the US Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, colloquially known in the US as "food stamps") in hopes of cutting public spending. This has exposed more families to poverty, but such are the relentless demands of neoliberal economics. The upshot is that although bread will remain the staple for most Jordanians' diet, it will symbolize new meanings and obligations. To make sense of this uncertain future, observers of Jordan should consider how politics and food became wedded to one another in the first place. *States of Subsistence* is a magnificent place to start.

doi:10.1017/S0020743823001186

Inventing the Middle East: Britain and the Persian Gulf in the Age of Global Imperialism

Guillemette Crouzet (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022). Pp. 304. $39.95 paper, $130.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780228014065

Reviewed by Daniel Foliard, Paris Cité University, Paris, France (daniel.foliard@gmail.com)

Guillemette Crouzet's *Inventing the Middle East* returns the Persian Gulf to its rightful place at the center of a wide array of clashing expansionisms in the long 19th century. Building upon the "oceanic turn" as well as the work of Christopher Bayly and James Onley, Crouzet provides an "aquatic and amphibious history" of the region, primarily through the prism of British records (pp. 19, 21). One of the illustrations examined by the author, a photograph titled *Landing at Koweit*, encapsulates a key part of her argument. It was taken as part of the coverage of G. Curzon's 1903 tour of the Gulf. The image depicts three local people carrying British officers on their backs to prevent them from getting wet as they disembark from a small boat. The full-dress uniforms and pointed helmets of the British stand out, and one of the officers, carried by a single man, seems to chuckle at the realization that he might have been on the verge of falling into the shallow sea right in front of Mubarak al-Sabah, the amir of British-protected Kuwait. A sense of awkwardness ensues in this shoreside scene, which unfolds at the very point of contact between British maritime power and local mastery of the land. The unstable British edifice seems on the verge of collapsing and subject to ridicule during this ill-improvised landing, despite a wealth of imperially amphibious performativity. In more ways than one, this image is a synecdoche of British encroachments in the region and of their inherent fragility and internal contradictions, ideas that take center stage in Crouzet's monograph.

The argument advanced by the author is a compelling one, insofar as it highlights the inherent tensions and flaws that characterized British India's policy toward the Gulf. The first two chapters of *Inventing the Middle East* emphasize the lack of a coherent imperial project in the first half of the 19th century. Unsuccessful attempts to stave off Qasimi "piracy," a European label once heatedly debated in the historiography, seen by both presidencies in India as a considerable hindrance to trade and stability, illustrate the inconsistencies of British influence. In striking accounts of the 1809 and 1819 attacks on Ras al-Khaimah, Crouzet shows how spectacular military campaigns were a critical instrument in the imperial toolbox and how violence was often a substitute for a coordinated approach to British influence in the region. Shock and awe tactics did little to ensure the kind of stability and openness to trade that policymakers in Bombay, Calcutta, and London desired in the late

18th and early 19th centuries. Reading these chapters, one wonders how this aggressive interventionism might be connected to the broader and enduring uses of spectacular military expeditions in the area and its immediate environment. Here, the 1868 Abyssinian expedition, or the 1896 bombing of Zanzibar, come to mind. The first sections of Crouzet's book are very much about British imperial fragilities, as an intricate web of perceived challenges to British India's indirect rule over one of its amphibious border areas favored an increasingly aggressive, yet inconsistent, policy toward unruly local power players. Crouzet carefully examines the trial-and-error process that eventually led to the establishment of the Trucial system in the 1820s. In a context in which British agents on the ground waited weeks for clear orders from the decision-making centers in India that they sometimes willfully ignored, haphazard decision-making seems to have characterized much of the imperial project in the area for decades. Further illustrations of how chaos and approximation often typified British interactions with the Gulf are provided by the author in Chapter 6, with the appearance of troublesome Frenchman Antonin Goguyer, arms trafficker and adventurer extraordinaire, on the stage in the 1900s.

Another contribution of *Inventing the Middle East* lies in its thorough examination of how British cultural and legal constructions of the Gulf framed this territory as a distinct, projected space. Chapter 3 moves away from diplomacy to focus on the geographical construction of the region by British hydrographers and topographers. Crouzet provides a detailed analysis of British surveys in the Gulf and the ensuing cartographic constructions of the area. Taking maps of Hormuz as a case in point, she explores the politics of place naming and the unstable nature of collected knowledge. In a convincing argument, she tackles the discrepancies between the British Empire on paper and less easily controlled realities on the ground. Chapter 5 offers another take on understanding the underlying motifs of British imaginations by centering on archaeology and its complex relationships with what the Middle East's past was in connection to what its future should be, that is, a critical component of the route to India. Painted as a place of glories gone that might be revived under the right influence, namely the Raj's supposed expertise in making the barren fertile again, no area within the British sphere ever excited such a combination of reminiscences of antiquity and futuristic utopias.

