



Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt (Cambridge Middle East Studies)

By Pascal Menoret

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Why do young Saudis, night after night, joyride and skid cars on Riyadh's avenues? Who are these "drifters" who defy public order and private property? What drives their revolt? Based on four years of fieldwork in Riyadh, Pascal Menoret's *Joyriding in Riyadh* explores the social fabric of the city and connects it to Saudi Arabia's recent history. Car drifting emerged after Riyadh was planned, and oil became the main driver of the economy. For young rural migrants, it was a way to reclaim alienating and threatening urban spaces. For the Saudi state, it jeopardized its most basic operations: managing public spaces and enforcing law and order. A police crackdown soon targeted car drifting, feeding a nationwide moral panic led by religious activists who framed youth culture as a public issue. The book retraces the politicization of Riyadh youth and shows that, far from being a marginal event, car drifting is embedded in the country's social violence and economic inequality.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Good anthropologists aim to enter into the minds of their subjects, sharing their lifestyle, acquiring their language, studying their moods and responses but always maintaining an objective self-awareness. Pascal Menoret is better than good."

The Economist

"An excellent ethnography of youth culture in Saudi Arabia that unpacks the connections between the social practice of joyriding as a form of political dissent with the questions of oil, urbanism, and power. It provides new insight into the categories of masculinity and gender in the Middle Eastern context and the spatial politics of the Saudi state. This work contributes to a growing body of critical scholarship ... *Joyriding in Riyadh* is an excellent and scholarly work that makes a valuable contribution to the field of Middle East Studies. It will appeal to anyone that has an interest in youth culture, urban and gender studies, urban history, and anthropology of the Middle East. Moreover, the book can be assigned to classes on Middle Eastern politics, Arab Uprisings, or any course that deals with the issues of social violence and economic inequality in a comparative or global framework."

Feras Klenk, Middle East Media and Book Reviews Online

"Menoret has written one of the best books on contemporary Saudi Arabia. I applaud the author's bravery in undertaking fieldwork among violent, repressed, and disenfranchised young men in the kingdom during the years of the War on Terror. He elegantly combines an intimate portrayal of Saudi male youth culture with a profound analysis of the national and global networks of government, business, and expertise that gave rise to joyriding."

Jörg Matthias Determann, American Historical Review

"This is an insightful, important and unique book. It is extremely readable and will be accessible to students of all levels, as well as others inside and outside academia with an interest in the Gulf, urban history and politics, and gender and sexuality in the Middle East."

Michael Farquhar, LSE Middle East Centre Blog (blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec)

About the Author

Pascal Menoret is Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at New York University, Abu Dhabi. His research combines urban history and social anthropology. His publications include *The Saudi Enigma: A History* (2005) and *L'Arabie, des routes de l'encens ... l'ère du pétrole* (2010).

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