering the Family Tree Room, one is struck by the overtones of sacrality that pervade it. The portraits of Zāyid's nineteen sons, arranged along three walls of the Room, are each illuminated from above by a small fluorescent light. The nimbus-like glow cast above their visages suggests that there is something more than heritage preservation afoot in that space. The Tree Room's position within the Museum is also worth noting, since it has the effect of focusing the gravity of the broader complex at this sanctuary or temple-like center, a design choice echoed in ancient Greek, Jewish, and to a lesser extent Muslim sacred architectural forms.[29]

Religious symbolism of an Islamic nature is notably absent from the Family Tree Room. There is no mention of the common religious references associated with genealogy in Islamic societies, most prominently Quran 49:13, which adorns, for example, the entry gate of the Saudi Ministry of

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[27] Before its consolidation into a city, al-ʿAin was one of a grouping of small settlements that included Rubayna.

[28] McAnany, *Living with the Ancestors*, 13.

[29] John Pedley, *Sanctuaries and the Sacred in the Ancient Greek World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8; Mary Emerson, *Greek Sanctuaries: An Introduction* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2007), 53; Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period (538 BCE–70 CE)* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 220, 232; Barbara Metcalf, "The Pilgrimage Remembered: South Asian Accounts of the Hajj," in Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, eds., *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 97. Metcalf notes how certain lithograph drawings of the great mosque of Mecca by South Asian Muslim pilgrims are "almost mandala-like in their focus on the centre." A further reflection of this centering in an Islamic context can be found in a study on the Kaʿba by the twentieth-century Hijazi scholar ʿAbd al-Quddūs al-Anṣārī, which uses satellite imagery to argue that the sacred cube is situated at the true geographical center of Mecca. ʿAbd al-Quddūs al-Anṣārī, *al-Tārīkh al-Mufaṣṣal li-l-Kaʿba al-Musharrafa Qabla al-Islām* (Mecca: Nādī Makka al-Thaqāfī al-Adabī, 1998), 55.

Foreign Affairs. The Family Tree Room is its own, autonomous ideological space, shorn of Islamic propriety. Veneration at shrines is a well-known practice in Islamic history. Yet such suggestions of the sacred as are found in the Family Tree Room would not be expected to commingle peaceably with the dominant orthodoxies of a modern, urban, and literate Muslim country. It is in the Tree Room that the absence of a distinctive Emirati *daʿwa* is most palpable, since it is only through this absence that the Room can emit such strong overtones of a non-Islamic sacrality. The hushed reverence of the space, one might say, speaks instead to newly emergent sacral forms, which venerate the mercantile beneficence of Abu Dhabi's ruling family as an aspect of the Emirati nation-building project.

MacAnany makes another important point, that ancestor shrines are most often situated at an apical ancestor's burial place.[30] In that respect, the Palace Museum and its Tree Room fall short, since Zāyid is buried in the city of Abu Dhabi alongside the grand mosque erected in his name. A comparison between the Tree Room and Zāyid's tomb is instructive for what it reveals about the interplay between sacred and mundane representations of nationhood in the new Arab Gulf.

The Shaykh Zayed Grand Mosque and tomb complex was erected in 2008, four years after the UAE founder's death. The many-domed mosque, surrounded by reflective pools and evocatively lit for night visitation, is one of the most striking and distinctive buildings in Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates. The Grand Mosque is a marker of the country's arrival as both a pivot of the global economy and an icon of Islamic modernity. Modest by contrast, Shaykh Zāyid's tomb is set off from the mosque in its own structure, at the northwest corner of the complex. Unlike the Tree Room, no diagrammatic arrows or physical corridors, no directives of any kind, point the visitor to the tomb. The tomb complex itself consists of a small building with three domes, and an adjacent courtyard that is enclosed by a wall with latticed openings along three of its sides. Palm trees and freestanding minarets frame the complex's perimeter. Zāyid's grave is in the courtyard, at the center of a many-sided bed of gravel. The courtyard is not accessible to ordinary visitors. Inside the building, a man sits on a sofa reciting verses from the Quran, his voice amplified by speakers set atop the structure. Six men take turns reciting Quran in 4-hour shifts. Thus, scripture is recited continuously for 24 hours per day at the tomb, with pauses only for prayer. If the Tree Room is a secular pedagogical and touristic space that seems permeated by sacred authority, Zāyid's mosque and tomb is its negative image: a sacred space, pervaded throughout by the secular authority of the country's founder.

