

A Survey of Historical Studies of the UAE in Western Languages

J.E. Peterson

[writing completed 2012]

The United Arab Emirates is a new state that coexists with an old society. The written history of the area is, for the most part, likewise new – whether in Arabic or in Western languages. This essay introduces and evaluates the small but growing body of literature that traces the historical trajectory of the emirates.

But to begin, perhaps a few caveats are in order. First, I intend to concentrate on Western-language sources. Most outside researchers write in Western languages, particularly English. This is reflected in the prominence of English as the second language of the country's citizens themselves. Serious research by Emiratis is often published in English, either in translation or because it is the product of theses submitted for graduate degrees at Western universities. This fact should not obscure the importance of utilizing Arabic sources whenever possible, but that is grist for another essay. Second, my conception of historiography is comparatively broad, reflecting my belief that the value and contribution of historically relevant writing transcends the boundaries of academic disciplines.

Literature on the pre-modern history of what is now the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—previously known as the Oman Coast, Pirate Coast, Trucial Oman and the Trucial Coast—remains sparse, in large part because the history is still unknown.¹ Situated on the edge of better-known Gulf civilizations and historically regarded as part of nearby Oman, the Trucial Coast long languished in the shadows. Its population was small, largely nomadic and illiterate. Works dealing with earlier eras are almost non-existent, with the exception of archaeology, which will not be discussed here.

It has been only in the last few decades that writing on the UAE has moved beyond a basic, descriptive level. In part, this is because the foundations on which to build more detailed and sophisticated analysis have now been outlined. But it is also because indigenous writers and academics have started to emerge with their own contributions. This factor, plus the newness of significant and formative developments, necessarily means that works discussing events of the 1970s and 1980s—even though written from a contemporary perspective—provide historical interest for the purpose of this essay. Not surprisingly, the quality and breadth of treatment across these writings is uneven.

Even given the brevity of the historiographical timespan, a few pioneering authors deserve mention. Muhammad Morsy Abdullah, who helped to found the Center for Documentation and Research (CDR) in Abu Dhabi, published his doctoral thesis as *The United Arab Emirates: A Modern History* in 1978. Rosemarie Said (later Rosemarie Said Zahlan) was not far behind with *The Origins of the United Arab Emirates*. Frauke Heard-Bey, who was associated with the CDR for many years as well, shortly afterwards published *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*, which, through

1. For the sake of convenience, the area under discussion will often be referred to in this essay as the UAE, even though the UAE did not come into existence until 1971. One of the few treatises on pre-modern history is Hasan Muhammad al-Naboodah, “Eastern Arabia in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D.,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Exeter, 1988.

updating in two subsequent editions and translation into several languages, has become an indispensable reference work. Mention may also be made here of the survey *The Trucial States* by Donald Hawley, a British diplomat who served as Political Agent for the Trucial States in the 1960s. An Irish economist working in the region, Kevin G. Fenelon, penned an even earlier survey, while John Duke Anthony's *Arab States of the Lower Gulf* was one of the first examinations of the role played by the various ruling families in the creation of the UAE. One of the first UAE nationals to acquire an advanced degree, who later became the Minister of Petroleum and Industry, published a short work on the economy of Abu Dhabi in the early 1970s.²

In a slightly different category, J.G. Lorimer's *Gazetteer*, although compiled for the (British) Government of India a century ago, remains an indispensable source of information. Another special category must be reserved for Shaikh Sultan al-Qasimi, the ruler of Sharjah and a historian who has produced a growing body of scholarly writing.³

2. Donald Hawley, *The Trucial States* (London: George Allen and Unwin; New York: Twayne, 1970); Mana Saeed Al-Otaiba, *The Economy of Abu Dhabi: Ancient and Modern* (Beirut: Commercial and Industrial Press, 1970?; second ed., 1973); K.G. Fenelon, *The United Arab Emirates: An Economic and Social Survey* (London: Longman, 1973); John Duke Anthony, *Arab States of the Lower Gulf: People, Politics, Petroleum* (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1975); Muhammad Morsy Abdullah, *The United Arab Emirates: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm, 1978); Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *The Origins of the United Arab Emirates: A Political and Social History of the Trucial States* (London: Macmillan, 1978); Frauke Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates: A Society in Transition* (London: Longman, 1983; rev. ed., 1996; third edition Dubai: Motivate, 2004).

