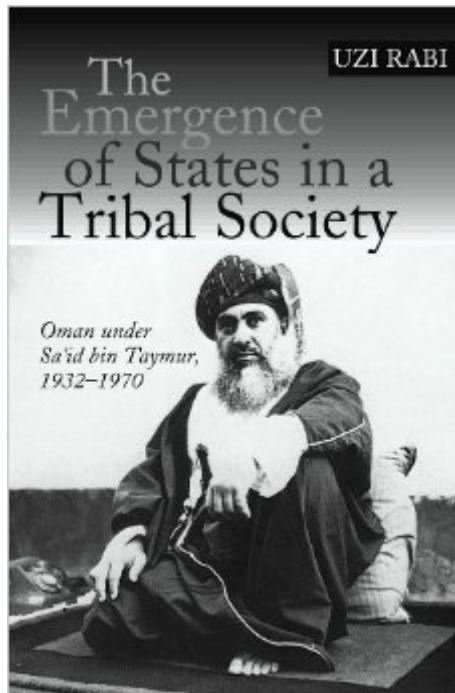


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The Emergence Of States In A Tribal Society: Oman Under Sa'id Bin Taymur, 1932–1970



Synopsis

This book reassesses the reign of Sa'ïd bin Taymur, who was deposed by his son, Qabus bin Sa'ïd, in a coup in July 1970. Contemporary historiography of the period of Sa'ïd's rule (1932-1970) views Oman as medieval and isolationist; Qabus's later government is seen as progressive and enlightened, with his ascendancy to the throne often described as the 'rebirth of Oman' from its 'medieval slumber' into a thriving and prosperous Sultanate. This study refutes the prevailing view that Sa'ïd's four-decade reign should be perceived as a place where time stood still. The author offers a critical look at the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of Oman during the reign of Sa'ïd bin Taymur. The Emergence of States in a Tribal Society mainly focuses on tribe-state relations, emphasizing their dynamic interaction, with particular attention paid to the relationships between the tribal groups. Uzi Rabi's book reinterprets a significant timescale in the modern history of the Arabian Peninsula and pre-oil societies, and will be essential reading for both students and scholars of Middle Eastern history, culture and society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *The Emergence of States in a Tribal Society*, Rabi, a lecturer in history at Tel Aviv University, provides a history of Oman during the rule of Sa'ïd bin Taymur (1932-70). Using British documents, European travel accounts, a handful of Omani chronicles, and a smattering of Arabic newspapers published outside Oman, Rabi challenges conventional wisdom depicting Sa'ïd's authoritarian rule

as harsh and backward, if not medieval. Instead, Rabi argues that Sa'id was skilled and capable, even if not progressive. While he unified and stabilized a divided, tribal, and economically bankrupt society, Rabi suggests he had little choice but to resist British pressure to reform in order to preserve his unified domain's tenuous balance. The narrative is straightforward, and Rabi's writing clear. After an introductory chapter explaining both the tribal and political backdrop to Omani society and the growth of British political influence, Rabi lays out a basic political and diplomatic history, beginning with Sa'id's inheritance of the country, continuing through the unification of the Sultanate of Muscat with the Imamate of Oman, and culminating in the challenge from the communist-inspired Dhofar rebellion. Whereas British authorities and, for that matter, other Arab leaders saw Sa'id as detached and uninterested, Rabi argues that he recognized economic autonomy to be key to preserving Oman's independence in the face of the British challenge. Rabi depicts Sa'id as a skillful tactician who preserved Omani territorial claims, even in the face of an expansionist Saudi kingdom. As he traces Oman's development, though, reliance on British sources may not be enough.

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