Oman is a researcher’s delight – with archives and manuscripts, archaeological and ethno-archaeological attractions ranging from pre-Islamic Arabia to the present.

Located on the southern edge of the Gulf, where the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean meet, and controlling the entrance to the Gulf, Oman is and has been the junction of commercial and cultural crossroads for centuries. It is simultaneously a contemporary state that combines modernity and tradition, religion and multiculturalism – a place where the present meets the past without being bound by it. It is thus not by chance that Ibadis have played and continue to play an important role in the history of Muslim theology and its political theory, a role that has been acknowledged in international academic circles only most recently.

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OMAN differs from other Arab countries of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf region in having a long history as a unified state. It is also famous as a seafaring nation and for the Ibadi tradition of Islam practised by most of the population. This volume contains the proceedings of a conference held in Tübingen in May 2011 with the aim of highlighting other, previously little known or studied aspects of Oman’s history.

The conference focused on the complex interrelationships between Oman and other countries bordering the Indian Ocean, and on views “from outside” of Oman’s culture and religion. Researchers from a wide range of disciplines examined these questions and the approaches and conclusions presented here are similarly wide ranging, from the pre-Islamic archaeology of Oman and the multiple languages of East Africa to the economic and cultural ties between Latin America and Oman. The technology and history of shipbuilding are also examined, using previously little-known source material. But however varied their themes, all the essays clearly emphasise Oman’s significance as an economic and cultural bridge between the eastern and western Indian Ocean.
This work focuses on Oman’s urban connections with the sea, examining the ports of Oman in order to emphasize their function as centres of commerce and interaction. The importance of the port for the maritime economy is discussed, as well as the deep links that these ports had with the interior of Oman, connecting the culture and economy of its people to the rest of the world. Specific ports from each of the main regions – such as Sumhuram, Qalhat, Sur, Muscat, Mutrah, and Sohar – are examined in depth in order to collectively relate them within an interconnected web of trade and human movement. In addition, ports beyond Oman’s current borders that were at one time politically or economically connected to Oman – such as Gwadar, Julfar, Hormuz, and Zanzibar – are also addressed in order to capture these larger connections. Methodologically, it takes an interdisciplinary approach in regards to the material, integrating archaeological, textual, and in some cases ethnographic evidence in order to provide a more complete picture of the specific port and its connections with the larger Islamic world.
This interdisciplinary work emphasizes the maritime dimensions of Oman’s past, as both archaeologists and historians delve into a variety of sources to unearth its rich history. It explores Oman’s long and enduring relationship with the sea, which has had a profound impact on its history. The inhabitants of Oman who sailed to Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley in the Bronze Age helped to initiate the beginnings of long-distance maritime commerce. The frankincense trade that flourished in the Iron Age connected Oman with the larger western Indian Ocean and the Greco-Roman world. With the coming of Islam, Oman became part of a much larger series of Islamic maritime networks that extended from East Africa to China, sailing across the seas carrying peoples, goods, and ideas. European maritime incursions such as the Portuguese invasions eventually fostered maritime trade with Europe, and the establishment of the Ya’rubid and Al Bu Sa’id maritime empires increased interaction with East Africa and later the Atlantic area. In the modern period, Oman has made the transition from a traditional dhow economy to a modern maritime system. In addition, the work addresses the diverse forms of watercraft and navigational practices utilized by Omanis to venture out into the sea. Collectively, it shows that the sea is intimately tied to Oman’s history.
This book is a study of the traditional relationships that exist in Oman between land and social organization, and how they have evolved. The author starts with the theme of aridity and, using the extensive literature of the 1200 year old Ibadi community to supplement his field work, shows how the techniques of water exploitation have influenced the country’s social organization and its political ideology. He describes how the settlement organization has evolved in two stages; the first in the years before Islam when the Persians irrigated the land using aflaj or horizontal water channels; the second after the Arabs had overthrown the Persians and, influenced by Ibadism, established a more democratic society dominated by a strong tribal structure in the villages. The tribal structure is then examined in detail and the author shows how close the links are between the Islamic ideology, land use, and social organization. As a contribution to the human geography of Oman as well as to general knowledge of the Middle East the book will interest Arabists, Islamic historians and social anthropologists, as well as hydrologists and geographers.
This book is a first attempt to present Omani Quranic manuscripts and their illuminations to a wider public and to discuss their originality in the wider context of Quranic manuscripts, Islamic art as a whole and beyond that in the wider context of Oriental art in general. The art of Quran illumination developed slowly. The main reason for this lengthy process can be seen in the fear of allowing anything to intrude upon the text, which in itself differs highly from the holy texts of other religions. For a Muslim the Quran is the word of God revealed to mankind. It constitutes a kind of Divine presence. Theoretically this Divine presence had to be the only source of inspiration for the artists who wrote, illuminated and embellished the Quranic text. It cannot be “polluted” with pictures of Holy figures, special events or so on.