3. J.G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Omân, and Central Arabia* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing), vol. 1: 1915, vol. 2: 1908. Reprinted in six volumes (Farnborough, Hants.: Gregg International, 1970; Shannon: Irish Universities Press, 1970). Reprinted for Sultan Qaboos University (Reading: Garnet, 1998). Shaikh Sultan al-Qasimi's doctoral thesis for the University of Exeter was published as Sultan Muhammad al-Qasimi, *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf* (London: Croom Helm, 1986; second ed.; London: Routledge, 1988). Representative of his other works are Sultan bin Muhammad al-Qasimi, ed., *The Gulf in Historic Maps, 1493-1931* (Exeter?: privately printed, 1996); Sultan bin Muhammad al-Qasimi, ed., *The Journals of David Seton in the Gulf, 1800-1809* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995); Sultan Muhammad al-Qasimi, *Les Relations entre Oman et la France 1715-1905*, trans. by

Encouragingly, a few collections of essays have begun to appear in the last dozen years. *Perspectives on the United Arab Emirates* includes contributions by Daniel Potts on the UAE's pre-history, Geoffrey King on a broad overview of the area's history, Frauke Heard-Bey on twentieth-century history, Ibrahim Al Abed and Malcolm Peck on the formation of the UAE and Ali Tawfik Al Sadik on the history of the post-independence economy. *Waves of Time* concentrates on the area's maritime history, with contributions by Potts on early history and Peter Vine and Peter Hellyer on the famed navigator Ahmad ibn Majid, as well as on pearling. *A Century in Thirty Years*, as might be expected from the title, focuses on the more recent past, including an overview by former Gulf Co-operation Council Secretary General Fahim bin Sultan al-Qasimi, along with essays on historical and social change by Hassan M. al-Naboodah, the role of the country's political leaders by Joseph A. Kechichian, the development of the economy by Fatima al-Shamsi and the creation of political institutions and civil society by Fatma Al-Sayegh, among other contributions.⁴

A small body of more general works exists as well. Aqil Kazim's published doctoral thesis covers UAE history from earliest times up to the present, while the United States Army's Area Handbook Series provides basic information about the country. Malcolm Peck has published a short summary of the federation, and the UAE figures prominently in his historical dictionary on the Gulf shaykhdoms. Another general work on the Emirates is by Xavier Beguin Billecocq, while a concise introduction to the country is included in Rosemarie Said Zahlan's *The Making of the*

Abdeljelil and Mireille Temimi (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1995); also published in English as *Omani-French Relations, 1715-1900*, trans. by B.R. Pridham (Exeter: Forest Row, 1996); Sultan Muhammad al-Qasimi, *The White Shaikh* (Sharjah: privately printed, November 1996).

4. Edmund Ghareeb and Ibrahim Al Abed, eds., *Perspectives on the United Arab Emirates* (London: Trident Press, 1997); Peter Hellyer et al., eds., *Waves of Time: The Maritime History of the United Arab Emirates* (London: Trident Press, 1998); Joseph A. Kechichian, ed., *A Century in Thirty Years: Shaykh Zayed and the United Arab Emirates* (Washington, DC: Middle East Policy Council, 2000).

Modern Gulf States. Muhammad Sadik and William Snavely published an early general work that touches on the UAE. There is also a chronology (although now somewhat dated) by Paul Bonnenfant.⁵

In light of the Pirate Coast epithet for the region given by the British in the nineteenth century, the subject of piracy has been a relatively well-studied subject, both from the point of view of British diplomatic history and in publications specifically written to rebut it. Sultan al-Qasimi's *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf* has already been mentioned; his interest in the subject is understandable given the accusations of piracy that were lodged against his ancestors. Louise Sweet published an older article on the topic, but perhaps the most detailed academic work is Charles Davies's *The Blood-Red Flag*. Other studies that concentrate on internal politics during the early and mid-twentieth century include Obaid Butti's doctoral dissertation on the relationship between imperial presence and sociopolitical evolution, Rosemarie Said's study of the 1938 reform movement in Dubai and Christopher Davidson's examination of political opposition to the British in Dubai.⁶

