

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Aspects of Economic Dualism in Oman, 1830-1930

Author(s): Mark Speece

Source: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Nov., 1989), pp. 495-515

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/164102>

Accessed: 09/05/2014 10:22

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to
International Journal of Middle East Studies.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Mark Speece

ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC DUALISM IN OMAN, 1830–1930

The history of Oman is largely a story of competition, and often conflict, between two very different entities. This duality was even symbolized by the name of the country, “Sultanate of Muscat and Oman,” until 1970. The sultanate was formed from the fusion of the Batina coastal plain and its port cities, symbolically Muscat, and the interior of the country, Oman. During most periods in the recent history of the country, only the coast has been ruled by the sultan. Even before the institution of the sultanate emerged in the 18th century, however, the coast had usually been under separate, often foreign, rule. In the interior, the ideal head of government from very early times was that of an imam, even though the office often remained vacant. At many times during Omani history, of course, one part of the country or the other imposed its control and Oman was temporarily united, but the differences between the two sections of Omani society eventually split the country into two separate states again. Even within the last decade, one of the major problems in Oman’s efforts to develop has been “the traditional antithesis between the sultan residing on the coast and the inwardly oriented tribes.”¹

The traditional dual organization of Oman reflected a number of basic differences in Omani society. Coastal Oman was always very trade-oriented and thus open to foreign influences. Although the Batina is densely populated with villages, the coastal cities have been the focus of social and economic life (Figure 1). These urban areas have been very cosmopolitan, detribalized, and tolerant of foreign ideas and presence.² Muscat and Matra and other major towns all contained resident Indians, *khojas*, Persians, and others, who usually were involved in some kind of commercial activity. The interior of Oman was oriented toward self-sufficiency, rather than trade, and thus was very inward-looking. The society was quite homogeneous, almost completely Arab. The tribe and agricultural villages, which were made up of one or several tribes, formed the basic mode of organization.

Economic aspects of this dichotomy have not been particularly well analyzed. Oman remained fairly isolated throughout most of the 20th century, both because of its economic insignificance and because of the isolationist policies of the imams and many of the sultans. For this reason, very few data have been compiled on Oman since the turn of the century that could be used in a detailed

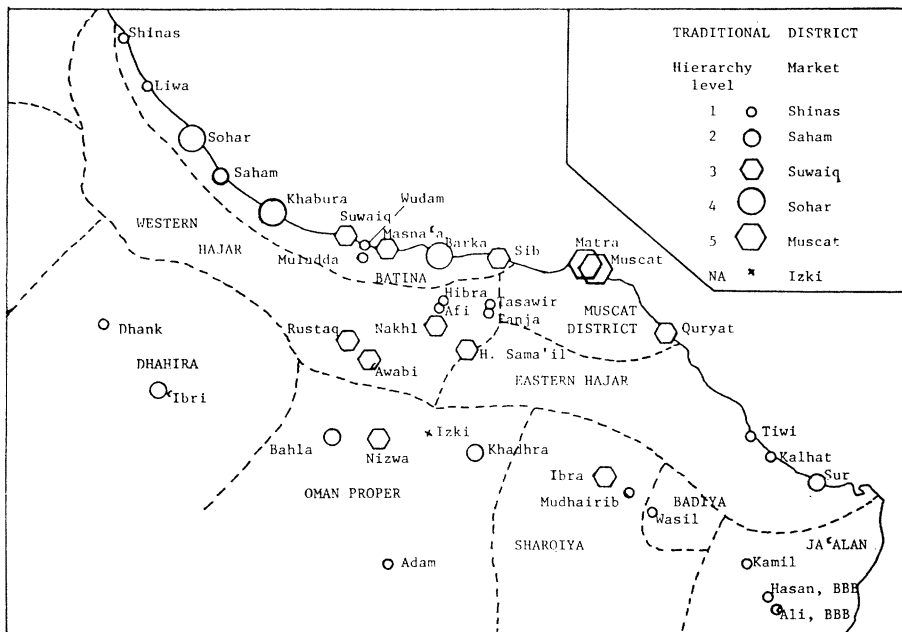


FIGURE 1. Reference map for figures: Documented markets.

analysis of the pre-oil economic structure of the country. The few Westerners allowed into Oman prior to 1970 tended to be either from oil companies or personal friends of the sultan. Those who wrote about Oman were primarily interested in the political history and composition of the country and made few comments on economic organization.³ Since 1970, research has begun on such questions,⁴ although so far too little has been done to gain a good overall view of the traditional patterns of economic organization throughout the country.

However, throughout the 19th century Oman was of the utmost strategic importance to Great Britain. Furthermore, until the later years of the 19th century, it was politically and economically one of the most important countries of the Indian Ocean region. The British stationed political officers throughout the Arabian Gulf, including in Muscat, where extensive data on many aspects beyond purely political affairs were compiled. The culmination of the British intelligence activities was Lorimer's *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*.⁵ Volume II (1908), subtitled *Geographical and Statistical*, covers nearly every town, village, tribe, and natural feature of the region. In addition, a great many other reports and articles were written by British officials or travelers during the decades around the turn of the century. These can be used to supplement and verify data found in the *Gazetteer*. Overall, such sources provide a wealth of detail for the analysis of economic structures in Oman.⁶

One key difference between the coast and the interior was the spatial organization of the marketing networks.⁷ As Figures 2 and 3 indicate, the structure was

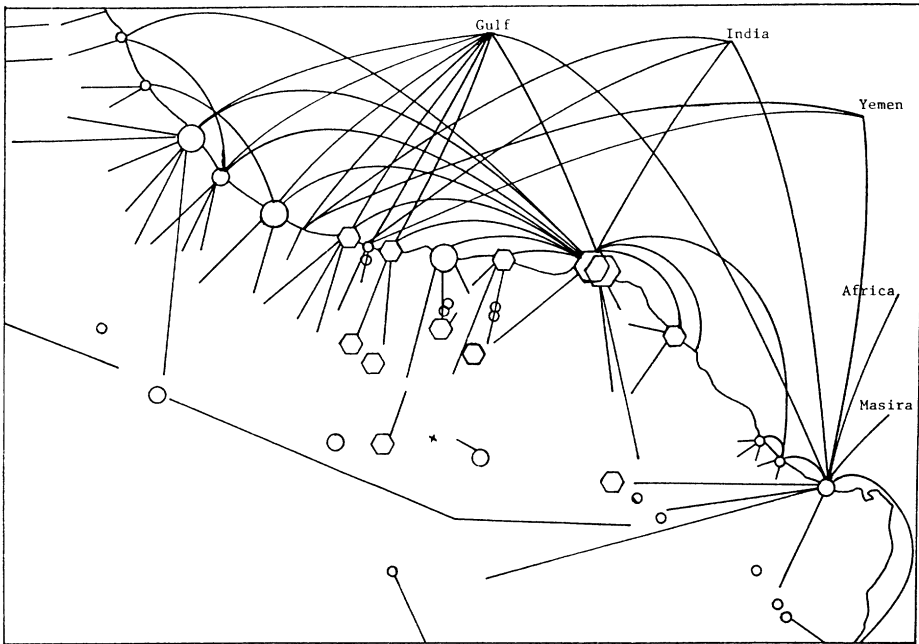


FIGURE 2. Markets and documented trade patterns.

quite elaborately defined for the coastal system centered on Muscat and Matra, representing the top level of a dendritic/mercantile system. Such spatial organization is characteristic of societies that are highly oriented toward external long-distance trade.⁸ In Oman, Muscat was the international trade center for the system, while distribution and collection functions for domestic trade were turned over to Matra. Trade with the part of Oman connected to the coastal system was channeled from Matra through a set of subordinate ports. From these subordinate ports the connection inland followed a route up a *wadi*. In a few areas on these routes (those with sufficient hinterland populations) markets developed inland. This kind of organization allowed quite extensive participation—by Omani standards—in international trade networks, while at the same time largely insulating the inland population from direct contact with the international network.