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[30] McAnany, *Living with the Ancestors*, 11.

GENDER AND PATRILINEAGE AT THE PALACE MUSEUM

Like the popular Gulf sport of camel racing, which Sulayman Khalaf has shown to be a modern invention as opposed to an organic extension of past Emirati practice,[31] such family trees did not exist in the Emirati past, or at the very least were not widespread. The tree is an invention of the modern age, through which a political heritage for the Emirati state is constructed. Its design follows the standard European model of a genealogical tree, which was codified in the fifteenth century.[32] The Tree Room is thus a mix of divergent influences, and like the Emirates itself a very post-national, national space.

The tree is traditional in one sense, in that it preserves a patrilineal vision of society. Women's names do not appear in this Banī ("Sons of") Yās kinship chart.[33] By inverse measure, this absence might be politically advantageous in that it preserves matrilineal politics for the informal realm, where most significant political decisions in the Gulf states transpire. There is also a more direct explanation for the tree's selectivity. The ideology of patrilineage that animated premodern social relations and systems of political authority in the Arabian Peninsula remains resilient because it corresponds well to the governance structure of the modern Emirati state, in which only men occupy positions of material significance.[34] Yet, in multiple ways, women's lineal narratives inform the working out of the Tree Room's purpose within the broader Emirati nation-building project, enhancing, extending, and subtly resisting dominant forms of genealogical expression.

For the young Emirati women who work there as guides, the Al-ʿAin Palace Museum is first Shaykha Fāṭima's palace. Shaykha Fāṭima bint Mubārak al-Kitbī (b. 1938) is, by Rugh's estimate, the fifth wife of the late Shaykh Zāyid, and the mother of six of his sons, including the de facto ruler of the UAE, Muḥammad b. Zāyid, and the Palace Museum's inaugurator, NCDR head Manṣūr b. Zāyid. Praised as the "mother of the Emirates,"[35] Shaykha Fāṭima is a prominent figure in her own right who oversees a number of charitable and educational initiatives in the country. Whereas the Tree Room's crowning object, the Āl Nahyān family tree, depicts the Zāyid patriline as the progressive unfolding of a relationship between fathers and sons, in the alternative rendering of Emirati women, this viewpoint is bisected by the matrilineal relationships that account for particular Āl Nahyān progeny, like those of Shaykha Fāṭima, and circumscribe specific groupings of brothers.[36] Removed from the realm of monumental iconography, these bisections add breadth and depth to the somewhat lifeless Āl Nahyān lineage chart. These bisections also raise questions about the tree's aesthetic harmony.

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[31] Sulayman Khalaf, "Poetics and Politics of Newly Invented Traditions in the Gulf: Camel Racing in the United Arab Emirates," *Ethnology* 39, 3 (2000): 243–61.

[32] Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The Genesis of the Family Tree," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 4 (1991): 105–29.

[33] Rugh addresses this point as well; *Political Culture of Leadership*, 23.

[34] During her fieldwork in northern Yemen, Shelagh Weir noted the absence of names for households headed by divorced or widowed women, a reflection of both the cognitive and actual dominance of patriarchal units. *A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 29.

[35] *The Nabaṭī Poetry of the United Arab Emirates*, Clive Holes and Said Salman Abu Athera, eds. (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2011), 58.

"The design [of the tree] is random (*ʿashwāʾī*). It does not follow a particular order," the museum guide Mūza explained. For one thing, while Zāyid had nineteen sons, twenty-one terminal leaves are depicted. The two extra leaves represent the sons of UAE President Khalīfa b. Zāyid, the distinction of that title being roundly apparent. In more free-flowing discussions with other Emirati women employed by the Palace Museum, however, a more profound sense of randomness emerged. Though skewed to account for sons above daughters, these women considered the question of the Āl Nahyān kinship chart in terms of a matrilineal logic: Zāyid married seven women,[37] with whom he bore a total of thirty children, nineteen sons and eleven daughters. He would marry from each of the surrounding villages—Hīlī, Zākhir, Muwayjiʿī, and so forth. Each group of sons was raised by their mother in a separate palace. Most wives bore Zāyid multiple sons, though Shaykha Ḥuṣṣa and Shaykha Shaykha had each only one son. In addition to Fāṭima bint Mubārak, Zāyid had another wife whose name was Fāṭima, though she is not typically discussed because she died without having produced any male offspring.