5. Muhammad T. Sadik and William P. Snavely, *Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates: Colonial Past, Present Problems, and Future Prospects* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books/D.C. Heath, 1972); Paul Bonnenfant, "Chronologie des Emirats Arabes Unis," in Paul Bonnenfant, ed., *La Péninsule Arabique d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1982), pp. 559–563; Richard F. Nyrop, ed., *Persian Gulf States: Country Studies*, second ed. (Washington: USGPO, 1984); Malcolm C. Peck, *The United Arab Emirates: A Venture in Unity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986); Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989; rev. ed. Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998); Aqil Kazim, *The United Arab Emirates, A.D. 600 the Present: A Socio-Discursive Formation in the Arabian Gulf* (Dubai: Gulf Book Centre, 2000); Xavier Beguin Billecocq, *Les Sept Dynasties souveraines des Émirats Arabes Unis* (Paris: Relations Internationales & Culture, 2000); Malcolm C. Peck, *Historical Dictionary of the Gulf Arab States* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1997; second ed., 2007).

6. Louise Sweet, "Pirates or Politics? Arab Societies of the Persian or Arabian Gulf, 18th Century," *Ethnohistory* 11(1964), 262–280; Rosemarie J. Said, "The 1938 Reform Movement in Dubai," *al-Abhath* (Beirut) 23(December 1970), 247–318; Obaid A. Butti, "Imperialism, Tribal Structure, and the Development of Ruling Elites: A Socioeconomic History of the Trucial States Between 1892 and 1939,"

Political history, particularly from the 1950s to the present, constitutes the largest body of work on the UAE. Because of the scarcity of local sources until recently, much of the writing covering the pre-independence period consists of diplomatic history based on British archives. Relevant publications include the studies cited above by Morsy Abdullah, Rosemarie Said Zahlan and Frauke Heard-Bey. In addition, J.B. Kelly, a historian of British imperial history, covers the UAE in his "A Prevalence of Furies," while Frauke Heard-Bey examines the evolution of Dubai and Glen Balfour-Paul includes the UAE in his survey of selected Gulf states.⁷

The announcement in 1968 of Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf prompted concern about the future of the small Gulf states. Negotiations about unity were begun between Bahrain, Qatar and the seven Trucial States. Although Bahrain and Qatar chose to pursue separate paths toward independence, the seven Trucial States formed the United Arab Emirates in 1971. The process of formation of the UAE, together with the protracted negotiations that preceded it and persistent uncertainty over its viability and durability, attracted the attention of at least a dozen authors. Studies on the immediate transitional period around independence include Ali Mohammed Khalifa's study, based on a doctoral dissertation, Souad Ghaouti's book, Heard-Bey's article on "The Gulf States and Oman in Transition," Abdullah Omran Taryam's look from the inside

Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1992; Charles E. Davies, *The Blood-Red Flag: An Investigation into Qasimi Piracy, 1797-1820* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997). See also his "Britain, Trade and Piracy;" Christopher M. Davidson, "Arab Nationalism and British Opposition in Dubai, 1920-66," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43(November 2007), 879-892.

7. Glen Balfour-Paul, "Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates: Political and Social Evolution," in Ian Richard Netton, ed., *Arabia and the Gulf: From Traditional Society to Modern States* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 156-175; Frauke Heard-Bey, "Le developpement d'un Etat-Citè maritime dans le Golfe: l'exemple de Dubayy," in Paul Bonnenfant, ed., *La Péninsule Arabique d'Aujourd'hui*, tome 2 (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1982), 523-559; J.B. Kelly, "A Prevalence of Furies: Tribes, Politics, and Religion in Oman and Trucial Oman," in Derek Hopwood, ed., *The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), 107-141.

and Ibrahim Al Abed's article in *Perspectives on the United Arab Emirates*. Assessments of the success of the federation are more numerous, including articles by John Duke Anthony and Heard-Bey, doctoral dissertations by Muhammad Salih al-Musfir and Albadar Abu-Bakr, and contributions to collected works by myself and Naomi Sakr. In addition, the Middle East Policy Council organized a conference in 1999 to discuss the accomplishments of the UAE to date.⁸

