Introduction

Why cities and urban history?

It is peculiar that urban history has been conspicuously absent from the study of the Arab coast of the Persian Gulf in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, peppered as that region is by a chain of city-states – or quasi city-states – stretching from Kuwait to Oman. The history of cities and urban societies in this region has featured only as a corollary to that of tribes, British Empire and oil. Of course the pivotal role of tribesmen, British officials and oil wealth as agents of historical change can be hardly overstated. Tribal communities constituted the backbone of the political infrastructure of the Gulf coast in the nineteenth century and developed a symbiotic, albeit often conflicting, relationship with the British authorities who controlled the region between 1820 and 1971. British protection ensured the political stability of the local tribal principalities within the new regional order of nation-states which took shape after World War I. After the 1930s, the discovery of oil gradually transformed the lives of Gulf peoples beyond recognition, altering their social and political identities and their relationship with their living environments.

The study of the politics of empire and tribalism, which has been the staple of regional historiography, has imposed a number of constraints on our understanding of indigenous societies and political cultures. External factors have been paramount in explaining historical change through the lens of British influence. The focus on imperial encroachment has also tended to restrict the scope of investigation to those elite groups which came into closer contact with British 'gunboat diplomats' (the officials of the Government of India supported by the Royal Navy in their diplomatic pursuits) and imperial administrators, particularly the ruling families and those segments of the merchant classes involved in pearling or European shipping. In parallel, the rich literature on tribes has often contributed to the typecasting of the region as a fragmented political universe. Traditional ethnographic studies, particularly on the Arabian Peninsula, have often reproduced the Orientalist clichés first publicised by travellers

and colonial officials who visited and described the region in the early twentieth century. Discussing tribal and religious authority in the Yemen, R. B. Serjeant famously wrote: 'As each tribe … is an independent unit, tribal Arabia is to be conceived of as normally in a state of anarchy.'[1] More recently, ethnographers, anthropologists and historians have discussed tribes either as state makers, forces opposed to state centralisation, or as the building blocks of social and political cohesion at the local level. Historical anthropologists, in particular, have presented a nuanced picture of tribal societies by engaging with the multiform manifestations of kinship solidarities across time and space: from the states which emerged in Central Arabia after the eighteenth century to the pearling communities of Trucial Oman (since 1971 the United Arab Emirates) in the 1950s.[2]

Without losing sight of tribal folk and imperial politics, this study shifts the context of investigation to urban milieus and to port towns and oil cities in particular. In drawing a composite picture of political and social life in Manama and in the islands of Bahrain, it explores the city as an organic entity and as the point of intersection of the political, social and cultural universe of the Gulf coast. Before oil, mercantile port towns such as Manama, Dubai and Kuwait provided the interface between their tribal and agricultural hinterlands, and the cosmopolitan world of trade which gravitated around the Gulf waters. In the oil era, regional ports were transformed into capital cities and showcases of modernisation. Their development epitomised the making of a new oil frontier populated by modern entrepreneurs, consumer goods and oil companies.

Revisiting the history of port towns and oil cities also responds to contemporary concerns. In the last decades or so, the manipulation of the region's urban past has acquired an increasing relevance in the practices of legitimacy promoted by Gulf governments. Efforts on the part of the ruling families to enforce political consensus among national populations gathered momentum in the various countries of the region after they

[1] R. B. Serjeant, 'The Interplay between Tribal Affinities and Religious (Zaydī) Authority in the Yemen', *al-Abhath*, 30(1982), 11–50 (12). For a critique of the literature on Gulf tribes written both by local historians and Western 'Orientalists' see K. al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Arabian Peninsula: A Different Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1–4.