With this matrilineal picture of the Āl Nahyān kinship chart in mind, the "random" quality of the ceramic tree is felt acutely. The tree lacks order for Mūza, I suggest here, because it disregards the matrilineal groupings described above. By ignoring even an implicit consideration of Āl Nahyān matrilines, the tree's success as an icon of Emirati heritage is diminished. Most notably, it is only through the informal, oral accounting of Emirati women that the logic or illogic of the tree—its presence in al-ʿAin, its haphazard sequencing—is fully revealed.

Before the conversion of the palace to a museum, the Tree Room did not exist. In its place was a long wall that, in traditional fashion, separated the private residence of Shaykha Fāṭima and her children from Shaykh Zāyid's official and guest quarters. In a sense, the Tree Room and its central object, the Āl Nahyān family tree, reproduce this divide, by separating the patriline from its female progenitors. And yet, what distinguishes the modern political project from that earlier one is that women are now the primary interface with the palace's Emirati and foreign guests, interpreting the significance of this refurbished and nationalized abode through a nuanced, gendered lens. Through this functional role reversal, women are empowered to erode the ideology of patrilineage, or, if they choose, reinforce it by filling out its broader resonances and matrilineal logics. Like the Tree Room itself, the interpretive choices these women make are part of the knowledge embodied by the museum.

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[36] The tree represents the Zāyid patriline inaccurately, as subdividing into three branches of seven, six, and eight male progeny, respectively.

[37] Rugh states that Zāyid married at least nine times, with his first two wives going often unacknowledged because they did not bear him children. Rugh, *Political Culture of Leadership*, 82. For an extended discussion of Zāyid's marriages, see ibid., 82–95.

As Nira Yuval-Davis has suggested, solidarities inclusive of the feminine subject, that is, feelings of social interdependence, and not just those of shared origins, are the bedrock of nationalism.[38] The Emirati national project, articulated in a kinship idiom that is grounded in patrilineal ideology, would appear to exclude such solidarities. Yet by encouraging the participation of all members of Emirati society, including women, the project to fashion a national citizenry sets in motion tendencies that counteract this exclusivity. In accommodating diverse roles and vantage points for women—as mothers, citizens, and bureaucrats—Emirati kinship nationalism positions Emirati women as vital contributors to genealogical discourse and thus the formation of modern Emirati identity.

A DISCONCERTING MAP OF EMIRATI ORIGINS

The Āl Nahyān Family Tree Room demonstrates the relative ease with which the Emirati state can produce resonant national sites and symbols out of the iconographical representation of its dominant family. Power is, after all, its own justification, and can muster the symbolic and material resources to make this point quite easily and convincingly. Yet when genealogy is used to try and link this inner circle of power with a broader national community, problems proliferate. The second case detailed here suggests that while solidarities that cut across gender, age, or ethnic lines are necessary for the success of a national project, those built on a genealogical foundation prove inadequate for repelling the challenge of competing ethnic or territorial paradigms.

The difficulty of extending a kinship-based concept of nationalism beyond the ruling family is exemplified in the controversy surrounding the Emirati genealogical text, *The Most Authoritative Measures of the Lineage of the Banī Yās and Manāṣīr* (*Awthaq*).[39] The failure of this ambitious, state-sponsored genealogical project speaks both to the significance of genealogy in the national heritage-building project, and its limitations as ideological material in a newly literate, multiethnic society like the UAE. As noted, *Awthaq* was commissioned by Manṣūr b. Zāyid Al Nahyān, head of the National Center for

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[38] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation," in Rick Wilford and Robert L. Miller, eds., *Women, Ethnicity, and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 25.

[39] Ḥammād al-Khāṭirī, *Awthaq al-Maʿāyīr fī Nasab Banī Yās wa-l-Manāṣīr* (Abu Dhabi: National Center for Documentation and Research, 2007).