The continued viability of the UAE surprised many outside observers, although it probably should not have. Even more numerous are the studies of the political development of the UAE as it has matured. Some of these take a broader view of developments, as in the case of Christopher Davidson's books on the UAE and Dubai and Bernard El Ghouli's article on the transformation of Dubai. Not surprisingly, in a

8. Frauke Heard-Bey, "The Gulf States and Oman in Transition," *Asian Affairs* 3(February 1972), 14-22; Frauke Heard-Bey, "The United Arab Emirates: A Quarter Century of Federation," in Michael C. Hudson, ed. *Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 128-149; Frauke Heard-Bey, "The United Arab Emirates: Statehood and Nation-Building in a Traditional Society," *Middle East Journal* 59(Summer 2005), 357-375; John Duke Anthony, "United Arab Emirates: Sociopolitical Developments," *AEI Foreign Policy and Defense Review* 2(1980), 56-60; John Duke Anthony, "Transformation Amidst Tradition: the UAE in Transition," in Shahram Chubin, ed., *Domestic Political Factors* (London: Gower, for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), 19-37; John Duke Anthony, *The United Arab Emirates: Dynamics of State Formation* (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2002); Ali Mohammed Khalifa, *The United Arab Emirates: Unity in Fragmentation* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979); Naomi Sakr, "Federalism in the United Arab Emirates: Prospects and Regional Implications," in Tim Niblock, ed., *Social and Economic Development in the Arab Gulf* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 177-187; Souad Ghaouti, *Les Emirats Arabes Unis vers une nouvelle experience federative* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1984); Muhammad Salih al-Musfir, "The United Arab Emirates: An Assessment of Federalism in a Developing Polity," Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1984; Abdullah Omran Taryam, *The Establishment of the United Arab Emirates, 1950-85* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); J.E. Peterson, "The Future of Federalism in the United Arab Emirates," in H. Richard Sindelar III and J.E. Peterson, eds., *Crosscurrents in the Gulf: Arab, Regional and Global Interests* (London: Routledge, 1988), 198-230; Albadar S.S. Abu-Baker, "Political Economy of State Formation: The United Arab Emirates in Comparative Perspective," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1995; "Sheikh Zayed and the UAE: A Century in Thirty Years; A Conference," *Middle East Policy* 4(June 1999), 1-29.

monarchical system the role of leadership and succession has been a major theme, as shown by the studies by Andrea Rugh, former United States ambassador to the UAE William Rugh, Davidson on the situation after Shaykh Zayid's death and Christian Huxley on the attempted 1987 coup in Sharjah. After the events of September 2001, security became a serious concern in the UAE, as shown in articles by Davidson, Fatma Al Sayegh and Sean Foley. UAE University scholar Abdulkhaleq Abdulla takes a serious look in his doctoral dissertation at the structure of political power in the Emirates, and especially its relationship with external elites. Given the weakness of the Federal National Council, it is not surprising that this institution has not received a lot of attention, although Mohammed Saeed Khalfan treats it in his dissertation and Michael Herb touches upon the UAE in a broader survey of consultative bodies.⁹

The creation of a constitutional basis for the young state, whether in its formal written form or in actual practice, together with the formation of the judicial system, has

9. Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, "Political Dependency: The Case of the United Arab Emirates," Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1984; Christian Huxley, "A Central American Situation in the Gulf," *MERIP Reports* 17(September-October 1987), 33-34; Mohammed Saeed Khalfan, "The Practicality of Having the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates Become an Elective Body," DPA dissertation, University of La Verne, 1997; William A. Rugh, "The United Arab Emirates: What are the Sources of Its Stability?" *Middle East Policy* 5(September 1997), 14-24; Sean Foley, "The UAE: Political Issues And Security Dilemmas," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3(March 1998); Michael Herb, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democratic Prospects in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); Bernard El Ghoul, "Les transformations d'une cité-marchande: Doubaï 1971-2001; impact global et dynamique interne," *Maghreb-Machrek* no. 174 (October-December 2001), 70-74; Fatma Al-Sayegh, "Post-9/11 Changes in the Gulf: The Case of the UAE," *Middle East Policy* 11(Summer 2004), 107-124; Christopher M. Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005); Christopher M. Davidson, "After Shaikh Zayed: The Politics of Succession in Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates," *Middle East Policy* 13(2006), 45-59; Christopher M. Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success* (London: Hurst, 2008); Christopher M. Davidson, "Diversification in Abu Dhabi and Dubai: The Impact on National Identity and the Ruling Bargain," in Alanoud Alsharekh and Robert Springborg, eds., *Popular Culture and Political Identity in the Arab Gulf States* (London: Saqi, 2008), 143-153; Christopher M. Davidson, "Dubai: The Security Dimensions of the Region's Premier Free Port," *Middle East Policy* 15(Spring 2008), 143-160; Andrea B. Rugh, *The Political*