The interior⁹ was not part of this dendritic/mercantile system. The imamate had a quite different economic organization; in fact, it was characterized by lack of a coherent overall structure. The bazaars of the interior usually functioned as the center of a small, distinct system without substantial trade relations to other interior bazaars. In the interior, international commerce generally played a much smaller role than in the coastal system. To the extent that it existed, it was organized on a bazaar-by-bazaar basis. Links to the Indian Ocean trade that passed through the coastal system were channeled directly through Matra or Sohar, rather than through the dendritic structure. Perhaps more commonly,

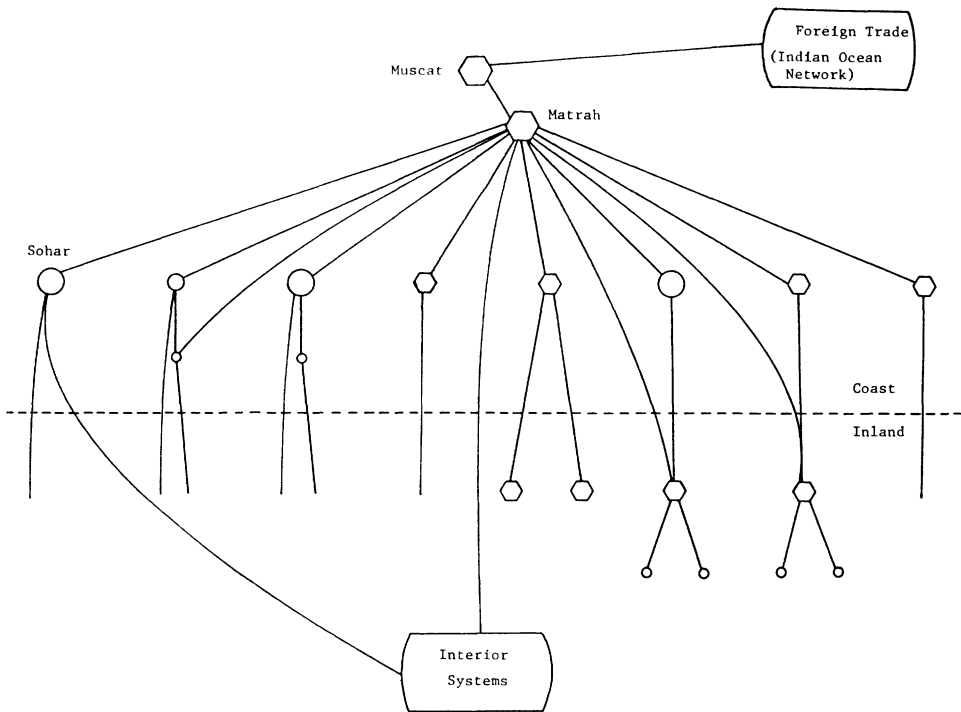


FIGURE 3. Schematic representation of the coastal system.

though, the interior's international trade bypassed the coastal system entirely and went through Sur, which was more or less independent of the sultanate.

Therefore, the spatial distribution of interior bazaars and markets and of trade patterns does not reflect any organization as part of a wider system. Rather, these interior markets were located so as to facilitate local trade across various kinds of boundaries. Location on ecological boundaries was particularly evident in the foothills between mountains and plains (Figure 4). Social boundaries were bridged by a string of small markets along the fringes of the settled areas, where bedouin met *hadari*. Most large bazaars were located to facilitate contact across the boundaries between the two major political confederations (Figure 5).

RENT CAPITALISM AND THE OMANI ECONOMY

Spatial organization of marketing, however, is only one manifestation of divergent socioeconomic forms in the two parts of Oman. The nature of commerce within individual market towns, and the nature of each market town's relationship with its hinterland, are also important factors which must be explored. In the coastal system of Oman, economic organization took on a form called "rent capitalism." The theory of *Rentenkapitalismus* has been developed largely by German geographers,¹⁰ and the concept can be seen as a sort of

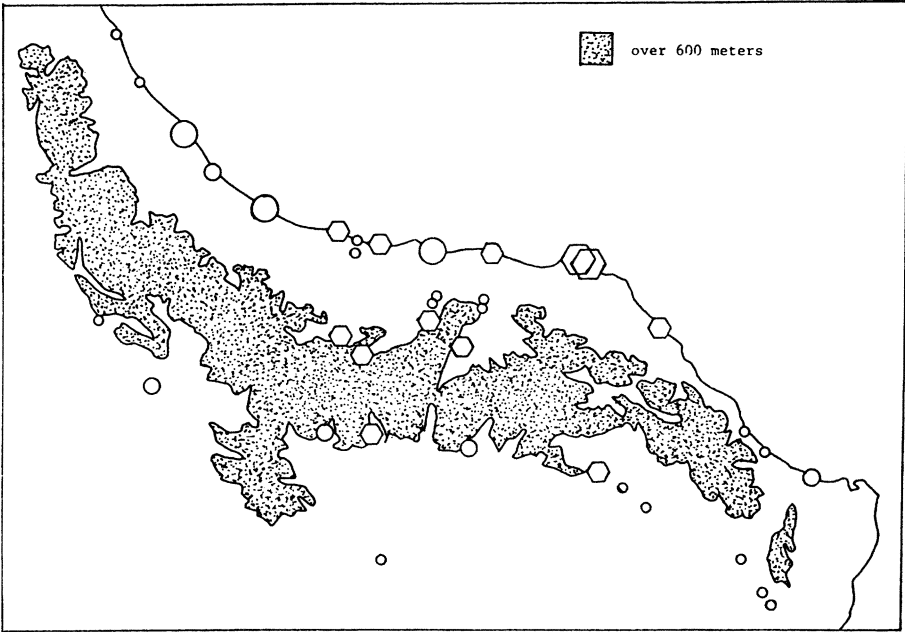


FIGURE 4. Market location on ecological boundaries.

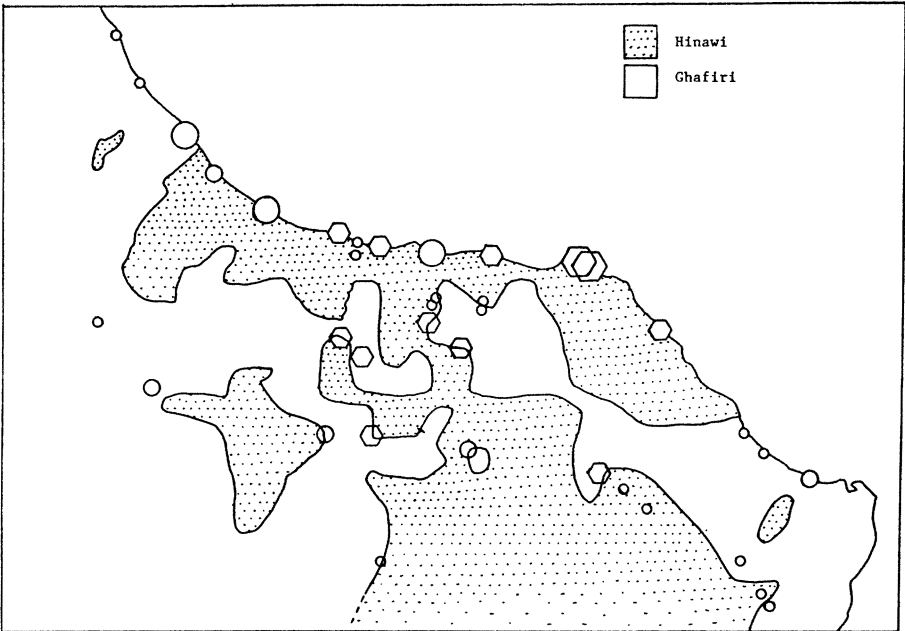


FIGURE 5. Market location on tribal confederation boundaries.

missing link between feudal economic organization and industrial capitalism. Some proponents of the theory claim nearly world-wide applicability and see rent capitalism in nearly every country where industrial capitalism has not yet developed.¹¹ In practice, however, the theory was developed primarily to explain the situation of Islamic cities, and nearly every discussion of rent capitalism has focused on the Middle East. Analyses of the relationships between Middle Eastern cities and their hinterlands reveal that in most cases the ties were not strictly feudal.¹² On the other hand, traditional Middle Eastern cities were clearly not characterized by industrial capitalism.

Rent capitalism, as it is usually portrayed, is a system in which commercial pursuits predominate. Accumulation of capital is the primary goal, but this capital is used for personal consumption or hoarded and is not reinvested in improving production. One of the major characteristics of this stage of economic development is the splitting and commercialization of the various activities and inputs involved in production. Each production factor is treated as an item that can be owned, exchanged, sold, or rented separately. They are put on the market and manipulated to accumulate wealth. For example, in agriculture the basic production factors are land, water, seed, animal power, and labor. The party owning and contributing each factor theoretically receives 20 percent of the harvest. A landlord owning and contributing all but labor would receive 80 percent. Of course, in any specific instance the practice may diverge from the theoretical model somewhat; in any case, landlords receive substantial shares of production. The result is a flow of wealth into the city from rural areas, since landlords usually live in the cities.

