BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY JOURNAL

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FROM THE EDITOR

The British-Yemeni Society is twenty years old this year. For 15 of these years, John Shipman edited the annual Journal. He turned it into a keenly awaited publication with high quality analytical and illustrated articles on a wide range of subjects. He resigned early in 2013 for health reasons and his editorship is definitely a hard act to follow. I am sure all readers of the Journal will join me in thanking him for making the Journal a favourite for all members and others. I look forward to his ongoing guidance.

Following the Chairman's Report, Thanos Petouris analyses the Society's main event of the year, the Conference held in SOAS jointly with LMEI. It was an unprecedented success and the book arising from the conference will be published in English by Saqi in early 2014; we hope an Arabic edition will follow. On the twentieth anniversary of the BYS, we have a short account of the society's origins by one of its founding members, Julian Lush. It is a good reminder of the importance the Society had in assisting improved relations between Yemen and the outside world when needed. Historical aspects of Yemen are covered in Ghazi al-Gosaibi's memoir of the YAR in the 1960s and the role of Saudi Arabia.

The Society's annual visit to Yemen was again to Socotra; the account of this visit will encourage other members to go, and includes an update on the Society's support to Socotran medical services, a small contribution to the humanitarian crisis engulfing Yemen. Richard Stanforth's article on the depth of the humanitarian crisis follows.

On lighter but important matters, we have the first of what is intended to be a series of articles on Yemenis in Britain. The Liverpool Arab Arts Festival started as a Yemeni event and has grown out of it. Adel Aulaqi then discusses the life and work of Mohammed Murshid Nagi, a major Yemeni musician who died earlier this year.

A new generation is emerging, committed to help solve Yemen's development and humanitarian problems. The BYS wants to respond to the hopes of all its members, so please contact me with your ideas and suggestions for the Journal at helenlackner@yahoo.com.

Thank you and happy reading.

HELEN LACKNER

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(Twentieth Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 19 June 2013)

For Yemen the last year has been dominated by the preparations for the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) that finally started on 18 March. The 565 delegates have until the end of September to agree a new political structure for Yemen that will lead to a new constitution and elections for a president and parliament in early 2014. The delegates have been selected to allow for representation not only of political parties but also of women (30 %) and youth (20 %). Over half the delegates are from the south and the southern movement has the largest single group. The NDC is reaching out to all communities and regions in an ambitious programme of consultation to give people a say in their future. The key topics – such as the new constitution, justice, southern question and the future of Sa'ada – are being discussed in nine working parties which are currently presenting their preliminary findings to a plenary session which will continue until just before the start of Ramadan. No one should underestimate the difficulties in finding solutions to some of these issues and of reconciling different interests and views. I know that some people are sceptical about the process or are trying to lay down pre-conditions but I ask them to remember how close Yemen came to armed conflict in 2011. No solution will be possible unless it has broad popular support. The NDC is the only effective game in town.

There is strong support for the NDC from the UN Special Envoy Jamal Benomar and his team and from the international community. The British government is playing an important role in providing financial, technical and political support. They all want to give Yemenis the opportunity to shape a new stable and united system of government able to address the major economic, social and security problems facing the country. All concerned recognise that it is vital that ordinary people see some tangible benefit from the NDC process: there must be an immediate and sustained improvement in their daily lives. The international community has finally understood that if it wants to defeat terrorism and contribute to stability in the region then it must help Yemenis to build a stable future.

The BYS is doing what it can to help in organising events to keep members informed of what is happening. I had the honour of meeting President Hadi last September during his visit to London. He expressed his

gratitude for the work done by the BYS and for the contribution it was making to the Yemeni-British relationship.