received the attention of Ali al-Hosani and Hadi al-Owais and also B.S.B. al-Muhairi.¹⁰ In 1950, the British government created the Trucial Oman Levies, later known as the Trucial Oman Scouts (TOS), to provide security for the area. Composed of British officers and local and other Arab soldiers, the TOS eventually became the nucleus of the UAE armed forces. Accounts of the TOS have been penned by Peter Clayton, Michael Mann and Tom Walcot.¹¹

International relations and foreign policy of the Trucial States/UAE have also provided a favorite subject. Hasan al-Alkim published a comprehensive treatment, while William Rugh contributed a shorter look and Enver Koury published an early article.¹² Relations among the emirates have been very close over the years, from the incorporation of the coast's statelets into the Maritime Peace system (thus earning them the sobriquet Trucial States) to their formal protected status under the (British) Government of India to continued good political, defense and economic relations in the independent era. Given this history, it is not surprising that numerous authors have examined the relationship. Some, such as Mubarak al-Otabi and Saleh al-Sagri in their doctoral theses, focus on the nineteenth century while others concentrate on the

Culture of Leadership in the United Arab Emirates (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2007).

10. Ali Ebrahim Abdulla al-Hosani, "Constitutional and Judicial Organisation in the United Arab Emirates," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Exeter, 1989; Hadif Rashid al-Owais, "The Role of the Supreme Court in the Constitutional System of the United Arab Emirates: A Comparative Study," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Durham, 1989; B.S.B. al-Muhairi, "The Development of the UAE Legal System and Unification with the Judicial System," *Arab Law Quarterly* 11(1996), 116-160.

11. Peter Clayton, *Two Alpha Lima: The First Ten Years of the Trucial Oman Levies and Trucial Oman Scouts (1950 to 1960)* (London: Janus Publishing, 1994); Michael Mann, *The Trucial Oman Scouts: The Story of a Bedouin Force* (Wilby, Norwich, UK: Michael Russell, 1994); Tom Walcot, "The Trucial Oman Scouts 1955 to 1971: An Overview," *Asian Affairs* 37(March 2006), 17-30.

12. Enver M. Koury, "The United Arab Emirates: National Interests and Security Problems," in Z. Michael Szaz, ed., *The Impact of the Iranian Events Upon Persian Gulf and United States Security* (Washington, DC: American Foreign Policy Institute, 1979), 149-164; Hassan Hamdan al-Alkim, *The Foreign Policy of the United Arab Emirates* (London: Saqi, 1989); William Rugh, *Diplomacy and Defense Policy of the United Arab Emirates* (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2002).

twentieth century before independence, including Simon Smith and Miriam Joyce. Former British ambassador Ivor Lucas brings the story up to date, while Gregory Gause traces the handing of the security torch from Britain to the United States.¹³

A wealth of information and insights on the formative phase in the UAE's history is to be found in the reminiscences of British officials who served in the Gulf. Donald Hawley and Glen Balfour-Paul both served in the Political Agency in Sharjah, while Hugh Boustead, who lived enough lives for a dozen men, was the first Political Agent in Abu Dhabi. Julian Walker helped to trace the boundaries between the Trucial States and Oman, thus giving rise to his nickname "Boundary Walker." Gawain Bell and James Lunt were stationed in or conducted missions to the Trucial Coast, while Edward Henderson served both as a diplomat and as an oil company official in Trucial Oman and the Sultanate of Oman. Bernard Burrows, as Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, dealt frequently with Trucial rulers.¹⁴