[2] See N. N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 123–6, for an excellent discussion of Gulf tribalism and state formation in a historical setting. As representative of this type of literature see M. al-Rasheed, *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidis of Saudi Arabia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991); P. Lienhardt, *Shaikhdoms of Eastern Arabia*, ed. by Ahmad al-Shahi (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001); P. Khoury and J. Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), particularly contributions by Joseph Kostiner and Paul Dresch; P. Dresch, *Tribes, Government and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); J. Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

achieved independence from British control between 1961 and 1971. Accordingly, Gulf metropolises have become instruments of statecraft, tools to promote state formation.[3] Since the 1990s, the historical centres of Dubai, Kuwait and, to a lesser extent, Manama have been gradually transformed into spaces which embody a new idea of 'homogenous' national culture and political community. The recuperation of pre-oil urban traditions and settings and the establishment of national museums have set in motion a movement of heritage revival (*ihya' al-turath*) which constitutes the most tangible manifestation of state-sponsored nationalism in the region. Historical sites and natural harbours have become recreational, educational and tourist spaces emphasising the tribal and Arab character of pre-oil Gulf societies, often to the detriment of their cosmopolitan traditions. The Dubai Heritage Village established in 1996 in the old harbour of the city includes replicas of its old quarters, spaces for folklore performances and the reconstruction of a diving village with miniatures of pearling boats. Since 1998, when the village was officially transformed into a living museum (*mathaf hayy*), it has become a venue where 'cultural representations and displays are organized, thematized and presented to viewers as discourses of Emirati national culture'.[4]

As an integral part of the teleological narrative of legitimacy promoted by ruling families, historic towns have also become the symbols of loyalty or opposition to contemporary Gulf regimes. Old Muharraq – the capital of the Al Khalifah administration of Bahrain in the nineteenth century – still evokes and reinforces allegiance to the ruling family among Bahrain's Sunni population. The celebrated historical novel *Mudun al-Milah* ('Cities of Salt') by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Munif expresses the author's dissent by presenting a powerful and imaginative political geography of the early modern oil city, a neocolonial city shaped since the 1940s by the

[3] E. Davis, 'Theorizing Statecraft and Social Change in Arab Oil-Producing Countries' in E. Davis and N. Gavrielides (eds.), *Statecraft in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory and Popular Culture* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991), pp. 1–35 (p. 12).

[4] S. Khalaf, 'Globalization and Heritage Revival in the Gulf: An Anthropological Look at Dubai Heritage Village', *Journal of Social Affairs* 19.75 (2002), 13–41 (19). A similar project is being undertaken in Kuwait City with the development of the Village of the Seaman (Qaryah Yawm al-Bahhar) which started in 2003. 'al-Baladiyyah du'yat mukhattatat al-mawqi' wa talabat khamsin alf dinar', *al-Abraj*, 24 Dhu al-Hijjah 1427 (13 January 2007). For a recent discussion of historical identity and globalisation in Sharjah and in Saudi Arabia see J. W. Fox, N. Mourtada-Sabbah and M. al-Mutawa, 'Heritage Revivalism in Sharjah' in J. W. Fox, N. Mourtada-Sabbah and M. al-Mutawa (eds.), *Globalization and the Gulf* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 266–87 and G. Okruhlik, 'Struggle over History and Identity: "Opening the Gates" of the Kingdom to Tourism' in M. al-Rasheed and R. Vitalis (eds.), *Counter-Narratives: History, Contemporary Society and Politics in Saudi Arabia and Yemen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 201–28. On statecraft and history in the oil states of the Middle East see Davis, 'Theorizing Statecraft'.

international oil economy. Munif's literary representation of the fragility and ephemeral nature of Harran, a fictional oil town in Saudi Arabia, is a critique of the coercive power of the neo-tribal governments which emerged in the early oil era in collusion with American imperialism and the nascent oil industry.[5] By focussing on the displacement of an urbanised Bedouin community, the author also gives a voice to the social malaise and political insubstantiality of large segments of Gulf societies.