Much of the BYS year was taken up by organising and holding the 'Yemen: Challenges for the Future' Conference held at SOAS on 11 and 12 January. It succeeded way beyond our expectations. 300 people attended and many more wanted to do so but there was not enough space for them. There were over forty papers during the two day event with speakers from a wide range of countries. I am delighted that so many Yemenis were able to attend despite the difficulties over visas. They included Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of our opposite number, the Yemeni British Friendship Association, and Dr Muhammad al-Sa'adi the Minister of Planning and International Co-operation. Alan Duncan, the Minister of State at the Department of International Development spoke. There is a full report on the conference at our web site and Thanos Petouris has written an article on it for the journal. I want to thank all those who sponsored the event and give particular thanks to the organisers: Thanos Petouris, the main convenor and Helen Lackner, Gabriele Vom Bruck, Shelagh Weir, Adel Aulaqi and Julian Lush.

We are following up the conference with a book under the title *Why Yemen Matters: A Society in Transition* to be published by Saqi with SOAS in February 2014. Helen Lackner is editing it and there will be about 16 chapters based on papers presented at the conference. The book will be available to BYS members at a discount.

As many of you know John Shipman has been suffering from ill health recently and has decided that the time has come for him to stop editing the journal. He has been editor for many years and has become a personification of the journal. I want to thank him on behalf of all BYS members for what he has done in setting the highest standards for the journal both in the quality of the articles and reviews and also his meticulous editing. He has established the journal as a sought-after publication on Yemen. We all wish him a speedy and full recovery and thank him for everything he has done. I am glad that he has agreed to remain on the BYS committee so that we continue to call on his wisdom, experience and unfailing willingness to help. I am delighted that Helen Lackner has agreed to take on the role of building on John's achievements. She is currently editing the 2013 issue which should be out in late October.

Rebecca Johnson has decided she would like to stand down after six years as Honorary Secretary. I think everyone in this room knows what a

splendid job she has done and how she is always so helpful, patient and kind in dealing with our administration and acting as the main contact point for the Society. I would like to thank her on your behalf and wish her well. She will remain an active member of the BYS. Audrey Allfree – who has been on the committee since 2012 – has agreed to be nominated in her place.

I also want to thank Shelagh Weir who is also standing down from the committee after many years. Her contributions had always been invaluable – not least in ensuring that the BYS Conference achieved such high academic standards. I want to thank Victor Henderson, who is also standing down. As you know he is both a former chairman of the BYS and a former British Ambassador to Sana'a. The BYS will still be able to call on their advice and both intend to remain active members of the BYS.

The committee is nominating three new ordinary members: John Shipman, Taher Ali Qasim MBE and Safa Mubgar. I am particularly happy that Taher will join us as he is active in the British Yemeni community in Liverpool and has been a leading figure in the Arab Arts Festival there. We hope to co-opt additional members from British Yemeni communities in other parts of the UK. They will not be able to attend many committee meetings but we would like to call on their advice – and help arrange BYS meetings outside London.

Could I also say a word of thanks to Paula De Souza who has been for many years working in the Yemen Ambassador's office and who has always been immensely helpful to us. Thank you, Paula.

I would like to congratulate Jane Marriott who will shortly take up her post as the British Ambassador in Yemen – and thus I hope agree to be one of our two honorary presidents. The BYS is very grateful to Nicholas Hopton, who has spoken to the society twice in the last 18 months, for his strong support. We wish him well in his next posting as ambassador to Qatar.

Yemen and the UK

Highlights include:
Visit of President Hadi to the UK in September 2012.
Friends of Yemen conference in London, March 2013, ahead of the start of Yemen's National Dialogue.
Festival of Yemen organised by the All Party Parliamentary group of Yemen chaired by Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP. Mr Vaz has set up a task force of

individuals from four sectors: health, business, education and security. He has appointed figures to lead these and they are in touch with counterparts in Yemen. The BYS has offered to assist in any way we can.

Press coverage has been extensive this year. Among recent events:
BBC Radio 4 'From Our Own Correspondent' on 1/6/13 featured an item about Yemen by BYS member Dr Elisabeth Kendall.
Channel 4's documentary series 'Unreported World' aired a programme with Krishnan Guru-Murthy reporting *Yemen – Death Row Teenagers* on 24 May 2013.