13. F. Gregory Gause, III, "The UAE: Between Pax Britannica and Pax Americana," in Joseph A. Kechichian, ed., *A Century in Thirty Years: Shaykh Zayed and the United Arab Emirates* (Washington, DC: Middle East Policy Council, 2000), 213-231; Miriam Joyce, "On the Road Towards Unity: The Trucial States from a British Perspective, 1960-66," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35(April 1999), 45-60; Ivor Lucas, *Britain and the UAE: Old Patterns and New Horizons* (London: University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, 1998); Mubarak al-Otobi, "The Qawasim and British Control of the Arabian Gulf," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Salford, 1989; Saleh Hamad al-Sagri, "Britain and the Arab Emirates, 1820-1956: A Documentary Study," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1988; Simon C. Smith, *Britain's Revival and Fall in the Gulf: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial States, 1950-71* (London: Routledge, 2004).

14. Glencairn Balfour Paul, *Bagpipes in Babylon: A Lifetime in the Arab World and Beyond* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Gawain Bell, *An Imperial Twilight* (London: Lester Crook Academic Publishing, 1989); Hugh Boustead, *The Wind of Morning* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972); Donald Hawley, *The Emirates: Witness to a Metamorphosis* (Norwich: Michael Russell, 2007); Edward Henderson, *This Strange, Eventful History: Memoirs of Earlier Days in the UAE and Oman* (London: Quartet Books, 1988); James Lunt, *Imperial Sunset: Frontier Soldiering in the 20th Century* (London: Macdonald, 1981); Julian Walker, *Tyro on the Trucial Coast* (Durham: Memoir Club, 1999). The memoirs of other British officials in the Gulf, such as Rupert Hay and Bernard Burrows, could be added to this list. Bernard Burrows, *Footnotes in the Sand: The Gulf in Transition, 1953-1958* (Wilton, Salisbury, Wiltshire: Michael Russell, 1990); Bernard Burrows, *Diplomats in*

Writing in the field of international relations is even more bountiful when concerned with two major territorial crises over the past half-century. In 1952, armed Saudi Arabian troops occupied one of the seven villages of al-Buraimi oasis on the border between Abu Dhabi and Oman. The Saudi claim to the area was based on Al Saud control of the oasis during part of the nineteenth century, but the action was also fueled by the prospect of oil. An impasse ensued and the involved parties agreed to an international tribunal for arbitration. The Saudi collection of supporting evidence, or *Memorial*, was prepared by the Arabian American Oil Company. ARAMCO also published a study of the region, *Oman and the Southern Shores of the Persian Gulf*, that was hastily retracted after the crisis developed. On the other side, the British Foreign Office prepared its own counter-claims, acting both on behalf of its client states (Abu Dhabi and Oman) and in support of British oil companies with concessions in the area. John Wilkinson has published a comprehensive account of border issues in this corner of Arabia, while Tore Petersen's article also covers the crisis. It is the subject of doctoral theses by Abdulrahman al-Shamlan and Saeed al-Shamsi. J.B. Kelly wrote a book and several articles on al-Buraimi in the 1960s; it was rumored that he had had a substantial hand in compiling the British statement.¹⁵ In the end, the tribunal turned out to be

a Changing World (Durham: The Memoir Club, 2001). Another, more personal, autobiography is Susan Hillyard, *Before the Oil: A Personal Memoir of Abu Dhabi 1954–1958* (Bakewell, Derbyshire: Ashridge Press, 2002).

15. Arabian American Oil Company. Relations Department. Research Division, *Oman and the Southern Shore of the Persian Gulf* (Cairo, 1952); reprinted as Raghid El-Solh, ed. *Oman and the South-Eastern Shore of Arabia* (London: Ithaca Press, 1997); J.B. Kelly, "Arabian Frontiers and Anglo-American Relations," *Government and Opposition* 27(Summer 1992), 369–384; J.B. Kelly, *Eastern Arabian Frontiers* (London: Faber, 1964); J.B. Kelly, "Eastern Arabian Frontiers," *Middle Eastern Studies* 1(1965), 307–312; Tore Tingvold Petersen, "Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East: The Struggle for the Buraimi Oasis, 1952–1957," *International History Review* 14(February 1992), 71–91; Saudi Arabia, *Arbitration for the Settlement of the Territorial Dispute Between Muscat and Abu Dhabi on One Side and Saudi Arabia on the Other: Memorial*, Riyadh, 31 July 1955; Abdulrahman Rashid al-Shamlan, "The Evolution of National Boundaries in the Southeastern Arabian Peninsula, 1934–1955," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1987;

moribund and the TOS evicted the Saudis in 1955, but the boundary issue has never been put completely to rest.