In an equally subversive message, some Gulf intellectuals have used the demise of the pluralistic civic tradition and cosmopolitan culture of port towns as a symbol of the violation of cities and urban lives by oil and modernity. The tolerant milieus of pre-oil Kuwait Town and Manama have been often contrasted with the forced policies of 'Arabisation' (and in the case of Kuwait City also 'Bedouinisation') enforced by the Al Sabah and Al Khalifah families. In the United Arab Emirates, these processes have also become apparent in recent decades but have so far not aroused dissident voices.[6] In a similar vein, the Kuwaiti sociologist Khaldun al-Naqeeb sees the metropolitan oil city as the personification of the authoritarian state, the ghetto of a 'decrepit *lumpenproletariat*'.[7] Such caustic criticism echoes the bitter contestation over thorny issues of citizenship and of political and economic entitlements on the part of disenfranchised groups such as the *bidun* (indigenous communities without passport), second-class citizens and immigrant labourers. Without accepting at face value this idealised portrayal of the pre-oil era, it is beyond doubt that the intervention of the oil state profoundly transformed the fluid trans-national character of Gulf ports. In the case of Manama this transformation is striking. As will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 6, since the 1950s the emergence of political and legal divisions between citizens (*al-muwatinun*), expatriate communities and migrant workers contrasts starkly with the open milieus which characterised the mercantile settlement of the nineteenth century.

The question of how historic port towns and their populations were bequeathed to modern oil states features prominently in this study of Manama. As shown by the literature on the post-Ottoman world, the notion of 'imperial legacy' offers a key to understanding the historical

[5] A. Munif, *Cities of Salt*, trans. by Peter Theroux (New York: Random House, 1987).
[6] See for instance 'Ali al-Tharrah, 'Family in the Kinship State', paper presented at the conference 'The Gulf Family: Modernity and Kinship Policies', School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, April 2005.
[7] al-Naqeeb, *Society and State*, p. 91. On Gulf indigenous historiography with a reformist agenda and the reinterpretation of the broad categories of tribe, state, class and British imperialism see A. Dessouki, 'Social and Political Dimension of the Historiography of the Arab Gulf' in E. Davis and Gavrielides (eds.), *Statecraft in the Middle East*, pp. 96–115.

roots of the states and urban societies which emerged in the Middle East after World War I. Philip Khoury and James Gelvin, for instance, have demonstrated how the politics of urban notables and popular nationalism provided a crucial element of continuity in the political infrastructure of Damascus between Ottoman and French rule and shaped the outlook of the city as the new capital of the Syrian state in the interwar period. In a similar vein, Jens Hanssen's study of urbanism in *fin de siècle* Beirut sets out to challenge the dichotomy between the Ottoman and French imperial histories of the city.[8] It is true that European imperialism and state building in the Gulf followed a different trajectory. Yet, particularly in Bahrain, the remarkable longevity of British informal empire (which lasted some 150 years) was instrumental in maintaining the urban and tribal elites of the pre-oil era in power as the 'natural' leaders of their populations. With oil revenue and British support, the Al Khalifah of Bahrain – in much the same way as the Al Sabah of Kuwait and the Al Maktum of Dubai – were able to refashion their profile as the political elites of the oil state, providing a term of comparison with the post-Ottoman Arab world, at least in the period between the two World Wars. This study develops this comparison by focussing on the politics of notables in Manama and on the role played by the municipality in upholding their position in the oil era.

In the first place, the absence of a comparative agenda in the study of Gulf towns and cities stems from the very limited interest in the region on the part of urban specialists. Historians have often been discouraged by the apparent 'exceptionalism' of the historical experience of the Gulf coast. The scarcity of local records and the seemingly 'obfuscated' historical memory of Arab Gulf societies have undoubtedly played a major role, as if oil modernisation had swept away urban history along with the traditional urban landscapes. Among specialists of the Muslim world in particular, this attitude is also reinforced by a general bias towards the study of 'lesser cities', urban centres which do not conform to normative ideas of Islamic urbanism in the same way as the capitals and provincial centres of Muslim Empires: Cairo, Delhi, Istanbul, Damascus and

[8] L. C. Brown (ed.), *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); J. L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); P. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate. The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1946* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1987); P. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860–1920* (Cambridge University Press, 1983); J. Hanssen, *Fin de siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 266–9.

