CONCLUSION
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During the late nineteenth century there was certainly a resurgence of trade at Muscat due to its trade becoming linked to the international economy through the trade in commodities like dates and guns. While Calvin Allen has argued that there was a resurgence of Muscat's economy during the late nineteenth century unlike the decline that was attributed to Oman during this same period by R. G. Landen and J. B. Kelly, a true understanding of Oman's economic condition can be gained only studying Oman's position in the world economic system. Immanuel Wallerstein in his seminal series on the modern world-system has geographically divided the world into a core, periphery and a semi-periphery. Oman belonged to the periphery of the modern world-system providing mainly primary products to a highly industrialized core encompassing Europe and America. In this highly unequal relationship of economic exchange, Oman's traditional handicrafts industries were ruined. Being in the periphery of the modern world-system, Oman could in no way protect itself from the fluctuations in the world economy or even crisis which could devastate its economy.

This is contrast to the situation when Oman was a part of the Indian Ocean world system which had no hegemonic core having an exploitative relationship with a large periphery. In such a system Oman could take measures to meet political and economic exigencies by even shifting the core of its economy from Muscat to Zanzibar or diversifying its economy like when Said bin Sultan initiated clove cultivation. The true dynamism of the modern world-system can be understood only in conjunction with its temporal dimensions like cyclical rhythms, contradictions and crisis which means that the world-system is not static but goes through periods of expansion and subsequent contraction. While there was certainly prosperity for Muscat, it soon ended with the outbreak of the First World War when the modern world-system contracted. Economies in the periphery which are dependent on the dominant core do not have the capability to regenerate themselves during such a stage.

Oman's political decline was more obvious during the late nineteenth century and happened as a result of increasing British imperialist influence. With the Al Bu Saidi dynasty distancing itself from the trade of Muscat, economic profits did not translate into political influence. The loss of
East Africa and the fact that it did not have the revenues to build a navy meant that it could no more be a maritime empire in the Indian Ocean region. While the political decline of Oman was very clear, the economic impact of its decline would only be felt in the beginning of the twentieth century. The relationship between the state and private capital in the Omani context was not exactly of the nature that existed in large empires where the taking over of trade from private merchants by large state bureaucracies led to inefficiency and lack of technological advancement which in return declined production and resulted in loss of trade. Omani Sultans were merchant princes who depended on trade had a direct interest in fostering the growth of trade. Therefore increased involvement of the rulers of Muscat in trade including personal trade cannot be seen as a period economic decline. While the Sultans of Oman from Hamad bin Said onwards till Said bin Sultan took direct measures in mercantile activities, Thuwaini bin Said and his successors mainly left the trade of Muscat in the hands of private Indian merchants during most of the nineteenth century. The only attempt to reverse this trend was in the late nineteenth century when Faisal bin Turki took over the direct management of the customs at Muscat which had been usually farmed by Indian merchants.

Because of its geographical location, the maritime trade of Oman was of an entrepôt type in which Muscat was a major trans-shipment location for trade coming to and leaving the Gulf region. Muscat began serving as a major entrepôt from the mid-eighteenth century onwards when it gained the trade that was diverted from Bandar Abbas and Basra due to political instability. Oman's economy during the nineteenth century has been described by Mark Speece as comprising of two different types, one on the coast and one in the interior. This division was in correspondence with the political/socio-cultural division in Oman between the tribal interior and the cosmopolitan sultanate on the coast. The system on the coast was one that has been described as neither feudal agrarian nor industrial capitalist in nature. It has been termed as rent capitalism and occupies the space between the two types of economic systems. This type of system does not reach the level of industrial capitalism as the accumulated capital is not reinvested to improve production. A difference from the feudal agrarian system is that in rent capitalism each of the activities and inputs involved in production like land, water, seed, animal power and labor are divided and then commercialised in the market. As most of the landowners lived in the city there was a flow of wealth from the rural areas to the city. The farmers being dependent on credit from
merchants in Muscat and Muttrah, many of the merchants become land owners because of mortgage foreclosures. The incoherent and unorganized economic system of the interior on the other hand was tribal and egalitarian in nature and land and water were jointly owned albeit by a few influential families. According to Speece the tribes in the interior were not affected by the maritime trade on the coast.