New books about Yemen
Hawks of the Hadhramaut by Philip Allfree (paperback edition).
Sana'a: an Arabian Islamic City (reprint) co-edited by Ron Lewcock.
Islamists and the State by Stacey Philbrick Yadav (IB Taurus).
The Principles of Arabian Navigation co-edited by BYS member Will Facey.
Unmaking North and South by John M.Willis.
Ginny Hill's book *Yemen, The Road to Chaos* is to be published later in the year as well as Nora Ann Colton's book *The Political Economy of Yemen*.

BYS members in the news
Congratulations to BYS member Nouria Nagi, director of YERO, who has been awarded an OBE in this year's Queen's birthday honours 'for services to charitable work transforming the lives of women and children in Yemen'. This is great news not just for her – and the BYS – but for civil society and women's rights in Yemen generally.

Other (non-BYS) events
June 2013
Liverpool Arab Arts Festival

29 May 2013
BFSA lecture by Dr Noel Brehony: The role of the PDRY in creating a South Yemeni identity.

14 March 2013
Dr Noel Brehony in conversation with Manuel Almeida at the Mosaic Rooms on the subject of 'Yemen Divided'.

7 March 2013
Lecture at Mosaic Rooms by Dr Khaled Fattah: Re-visiting state-tribe relations in Yemen.

6 March 2013
Screening of *The Reluctant Revolutionary* and *A new day in old Sana'a* at the Mosaic Rooms.

March 2013
2 rare screenings at the NFT London of Pier Paolo Pasolini's short film for UNESCO *The Walls of Sana'a*.

February–April 2013
Little Yemen – exhibition by British Yemeni photographer Sonia Audhali at MAC Birmingham.

Wednesday, 13 February 2013
British Arabian Nights concert (BAX).

Tuesday, 5 February 2013
Film screening: *The President's Man and his Revolutionary Son* (SOAS Yemen Society).

1–22 February 2013
Last of the Dictionary Men exhibition (Mosaic Rooms).

BYS Grant 2013
This year's academic grant has been awarded to Amr Sufian for his PhD research into Honey Monitoring in the Yemen. We are pleased to welcome Amr here today to receive his award in person. We will present it at the end of the AGM and we look forward to him talking about his research at a BYS meeting next year.

BYS events this past year
13 May 2013
Lecture by HMA Nicholas Hopton: The state of Yemen's political transition.

13 March 2013

Lecture by Larissa Alles (winner of last year's academic grant): The Vulnerabilities of Authoritarian Upgrading in Yemen.

21 February 2013
Lecture by Dr Qais Ghanem: The Summer that follows the Arab Spring. Plus launch of his latest book *My Arab Spring, My Canada*.

11–12 January 2013
BYS-LMEI conference – Yemen: Challenges for the Future.

10 December 2012
Lecture by Dr Adel Aulaqi: Eid-ing in Aden, Yemen 2012.

15 November 2012
Lecture by Richard Stanforth (Oxfam) and Awssan Kamal: Yemen, Fragile Lives in Hungry Times; the Humanitarian Overview.

16 October 2012
Lecture by Ilham Ali: Yemeni Women – Know Your Limits!

17 September 2012
Lecture by Taher Ali Qassim MBE: How alien a Yemeni am I?

17 July 2012
HMA Nicholas Hopton – gave his perspective on Yemen after his first few months in the country.

Upcoming BYS events
The full Autumn programme will be sent out with the 2013 Journal at the end of the summer. Meanwhile, a date for your diaries:

23 July 2013
Professor Scott Reese will give an afternoon talk 'A Community of Believers: Saints' Festivals and Public Piety in Colonial Aden' at 2.00 p.m. at the Middle East Association.

Membership

We are delighted to welcome new members to the Society – 39 since last year (including two new corporate members: MBI Al Jaber Foundation and MENARC). Two of our members have died since the last AGM, Malcolm Docherty and Captain Gordon Blyth.

Future of the BYS / Survey

I said in the 2012 report that we were proposing to organise a survey of your views on the BYS and how it should develop. I regret that we have not been able to do this – because of the time taken up by the conference and book – but we plan to arrange it before the next AGM.