Another festering territorial issue concerns ownership of the small islands of Abu Musa and the two Tunbs. Situated near the exit of the Gulf, midway between the UAE and Iran, the islands have been the subject of conflicting claims since the nineteenth century. Iran moved to occupy all three islands on the eve of the British withdrawal, taking over the Tunbs from Ras al-Khaimah but reaching an agreement with Sharjah on the *de facto* division of Abu Musa. However, in 1992, Iran forcibly evicted UAE and Sharjah residents from the island, provoking a storm of criticism throughout the Arab world. The UAE remains adamant in its claims, while Iran refuses any compromise. The Iranian viewpoint has been presented by Mohammad Reza Dabiri, Guive Mirfendereski, Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, Hooshang Amirahmadi, Farhang Mehr and Jalil Roshandel. UAE rebuttals are contained in Mohamed Abdullah Al Roken, Hassan al-Alkim and Thomas R. Mattair. More neutral assessments can be found in Richard Schofield and Richard A. Mobley.¹⁶

Saeed Mohammad al-Shamsi, "The Al-Buraimi Dispute: A Case Study in Inter-Arab Politics," Ph.D. dissertation, American University, 1987; United Kingdom. Foreign Office, *The Boundary Between Saudi Arabia and the Shaikhdoms of Qatar and Abu Dhabi and the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman: A Summary of the History of the Dispute Together with a Statement of the Evidence in Support of the Claims of Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Muscat* (Bahrain, 1954); John Wilkinson, *Arabia's Frontiers: The Story of Britain's Blue and Violet Lines* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991).

16. Guive Mirfendereski, "The Tumb Islands Controversy, 1887-1971: A Case Study in Claims to Territory in International Law," Ph.D. dissertation, Tufts University, 1985; Mohammad Reza Dabiri, "Abu Musa Island: A Binding Understanding or a Misunderstanding," *Iranian Journal of International Affairs* 5(Fall-Winter 1993-1994), 576-583; Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *The Islands of Tunb and Abu Musa: An Iranian Argument in Search of Peace and Co-operation in the Persian Gulf* (London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1995); Hooshang Amirahmadi, ed., *Small Islands, Big Politics: The Tonbs and Abu Musa in Iranian Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Farhang Mehr, *A Colonial Legacy: The Dispute Over the Islands of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tumb* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997); Mohamed Abdullah Al Roken, "Historical and Legal Dimensions of the United Arab

While a few attempts at social and economic history appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, the last dozen years have seen an encouraging surge in this field. An early treatment of social change and culture was published by Morsy Abdullah, while local scholars Mohammed al-Mutawa and Fatima al-Sayegh looked at change in the mid-twentieth century and the role of merchants and missionaries. The doctoral dissertation of Hendrik van der Meulen focuses on tribe and kinship, while Fred Lawson and Hasan al-Naboodah have written on heritage and cultural nationalism, Nadia Rahman on changing attitudes and Roland Marchal on the cosmopolitan emergence of Dubai.¹⁷ Economic history, as opposed to economic analysis and reporting, is still in its infancy, although S.N. Rizvi contributes an overview, Fatima al-Shamsi concentrates on

Emirates-Iran Dispute Over Three Islands," in Edmund Ghareeb and Ibrahim Al Abed, eds., *Perspectives on the United Arab Emirates* (London: Trident Press, 1997), 139–159; Jalil Roshandel, "On the Persian Gulf Islands: An Iranian Perspective," in Lawrence G. Potter and Gary G. Sick, eds., *Security in the Persian Gulf: Origins, Obstacles and the Search for Consensus* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 135–153; Hassan al-Alkim, "The Islands Question: An Arabian Perspective," in *ibid.*, 155–170; Richard Schofield, "Anything But Black and White: A Commentary on the Lower Gulf Islands Dispute," in *ibid.*, 171–187; Richard A. Mobley, "The Tunbs and Abu Musa Islands: Britain's Perspective," *Middle East Journal* 57(Autumn 2003), 627–645; and Thomas R. Mattair, *The Three Occupied UAE Islands: The Tunbs and Abu Musa* (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2005).