Aleppo, to name a few.[9] Moreover, the little attention devoted to the urban history of the Arab Gulf States (including Saudi Arabia) is partly a symptom of the effects of the 'modernist' and 'state-centric' paradigm which has permeated the study of the region, the brainchild of the modernisation literature produced in the 1950s and 1960s. In focussing on the evolution of the state in oil-producing countries, this literature not only portrayed state formation as following a Western model of development but also construed it as an irreconcilable break with the past.[10] As social anthropologists would put it, the oil era was typecast as a process exemplifying the sudden withdrawal of 'tradition' in the face of 'modernity', contributing to dissociate processes of city formation from the cumulative experience of change over the long *durée* of regional history.

The dependency approach that has dominated the study of the political economy of oil countries since the 1970s has reframed the developmental process under the rubric of 'rentierism', with an emphasis on oil income as an externally generated source of state revenue.[11] Yet, with the exception of the studies by Jill Crystal on Kuwait and Qatar and by Fuad Khuri on Bahrain, what we often miss from these accounts is the historical perspective which should underpin the study of oil development.[12] One of the additional pitfalls of the 'rentierist' approach is the emphasis placed upon the preponderant role played by the world economy over the Gulf 'periphery'. This emphasis has led scholars to view politics and economics through the lens of global processes and thus often to underplay historical and regional specificities.[13] In examining further the limitations of the 'rentierist'/dependency approach, it must be simply noted that it has not been concerned with urban issues. Even studies on the Oil City, which to some extent draw on this approach, promote an 'essentialist' view of

[9] The Islamic City has a long pedigree in Middle Eastern historiography. For the earliest poignant critique to this concept see J. Abu Lughod, 'The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence and Contemporary Relevance', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 19(1987), 155–86.

[10] J. Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 3–5.

[11] Literature on the rentier state is vast. See Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State*, pp. 224–30; H. Beblawi and G. Luciani (eds.), *The Rentier State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); J. S. Ismael, *Kuwait: Dependency and Class in a Rentier State* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993).

[12] Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*; F. I. Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[13] I here draw on Sami Zubaida's discussion of historical continuity, dependence and the peripheral state in the Middle East. S. Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East* (London: I. B.Tauris, 1993), pp. 140–5.

urban development with poor conceptual elaboration and limited empirical substance.[14]

A line of enquiry which seems to have much resonance for the study of urbanisation in the Arab Gulf is that pioneered by Anthony King who has opened new ways of investigating continuities in the evolution of 'colonial' and 'world' cities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[15] First, this approach links the development of non-Western cities to the long *durée* of the world global economy, broadening considerably the scope for research on Gulf urbanism encompassing the period before and after the discovery of oil. Secondly, it focusses on the 'language' of urbanisation, that is, on how processes such as colonialism, imperialism, modernisation and development became 'concretized in the built environment'.[16] Although the port towns and oil cities of the Persian Gulf were not colonial creations and do not conform to the definition of 'world' city (with the notable exception of Dubai),[17] they deserve attention as the physical embodiment of historical processes, more so in the light of the dramatic transformations of their cityscapes over the last two centuries.

In spite of the heuristic potential of the macro-economic approach pioneered by King, this study of Manama between 1783 and 1971 is not underpinned by an analysis of the changes in the world economy. Primarily conceived as a history of urban space, politics and community, it uses regional and international trends as a backdrop: the resurgence of tribal power across Asia and the Arabian Peninsula in the eighteenth century, British political and commercial expansion in the long nineteenth century, internationalism and state building after World War I, the consolidation of the international oil economy, particularly after 1945

[14] For a critique of the literature on Gulf cities see N. Fuccaro, 'Visions of the City: Urban Studies on the Gulf', *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 35.2 (2001), 175–87.

[15] See in particular A. D. King, *Colonial Urban Development. Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976); A. D. King, *Urbanism, Colonialism and the World Economy: Cultural and Spatial Foundations of the World Urban System* (London: Routledge, 1990); J. Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities. Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005). On colonial and world cities see A. D. King, *Global Cities: Post-Imperialism and the Internationalization of London* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 33–68.

[16] King, *Global Cities*, p. 35.