Documentation and Research, the official archival and heritage preservation arm of the Emirati government. Its author, the prolific folklorist Ḥammād al-Khāṭirī, claims to have spent six years in the field collecting oral narrations from elders throughout the Arabian Peninsula for the project. Published in 2007, *Awthaq* was to be the first scientifically rigorous genealogical study of the Banī Yās and its affiliate kinship collectives. According to estimates by Emirati genealogists, approximately one-third of the one million Emirati citizen population claims a Banī Yās affiliation,[40] making it the country's dominant kinship group.[41]

In his introduction to *Awthaq*, Manṣūr b. Zāyid praises Khāṭirī's study, noting how for the first time a scholar had created a clear and well-organized map of the Banī Yās lineage.[42] This emphasis on mapping has several important implications. First, it echoes practices identified by Foucault and elaborated by James Scott concerning the modern state's need to create a well-ordered picture of the society it circumscribes. In the Gulf, especially, such practices were inherited from scholar-administrators like the British J. G. Lorimer (d. 1914) or the American Arabist George Rentz (d. 1987), who gathered systematic ethnographic data about the region's inhabitants for their colonial or commercial sponsors. What distinguishes such a project in the postcolonial UAE is the need felt locally to produce some sort of historical-empirical grounding for Emirati nationhood, an urtext, where no such text existed before. Second, Manṣūr's praise of Khāṭirī's cartographic skills invites reflection on the curious confluence of interests and motivations behind the *Awthaq* text, which, for a scion of the ruling Āl Nahyān branch of the Banī Yās, serves also as a family history of sorts—an extended map of the self, in the idiom of Emirati kinship nationalism.

Awthaq's author, Ḥammād al-Khāṭirī, hosted me in his home in the suburbs of Abu Dhabi one late afternoon in September 2010. Though deeply hospitable and courteous, he had an intensity of manner and expression that was difficult to read and slightly off-putting. Perhaps he was just hungry. During our meeting, Ḥammād offered his guest a plate of fruit—made in America, he joked—but declined to eat himself because he was fasting. Ḥammād's fast that day was voluntary, a non-obligatory rite meant to emulate the Prophet's practice, and a signal of personal devoutness. The *Awthaq* text reflects this pious concern in both style and substance. Unlike the Family Tree Room, *Awthaq* is saturated with Islamic religious supports and justifications for why the potentially divisive practice of documenting genealogies is important, indeed vital. Knowing one's lineage as God encourages in the Quran, Khāṭirī explains in one place, is the only way to fulfill the Sharia prohibitions against consanguineous marriage.[43] Despite Khāṭirī's pious framing of the text, a reflection of his own personal piety, these measures did not immunize *Awthaq* from the controversy that surrounded its publication. To understand this controversy, I turn to the book's thesis and the creative evidence Khāṭirī mustered in support of it.

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[40] Emirati nationals comprise approximately 12 percent of the resident population. "Population Estimates: 2006–2010," *United Arab Emirates, National Bureau of Statistics*.

[41] Interviews with Emirati genealogists, Dubai, Jan. 2014, and Sharjah, Dec. 2014.

[42] al-Khāṭirī, *Awthaq al-Maʿāyīr*, 13.

Khāṭirī's key claim in *Awthaq* is relatively simple: contrary to the dominant opinion held by previous generations of Emiratis, the Banī Yās are a tribe united by blood descent from a single ancient ancestor, Quḍāʿa. The Banī Yās and their leaders are one bloodline, *Awthaq* asserts, not a confederation of disparate tribal branches of diverse origin, that is, incidental compatriots thrown together by vicissitude, chance, or the dictates of a harsh ecology. *Awthaq*'s unstated ambition is to produce a teleology that weaves together the Emirati nation, its leaders, and its dominant kinship collective into a single, purposeful narrative. For Emirati nationality to be meaningful, the "national" tribe of the Emirates, the Banī Yās, must be conceived in such organic terms. *Awthaq* is in another sense about defining the boundaries of an Arabian Volk in the face of massive social transformation. In my book on the politics of genealogy in modern Saudi Arabia, I explore the way Saudis have negotiated this transformation to produce locally resonant and historically rooted understandings of their identities using the fraught idiom of kinship.[44] In Saudi Arabia, as in the UAE, the framing of kinship solidarities as either purposeful or contingent is significant and contentious, animating many a parlor conversation, lettered debate, or exchange of invective.