17. Muhammad Morsy Abdullah, "Changes in the Economy and Political Attitudes, and the Development in Culture on Coast of Oman Between 1900 and 1940," *Arabian Studies* 2 (1975), 167–178; Fred H. Lawson and Hasan M. al-Naboodah, "Heritage and Cultural Nationalism in the United Arab Emirates," in Alsharekh and Springborg, eds., *Popular Culture and Political Identity*, 15–30; Roland Marchal, "Dubai: Global City and Transnational Hub," in Madawi Al-Rasheed, ed., *Transnational Connections and the Arab Gulf* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 93–110; Mohammad A.J. al-Mutawa, "Social Change and Political Development in the Omani Coast 1934–1970," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Reading, 1983; Nadia Rahman, "Place and Space in the Memory of United Arab Emirates Elders," in Alsharekh and Springborg, eds., *Popular Culture and Political Identity*, 31–39; Fatma al-Sayegh, "Merchants' Role in a Changing Society: The Case of Dubai, 1900–90," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34(1998), 87–102. Fatimah al-Sayigh, "American Missionaries in the UAE Region in the Twentieth Century," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32(January 1996), 120–139; Fatma al-Sayegh, "Domestic Politics in the United Arab Emirates: Social and Economic Policies, 1990–2000," in Joseph A. Kechichian, ed., *Iran, Iraq, and the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 161–175; Hendrik Van Der Meulen, "The Role of Tribal and Kinship Ties in the Politics of the United Arab Emirates," Ph.D. dissertation, Tufts University, 1997.

industry, Martin Hvidt looks at the economic development of Dubai and I assess economic ties with the US.¹⁸

The Gulf has long exhibited a pronounced reluctance by public figures to write their *memoires* or even offer public accounts of activities in which they have actively participated. Thus it has been left largely to outsiders to chronicle Emiratis' contributions. Majid Khadduri provides a biographical/political sketch of Abu Dhabi's ruler Shaikh Zayid bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Uzi Rabi examines Zayid's predecessor and brother Shaikh Shakhbut and Hamdi Tammam has put together a flattering portrait of the late Shaikh Zayid as the first and formative president of the UAE. A rare autobiography has been published by prominent Dubai businessman and long-time ambassador to the United Kingdom Isa al-Gurg.¹⁹

It is encouraging to review the substantial and growing body of historically relevant literature on the UAE that has appeared in only the space of a few decades, and even a bit surprising to see its extent. Indeed, much of this scholarship has been published only in the last ten to fifteen years. This undoubtedly indicates that as history is being made in the UAE, historians will be increasingly present and able to document it.

18. Martin Hvidt, "Public-Private Ties and Their Contribution to Development: The Case of Dubai," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43(July 2007), 557-577; J.E. Peterson, "The United Arab Emirates: Economic Vibrancy and US Interests," *Asian Affairs* 34(July 2003), 137-142; S.N. Asad Rizvi, "From Tents to High Rise: Economic Development of the United Arab Emirates," *Middle Eastern Studies* 29(October 1993), 664-678; Fatima S. al-Shamsi, "Industrial Strategies and Change in the UAE During the 1980s," in Abbas Abdelkarim, ed., *Change and Development in the Gulf* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 79-103.

19. Easa Saleh al-Gurg, *The Wells of Memory: An Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1998); Majid Khadduri, *Arab Personalities in Politics* (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1981); Uzi Rabi, "Oil Politics and Tribal Rulers in Eastern Arabia: The Reign of Shakhbut (1928-1966)," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 33 (May 2006), 37-50; Hamdi Tammam, *Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan: The Leader and the March*, second rev. ed. (Abu Dhabi: n.p., 1983).