Conclusion

Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to His Excellency Ambassador Abdullah Al-Radhi for being so supportive of the BYS. It is often difficult for our honorary presidents to deal with us. On the one hand we all want to promote understanding between Britain and Yemen. On the other, the BYS is an independent society responsible to its members and the Charity Commission, not to the British or Yemeni governments. The ambassador has been immensely understanding and patient with us for which I am most grateful. I also thank him in advance on your behalf for the reception he is hosting for members after the AGM.

NOEL BREHONY

Rainbow over Hajja photo Helen Lackner

THE BIRTH OF THE BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY

JULIAN LUSH

On the occasion of the Society's twentieth anniversary, I asked the main players on the British side, Bernard Mills and Bill Heber Percy, to delve into their diaries and memories to provide an account of the origins and early years of the BYS.

Less than 6 months after its formation in 1990, the Republic of Yemen found itself in the unenviable position of holding the rotational Chair of the UN Security Council (UNSC). Following on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the UNSC had to vote on a resolution approving military action to reverse this invasion. The USA and other leading members of the UNSC put considerable pressure on all members to approve this resolution, which Yemen was unable to support as it was in favour of an Arab initiative and mechanism to address this problem. The understandably equivocal terms of its vote being interpreted as negative, Yemen's relations with the western powers rapidly deteriorated, with a sudden reduction or complete halt to development support. Moreover relations with regional powers, Saudi Arabia in particular, were even worse as, not only were financial support and aid interrupted, but in addition these countries expelled close to a million Yemenis. In this situation there is little doubt that bridges could do with some rebuilding.

In February 1992, Dr Abdul Karim al-Eryani, then Yemeni Foreign Minister, visited the UK and the Yemeni Ambassador arranged a reception at the Carlton Tower on 5 February. Here Bernard Mills introduced himself as Director of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) but al-Eryani recognised him from their previous acquaintance in Yemen in 1973 (and from seeing Bernard on TV during the Intifada when he was with UNRWA). They met again at Chatham House on 7 February when al-Eryani gave a lecture on the situation in Yemen. al-Eryani invited Bernard to dine with him the following evening at the Hyde Park Hotel where he was staying. They dined alone except for a bodyguard who said nothing, while they talked late into the evening. In the course of the dinner, al-Eryani broached the need he felt for a British-Yemeni society to help improve matters. Bernard said he would see what he could do. Given his commitments as Director of CAABU, and Chairman of the European Committee of NGOs on Palestine at the UN, Bernard was too

busy to take on a Yemeni society. He asked Bill Heber Percy if he would be willing to work on starting such a society. Bill said he would consider the idea. On 6 August, Bernard gave a lunch at his Club where he introduced Bill to the Yemeni Ambassador, Shaya Mohsin al-Zindani, and Bill picked up the reins from there.

Bill needed support in this undertaking and had started discussing the project with Julian Paxton, an old Arabist colleague of mine who was still working with Shell. At about this time, I ran into Julian; as my final post as Shell representative had been in Yemen, he invited me to join them for lunch in Shell Centre. When the proposed society and Bill's need for assistance were described I offered to help Bill with the secretarial work of forming a society, as I had retired and had the time. We formed an Interim Committee of 5 people together with Mike Whittall and Charles Leslie as treasurer.

We were starting from scratch and working out what had to be done. Some main elements were clear: we had to define the Society's objectives and shape, and draft a Constitution, which we based on the format of other friendship societies. We needed a nucleus of people to bring it into being and make up its initial membership; we wrote to as many friends as we could think of with connections with Yemen and eventually the numbers snowballed into about 300 invited to become members. We also needed a small start-up fund to cover administrative costs. Initially these were raised from voluntary contributions, later on from subscriptions. I bought a small computer, a Sinclair Z88, on which the various lists were kept and letters written. By the end of 1992 we were ready to go and called a formative meeting on 11 February 1993. It was well attended and the British-Yemeni Society came into being with 120 individual and 15 corporate members!