The shift to an explicitly blood-based concept of Banī Yās identity coincides with the consolidation of the Emirati nation-state and the rearing of new generations of Emiratis in its wake. Biological, blood relatedness is a central obsession of Gulf tribal genealogists, transcending methodological distinction. With increasing frequency, Gulf genealogists are investing large sums of money in DNA testing—often through U.S.-based firms—to compare the genetic markers of their putative kinsmen. They pursue this research to sometimes dangerous social effect—imagine learning that your cousin was not in fact related to you. A traditionalist, Ḥammād al-Khāṭirī eschews the use of DNA sampling for establishing connections between and among tribal branches. Instead, he believes that collecting and comparing the oral narratives of Emirati elders, both male and female, is the preferred method for making claims about Arabian lineages.[45] His main scholarly opponent, ʿAbdallāh al-Muhayrī, favors DNA testing, while downplaying the scientific validity of oral narration. Despite their rival approaches and methods, both advocate the same revisionist narrative of Banī Yās history that affirms the tribe's common descent from a single ancient ancestor, Quḍāʾa. A common Quḍāʿa origin is a safe conclusion for Khāṭirī and Muhayrī to draw, because it locates the shared ancestry of the disparate Banī Yās branches in mythical time. This is a seemingly neat strategy for fashioning a locally resonant nationalism out of a deeply heterogeneous population.

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[43] Ibid., 37.

[44] Samin, *Of Sand or Soil.*

[45] Author interview with Emirati genealogist, Dubai, Jan. 2014.

What proof does Khāṭirī rely on to make his claim? His primary piece of evidence is a 1955 legal gloss by a lawyer for the British-controlled Iraq Petroleum Company, Robin Dunn,[46] whose commentary on a territorial dispute with Saudi Arabia and its allied firm Aramco preserves by happenstance a bit of Emirati oral tradition. Discussing some of the claims and counterclaims circulating during the Buraymī dispute, Dunn remarks: "The principal general contention of the Saudis is that the tribe of Bani Yas is a fiction. I tried to find out something of the origins of the tribe from [UAE founder] Zaid and [his brother] Hazza, but all that they could tell me was that they were the 'sons of Yas bin Ahmed.' They could not tell me who Yas was or where he lived or when."[47]

The Dunn document is the only English-language source in *Awthaq*, which is otherwise packed with references to Arab genealogical arcana that would seem of interest only to antiquarians. Yet the entire volume is structured around evidence extracted from Dunn's comments, specifically Shaykh Zāyid's statement that the Banī Yās are the "sons of Yas bin Ahmed." When we began discussing the book in his home, Khāṭirī took me straight to the page on which the Dunn document was reproduced, such was its importance to *Awthaq*'s purpose. It is an irony distinctive to modern Gulf life that Khāṭirī's chosen evidence for his Banī Yās genealogical charter begins with a Saudi claim that the Banī Yās are a fiction, or that the initiator of this ostensibly scholarly project is unbothered by the hostility of his principal source to that project.

What the Saudis or Robin Dunn believe about the Banī Yās is of secondary concern, no doubt. The document is precious to Khāṭirī because it preserves a rhetorical morsel by the nation's founder, Zāyid b. Sulṭān, pronouncing on the Banī Yās's genealogy. It is here—in a five-word utterance, related by an oasis governor to a British lawyer, then frozen in print of the most authoritative kind, the records of the former hegemon, and reproduced as a foundational narrative of the Emirati state—that British colonial and local Emirati history achieve a potent synergy.[48] Though published in 2007 to some understandable excitement, *Awthaq* was withdrawn from circulation soon after its release, such that it no longer appears in the official catalogue of NCDR publications. *Awthaq* thus failed as the Emirati urtext. Why it was censored and removed from circulation is both opaque and significant.

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[46] Michael Quentin Morton, *Buraimi: The Struggle for Power, Influence and Oil in Arabia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 164.

[47] Robin Dunn, "Notes on Saʿudi Arabia Memorial," cited in al-Khāṭirī, *Awthaq al-Maʿāyīr*, 226. The document bears the encoding of the British Foreign Office.

[48] Khāṭirī's corroborating evidence for the Quḍāʿa lineage is a line of Emirati oral poetry recited by a purported early nineteenth-century Banī Yās leader, which links the Yās b. Aḥmad mentioned in the Dunn document to the ancient ancestor Quḍāʿa through what Khāṭirī's Emirati critics consider to be a convoluted and far-fetched chain of ancestors. al-Khāṭirī, *Awthaq al-Maʿāyīr*, 86.