[17] Studies of global Dubai have increased in the last few years, starting to challenge the static paradigm of the Oil City. See A. Kanna, 'Not Their Fathers' Days: Idioms of Space and Time in the Arabian Gulf', unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard (2006); B. Ghoul, 'Les Transformations d'une cité-marchande: Doubaï, 1971–2001: impact global et dynamique interne', *Monde Arabe Maghreb-Machrek*, 174 (2001), 70–4; R. Marchal, 'Dubai: Global City and Transnational Hub' in M. al-Rasheed (ed.), *Transnational Connections in the Arab Gulf* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 93–110.

and, last but not least, the demise of the British Empire in India and in the Middle East. Yet, to some extent King's 'language' of urbanism has provided inspiration for this urban history which is partly concerned with the transformation of urban spaces and how key players such as state, tribe, empire, oil and modernisation intersected with them.

Histories of city and state in Manama

Before the development of modern states and national cultures, urban centres often symbolised the identity of entire regions. The nature of the relationship between city and state in the pre-modern period has long engaged historians and urban specialists. In the context of the Islamic world, Ira Lapidus has referred to cities as plural societies and as the microcosms of wider political processes. Taking a broader cross-cultural approach, Kirti Chaudhuri has discussed the city in the Indian Ocean as the architectural sign and symbol of 'the abstract concept of the state, government, society, and economic activities'.[18] The common matrix of urban development and state building is particularly apparent in the ports of the Arab coast of the Persian Gulf and in the Arabian Peninsula. Here towns constituted veritable 'central places' with important political and economic functions. In an area which offered scarce resources and was located on the fringes of large territorial empires, the control of key commercial and religious centres allowed tribal groups to raise revenue and to establish centralised administrations. Along the Arab coast, maritime trade emporia dominated physically and politically the tribal principalities, which in some cases did not extend much further beyond the precincts of port settlements. With the discovery of oil these trade emporia made a relatively smooth transition to capitals of modern states: Manama in the 1920s, followed by Kuwait, Abu Dhabi and Doha some decades later. The situation was not dissimilar in Central Arabia. In Najd, the Sau'di and Rashidi Emirates developed along the axis which connected the towns of al-Ha'il and Riyadh, centres of caravan trade which were intersected by pilgrimage routes. It was from Riyadh that Ibn Sa'ud started the unification of what is today Saudi Arabia at the turn of the twentieth century.

In the heterogeneous society of the islands of Bahrain the interface between city and state resulted in a complex 'politics of urbanisation'

[18] I. M. Lapidus, 'The Muslim Cities as Plural Societies: The Politics of Intermediary Bodies' in *The Proceedings of the International Conference on Urbanism and Islam (ICUIT)*, 4 vols (Tokyo: The Middle East Culture Centre, 1989), vol. I, pp. 134–63 (p. 136); K. N. Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 338.

whose repercussions were still felt in the twentieth century. This politics antagonised tribes, agriculturalists and mercantile communities, and triggered economic and political competition between Manama, the cosmopolitan trade centre of the islands, and Muharraq, the seat of the administration of the Al Khalifah family. While Muharraq resembled many of the tribal settlements scattered along the coast, Manama represented the microcosm of Bahrain as *the* frontier society of the Persian Gulf.[19] The mixed ethnic and sectarian composition of the urban population reflected a long history of immigration associated with trade, pearling, pilgrimage and military conquest. Moreover, the town was situated at the intersection of the Arab and Iranian and the Sunni and Shi'i worlds. It lay at the southern end of an imaginary axis running along southern Iraq through the Shi'i holy cities of Najaf and Karbala and was the terminus of the overland route which connected Wahhabi Najd to the shores of the Gulf, continuing further west to Mecca and Medina in the Hijaz.