Other key factors in rent capitalism are bazaars and merchants/traders. Ehlers¹³ argues that rural economic ties to the town through these institutions and people are actually more important than are the ownership ties to urban landlords. Farmers are chronically short of food and cash in the season just before the harvest. The stored crops or money from the sale of the previous harvest has run out, and the farmer must turn to the merchant in the bazaar for credit. Credit is granted on the basis of the prevailing prices, which are high because of widespread shortages. Repayment is taken on the basis of prevailing prices at the time of repayment. Since this is just after harvest, prices are low and a substantial proportion of the crop goes to the merchant, leaving the farmer a little shorter for the coming year. This cycle continues until many farmers are deeply indebted and heavily dependent on the merchant. Those who have land may eventually lose it through default, so that the merchant becomes a landlord.¹⁴

This kind of system can give the city a parasitic role, in which the city takes surplus production from its hinterland without returning anything. Wirth¹⁵ argues, however, that the heavily parasitic characteristics of rent capitalism, when they exist at all, are actually only a late development. Cities are not only consumers, but also usually provide much to their hinterlands in return. Cottage industry is often organized by city capitalists who provide raw materials and equipment for production.¹⁶ This enables small farmer households to earn supplementary income and avoid the cycle of indebtedness through which they can lose their land.

Even in agriculture, it is often the city capitalists in a rent capitalist system who initiate the reclaiming of land, invest in irrigation systems, and provide new trees for orchard plantings and many similar services. Merchants become landlords because they purchase land, not because they foreclose on it. According to Wirth, the parasitic aspects of the rent capitalist system becomes dominant when the Western industrial economy begins to intrude. The influx of cheap manufactured goods so depresses wages in the traditional cottage industries that farmers no longer have the supplemental income they need to maintain a viable farm. This is when the cycle of indebtedness becomes particularly serious.

During the period under discussion, coastal Oman manifested a rent capitalistic economy, details of which will be discussed in the following section. By the latter part of the 19th century it seems to have entered Wirth's late phase of rent capitalism, a development brought on by economic decline. The basic causes for this decline and stagnation have been analyzed in detail several times;¹⁷ only a brief review is necessary here. Political conflict had already begun to disrupt the economy in the 18th century, and a series of other factors combined during the 19th century so that by about 1900, Oman was in the midst of a severe depression. The political struggle revolved around the interior's reassertion of its traditional independence after a period of fragile unity between coastal and interior Oman. Armed conflicts were already common by the end of the 18th century, and they continued throughout the 19th century as each region attempted to dominate the other.

Other factors came largely from Oman's relations with the outside world, rather than from domestic conditions. The de facto transfer of the sultan's capital to Zanzibar, a center of Oman's substantial East African trade empire, was begun in the 1820s and was largely completed by the end of the next decade. The sultan's main economic activities and assets shifted to East Africa, to the detriment of coastal Oman. Eventually, the British-sponsored separation of Oman from Zanzibar in 1861 cut Oman off from its most prosperous possessions. Also, around 1822 the British began to suppress the slave trade, which had been an important component of Oman's commerce. British pressure on Oman culminated in the sultan's ban on the trade in 1873.

The economy slowly deteriorated as the century progressed. Competition from European ships had already hurt Omani shipping, but the introduction of steamers in the mid-1800s further diminished the Omani share of long-distance sea transport. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 made the journey from Europe to India much shorter and greatly reduced Muscat's value as a way station. As the Indian Ocean came under increasing British domination, commerce shifted from the traditional silver standard to the British gold standard. The Maria Theresa dollar (M.T. \$) used in Oman was based on silver, and Oman was drained of currency when silver prices plummeted in the late 19th century. Finally, Omani cotton weaving had been nearly eliminated by the end of the century, and many other handicraft industries were severely hurt because they could not compete with European and European-sponsored Indian manufacturing.

Oman at the turn of the century, although still within the Indian Ocean network, had become relatively insignificant economically. The coast was still

firmly tied to the Indian Ocean trade, but the volume of trade was not great enough to support prosperity for more than a few merchants. The Indian Ocean trade itself was firmly in the hands of the British, who controlled India and other areas in the network. Thus, coastal Oman was also tied to the British Empire, and this translated into heavy dependence on Britain. The British held “a commanding trade position; amenities of extraterritorial privileges; assurance that no foreign power could obtain land; quasi-legal power of recognition and subsidy control; a British agent and agency; [and] precedents of occasional British intervention in aid of the sultan against foreign or internal aggression.”¹⁸

The interior was relatively immune from the situation on the coast. Its economy was still based upon subsistence agriculture, which was affected very little by the international economic system. Politically, the interior was essentially independent; in fact, the imamate had been briefly revived between 1868 and 1871, and it was revived again in 1913 to challenge the sultan. Otherwise, local tribal sheikhs held power in the interior. They had no particular interest in encouraging economic activities outside of agriculture, and the British had little interest in the interior as long as it did not threaten their position on the coast. The sultan had little power to exercise in the interior even if he had been interested in affairs beyond the coastal system.

The decades around the turn of the century, then, present an excellent opportunity to examine the economic duality of Oman at a time when the two systems were functioning separately. Furthermore, the basic patterns of economic organization in the country remained relatively static throughout the period from approximately 1830 to 1930.¹⁹ To be sure, it has just been noted that the volume of economic activity declined, but the decline was relatively gradual. It may have caused some shifts in groups that constituted the main economic players, but it had little impact on how they played. This was not a period of dynamic change, which in Omani history usually coincided with periods of unity and economic growth. Therefore, sources from this wider period can shed considerable light on conditions around 1900.²⁰

STRUCTURE OF THE COASTAL ECONOMY

The decline of the economy, as just noted, led to depression in the handicraft industry. According to Landen, although Oman had never been an important center of manufacturing, many handicraft industries in the country were of considerable local importance.²¹ He states that “the vitality of many of these enterprises was destroyed after cheap Western manufactures invaded the local market during the nineteenth century,” and also that “by the end of the century [Western manufactures] had captured much of the local market.”²² Landen notes that various textile industries constituted the majority of Omani manufacturing, and he cites the cotton fabric industry as one of the examples of handicrafts that were hurt by foreign competition.²³ The development of a modern textile industry in Britain and in British Indian enterprises was, of course, a major source of Britain’s economic strength in the century under discussion.

Figures from the Maskat Political Agency (Table 1) certainly show the collapse of the Omani cotton fabric industry at the end of the 19th century. Muscat

TABLE 1 *Cotton Fabric Exports*

Fiscal Year	Value of Cotton Fabric Exports (M.T. \$)	Value of Total Exports (M.T. \$)	Source of Figures	Cotton as % of Total
1875-1876	150,000	1,032,450	1	14.5
1876-1877	150,000	1,161,750	1	12.9
1900-1901	4,640 ^a	1,359,893	2	0.3
1901-1902	4,400 ^a	1,641,076	3	0.3
1902-1903	700 ^a	2,506,515	3	<0.1
1903-1904	500 ^a	2,509,840	3	<0.1

^aThese figures are for cotton fabric and raw cotton combined.

Sources:

1. Government of India, Foreign Department, *Report of the Administration of the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Muscat Political Agency for the Year 1876-1877* (Calcutta, 1877).
2. Government of India, Foreign Department, *Administration Report on the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Maskat Political Agency for 1902-1903* (Calcutta, 1903).
3. Government of India, Foreign Department, *Administration Report on the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Maskat Political Agency for 1903-1904* (Calcutta, 1904).

was exporting M.T. \$150,000 worth of cotton fabrics per year in 1876-1877. These were mostly manufactured in the country, not simply transshipped through Muscat from outside Oman, because only M.T. \$19,000 worth of cotton cloth was imported in fiscal year 1876-1877.²⁴ Cotton fabrics made up around 13 to 15 percent of total exports. The political agent stationed at Muscat in 1901 noted that "there was formerly a brisk trade with Zanzibar in a certain line of piece-goods embroidered in Muscat, and popular in Zanzibar. This class of goods is said to have now gone out of fashion, having been ousted by a cheaper article manufactured in Europe."²⁵ Table 1 shows that the political agent's observation was part of a broad trend in all cotton fabrics. By the first years of the 20th century, Muscat was exporting hardly any cotton fabric at all.