After inquiring with a diverse range of Emirati informants, the precise reasons behind the book's censorship remain elusive to me. Khāṭirī himself denied to me that the book had been banned. Despite the NCDR's clear copyright imprint, Khāṭirī claimed that he owned the rights to *Awthaq*, and that he had refused to allow it to be reprinted because he objected to a request by the NCDR to modify some of its contents.[49] My very inability to get a straight answer on the question of *Awthaq*'s brief public life reflects the socially contested nature of the genealogical enterprise at this expansive level, though certainly as well the wariness of Emiratis to air their business with outsiders.[50] What is not contested is that, in response to concerns or complaints, a committee of experts was assembled to assess the book's veracity, led by the influential cultural liaison to the Dubai court, Jamāl Ḥuwayrib. This committee deemed the book unreliable and recommended that it be withdrawn from circulation. Beyond the procedural factors, *Awthaq* was withdrawn from circulation, I assert, because it violated the implicit terms of the Emirati social contract.

THE STRANGER AMONG US

The conceit of *Awthaq*, and its ultimate failing, is the notion that tribal lineages (*ansāb*) are being retrieved unperturbed and whole from an objectively determinate past, as opposed to being fashioned in the moment. Andrew Shryock's pioneering study of Jordanian tribal historiography captures this notion well and so provides a useful parallel to the Emirati case. As Shryock and others have shown, the process of heritage preservation and production is complicated by the uncertainties inherent in codifying the genealogical knowledge of a predominantly oral culture. Compounding these epistemological obstacles is the deeply heterogeneous nature of the Emirati population, which conceals under a loose rubric of Arab ethno-nationalism the descendants of a multitude of ethnicities, including but not limited to large numbers of South Asian and Persian- or Iranian-origin Emiratis. An Emirati historian and genealogist, ʿAlī al-Maṭrūshī, told me about his own dilemmas. Some youth of the emirate of ʿAjmān asked him to publish a book for them on the lineages of the families of ʿAjmān, but he refuses to put anything to paper on the subject.[51] Because Emirati society is so culturally and ethnically diverse, making assertions about a family's putative Arab genealogies is a social tinderbox. Al-Maṭrūshī articulated his hesitancy indirectly in a critical review of the *Awthaq* text for an Emirati publication. When documenting lineages, he explains:

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[49] Author interview, Abu Dhabi, Sept. 2010.

[50] Echoing Shryock's experience in Jordan, one Emirati historian implored me to erase the handwritten notes I was taking when discussing the key points of the *Awthaq* controversy. Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination*, 148.

[51] Author interview, ʿAjmān, Jan. 2014.

> Like the second wife of a plural marriage, the researcher is in an unenviable position. He can either ascribe the lineages of everyone—both pure origin (*aṣīl*) and outside entrant (*dakhīl*)—to the tribe, and so become the object of the wrath and criticism of the pure group; or, he can deny tribal affiliation to those whose lineages he suspects to be damaged, and consequently, become the target of the arrows of the other group, who are sometimes quite notable and influential in the social and economic life of society. Which of these two choices is a good one?[52]

Underlying the sensitivities surrounding *Awthaq* is the fear that a genealogical approach to national identity will expose the diverse ethnic origins of the Emirati population. The Emirates is, after all, a country of merchants and traders, for whom indefiniteness and malleability of identity is an advantage. Any effort to fix that unstable social mass in place is doomed to fail, however piety-minded its justifications. The study of genealogies in an ethnically heterogeneous society that is captive to an ideology of Arab lineal purity is thus a quixotic stab in the dark. The problem of the *Awthaq* text is surely one of Arab nationalism when its insides are turned out.

It is also a problem of state authority. "It is [Khāṭirī's] judging and deciding from this elevated vantage point that is the problem," an Emirati genealogist insisted to me.[53] The imprimatur of the NCDR gave Khāṭirī's genealogical pronouncements the effect of state edicts, an intolerable power for those unsure of their social position in a newly coalescing nation. With a sly wit, a prominent Emirati historian explained: "The easiest accusation to make against your cousin is that he is not really your cousin."[54] When asserted from the lofty ranges of the state's historiographical authority, such accusations are especially cutting.

Some Emiratis were undoubtedly offended by the place Khāṭirī assigned to their tribes on the national lineage tree. The Manāṣīr, a tribe that was historically allied closely with the Banī Yās, are presented in *Awthaq* as a collective of diverse tribal branches of scattered origins (ironically, the default premodern view about Banī Yās), as opposed to descendants of one ancestor like the Banī Yās.[55] The same is true of the core Banī Yās sub-tribe, the Mazāriʿ.[56] "The denying of blood ancestry to people is the problem," an Emirati genealogist insisted.[57] If the tribe is the basis for national identity, then full membership must be the aspiration, not ancillary membership. Suggestions to the contrary are considered degrading.