Right from the beginning, many members volunteered their assistance. The Yemeni Ambassador, Dr Shaya Mohsin Zindani, gave the embryonic Society much support assisted by his secretary Paula De Souza. The first Executive Committee of course chose Bill Heber Percy as Chairman, Michael Whittal became Vice Chairman and I took on the post of Secretary. Amongst the original members were Julian Paxton, Venetia Porter who organised the Society's logo – a fine bit of calligraphy – and Shelagh Weir who kept us all up to the mark. James Nash was the originator and first editor of the Journal; he devised its splendid bull's head emblem and edited four editions before handing over to John Shipman.

Soon to join were Dirham Abdo Saeed of Longulf Trading UK, John Grundon and Anderson Bakewell. We also received notable help from Michael Carey of Vizards Tweedie who dealt with the Charity Commission on behalf of the Society and got it registered. (He is still a generous supporter of the Society's Appeals.)

It is remarkable how the Society has thrived ever since. But Yemen, despite its problems, has never lacked friends in Great Britain. While today's challenges for the Society are different from those of twenty years ago, and Yemen faces a whole new set of problems, the need for our Society continues, and this also means we are ready for a new and younger generation of members, with different types of connections to Yemen.

Rada' Amariya madrasa photo Helen Lackner

YEMEN: CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE
THE BYS-LMEI CONFERENCE

THANOS PETOURIS

Organised jointly with the London Middle East Institute (LMEI), the BYS conference 'Yemen: Challenges for the Future' was held on the 11th and 12th of January 2013. The event took place in SOAS, at the Brunei Gallery lecture theatre. It was attended by approximately 350 academics, journalists, policy makers, representatives of international organisations and foreign governments, as well as a large number of Yemenis who travelled from various parts of Britain, Europe and Yemen itself to London. Regrettably, a further 150 applications for attendance had to be declined because of lack of space.

The primary aim of the two-day meeting was to provide an open forum for a discussion of the challenges faced by Yemeni society and politicians in the post-Saleh era, some of which were to be addressed by the National Dialogue Conference which was then under preparation. Our conference offered the opportunity to new and established researchers to present their work to a wider audience, discuss it with peers, and put forward potential solutions to the multitude of pressing problems facing the country. Topics covered included domestic and international politics, the economy, migration, social policy, culture, and rural development.

This was the fifth major conference on Yemen to be held in Britain in the last thirty years. The first 'Symposium on Contemporary Yemen' took place at the University of Exeter in 1983. It brought together scholars from both Yemeni states, Europe and the US into a discussion of the twentieth-century trajectory of the two countries in every aspect of their socio-political development. The symposium papers were published in two volumes edited by B. R. Pridham under the titles *Contemporary Yemen: Politics and Historical Background* and *Economy, Society and Culture in Contemporary Yemen*, the use of the name Yemen in the singular foreshadowing the future unification of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).

The second one was organised at SOAS and coincided with the very day of unification in May 1990. The papers of 'Contemporary Yemen: Process of Change' were not published. However, having been convened at a time of profound international and local political change, one can easily

imagine both the spirited academic debate that took place during the meeting, and the difficulty in forecasting the importance of the unfolding events in the country.

Third came another SOAS conference, 'Yemen Today: Crisis and Solutions', the proceedings of which were edited by E. Joffé, M. Hachemi, and E. Watkins. Convened in 1995 it stands out for the participation of a large number of major Yemeni politicians and policy makers, attempting to deal with the aftermath of the 1994 civil war and the future of the unification project.

Of a more academic character was the subsequent fourth international conference, 'Yemen: The Challenge of Social, Economic and Democratic Development', at Exeter in 1998. It attempted to address the problems posed by the post-unity developments in a host of areas of social and political activity, the legal sector, and challenges to the urban and rural populations. The conference presentations were published in a volume edited by K. Mahdi, A. Würth and H. Lackner under the heading *Yemen into the Twenty-First Century: Continuity and Change*.