In the study of the 'unruly' multicultural society of Bahrain, the familiar theme of Gulf tribes as almost 'natural' state-makers has had considerable academic currency. As stated by Fuad Khuri in the late 1970s: 'In the absence of state structures with standardized and centralized systems of authority, tribal groupings and alliances … emerged [before oil] as the *logical* forms of social organisation. The Shi'a [cultivators] and urban Sunni [of Manama], lacking tribal organization, prevailed in those occupations and careers that were not related to government and the control of resources' [my emphasis].[20] In focussing on cosmopolitan Manama, this study challenges the restrictive definition of state – both pre-modern and modern – as a structure built into the tribal (or neo-tribal) system supported by the Al Khalifah since their arrival in Bahrain in 1783. In contrast, it draws attention to the resources offered by this port town and oil city, which developed as the centre of the booming pearling economy of the Gulf and of the region's nascent oil industry, after the 1880s and 1932

[19] As a frontier society, the islands of Bahrain differed considerably from their American and African counterparts. They functioned as areas of contact and cultural exchange, rather than as empty zones inhabited by 'uncivilised' natives, or border regions exposed to the absorbing power of centralised states and their dominant cultures. Gulf frontiers have been discussed only in the context of regional trade. H. Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf, 1745–1900* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 19–23. For a review of the conceptualisation of the Asian, European and North American frontier in history see P. R. Gaubatz, *Beyond the Great Wall. Urban Form and Transformation on the Chinese Frontiers* (Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 15–19. The classic studies on the Eurasian and world frontiers are by W. H. McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier, 1500–1800* (Chicago University Press, 1964) and *The Great Frontier: Freedom and Hierarchy in Modern Times* (Princeton University Press, 1983).

[20] Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain*, p. 67.

respectively. These resources were not only economic but also political and ideological. Until 1971, Manama continued to be a locus of a strong civic identity and of British imperial influence, both of which restrained the authority of Bahrain's rulers. Throughout the two centuries covered in this book, changes in the sociopolitical organisation of urban society and in Manama's built environment and urban layout clearly signposted the emergence and consolidation of Bahrain's state administration under the aegis of the British Empire and oil. Treating Manama as an integral part of the pedigree of the oil state broadens the reductive understanding of Gulf modernisation as a more or less simple transition between 'pastoral nomadism to petroleum tribalism'.[21]

In fact, the entry of Manama into the modern world was not shadowed exclusively by the oil boom and by the integration of the northern Gulf into the industrial world economy in the 1940s and 1950s. In this respect, the town's imperial history is instrumental in fine-tuning the penetration of modernity in the region. To this effect, this study takes the 1880s as a point of departure, a period which marked the first era of 'global' capitalism and the boom of Bahrain and Gulf pearls in the world markets. Renewed British expansion in Bahrain and the Persian Gulf paralleled the accelerated economic and political penetration of the British Empire in India, Egypt and in the Ottoman world. As shown by studies on the ports of the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean in this period, the development of urban milieus in the age of European expansion embodied a new 'set of relationships between Europe, Middle East and South-East Asia'.[22] Although Manama remained essentially a 'native' town, it became increasingly connected to the world of empires which stretched from the Ottoman Mediterranean to British-controlled India. This is also suggested by the consolidation of an eclectic trans-regional culture among the town's merchants, which fused elements from different areas of the Indian Ocean rim.[23] This imperial connection was furthered after World

[21] M. Dahir, *al-Mashriq al-'Arabi al-mu'asir min al-badawah ila al-dawlah al-hadithah*, quoted in Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State*, pp. 125–6.

[22] Quote from C. A. Bayly and L. T. Fawaz, 'Introduction: The Connected World of Empires' in Fawaz and Bayly (eds.), *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 1. For an overview of the development of port cities in the Indian Ocean in this period see K. McPherson 'Port Cities as Nodal Points of Change: The Indian Ocean, 1890s–1920s' in Fawaz and Bayly (eds.), *Modernity and Culture*, pp. 75–95.

[23] J. Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf* (Oxford University Press, 2007); J. Onley, 'Transnational Merchants in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf: The Case of the Safar Family' in M. al-Rasheed (ed.), *Transnational Connections in the Arab Gulf*, pp. 59–89. On merchants as the modernist elites of the Indian Ocean see U. Freitag and W. Clarence-Smith (eds.),