According to Landen, the depression strengthened the position of the Indian merchants in Oman.²⁶ The Indians had the most extensive contacts with merchants in India, which was Oman's major trade partner. Western economic influence largely entered Oman via India, and the Indians in Oman were in a position to act as brokers for the new interests; indeed, most Indians were under British protection. However, regardless of the extent to which Indians strengthened their economic dominance, the predominance of foreigners in international trade was inherent in the Omani situation anyway. Coastal Oman's economy was rent capitalism, in which merchants play a major, if not the major, role. The spatial organization was that of a dendritic system. In such systems, foreign trade, and the merchants who carry on foreign trade, are the deciding factor. According to Smith, "one expects a sharp, perhaps ethnic break and rigid class distinctions between rural and urban classes and between economic middlemen and the major merchants, their economic positions related to the spatial positions within the system."²⁷

Foreign populations were a major component in all coastal towns. In Muscat the majority of the population was non-Arab, and the Arab population was

actually quite small.²⁸ Sources disagree over whether there were more Africans²⁹ or Baluchis³⁰ in Muscat. Lorimer notes that “Baluchis appear to be numerically the strongest element; next to Baluchis are probably negroes and half-caste Arabs. . . .”³¹ However, while a few Baluchis were petty traders,³² most trade was in the hands of other smaller foreign groups. Persians were primarily “shopkeepers, fishmongers, and makers of quilts and bedding.”³³ The majority of trade, however, was controlled by Indians, in Muscat’s case, Hindus. The Hindus controlled trade in food,³⁴ particularly the grain market and grain imports from India.³⁵ They also controlled imports of coffee,³⁶ sugar,³⁷ and exports of dates³⁸ and dried fish.³⁹ Hindus monopolized the pearl trade⁴⁰ and the importation of Indian cloth and piece goods.⁴¹

In a rent capitalist system, the merchants of the bazaar should also have been involved in a great number of activities besides trade. The bazaar functions as a financial and credit center, and as a place of handicrafts and manufacturing. Merchants also become important landlords with considerable holdings. Their ready access to cash from their other activities allows them to purchase and invest in urban and rural real estate, and the bazaar is a center from which much investment in the agricultural sector comes.⁴² In addition, merchants acquire landholdings through their activities as creditors, as has been noted earlier. All these aspects certainly applied to the Hindus in Muscat during the period under study. They dominated commerce not only through trade, “but by their operations as bankers, brokers, and moneylenders. . . .”⁴³ They had also moved into shipping and owned most of the large dhows,⁴⁴ as well as into insurance activities which covered ships and cargoes.⁴⁵ In addition, landholdings were closely linked with the banking functions of the Banian community, as many land transfers were the result of mortgage foreclosures. Land, houses, and date palms were about the only collateral that the local population had to offer in return for a loan that would tide them over to the next date harvest. The level of indebtedness was high, and foreclosures a regular occurrence.⁴⁶

Matra’s social composition was similar to, although not identical to, Muscat’s. About half of the population was Baluchi, the African element was relatively small, and Arabs made up a more substantial proportion of the inhabitants. A few Persians resided in Matra, as well as khojas and Hindus. However, while there were only a few khojas in Muscat and many Hindus, in Matra the reverse was true.⁴⁷ The khojas were numerous enough to inhabit an entire large walled quarter in the center of town. Foreign trade was concentrated in the hands of Hindu Indians as at Muscat, while khojas dominated domestic trade.⁴⁸ The monopoly by foreigners was all the greater because the royal family and administration officials, important merchants in their own rights, were not usually resident in Matra to provide competition. Foreign merchants also dominated economic activity in the subordinate coastal ports. For example, at Barka “the ready cash is all in the hands of the Banyans. . . .”⁴⁹ At Khabura, trade was “in the hands of twenty-five khoja traders. . . .”⁵⁰ at Suwaiq “there are eleven Banians here who control the trade. . . .”⁵¹ These merchants also had landholdings, though not on the scale of the landlords in Muscat or Matra.

The Indian community certainly held extensive properties in urban areas, acquired either through purchase or default.⁵² The sources are less complete

regarding holdings of foreign merchants in rural areas, but there is nevertheless enough evidence to show rent capitalist patterns. According to Lorimer, Hindus owned many of the best gardens in the suburbs of Muscat and Matra.⁵³ In villages further away, Hindus owned gardens, farmland, and water rights in Sidab, Ghubra, and Falaj al-Hilam. Khojas owned properties in Aiyint, Darsait, Ghalla, and Birain.⁵⁴ Allan also notes that a prominent Hindu family owned a garden in Sidab, and farms and water rights in two outlying villages; it is not clear if these overlap with those just cited.⁵⁵ (Table 2 and Figure 6 include the Indian holdings in their summaries of urban landlords' holdings.)

It is not always clear in the sources whether holdings were gained through foreclosure or purchased as investments, but this is an irrelevant question when simply establishing the rent capitalist involvement of the Indian merchants. Either means of acquiring holdings is consistent with the theory, though foreclosure would become more prominent in the later stages of rent capitalism. The earlier quote concerning the close link between landholdings and the Indians' banking activities indicates that foreclosure was common. Miles does, however, present a detailed discussion that indicates that in at least some cases, land and water rights were purchased as an investment in agricultural production. He cites the case of Birain, where a joint stock company that included several Indian merchants as well as the sultan's vizier purchased a spring from the local Arab owners. The company already owned land in the village, and further invested in construction of a *falaj* (irrigation system) to improve productivity.⁵⁶ This is a clear case of bazaar profits moving into the agricultural sector.

The documented Indian holdings are all within areas that were under fairly secure control by the sultan. This is not particularly surprising, given that the inland tribal economy was antagonistic to the rent capitalist system⁵⁷ and that the dendritic/mercantile system was organized to minimize contact between the tribal Arab population and foreigners.⁵⁸ It is convenient to use Indians to illustrate rent capitalist ties, since it is sometimes difficult to distinguish whether Omani Arabs, especially when related to the sultan, acquired holdings through their commercial activities or because of their political and/or tribal ties. Indians, although the most important group of merchants, were certainly not the only agents of rent capitalism in coastal Oman. Many Omani Arabs were also heavily involved in commercial pursuits; indeed, the royal family was very important in commerce, and was the largest landholder. Table 2 and Figure 6 demonstrate the extent of the holdings throughout Oman that can be documented as belonging to landlords resident in Muscat.⁵⁹

Documenting that all of these holdings were acquired as a result of bazaar activity (i.e., through diversion of trade profits to agriculture or through foreclosure on commercial loans) is much more problematic than with the Indians. Omani Arab merchants, in addition to their commercial activities, may well have been involved in tribal society, and holdings could have been acquired through other means. In cases where the landholder is of the same tribe as the inhabitants of the village in which he owns land, the land is likely to have been acquired through the normal workings of tribal society. Nevertheless, it is clear in some descriptions that many business dealings by Omani Arabs were exactly like those of Hindus and khojas just discussed.

TABLE 2 Documented landholdings by urban landlords

Landlords Resident in Muscat/Matra			
Reference (Figure 6)	Village	Owner	Source, Pages
a	Aiyint	khojas	L 1192
b	Auhi	sultan ^a	L 1424, 1839
c	Bait al-Falaj	sultan	L 255, 1424
d	Bidbid	sultan	L 1424, 1670
e	Birain	khojas, Arabs	L 17, 1424; M 523
f	Darsait	khojas	L 1034, 1192
g	Dikka	sultan	L 1193
h	Falaj	sultan	L 287, 1424
i	Falaj al-Hilam	Hindus	L 716
j	Falaj al-Sham	Arabs	L 323
k	Filij	sultan	L 322
l	Ghalla	khojas	L 322, 1034
m	Ghubra	Hindus	L 1191
n	Hail	sultan	L 714, 1424
o	Hail al-Ghaf	Al Bu Sa ^c id ^b	L 603, M 534–35
p	Hajir	Arabs	L 1128, M 536
q	Hisn Sama ³ il	sultan	L 1424, 1663
r	Kafara	Arabs	L 1668
s	Manah ^c	sultan	L 1157–58, 1424
t	Mansur	Al Bu Sa ^c id	L 550
u	Nakhl	sultan	L 1359–60, 1424
v	Nizwa ^c	sultan	L 1365–66, 1424
w	Quryat	sultan	L 1424, 1566–68
x	Rauda	Al Bu Sa ^c id	L 1194
y	Ruwi	sultan	L 1424, 1618
z	Sidab	Hindus, sultan	L 1194, 1424
+	Wataiyya	sultan	L 17, 1424

^aSultan refers to the sultan of Muscat.