Examining the topics discussed in the past academic fora, the perennial character of many of the problems that have plagued the country for decades becomes easily apparent. What differs, however, is the degree to which the academic community has understood these questions over the years, and the responses it has attempted to provide. Thus, just as the country and its people find themselves at yet another historical juncture, and fifteen years after the last such gathering took place in the UK, convening the conference quickly became an important part of the wider academic discourse on the future of the country.

The strength of the BYS / LMEI conference lies in the variety and quality of the papers received. In preparation for the conference, an academic and organising committee was formed as early as 2010. It consisted of the Chairman of BYS, Dr Noel Brehony, and the author as co-convenors, and Dr Adel Aulaqi, Dr Gabriele vom Bruck, Helen Lackner, and Dr Shelagh Weir. The BYS committee was represented by the Vice-Chairman Julian Lush, and the LMEI by Louise Hosking. After the initial call for papers, the committee was able to choose 35 from among 56 proposals received from as far afield as Hong Kong and Brunei. The conscious decision to issue an open invitation instead of commissioning presentations ensured not only the independent character of the process, a valuable prerequisite of any meaningful contribution during the current turmoil in Yemen, but it also

Delegates at the conference photo Glen Ratcliffe, SOAS

allowed for a better understanding of current academic trends as far as Yemeni studies are concerned. In choosing the final papers, the academic committee considered a number of factors, including the distinctiveness of individual topics, their suitability vis-à-vis the conference theme, and the ability to group them into panels.

The conference was opened on Friday 11 January by the Chairman of the BYS, Dr Noel Brehony, the Director of the LMEI, Dr Hassan Hakimian, and Shaikh Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber, founding patron and donor of the LMEI. All three underlined the significance of holding a conference on Yemen at that particular moment in time, and especially the need for a better understanding of the socio-political changes that have been unfolding in this part of the Middle East. Shaikh Mohamed, in his capacity as UNESCO Special Envoy, announced a ground breaking initiative between the MBI Al Jaber Foundation and UNESCO in support of Educational Reform in Yemen.

The keynote speeches were given by Dr Abubakr al-Qirbi, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Yemen and president of the Yemen-British Friendship Association, Dr Muhammad al-Saadi, Yemeni Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, and Alan Duncan MP, UK

Minister for Development. Dr al-Qirbi acknowledged the multitude of challenges facing the government and the need for adequate preparations for the National Dialogue. He highlighted a number of issues the Dialogue needed to address, including constitutional reform and the Southern question. Dr al-Saadi urged the international community to help in accelerating the implementation of much needed development projects in Yemen. Mr Duncan underlined British support for the upcoming National Dialogue, and the British role within the 'Friends of Yemen' group, which pledged in September 2012 a total sum of USD 8 billion in aid money to the country, whilst at the same time urging Yemeni politicians to work with each other and within the agreed timeframes.

The first panel focused on locating Yemen within its regional and international frame of reference. Whilst acknowledging the historic significance of the youth uprising, and how it went on to become the longest standing anti-regime protest in the Middle East since early 2011, the speakers focused on the counter-terrorism aspect of American policies in Yemen, and the role of the army during the current period of transition. Security plays a major role in forming western and regional attitudes towards Yemen, but it also impinges on the complex web of civil-military relations within the country.

The two subsequent panels examined the domestic challenges posed to the state by the northern al-Huthi revolt, and the Southern question. On Sa`ada, it was argued that the branding of the conflict as 'tribal' misinterprets the nature of the events, which have gone beyond customary tribal forms of conflict especially with the involvement of militias headed by state sponsored tribal leaders in the army, the so-called 'Colonel Shaikhs'. The political structures and values seen during the six rounds of war and mediation offer a basis for the future resolution of the problem. On the South, the panellists focused on the origins of South Yemeni identity during the decolonisation period, and the strengthening of the idea of a distinct southern polity during the PDRY years, and how these historical precedents affect the current politics of *al-Hiraak*, or Southern Movement. This was further supported by exploring how idealised representations of the past affect the expectations southern youth have of the Yemeni state, and how this discrepancy between the feasible and the desirable shapes youth politics in Aden.