The contention that the tribal interior was unconcerned with maritime trade becomes problematic with the identification of non-state tribal networks based in Sharqiya and Sur involved in the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean. The studies on Oman have mostly focused on the Al Bu Saidi dynasty because the sources on Omani history, mainly British colonial records have paid more attention the Sultans who were British allies. This has resulted in the formation of a state-centric grand narrative where events related to the history of the Al Bu Saidi dynasty like the partitioning of the empire in 1861 and the establishment of the Imamate of Azzan bin Qays in 1868 are paid more attention. In the period from the oil boom onwards there has been a tendency to club Oman with other Gulf Co-operation Council states linking it to the politics of the Arabian Peninsula away from the ocean. But Oman was an Indian Ocean power from the middle of the seventeenth century. In fact Oman’s links with maritime trade go back to the distant past and Omanis were considered as great mariners of the ocean. It is expected that there would have been cultural and commercial networks connecting Oman and other territories of the Indian Ocean littoral separate from the Sultanate state. The area of Indian Ocean studies has identified the cosmopolitan character of Indian Ocean maritime communities. While communities like the Swahilis of East Africa and the Hadrami sayyids of Hadramaut have been studied in the context of their maritime setting there has been lesser attention on Omani maritime groups.

Oman’s strongest links across the ocean was with East Africa. Even before Said bin Sultan shifted his administrative centre to Zanzibar, there have been Omani migrations to the Swahili coast. Some these groups had become politically powerful by the time Said tried to subjugate the area. These groups included the Mazaria or Mombasa, the Banu Nabhan of Pate and the Barawina at Zanzibar. They had begun opposing the Al Bu Saidi dynasty right from the time of Ahmad bin Said. Said not only put down the opposition by these groups but also brought loyal
tribal sheikhs from Oman to create a parallel elite structure which would support him. By the
time of the mid-nineteenth century, the Bani Hirth of the Sharqiya region had created strong
trade networks with Zanzibar and they were the major traders of slaves from East Africa. The
Hirth traded through the port of Sur which was controlled by the Ghafiri tribes Bani Bu Ali and
the Jenaba. Studies on the history of the tribes of Oman are replete with references to the
"Ghafiri-Hinawi dichotomy". But the Hirth borrowed the boats of Jenaba and the Bani Bu Ali
who were termed as Suris to transport their produce to East Africa, Aden and Bombay. This
shows that there was more co-operation between the Ghafiri and Hinawi tribes in the context of
maritime trade than otherwise understood.

The increasing influence of the British in East Africa and their efforts to ban the slave trade
hurt the interests of the newer Bani Hirth immigrants who were involved in the slave trade more
than the members of the tribe who had migrated earlier as the latter had a more sedentary
lifestyle and were more involved in the clove plantation economy. But the Barawina clansmen of
the Bani Hirth who were involved in clove production needed slaves for their plantations. This
resulted in a revolt by the combined Bani Hirth led by the Barawina leaders and Salih bin Ali,
the Bani Hirth tamimah or paramount sheikh of Sharqiya against Majid who had succeeded Said
bin Sultan. But Majid crushed the revolt with British help and Salih fled to Oman. Salih
conducted a series of revolts against the Sultans of Oman for more than thirty years until his
death in 1896. He was a powerful leader in the Ibadi conservative movement in Oman and after
allying with Qays bin Ahmad collateral branch of the Al Bu Saidi toppled Salim bin Thuwaini in
1868 and established an Imamate with Azzan bin Qays as Imam. During the time of the short-
lived Imamate, Salih tried to organize an expedition to take back Zanzibar but could not succeed.
After the Imamate was overthrown, Salih continued to organise against the Sultans at Muscat. He
even tried to intervene in the politics of East Africa by trying to draw support from Sultan Faisal
bin Turki in favour of Abdul Aziz bin Said, a son of Said bin Sultan against the Germans in East
Africa in 1889.

There was also an ideological context in which the non-state networks of Oman were
operating. There was a pan-Ibadi revival movement taking place during the 1880s and 1890s.
Sultan Barghash of Zanzibar maintained close relations with the Ibadi clergy in Zanzibar and
started the first Ibadi press of the Islamic world in Zanzibar. Ibadi religious intellectuals travelled between regions where there was an Ibadi presence including the Mzab region in Algeria, Zanzibar and Oman and there was much exchange of ideas. Omani religious books and newspapers were published in Barghash's press at Zanzibar. The leaders of the non-state networks were influenced by the intellectual climate and rising tide of opinion against the increasing European colonial influence in West Asia and North Africa expressed in the intellectual debates and Ibadi publications. There was a pan-Islamic element to this ideological context as many of the Bani Hirth supporters of the networks opposing the Sultan of Muscat had converted to Sunni Islam once they migrated to East Africa. Pan-Arab sentiment was also an important factor as many of the leaflets and magazines published in the Arab intellectual centres of Cairo and Beirut dealt on the situation in Oman.