^bAl Bu Sa^cid refers to the sultan's family on the coast (not to other branches of the Al Bu Sa^cid in the interior).

^cConsiderable populations of Al Bu Sa^cid live at these two interior towns, and the sultan's holdings in them are undoubtedly ancestral. No Al Bu Sa^cid live in any other place in the table, except at Hail al-Ghaf, where they clearly purchased the land in recent times and settled.

Sources:

L = J. G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II: *Geographical and Statistical* (Calcutta, 1908).

M = S. B. Miles, "Journal of an Excursion in Oman, in Southeast Arabia," *Geographical Journal* 7,5 (1896), 522–37, map.

Omani Arabs invested in founding new villages; at Hail al-Ghaf, inland of Quryat, a *wali* of Muscat purchased land from tribesmen and financed the new village. The village eventually became an exporter of fruits and vegetables to Muscat and other markets.⁶⁰ Similarly, the village of al-Hajar, in the Muscat district, was founded by an Arab landlord who purchased a spring from tribesmen and financed construction of a falaj. Miles visited the village a few years

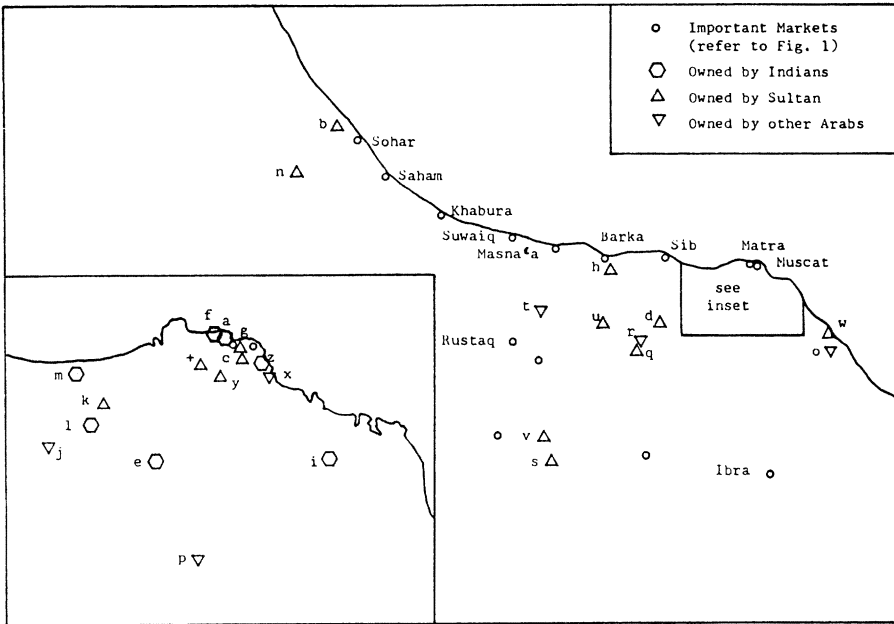


FIGURE 6. Absentee holdings by Muscat landlords.

after its founding and found that it had become “fairly profitable to its enterprising founder.”⁶¹ Regardless of who the owners were, though, Muscat had extensive rent capitalist ties to the hinterland, and throughout areas tied to the coastal system property was owned by landlords resident in Muscat.

INTERIOR ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

The interior maintained only tenuous economic contact with the dendritic rent capitalistic system of the coast. It was not organized into a coherent economic system in its own right; in fact it was not a single system at all but a series of small, mostly local markets. Nor was marketing in the interior the affair of large prosperous merchants based on the coast. The markets of interior Oman are an example of an “extended network system” in Smith’s terminology.⁶² Such systems are characteristic of “independent ‘tribal’ societies”⁶³ that are corporate and egalitarian in nature.⁶⁴ In them “no broader economic system is formed by the links of the network because no nodes become differentiated or hierarchically dominant, and therefore no higher level integration is attained.”⁶⁵

There is hardly a need to demonstrate the tribal nature of Omani society outside the cosmopolitan towns of the coast; it has been amply discussed many times.⁶⁶ A few characteristics are simply reviewed here to show that Smith’s model generally holds. “Tribal organization is loose and haphazard. Some of the tribes are scattered territorially and have no local center; while others, though their domains are compact, are broken up into sections headed by chiefs who

acknowledge no common authority.”⁶⁷ Lorimer goes on to describe the political division of the country into the two confederations, Hinawi and Ghafiri.⁶⁸ The influence of this division on Omani history has been examined often.⁶⁹

Land tenure patterns and market structures, however, are the key points in contrasting the economic organization of the interior with that of the coastal system. Islamic inheritance laws and [◌]Ibadi principles were and still remain in force, so that land and water tenure in the interior is highly egalitarian, in theory at least. To be sure, in practice, land and water ownership was sometimes highly skewed toward a few wealthy families or individuals.⁷⁰ These families, however, were rarely absentee merchant landlords, or even local merchants, but rather local families engaged in agriculture.⁷¹ This ideological base worked against any capitalist or feudal form of tenure and encouraged small holdings.⁷² Capitalist tenure was introduced from time to time throughout Omani history, but during any kind of upheaval tribesmen destroyed the manifestations of the system. Privately owned mills or factories, as well as land and water rights, reverted to small holders whenever domination by the coastal system could be weakened or rejected. And de facto, if not always de jure, independence of the interior was the rule in Omani history.⁷³

Wilkinson’s examination of privately held water rights in early 19th-century Izki showed that virtually all of the over 300 water shares were owned by villagers themselves. The benefits of Izki’s falaj were confined to Izki itself, and were very well-distributed among the inhabitants.⁷⁴ Miles says that in the interior “the construction of these underground watercourses is generally undertaken by the tribal communities in each town or village on a sort of joint-stock basis, each individual contributing his quota in money or in personal labour.”⁷⁵ These observations were still accurate in more recent years.⁷⁶

Market structure was also very different from the coast. The smaller markets in the interior system were primarily places where bedouins could sell animals and animal products and buy provisions produced locally, while even the larger ones were still local in nature. Buraymi, on the borders of Oman and the modern United Arab Emirates, was one of the small markets. “Baraimi boasts no bazaar properly so called; local trade is done almost entirely by barter at an open air market . . .”;⁷⁷ and “there being no banians or other regular traders, there is no general bazaar at Bereymi, but every afternoon a market is held where the Bedouins assemble with their produce and animals for sale or barter with those who can supply their wants.”⁷⁸ Dank, in the Dahirah, was another of these open-air markets with no shops;⁷⁹ Adam in Oman proper is “a convenient market for the Bedouin to resort to for provisions and other necessities”;⁸⁰ and the description of Bilad bani bu Hasan shows that it was similar.⁸¹

The larger markets of the interior did have wider functions; most were local centers of industry. The [◌]Ibri market “contained shops and booths of every description, and presented a very lively appearance, all the artisans being evidently in full employment, the town comprising considerable indigenous industries and productions.”⁸² Manufacture of indigo dye and dying were specialties of [◌]Ibri.⁸³ Bahla specialized in the manufacture of cotton and goats hair garments⁸⁴ and Nizwa in copperware.⁸⁵ The major industry at Ibra was weaving

cotton and silk, which was imported from India.⁸⁶ Even these larger markets, however, were not part of any wider network that involved them intimately with the big merchants of the coastal system. Barth notes that Bahla did not even have many full-time merchants until recent years; instead, most shopkeepers were farmers who traded as a part-time supplement to their agricultural activities.⁸⁷ Each town was its own small urban "system" without being integrated into a wider network. Scholz' more recent work describes a kind of city-state organization in the interior, in which the main settlement with its market and its hinterland were essentially self contained.⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

Traditional Omani duality, then, translated into a number of striking differences. Behind the two distinct spatial structures of coast and interior (discussed earlier) were two very different types of economic organization. The economic form of the dendritic spatial system of the coast was rent capitalism. Rent capitalist theory accounts for the phenomenon of urban dominance evident in Muscat's and Matra's relations with the rest of coastal Oman.⁸⁹ This dominance included landholdings and water rights in rural areas by absentee landlords. The Omani evidence, however, shows that the function of Muscat and Matra was not merely parasitic; the cities did not simply drain rural resources to urban areas. Wirth's point that rent capitalism also implies urban investment in rural areas⁹⁰ is amply demonstrated, and this was true even when coastal Oman was in the late stage of rent capitalism and local industry was largely eliminated by foreign competition.