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[52] ʿAlī al-Maṭrūshī, "Wajhat Naẓr Ḥawl Kitāb 'Awthaq al-Maʿāyīr fī Nasab Banī Yās wa-l-Manāṣīr'," in *ʿAnāqīd Thaqāfiyya* (ʿAjmān: al-Nādī al-Waṭanī li-l-Thaqāfa wa-l-Funūn, 2008), 65.

[53] Author interview, Sharjah, Dec. 2014.

[54] Author interview, al-ʿAin, Sept. 2010.

[55] al-Khāṭirī, *Awthaq al-Maʿāyīr*, 191–216.

[56] Ibid., 167–75.

[57] Author interview, Sharjah, Dec. 2014.

There was also some discomfort with another of *Awthaq*'s implications, that an authoritative genealogical map of the nation would reveal some tribes on the periphery of the national lineage tree to have strong ties to adjacent countries. Discussing the *Awthaq* controversy, one genealogist explained to me:

> I'll tell you what I heard, for example, when Ḥammād said, those group of Mazāriʿ are actually from the Dawāsir [and not Banī Yās], for example … people did not accept it … because they're part of the [Banī Yās] confederation now. Because the only thing they hear is Banī Yās. They do not know what's beyond that … the Banī Yās who lived in Līwā, they were here from many hundreds of years ago, maybe a thousand years ago. So the people who lived around this society, if you come and tell them you're from the Dawāsir, this means that you are not actually from this place, you came from Saudi Arabia. So people do not want to feel that their origins do not belong here in the land.[58]

In the nationalist politics of the new Gulf, the attribution of an Emirati's origins to a non-Emirati tribe like the Saudi Dawāsir tribe can pose a political threat. This was alluded to in an article by ʿAlī al-Maṭrūshī which makes oblique reference to a politically reckless genealogist, whom I read to be Khāṭirī:

> Some of the large tribes are distributed across a number of neighboring countries, in border regions, some of which may have been contested by these states. Some genealogists interject themselves into these conflicts by jumping into these extremely sensitive issues. So he decides, for example, that this land in which such-and-such branch (*baṭn*) dwells, and which was occasionally present in the contested regions, belongs to such-and-such country. His book might be then used as a piece of evidence and a document by the neighboring country in requesting the regions over which it claims sovereignty. In addition, he exposes himself to legal issues, and his book is banned and forbidden from circulation, as it is considered injurious to the interests and security of his country, and disrespectful of its sovereignty over its territories."[59]

Since the *Awthaq* controversy, the NCDR has hired a resident genealogist, Saʿīd al-Suwaydī, who is working to smooth over some of the difficulties and challenges in the alchemical transition of genealogies from the oral sphere to the arena of public record. For Suwaydī, Khāṭirī's *Awthaq* was the "spark" that inspired his own interest in Emirati lineages. Yet Suwaydī's approach is less traditional than that of Khāṭirī. His family trees record knowledge about both daughters and sons, a departure from the typical patrilineal tree. And he purposely seeks out matrilateral linkages: "The point of documenting the names of the mothers is that the women are the ones who link the families together."[60] With an earnest spirit, though one perhaps chastened by the experience of his predecessors, Suwaydī goes about his work sensitive to the challenges and polarizing implications of his state-sanctioned genealogical enterprise.

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[58] Author interview, Dubai, Jan. 2014.

[59] ʿAlī al-Maṭrūshī, "Maḥādhīr al-Kitāba fī Ansāb al-Qabāʾil al-Maḥalliyya," *Majallat al-Ẓafra* 50 (2011). A second volume by al-Khāṭirī, titled *Aṭyab al-Thamarāt fī al-Taʿrīf bi-Qabāʾil al-Imārat* (The choicest fruits of the introduction to the tribes of the Emirates), met the same fate as *Awthaq*.

[60] Author interview, Dubai, Jan. 2014.