Even though East Africa was separated from Oman, the Bani Hirth continued to smuggle slaves from that region to the Gulf. The slaves were brought to Sur from where they were further transported to the northern Gulf. When Muscat became a major entrepôt of the arms trade, the Suris were involved in the clandestine trade of arms from East Africa to the Gulf. It was to protect their clandestine trade activities that the non-state networks of Oman were willing to seek French protection in the form of French flags and papers for their sailing vessels so that they would not be inspected by the British. The Suris were not merely pawns in the competition between the French and British in Omani affairs during the 1880s and 1890s. Sur had become an important port for these networks as the Sultan could not impose his authority in that location. Sur had also begun to rival Muscat as a port. The clandestine activities of the non-state networks continued till the beginning of the twentieth century. The capture of a large group of slavers from Sur by the Portuguese on the coast of Mozambique in 1902 while they were trying to load slaves on to their vessels brought an end to slave trade operating from Sur. In 1912 the British forced the Sultan to put an end to the arms trade as these were flowing to the Pushtoon tribes of the North-West Frontier Province who were fighting the British.

This showed that the interests of the British did not always coincide with that of the modern world-system as the arms trade linked Muscat to the world economic system. While this might give the impression that Britain opposed this particular trade because of its political and strategic
implications, Fred Lawson has mentioned how free trade in the Gulf was not supported by Britain because of economic considerations. Britain with its huge resources could dominate only a large market despite competition but in the case of the limited market of Muscat any of the smaller European competitors could easily take over it completely which was not in the interest of Britain as it would weaken the trade between the Gulf and British India. Because of British imperial interests in the Gulf and Oman these territories have been described as forming Britain’s informal empire separate from its formal empire, the British Raj. British control over the affairs of such states in the vicinity of its empire had given it the status of a protecting power just short of direct rule. Natives, either local or Indian had an important role in upholding the British system of administration in the region. British India was not just the centre of British power from where men and resources were drawn to protect British interests in the wider Indian Ocean region but was also a source of cultural influence. This influence would be felt more in the twentieth century by Omani princes who were educated in India and later became Sultans.

The process of incorporating Oman into Britain’s informal empire had begun especially with its arbitration in the dispute between Muscat and Zanzibar and the resultant partitioning of the empire in 1861. While the relationship between the British and the Sultans before Thuwaini was one of equals, from the latter’s time onwards it was one of British domination over Oman. Even here there was a difference between Thuwaini and his successors. The British had to never defend Muscat from tribal attacks during the time of Thuwaini attesting to the fact that he had some level of influence in the Omani interior. Salim bin Thuwaini’s time saw the increasing instances of the British coming to the defense of Muscat from tribal attacks. This is resulted in a cyclical process by which increased dependence of the Sultans on the British resulted in more resentment among the tribes and more attacks. Azzan bin Qays was not recognized by the British who realised that he was a more independent minded ruler.

The British prevented Azzan who had proved successful in uniting the landward territories of Oman after a long time to exert his influence over Oman’s maritime territories. They illegally extended the stipulations of the maritime truce not signed by Oman and enforced in the northern Gulf to the coastline of Oman. While the intention of the higher authorities in British India was to prevent Azzan from sending munitions and supplies to his forts on the coastline in large
quantities required for an attack, the Political Agent enforced it in such a way that even the normal reinforcing of the forts were not allowed. British officials in the Gulf had the capability to influence British policy towards Oman. Because of the strong relations that Turki bin Said had maintained with British officials he was regarded in a favourable manner by the British Indian authorities. Turki’s period not just saw increased British intervention to prop up his rule but also the normalising of the practice of the British employing naval action against the tribes to gain compensation for the losses suffered by British Indian subjects. Faisal bin Turki unlike his father tried to assert his independence and move closer to the French who were becoming assertive in Omani affairs during the late nineteenth century. The British threatened to bombard Muscat which forced Faisal to sever his dealings with the French which finally proved that it was Britain who ruled the waves in the Gulf.

Now that the Omani non-state maritime trade networks have been identified as an important element in the politics and economy of Oman during the late nineteenth century, the task that is left is to place these networks in the modern-world system. As mentioned earlier, Mark Speece has described the spatial organization of the coastal segment of Oman’s economy in the form of a dendritic/mercantile system and the lack of a coherent overall structure for the interior segment of Oman’s economy. What is important here is the separation of the coastal and interior economies. Speece does mention that the interior economy was linked to the Indian Ocean trade through certain points like Muttrah and Sohar and that perhaps the interior’s international trade bypassed the coastal system entirely and went through Sur which was more or less independent of the sultanate. But Speece does not dwell further on the role of Sur. During the course of this study it has been realised that Sur was an important conduit through which slaves and later arms flowed to Oman during the late nineteenth century. It is also clear that slaves from Sur were then landed at the port of Wudam on the Batina and then taken to markets in the inland as far as Buraimi and then further on to Najd. A large number of slaves were required for the agrarian economy of Batina itself. This shows that there was a parallel economic system which unlike the dual economic system connected the coast and the interior.