Many of the absentee landlords were foreign merchants, and these foreign merchants controlled most trade in the coastal system. Such domination of marketing channels by foreigners has been noted in many countries,⁹¹ and, in fact, it is likely to prevail in any dendritic system based on long-distance trade.⁹² The substantial role of Hindu and khoja Indians in the coastal system certainly fits what one would expect to see in a rent capitalist, dendritic economic structure. Foreign merchants dominated marketing, and through their marketing activities, they acquired the means to play major roles in urban investment in rural areas.⁹³

This system did not extend to the interior of the country where trade links were very weak with the coastal system. Interior markets were not part of wider networks, but functioned largely as local commercial centers for the local exchange of goods across various ecological and political boundaries. The large merchants of the coast were not active in the interior system, and the scale of transactions in market centers was relatively small. Such marketing patterns apparently were not conducive to the accumulation of capital for investment activity. At any rate, the social structure of the interior was unfavorable to the rent capitalist forms of the coast. Holdings were often small and fairly evenly distributed; even when this ideal was violated, the benefits of production remained in the local area rather than flowing to absentee landlords in dominant urban areas. Large agricultural projects were financed by pooling many small

capital and labor investments from rural inhabitants rather than by an influx of large amounts of capital by individual urban investors.

These differing structures are, of course, only one aspect of the total background to Oman's long-lasting duality. Research on some of the other aspects has begun; much more is needed. The traditional economic structure is the foundation upon which current development efforts must take place. Understanding this structure well can only aid in a better understanding of the development process, both in Oman and in other countries that may have similar structures. Oman has seen much change in the past several decades. The coast has dominated the whole country politically since 1959, when British forces helped the sultan defeat the revived imamate. The great influx of oil money since exports began has greatly increased the capital available to the urban elite, and the new development policies instituted in 1970 have enhanced opportunities to invest that capital in domestic projects.

It is apparent that the rent capitalist system of the coast is now being extended into the interior of the country. For example, most large modern farms, if not established by the government, are held by absentee landlords. Many such investments are in the interior.⁹⁴ It remains to be seen whether the interior system will be overwhelmed and whether coastal Oman can overcome the traditional duality. Much evidence suggests that the coastal system will eventually prevail. At any rate, analysis of current economic trends in Oman can only be enhanced by a better understanding of the traditional forms of economic organization in the country.

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, FAIRBANKS

NOTES

Author's note: Thanks are due to Michael E. Bonine, University of Arizona; Peter von Sivers, University of Utah; and three anonymous readers for some very valuable criticisms to earlier drafts of this paper.

¹The original German: "der traditionelle Gegensatz zwischen dem an der Küste residierenden Sultan und den binnenwärts orientierten Stämmen." Fred Scholz, "Ziele und Ergebnisse der wirtschaftlichen und wirtschaftsräumlichen Entwicklung in den kleinen arabischen Erdölförderländern—Oman als Beispiel," *Die Erde*, 109,3–4 (1978), 505. Translation is by the author.

²The coastal villages are largely tribal and Arab, of course, although some authors note considerable heterogeneity even beyond the Batina urban areas: Hartmut Asche, *Mobile Lebensformgruppen Südost-Arabiens im Wandel: Die Küstenprovinz Al Batinah im erdölfördernden Sultanate Oman*, Abhandlungen des Geographischen Instituts, Anthropogeographie, Bd. 32 (Berlin, 1981), section 2.2.2.

³For example, Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), Relations Department, Research Division, *Oman and the Southern Shore of the Persian Gulf* (Cairo, 1952); and Wendell Phillips, *Oman: A History* (London, 1967).

⁴For example, University of Durham, *Research and Development Surveys in Northern Oman, Final Report*, Vol. V: *Fishing and Fish Marketing*; and Vol. VI: *Marketing* (Durham, England, 1978); J. C. Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia: A Study of the Aflaj of Oman* (London, 1977); "Changes in the Structure of Village Life in Oman," in Tim Niblock, ed.,

Social and Economic Development in the Arab Gulf (London, 1980), pp. 122–34; Fred Scholz, “Entwicklungstendenzen im Beduinentum der kleinen Staaten am Persischen/Arabischen Golf—Oman als Beispiel,” *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft*, 118,1 (1976), 70–108; “Sultanat Oman: Ein Entwicklungsland im Südosten der Arabischen Halbinsel,” *Die Erde*, 108,1–2 (1977), 23–74; “Die beduinischen Stämme im östlichen Inner-Oman und ihr Regional-Mobilitäts-Verhalten,” *Sociologus*, 27,2 (1977), 97–133; “Falaj-Oasen in Sharqiya, Inner-Oman,” *Die Erde*, 115,4 (1984), 273–94; *Sultanate of Oman, Part I: A Geographical Introduction to the Country of Oman, Its Natural Resources, Its People, Its Settlements, Its Economy, and Its Modern Development* (Stuttgart, 1980); Scholz, “Ziele und Ergebnisse der wirtschaftlichen und wirtschaftsräumlichen Entwicklung in den kleinen arabischen Erdölförderländern—Oman als Beispiel.” See also the panel of papers “Economic and Social Development of Oman,” in *BRISMES Proceedings of the 1986 International Conference on Middle Eastern Studies* (BRISMES–MESA–SOAS), University of London (SOAS), London, July 1986 (Oxford, 1986), pp. 333–74.

⁵J. G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. I: *Historical* (Calcutta, 1915), and Vol. II: *Geographical and Statistical* (Calcutta, 1908).

⁶Of course, the sources exhibit various degrees of reliability, sometimes even within the same report. They occasionally contradict one another, though more often on minor details than on major issues. Care must be taken to assure consistency among them.

⁷This brief discussion of spatial structure is summarized from: Mark Speece, “Duality of Market Structures in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Oman,” *Erdkunde*, 41,3 (1987), 196–210.

⁸James E. Vance, *The Merchant's World: the Geography of Wholesaling* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), developed the spatial concepts for what he called the mercantile system. Carol A. Smith's extensive works on synthesizing geographic and anthropological approaches to marketing structures show that Vance's mercantile system is actually one form of the dendritic system; see “Economics of Marketing Systems: Models from Economic Geography,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 3 (1974), 169–201; “Examining Stratification Systems through Peasant Marketing Arrangements: an Application of some Models from Economic Geography,” *Man* (NS), 10 (1975), 95–122; “Exchange Systems and the Spatial Distribution of Elites: the Organization of Stratification in Agrarian Societies,” in Carol A. Smith, ed., *Regional Analysis*, Vol. II: *Social Systems* (New York, 1976), pp. 309–74; “Regional Economic Systems: Linking Geographical Models and Socioeconomic Problems,” in Carol A. Smith, ed., *Regional Analysis*, Vol. I: *Economic Systems* (New York, 1976), pp. 3–63.

⁹One must distinguish in this discussion between interior as a geographic term for inland areas away from the coast, and interior as a term signifying economic system. Some inland areas on the seaward side of the mountains were linked to the coastal economic system, as Figures 2 and 3 clearly show. On the inland side of the mountains, however, no area was closely tied to the coastal system. This inland side is the core of the interior in the economic sense. Although this work stresses the contrasts between the two systems, it is probably most accurate to view the two as opposite ends of a continuum, with the boundary fluctuating as one end or the other increased in relative economic or political strength.

¹⁰Key authors who developed the theory of rent capitalism and examined it in the context of the Middle East include: Hans Bobek, “Über einige funktionelle Stadttypen und ihre Beziehungen zum Lande,” in *Comptes rendus du Congrès international de géographie, Amsterdam*, Vol. II, Section 3a: *Géographie humaine* (1938), pp. 88–102; idem, “Die Hauptstufen der Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsentfaltung in geographischer Sicht,” *Die Erde*, 90,3 (1959), 259–98; idem, “Zum Konzept des Rentenkapitalismus,” *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale Geografie*, 65,2 (1974), 73–78; idem, “Rentenkapitalismus und Entwicklung in Iran,” in G. Schweizer, ed., *Interdisziplinäre Iran-Forschung: Beiträge aus Kulturgeographie, Ethnologie, Soziologie und Neuerer Geschichte*, Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Beiheft Reihe B: Geisteswissenschaften, Nr. 40 (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 113–24; Eckart Ehlers, “Die Stadt Bam und ihr Oasen-Umland/Zentraliran: Ein Beitrag zu Theorie und Praxis der Beziehungen ländlicher Räume zu ihren kleinstädtischen Zentren im Orient,” *Erdkunde*, 29,1 (1975), 38–52; idem, “Dezful and its Hinterland: Observations on the Relationships of Lesser Iranian Cities and Towns to Their Hinterland,” *Journal of the Association of Iranian Geographers*, 1,1 (1976), 20–30; idem, “Rentenkapitalismus, Industrialismus und Stadtentwicklung in Iran,” in G. Schweizer, ed., *Interdisziplinäre Iran-Forschung: Beiträge aus Kulturgeographie, Ethnologie, Soziologie und Neuerer Geschichte*, Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Beiheft Reihe B: Geisteswissenschaften, Nr.