The first day concluded with a discussion on the role of business in developing the Yemeni economy. After exploring the potential benefits of

establishing a financial market, which is partly hindered by the fact that Yemeni companies are mostly family owned and reluctant to adopt shareholding models of ownership, the debate moved on to the small enterprise sector. Such businesses provide the main employment opportunities in the country, but find themselves crushed between their own lack of skill and infrastructure, and the bureaucratic pressure of the state. This economic environment proves no less challenging to foreigners who live and work in Yemen, especially, as it was argued, because of the legal plurality and different legal frameworks that apply to them.

The second day opened with two concurrent panels, both addressing social issues. In the field of health, education and welfare, all speakers agreed with the urgent need for state reform. The poorly regulated provision of public and private health services places a strain not only on the population, but also on the state itself. The results of this lack of a coherent policy appear most acutely in the area of reproductive health. However, it was contended that the access of women to better health care is also determined by individual attitudes, which are affected by societal norms and longstanding traditions.

Cultural activity is perhaps the most sensitive indicator of socio-political change, and that has been evident in Yemeni theatre, where politics and human rights themes have dominated performances of drama since 2011. Just as with theatre, modern Yemeni literature is also a relatively new discovery for academics. In an environment lacking educational or cultural state institutions, questions of identity, gender relations, and revolution are being debated by Yemeni intellectuals through the use of different literary genres.

Perhaps the most vital and urgent problem for the country is that of the depletion of its water resources and the attendant question of their management. After discussing the evolution of state water policy, from virtually non-existence to the recent National Water Conference, the panel discussed local, traditional mechanisms of water management and the ways in which they could be incorporated into state law. The critical conditions in Ta'iz and the remedies desalination could offer stood out as an example. Connected to water is the increasing number of land disputes in the country, for which a model for 'adequate dispute resolution' was offered, as well the issue of cultivation and consumption of *qat*, the plant whose influence goes beyond water into the economy and politics of the land.

Migration from and to Yemen is a topic as old as Yemeni studies themselves. However, new aspects of this phenomenon were presented at the conference with papers on Yemenis in China, where they make up the largest Arab community, and work as traders between China and the Middle East. At the same time, migration into Yemen from the Horn of Africa has been increasing in recent years. The country itself is not the main destination, with mostly Ethiopian men using it as a transit point to other countries in the Arabian Peninsula. Finally, migration within Yemen, with approximately half a million Internally Displaced People from Sa`ada and Abyan as a result of local conflicts, presents the 'post-revolutionary' government and NGOs alike with a difficult challenge to address.

The final panel addressed the recent political transition and the youth revolution. After examining the changing political influence of different Islamist groups before and during the uprising, the focus of the debate shifted to the various discourses propounded by leading actors in the transitional process. Tribalism, secularism, Islamism are just a few of the models of political organisation that will influence the post-Saleh era. Inviting the audience to consider the limits and scope of our own knowledge of the country, the meeting concluded with a photographic display of the protest camp in Change Square in Sana'a.

The conference was an unqualified success and its impact reached well beyond those present. The proceedings were reported live on social media such as blogs and twitter; summaries of the panels appeared in both the British and Yemeni press, whilst participants themselves, especially from Yemen, conceded that the conference improved their knowledge about their own country. The book, *Why Yemen Matters, a Society in Transition* including chapters based on the presentations will be published by Saqi Books as part of the 'SOAS Middle East Issues' series in February 2014.

The interest that this conference generated and its wide appeal have highlighted the importance of Yemeni studies in Britain, and the responsibility of the Society to collaborate with appropriate institutions for their furtherance. With its long historical ties, a vast body of academic scholarship on Yemen, numerous centres for Middle Eastern Studies, and the existence of a large, vibrant Yemeni community, Britain is well placed to be the centre for future activities.