In which way do these specific preconditions and other criteria influence Quran illumination? In the first place, we have to take into consideration that the artists who illuminated Qurans came from different ethnic, artistic, and historic backgrounds which nurtured what became a specific Islamic civilization and a specific Islamic art. And, next to the uniqueness of the text, these backgrounds were the sources of the formation and development of Quran illuminations as we can follow them up chronologically and regionally.
Since the remarkably strong increase in scholarly activity concerning research on the Ibadiyya in the recent decades it is high time to provide insight into the topical state of affairs. The present volume is devoted in particular to the study of Ibadi history and its sources, thus covering the long period of time from early Islam to our days, and extending geographically from the Indian Ocean region to the Mediterranean. In their contributions to this volume scholars from all over the world deal with a great variety of topics and approaches, thereby revealing in several respects the challenging character of this field of research, just to mention the question of regional specificities and interrelations of the dispersed Ibadi community, the filling of information gaps in its historical narrative, or the reconstruction of sources and their appropriate interpretation. In that way this book may also serve as an ample source of inspiration to future research on Ibadi history.
The aim of this volume is to explore different issues of Ibadi theology from the early beginnings until the present day. Ibadi Islam emerged in the early Islamic period and played a pivotal role in the development of Islamic law and theology. Today, it continues to be an influential force in the contemporary Middle East and North Africa. Despite its antiquity, Ibadi Islam – and particularly Ibadi theology – remains little known and has often been misunderstood. This volume aims at redressing this gap by introducing the distinctive theological teachings of this influential Islamic school to a broad public, specialists and non-specialists alike. Dealing with a series of cases, from different periods and different sources and using an interdisciplinary approach, the authors address questions such as dogma and creed, conception of faith, theological controversies, reassessment of theological sources, the Ibadi “modernism” in last century Oman and North Africa. Medieval Ibadi sources are crucial for the understanding of the early development of the movement and the doctrinal and political disputes which differentiate Ibadi doctrine from Sunni Islam, on the other hand the volume emphasizes the importance of also focusing on the Ibadi sources from 19th and 20th centuries, when the Ibadi reform movement started looking for reconciliation between Islam and modernity.
This volume presents the proceedings of the first international conference dedicated to Ibadism and the Sultanate of Oman, which was held at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in November 2009. The goal of the conference was to introduce Ibadism and Ibad Studies to the worldwide research community and, indeed, it has served as the springboard for other conferences and the founding of academic groups dedicated to Ibadism and the Sultanate of Oman. In the first part of this volume, we are guided through Ibadi history, theology, and jurisprudence while the second part opens up a broad vista on the dialectics between religion, society, and politics within contemporary Ibadi communities and especially that of Oman. By introducing Ibadism to the broader academic community, we hope to contribute to the mutual understanding and rapprochement of peoples, cultures, and religions. In this regard, each paper in the present volume has lasting value.
Omanis in the pre-Islamic period were already familiar with the coastal regions of East Africa and the islands east of them. In the early Middle Ages, members of Omani royal families and their followers began to emigrate to the region, with some of them founding small princedoms. After approximately 150 years of Portuguese dominance, the Omanis drove the Portuguese out of the coastal areas north of Mozambique, and a period of prosperity began under Omani rule. In a treaty signed in 1822 between the British and the Omani ruler, Sayyid Said, the British ceded supremacy to the Omanis over the coastal areas of East Africa between northern Mozambique and southern Somalia. This led to another period of prosperity under Omani rule, which ended in the so-called “Revolution of Zanzibar” in 1964.

In this book the author presents for the first time a comprehensive survey of the archaeological evidence of the Islamic period in the coastal areas of Kenya and Tanzania, as well as relevant written sources in African, Oriental and Western languages and provides a synthesis of the two different sets of sources.
Ibadi jurisprudence looks back on more than 1000 years of tradition and productive development. Nevertheless, in terms of scholarly research, this particular school of Islamic law has remained a remote field of interest for a long time. After some first and basic encounters in the colonial period – not least for practical reasons – it happened in recent decades that both Ibadi and non-Ibadi scholars gave a fresh impetus to studies of Ibadi law and jurisprudence.

The present volume has the aim to explore the vast field of Ibadi jurisprudence from its beginnings to the present day against the background of enhanced knowledge and research. Thus the contributions of the individual authors provide the reader with different approaches to and new insights into a great variety of topics, ranging from fundamentals of legal theory to practical cases of law, ancient and modern, from the origins and formation of the Ibadi school, its interrelations with other Islamic schools of law, to developments in doctrinal and regional context including reactions to achievements of European modernity.
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