40 (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 125–29; Eugen Wirth, “Die Beziehungen der orientalisches-islamischen Stadt zum umgebenden Lande: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie des Rentenkapitalismus,” in E. Meynen, ed., “Geographie heute, Einheit und Vielfalt: Ernst Plewe zu seinem 65. Geburtstag,” *Geographische Zeitschrift*, Beiheft Nr. 33 (1973), 323–33.

¹¹For example, Bobek, “Die Hauptstufen der Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsentfaltung in geographischer Sicht.”

¹²*Ibid.*, 274–79. Bobek sees these systems as ones in which agrarian production is organized and controlled by the rulers. However, there is no universally accepted definition of feudalism. Most discussions of the system note that the economy was agriculturally based and characterized by land tenure derived from a political source—i.e., allegiance to an overlord by the landholder. Land was actually worked by the tenants, who were sometimes bound to the land, but who had no ownership rights. The tenants, often called serfs in European feudalism, were (usually legally) obligated to the landlord, who could claim production output as well as other service such as labor for nonagricultural projects. An authoritative older discussion of various feudal systems throughout the world may be found in Rushton Coulborn, ed., *Feudalism in History* (Hamden, Conn., 1965). A fairly recent review and criticism of theories of feudalism appears in John E. Martin, *Feudalism to Capitalism: Peasant and Landlord in English Agrarian Development* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1983).

¹³Ehlers, “Die Stadt Bam und ihr Oasen-Umland/Zentraliran.”

¹⁴Fred Scholz, “Informelle Institutionen versus Entwicklung,” *Die Erde*, 117.3–4 (1986), 285–97, shows in an example from modern Oman that this kind of indebtedness can also lead to futures contracts, in which the farmer is obligated to sell his next crop to the merchant.

¹⁵Wirth, “Die Beziehungen der orientalisches-islamischen Stadt zum umgebenden Lande.”

¹⁶Scholz, “Informelle Institutionen versus Entwicklung,” shows this rent capitalist cottage industry for Pakistan; Ehlers, “Rentenkapitalismus, Industrialismus und Stadtentwicklung in Iran,” shows it for Iran.

¹⁷For example, Robert G. Landen, *Oman since 1856: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society* (Princeton, N.J., 1967); Scholz, “Entwicklungstendenzen im Beduinentum der kleinen Staaten am Persischen/Arabischen Golf—Oman als Beispiel,” and “Sultanat Oman: Ein Entwicklungsland im Südosten der Arabischen Halbinsel.”

¹⁸Briton C. Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894–1914* (Berkeley, 1967), p. 21; see also Landen, *Oman since 1856: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society*.

¹⁹In distinguishing this as a period in Omani economic history, we follow Calvin H. Allen, Jr., “Sayyids, Shets and Sultans: Politics and Trade in Masqat under the Al Bu Sa‘id, 1785–1914” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1978). He notes that Muscat’s economic decline started with the new African policy begun in 1829.

²⁰One of the anonymous readers of an earlier draft of this paper quite correctly pointed out that a few of the sources upon which this discussion of economic organization is based are limited to the 1830s and 1840s. Precisely because there were no dramatic changes in organization during the period 1830–1930, however, these early sources contribute considerably to the knowledge of conditions later in the period. Of course, in order to be used, they must be consistent with the sources which come from later in the century, but they generally are. When they differ, it is largely on matters of detail, rather than in what they show of basic economic organization. Furthermore, careful reading of several sources from various times can usually pinpoint the cause for the discrepancy in detail. This argument for utilizing sources from the wider period is developed somewhat more thoroughly, and a few examples are presented concerning differences in detail about the location of markets, in Mark Speece, “Sultan and Imam: an Analysis of Economic Dualism in Oman” (M.A. thesis, University of Arizona, 1981).

²¹Landen, *Oman since 1856: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society*, pp. 144–46.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 145.

²³*Ibid.* In addition to the manufacture of textiles, relatively important handicrafts included various metal work industries and pottery, as well as dyeing of textiles. Many of these more specialized activities, however, were not cottage industries. Rather, manufacturing was based in the bazaars. The next section contains references to such bazaar manufactures for some towns in Oman.

²⁴Government of India, Foreign Department, *Report of the Administration of the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Muscat Political Agency for the Year 1876–77* (Calcutta, 1877).

²⁵Government of India, Foreign Department, *Administration Report on the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Maskat Political Agency for 1900–1901* (Calcutta, 1901), p. 85.

²⁶Landen, *Oman since 1856: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society*, pp. 133–34; see also Calvin H. Allen, “The Indian Merchant Community of Masqat,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 44,1 (1981), 39–53; idem, *Sayyids, Shets and Sultans*.

²⁷Smith, “Examining Stratification Systems through Peasant Marketing Arrangements,” 100.

²⁸A. S. G. Jayakar, “Medical Topography of Muscat,” in Government of India, Foreign Department, *Report of the Administration of the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Muscat Political Agency for the Year 1876–77* (Calcutta, 1877), pp. 102–3; Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 1185; G. J. Eccles, “The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman,” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 14 (1927), 19–42.

²⁹Jayakar, “Medical Topography of Muscat,” pp. 101–2.

³⁰Eccles, “The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman,” 21.

³¹Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 1185.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 1185.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 1185; compare J. Theodore Bent, “Exploration of the Frankincense Country, Southern Arabia,” *Geographical Journal*, 6,2 (1895), 109–34; J. R. Wellsted, *Travels in Arabia*, Vol. I (1838; reprint ed. Graz, 1987), p. 17.

³⁴Percy Cox, “Some Excursions in Oman,” *Geographical Journal*, 66,3 (1925), 193–227; map.

³⁵Wellsted, *Travels in Arabia*, Vol. I, p. 21; Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 1185.

³⁶Wellsted, *Travels in Arabia*, Vol. I, p. 24; Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 1185.

³⁷Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 1185.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹W. S. W. Ruschenberger, *A Voyage Round the World; Including an Embassy to Muscat and Siam in 1835, 1836 and 1837* (Philadelphia, 1838), p. 75.

⁴⁰Wellsted, *Travels in Arabia*, Vol. I, p. 21.

⁴¹*Ibid.*; Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 1185.

⁴²Eugen Wirth, “Zum Problem des Bazars (suq, carsi): Versuch einer Begriffsbestimmung und Theorie des traditionellen Wirtschaftszentrums der orientalisches-islamischen Stadt,” *Der Islam*, 51,2 (1974), 203–60; 52,1 (1975), 6–46.

⁴³S. B. Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf* (London, 1966), p. 468; see also W. M. Peggelley, “Remarks on a Portion of the Eastern Coast of Arabia between Muscat and Sohar,” *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, 16 (1861), 30–39.

⁴⁴J. Theodore Bent, “Muscat,” *Contemporary Review*, 68 (1895), 871–82. Of course, the share of trade that dhows still controlled was not very large. Allen, *Sayyids, Shets and Sultans*, Ch. 5, though, shows that the Indians were very effective at utilizing steamship transport, even though they did not actually own steamships. It should also be noted that extensive dhow ownership after dhows ceased to carry much trade may show involvement in the fishing industry.

⁴⁵Ruschenberger, *A Voyage Round the World*, p. 83.

⁴⁶Allen, “The Indian Merchant Community of Masqat,” p. 47.

⁴⁷Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 1425, gives figures for British protected Hindus and Muslims (he says that most protected Muslims were khojas) in Oman. In Muscat, there were 253 Hindus and 122 Muslims under British protection. In Matra, the figures were 37 and 665, respectively. The Muscat Hindus made up 66 percent of all British protected Hindus, while the Matra Muslims made up 67 percent of all protected Muslims. Of course, not all Hindus or khojas were under British protection, but the figures are nevertheless revealing.

⁴⁸Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, pp. 1197–1200; Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf*, p. 461. The ethnic division of function is discussed in Speece, “Duality of Market Structures in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Oman.”

⁴⁹Peggelley, “Remarks on a Portion of the Eastern Coast of Arabia between Muscat and Sohar,” p. 33.