It cannot be said that this system completely bypassed the economic system of the coast centered at Muscat and Muttrah. When the arms trade at Zanzibar was banned by an international
convention at Brussels in 1892, Muscat became the major entrepôt of the arms trade. The networks based at Sur smuggled the arms that were stockpiled in East Africa to Muscat. The arms trade that took place in Zanzibar before 1892 and at Muscat from that period onwards can be described as a part of the overall economic exchanges linking these locations to the modern world-system. A large number of arms were brought directly by steamer from Europe to the Muscat arms market. But the arms trade that the non-state entities in Oman were involved cannot be described as linking them to the world-system as they were not formally part of the system. The large number of arms that were stockpiled in East Africa was clandestinely channelised to Oman using the same routes that were used to bring in slaves. Apparently the Muscat arms market had the capacity to absorb the arms brought in these two different routes. This also means that the Indian Ocean trade networks continued operating well into the late nineteenth century when the entire region was supposed to have been part of the modern world-system. While the earlier slave trade involved only a limited number of tribes of the Sharqiya and Sur, the arms trade involved almost all of the major tribes of interior Oman which led to unified opposition and the establishment of an Imamate when the arms trade was completely stopped at Muscat due to British pressure in 1912.

An alternative system will have to be drawn to explain the nature of the parallel non-state networks which connected both coastal and interior Oman. For that to happen, points along the coast apart from Sur and Wudam where slaves and arms were landed will have to be identified. The routes that went into the interior and connected most of the tribes to either one or both of the clandestine trades involving slaves and arms will have to be traced. Muscat would be identified as linked to both the modern world-system and the remnant trade networks of the Indian Ocean system. But the non-state networks stood little chance against an increasingly entrenched modern world-system in the Indian Ocean region. The sources of supply and markets of these networks were abruptly terminated at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Indian merchants of Muscat and Muttrah have important roles as agents who linked Muscat to the modern world-system and to a certain extent to the Indian Ocean non-state networks. The Indian merchants were also subjects of the British Empire. Wallerstein has pointed out that empires like that of the British existed within the world-system. Both Britain and France were involved in Omani politics. The difference between the Sultanate state-British relationship and the Sur-French
alliance was that the former drew Muscat into a situation of economic dependence on British India and thereby linked it to the modern world-system whereas the latter was of a temporary nature for attaining certain objectives in which France could not draw the non-state networks into a situation of economic dependency.

Finally, how can one best describe the existence of Sur as a rival to Muscat during this period when the modern world-system is supposed to have encompassed the Indian Ocean region? Andre Gunder Frank, one of the foremost scholars who propounded the theory of dependency has used the metropolis-satellite model to describe the economic situation that existed in Latin America from the sixteenth century onwards. The underdevelopment of a region is because of the nature of the exploitive relationship between the satellite underdeveloped region and developed metropolitan countries. This type of relationship is an essential part of the structure and development of the capitalist system in the world. This metropolis-satellite relationship is not limited to the international level but operates even at the regional level. The national metropolis connects its provincial satellites to the international metropolis. The provincial satellites in turn connect their many local satellites to the larger constellation of metropoles and satellites. Each satellite sucked capital or economic surplus out of its own satellites and channelled part of this surplus to the world metropolis. According to Gunder Frank satellites experience their greatest economic development if and when their ties to the metropolis are the weakest.

Sur which was autonomous from the Sultanate state for most of the nineteenth century was a satellite which had weak ties to the national metropolis Muscat. This allowed the non-state maritime networks to operate out of Sur till the beginning of the twentieth century. The non-state networks were disrupted as they began to depend on sources of supply and markets like Muscat which was a part of the modern world-system. Sur as a port continued to retain weak ties to the modern world-system which allowed it to remain vibrant until the 1950s just before the beginning of the oil boom in Oman. By 1927 Sur had become the most flourishing port of Oman and produced almost as much revenue as Muscat. During the 1930s, Sur rivalled even Kuwait which was most important port in the Gulf. Sur's continuing prosperity was because of its
involvement in the dhow trade that plied between East Africa and the Gulf which was not linked to the modern world-system.