

## **In the Middle of a Reign**

Mandana Limbert

This paper reflects on the period of the middle of Sultan Qaboos's reign, a time when the 1970 coup was still within living memory for many and, yet, for many others, was starting to be understood primarily through other peoples' personal recollections and national representations. Focusing on reflections of ethnographic work conducted in the 1990s and then in the early 2000s, this paper considers how those who were coming of age at that time navigated emerging and solidifying official histories and local, personal memories and accounts. How did these young people understand the stories elders told them of life in the 1950s and 60s? How did they both admire their elders, and yet reveal discomfort with accounts that did not neatly fit into received narratives? How did they translate – literally and metaphorically – the stories they heard? The paper focuses too on the early “local histories” published at the time that aimed to frame a narrative that could both integrate into a larger national story and yet would retain local authority and legitimacy. At the cusp of the potential “loss” of these local histories and memories, different genres and authorities emerged to capture and represent the past.