⁵⁰Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf*, p. 456.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 457.

⁵²Allen, *Sayyids, Shets and Sultans*, p. 115; idem, "The Indian Merchant Community of Masqat," p. 47, briefly discusses urban holdings of one prominent Hindu merchant family.

⁵³Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 1185.

⁵⁴References documenting these ownerships are summarized in Table 2. A few of the places, notably Aiyint and Darsait, as well as several of the villages discussed under the sultan's holdings, are really suburbs of Muscat and Matra in the 1980s. At the turn of the century, however, when Muscat and Matra were much more compact, these villages were distinct from the two cities. Compare earlier maps of Muscat, e.g., Arthur W. Stiffe, "Ancient Trading Centers of the Persian Gulf, IV: Maskat," *Geographical Journal*, 10,6 (1897), 608–18 (map p. 660) with ones from the last decade, e.g., Scholz, *Sultanate of Oman, Part I: A Geographical Introduction*.

⁵⁵Allen, "The Indian Merchant Community of Masqat," p. 47.

⁵⁶S. B. Miles, "Journal of an Excursion in Oman, in Southeast Arabia," *Geographical Journal*, 7,5 (1896), 522–37, map. Birain is discussed on p. 523.

⁵⁷Historically, rent capitalism penetrated the interior during periods of unity, and retreated when the two parts functioned separately: "... only when Oman was unified did this level of economic interchange [between coast and interior] tend to rise; but ... the intrusion of wealth into the interior in the form of capital investment automatically triggered off reaction in the tribal system, so that the new linkages between coast and interior were destroyed," Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia*, pp. 143–44.

⁵⁸Speece, "Duality of Market Structures in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Oman."

⁵⁹Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, pp. 17, 322–23, 550, 603, 714, 716, 1034, 1191–94, 1372, 1424, 1663, 1836–37; Miles, "Journal of an Excursion in Oman, in Southeast Arabia," 523, 534, 536; Bertram Thomas, *Alarms and Excursions in Arabia* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1931) p. 127.

⁶⁰Miles, "Journal of an Excursion in Oman, in Southeast Arabia," 534; Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 603.

⁶¹Miles, "Journal of an Excursion in Oman, in Southeast Arabia," 536.

⁶²Smith, "Exchange Systems and the Spatial Distribution of Elites," pp. 314–23; idem, "Regional Economic Systems: Linking Geographical Models and Socioeconomic Problems," pp. 39–43.

⁶³Smith, "Exchange Systems and the Spatial Distribution of Elites," p. 317.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 368.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 317.

⁶⁶See, for example, Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia*, Ch. 10, and passim. For the political expression of tribal structures, Dale F. Eickelman, "From Theocracy to Monarchy: Authority and Legitimacy in Inner Oman, 1935–1957," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 17,1 (1985), 3–24.

⁶⁷Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 1390.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 1389, 1391–1410; see also E. C. Ross, "Memorandum on the Tribal Division in the Principality of 'Oman," *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, 19,3 (1873), 187–98. An anthropological interpretation of this dual confederation organization is briefly discussed in Dale F. Eickelman, "Religious Tradition, Economic Domination and Political Legitimacy: Morocco and Oman," *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 29,1 (1980), 17–30.

⁶⁹For example, in J. B. Kelley, "A Prevalence of Furies: Tribes, Politics, and Religion in Oman and Trucial Oman," in D. Hopwood, ed., *The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics* (Totowa, N.J., 1972), pp. 107–41. The tribal organization also influenced spatial economic organization, see Speece, "Duality of Market Structures in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Oman."

⁷⁰Eickelman, "From Theocracy to Monarchy"; Fredrik Barth, "Factors of Production, Economic Circulation, and Inequality in Inner Arabia," *Research in Economic Anthropology*, 1 (1987), 53–72, show this for some villages in modern interior Oman.

⁷¹Barth, "Factors of Production," makes this point; see discussion later.

⁷²Wilkinson discusses land tenure systems extensively, and is one of those showing fairly egalitarian practice; see, for example, Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia*, p. 212.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 211. For an interpretation of Omani history as a struggle between the coastal and interior economic systems see Speece, "Sultan and Imam: an Analysis of Economic Dualism in Oman," Ch. 6.

- ⁷⁴Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia*, pp. 214–15.
- ⁷⁵S. B. Miles, "Across the Green Mountains in Oman," *Geographical Journal*, 18,5 (1901), 488.
- ⁷⁶Ian Skeet, *Muscat and Oman: the End of an Era* (London, 1974), p. 119.
- ⁷⁷Cox, "Some Excursions in Oman," 207.
- ⁷⁸S. B. Miles, "On the Route between Sohar and el-Bereymi in Oman, with a Note on the Zatt, or Gipsies in Arabia," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 46,1 (1877), 54.
- ⁷⁹Cox, "Some Excursions in Oman," 209.
- ⁸⁰Miles, "On the Border of the Great Desert: a Journey in Oman," *Geographical Journal*, 36, 2 & 4 (1910), 2:168.
- ⁸¹C. G. Ward, C. J. Sylvester, and James. "Account of a Journey from Soor to Jahlan, and thence to Ras Roves," *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, 8 (1847–1848), 101–6.
- ⁸²Miles, "On the Border of the Great Desert: a Journey in Oman," 414.
- ⁸³Cox, "Some Excursions in Oman," 211; Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 758.
- ⁸⁴Miles, "On the Border of the Great Desert: a Journey in Oman," 173; Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 209.
- ⁸⁵Miles, "On the Border of the Great Desert: a Journey in Oman," 177; C. S. D. Cole, "An Account of an Overland Journey from Leskkaire to Maskat and the Green Mountains of Oman," *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, 8 (1847–1848), 106–19; Wellsted, *Travels in Arabia*, Vol. I, p. 177.
- ⁸⁶Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Vol. II, p. 757.
- ⁸⁷Barth, "Factors of Production."
- ⁸⁸Scholz, "Entwicklungstendenzen im Beduinentum der kleinen Staaten am Persischen/ Arabischen Golf," 84.
- ⁸⁹In fact, it is likely that rent capitalism is the economic form of primate city systems; see Michael E. Bonine, "City and Hinterland in Central Iran," in G. Schweizer, ed., *Interdisziplinäre Iran-Forschung: Beiträge aus Kulturgeographie, Ethnologie, Soziologie und Neuerer Geschichte*, Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orient, Beiheft Reihe B: Geisteswissenschaften, Nr. 40 (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 141–54; Michael E. Bonine, *Yazd and its Hinterland: a Central Place System of Dominance in the Central Iranian Plateau*, Marburger Geographische Schriften, Heft 83 (Marburg, 1980). The dendritic system in Oman is one type of primate city system; see Speece, "Sultan and Imam: An Analysis of Economic Dualism in Oman."
- ⁹⁰Wirth, "Die Beziehungen der orientalisches-islamischen Stadt zum umgebenden Lande."
- ⁹¹Extensive references to such domination of marketing channels by foreigners may be found in Douglass G. Norvell and Robert Morey, "Ethnodomination in the Channels of Distribution of Third World Nations," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 11,3 (1983), 204–15; Mark Speece, "Ethno Domination of Retail Channels," in Allan Findlay, John Dawson, & Ronan Paddison, eds., *Retail Environments in Developing Countries* (London, in press).
- ⁹²Speece, "Sultan and Imam: an Analysis of Economic Dualism in Oman," shows that ethnodomination is likely to prevail in any dendritic system based on long-distance foreign trade.
- ⁹³The two places on Figure 6 where absentee landlord holdings appear in the interior are holdings of the sultan's family. They seem to be residual holdings from previous generations. The Al Bu Sa'id family had originally resided in the interior. The first Al Bu Sa'id sultan had been appointed governor of Sohar by the imam at a time when the interior had achieved temporary political domination over the coast. From that power base, the family eventually was able to assume the sultanate. Discussion and references on Omani history from the perspective of the economic structures analyzed here may be found in Speece, "Sultan and Imam: an Analysis of Economic Dualism in Oman."
- ⁹⁴Several specific cases of this absentee investment in interior farms, as well as general observations on the development process, are discussed in A. N. el-Rikaishy, *Agricultural Study*, Vol. I (Muscat, 1980). Private investment in agricultural projects, both by Omanis and by multinational corporations, is also discussed in J. Stace Birks and Sally E. Letts, "Ba'd mushkilat at-tanmiyya al-zira'iyya fi sultana 'uman," *Journal of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies*, 5,18 (1979), 157–69.