Another significant contribution of the book lies in its application of globalization to the Gulf. Crouzet provides a thorough analysis of the flows of weapons, pearls, and palm dates that originated, or ended, in the region. The author convincingly demonstrates that this area became enmeshed in wider trading patterns well before oil and gas placed it at the center of the world's energy system. The analysis of how British imperial rule pragmatically accommodated its professed antislavery principles to avoid impeding the commodification of local luxury goods is particularly fascinating. Even if analogies with the past are often deeply ahistorical, the educated reader might be lured into seeing long-term reflections of similar compromises in how the combination of underpaid labor and global sports events was recently dealt with by liberal democracies. The notion of globalization, itself, could have been questioned further. Its analytical value in this case notwithstanding, many preexisting trade routes and commercial networks survived the increasing integration of the Gulf's economies into global markets at the turn of the 20th century. As noted in the book's introduction, the Gulf cannot be understood in isolation from the wider Indian Ocean world, a site of transoceanic interconnections that predated intensifying British encroachments. Moreover, 19th-century imperialisms and their trading ambitions effectively enclosed and disjointed areas that had long been characterized by intense circulations as much as they supposedly opened entire regions to trade with Europe and America. If the Gulf was central to British constructions of the "Middle East," one of the monograph's main arguments, it also was because the Gulf's inhabitants entertained a complex set of interconnections that extended from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean long before British India sought to expand its influence there. Crouzet's book, accordingly, would have benefited from a closer engagement with the concept of globalization and its teleological baggage.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743823001204 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Throughout *Inventing the Middle East*, the reader encounters the voices of people from the Gulf only through the distorted echoes of European sources. Although Egypt, the Wahhabis, the Ottoman Empire, the sultans of Oman, the shaykhs of the Arabian coast, and Qajar Persia all surface in this wide-ranging analysis, the author mainly works with British archives. She aptly demonstrates how much can still be drawn from the colonial library by successfully giving the Gulf its proper place in the historiography of the region. But one cannot help but wonder how a fully connective history of this terraqueous environment might read if it drew upon Wahhabi chronicles, Ottoman archives, Egyptian sources, Qajar documentation, potentially surviving local oral traditions, and nature itself: its scorching summer heat, its dangerous rocky outcrops at sea, its foreshore where contacts were made, and its underwater and underground wealth.

Ultimately, in *Inventing the Middle East*, Crouzet delivers a highly readable and methodologically sound account of how the British envisioned and shaped the Gulf from the 1780s to the early 20th century. The book carefully deconstructs the highly hybrid political and legal architecture that resulted from the interactions between the most powerful empire of the late 19th century and local stakeholders. On these grounds, the book will be of interest to historians and students from a wide range of specialties, from Near Eastern studies to global history.

doi:10.1017/S0020743823001204

Tunisia's Modern Woman: Nation-Building and State Feminism in the Global 1960s

Amy Aisen Kallander (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021). Pp. 280. £75.00 hardback. ISBN: 9781108845045

Reviewed by Hind Ahmed Zaki, Department of Political Science and Literatures, Cultures, and Languages, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, USA (hind.ahmed_zaki@uconn.edu)

Since the outbreak of the Arab uprisings more than a decade ago, there has been growing scholarly interest in the politics and history of modern Tunisia. The reasons are obvious. After all, Tunisia was the birthplace of the Arab spring which started with the self-immolation of a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, an event that inspired millions of Arabs across the region to rise en masse against long-standing autocratic regimes. Afterward, Tunisia remained the only country in the region where both electoral democracy and gender equality seemed to be heading in the right direction. Up until the constitutional coup of Kais Saied in July 2021, Tunisia was hailed an outlier in the region, with its state-sponsored feminism receiving particular attention as one of its most enduring, and positive pre-authoritarian historical legacies. While Tunisian state feminism has recently gained attention and been the subject of careful critique from both Tunisian feminists and academic scholars alike, there has been a noticeable lack of studies that situate postcolonial Tunisia and its historical project of state feminism within the politics of postcolonial nation-building, national liberation movements, and Cold War politics. Amy Kallander's *Tunisia's Modern Woman* fills this important gap by placing Tunisia's state-sponsored feminism and the role it historically played in the state-led postcolonial national modernization process firmly within the 1950s and 1960s global and regional contexts.