Thomas Eriksen,[61] Miriam Cooke[62], Engseng Ho, and Benedict Anderson all call our attention to the often unacknowledged dynamics through which lineages, ethnicities, and national identities are defined. Drawing from their work, we can suggest that the *Awthaq* story tells us as much about the non-Arab communities and identities against which Emirati nationhood is taking shape as it does about the actual constituent components of local Emirati nationalism. *Awthaq*'s preface, written by an Emirati intellectual, speaks directly to this point:

> The objective of this valuable study is to define the national identity of the United Arab Emirates.… National identity can only be defined through uncovering the pure Arab origin to which the Emirati people belong. [From this pure original state] … waves of every ethnicity and color poured onto the Arab Gulf shores until, amidst [these] foreign migrants (*al-wāfidīn*), the pure Arabs became like an island in a human sea encompassing almost every nation of mankind, overflowing onto the purities of this island (*al-jazīra*) from every direction,[63] while its people search for a guardian (*ʿāṣim*) who might defend them from this deluge.[64]

One of the underlying concerns of *Awthaq*, as with every genealogical volume produced over the past half-century in the Arab Gulf, is the perceived adulteration of the lineage by foreign elements. The overwhelming presence of labor migrants undoubtedly accentuates this fear, influencing public discourse toward an appraisal of the authentic and inauthentic within the Emirati citizen population. *Awthaq* is indeed a map, but not one that anyone can gaze at comfortably. This discomfort gets at the ethnic heterogeneity of an ostensibly Arab tribal society, one for which a new culture of genealogy, with sometimes sacral resonances, is being designed in compensation.

BADGER'S OVERSIGHT: AN AFTERTHOUGHT

In 1871, the British Hakluyt Society published a translation of an Arabic language dynastic history of the rulers of Oman by the Orientalist George Percy Badger. Badger's authoritative translation and commentary on Ibn Ruzayq's history of the Āl Bū Saʿīd was not completely faithful, however, since it omitted key elements. His positivist leanings inclined him to skip over the first section of the manuscript, which consisted of "elaborate genealogies" of ancient Arab tribes likely familiar to Orientalists, he reasoned, from other works of ancient Arab history.[65] Ancient genealogies, Ho argues, were dismissed by scholars of Badger's generation as unverifiable myths, speculations that were secondary to the real substance of history and political contestation in non-Western societies. "If they were myths, let us call them founding myths."[66] Unlike the drawn-out cosmology of Omani or Saudi nationhood, I have argued here, the myths of the modern Emirati nation are being fashioned as we speak. The mashing together of past and present, Arab and non-Arab, kin group and polity, and ruler and citizenry in the UAE is taking place before our eyes. It might be prudent, therefore, to reconsider the methodological biases of our forebears, so as to better discern the remarkable processes through which Gulf myths are unfolding into the domain of public record, shaping new realities in their wake.

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[61] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

[62] Miriam Cooke, *Tribal Modern: Branding New Nations in the Arab Gulf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

[63] *Al-Jazīra (al-ʿArabiyya)* is also the term for the Arabian Peninsula. The double meaning is thus apparent.

[64] al-Khāṭirī, *Awthaq al-Maʿāyīr*, 23.

Abstract: This article considers the question of collective identity formation in the Arab Gulf by looking at the distinctive ways in which the genealogies of the dominant kinship collective of the United Arab Emirates, the Banī Yās confederation, have been represented by that country's cultural and heritage-making institutions. I look comparatively at two high profile, state-sponsored, Emirati genealogical projects, one a site, and the other a text, and investigate their significance from a historical and ethnographic perspective. I find that the relatively weak religious gravity of the United Arab Emirates allows for unorthodox representations of kinship at the national level, that women do not necessarily buy into these representations yet contribute in their own ways to a kinship nationalist discourse, and that genealogy is nonetheless a particularly fraught idiom for binding together an ethnically heterogeneous society like the Emirates. Approaching the public representation of genealogies through an integrative framework, this article sheds light on important themes in modern Emirati and broader Gulf social and political life, including the complicated place of religious norms in a newly fashioned Muslim nation, the influence of gender on conceptions of kinship and nationhood, and the challenge ethnic heterogeneity poses to an Arab ethno-national project.

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[65] George Percy Badger, *History of the Imâms and Seyyids of ʿOmân, by Salîl-ibn-Razîk, from A.D. 661–1856* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1871), Editor's Preface.

[66] Engseng Ho, "Foreigners and Mediators in the Constitution of Malay Sovereignty," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 41, 120 (2013): 146–67, 152.