A MEMOIR OF YEMEN

DR GHAZI ABDUL RAHMAN AL-GOSAIBI

TRANSLATED AND INTRODUCED BY JOHN SHIPMAN

The late Dr Ghazi al-Gosaibi played an outstanding role in Saudi public life – not only as a Minister and diplomat but also as a man of letters. His untimely death in August 2011 was marked by three days of national mourning, a measure of the high esteem in which he was held. In his spirited autobiography, A Life in Administration, *Dr Ghazi recalls his visit to Yemen in 1965 against the background of the agreement signed in Jeddah by King Faisal and President Nasser to end the civil war in Yemen. This provided for the establishment of a joint Saudi/Egyptian Peace Committee to oversee implementation of the agreement.*

The Saudi side was led by Abdullah al-Sudairi, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Interior, who took Gosaibi with him as his legal adviser. Gosaibi, then aged twenty-five, had a degree in international relations from South California University, Los Angeles, and had just returned to Riyadh from a course in public administration at the American University, Beirut. Initially, he was very reluctant to accept assignment to Yemen but since the King had already approved his appointment, he had little choice. Meanwhile, friends convinced him of the advantages of going: he would meet a number of leading personalities and be in the public eye, which would rescue him from the obscurity of his position as a college teacher; and he would receive a handsome gratuity at the end of his assignment.

The following paragraphs from his book summarise his experience in Yemen.

My journey to Sana'a ensured my sudden transfer from the theory to the reality of international relations … Immediately on arrival at Sana'a airport we saw huge quantities of military equipment: row after row of aircraft on the runway, and after leaving the airport it took us a long time, driving at considerable speed, to pass all the lines of tanks, armoured cars and military vehicles of various types along our route.

When Yemen's revolution happened in 1962, like most young Arabs of my generation, I regarded it and Egypt's subsequent intervention in the country with enthusiasm. But when I saw with my own eyes this enormous strike force stationed in Yemen far away from the true battleground in Palestine, I realised that, whatever the justification and reasons, it was wrong for over a third of the Egyptian army to be plunged into an Arab civil war.

When they signed the peace agreement in Jeddah in the autumn of 1965, President Nasser told King Faisal that it was Anwar Sadat who had convinced him to intervene in Yemen. According to him, Sadat had asserted that the mere appearance of a single aircraft would be enough to intimidate 'the tribes'. The Egyptian President added, laughingly, that King Faisal ought to sue Sadat for having caused the catastrophe. The truth of the matter, as everyone knows, was that during Nasser's era no one could say anything that differed from the President's view, including Anwar Sadat himself. In any event, ultimate responsibility for any decision rests with the leader who takes it, regardless of the opinions he may have heard beforehand, if he listened to the opinions of others.

If we must assign where the real responsibility for the debacle lay, it was certainly in the lack of information. Neither Nasser nor those around him knew anything about Yemen – its history, people, geography, traditions and customs. Indeed at the outset of its intervention, the Egyptian army had no maps of Yemen and were obliged to rely on maps prepared by Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Egyptian President actually believed that a token military intervention would be enough to consolidate the foundations of the fledgling republic. But escalation came rapidly, as later happened with the American army in Vietnam.

Compare this situation with the position of the late King Abdul Aziz towards Yemen. My father was in Europe during the outbreak of the Saudi-Yemeni war in 1934. As soon as he heard about it he hurried back to take part in the war effort, only to find that King Abdul Aziz had already ordered his forces in Yemen to halt their advance, and then to withdraw. My father was surprised by the King's decision and made his surprise known more than once. Finally the King summoned him and told him privately: 'Abdul Rahman, you know nothing about Yemen; it is mountainous and tribal; no one can control it. Throughout history all those who tried to control it, failed. The Ottoman state was the last of the failed invaders. I don't want to embroil myself or my people in Yemen'.

Later, Nasser was persuaded that his entanglement in Yemen was the greatest mistake of his life. During the summit conference in Cairo just before his death in 1970, Colonel Mu'ammar Qadhafi proposed an Arab military intervention to stop the fighting between the Jordanian army and the Palestinian resistance. Nasser immediately objected, saying to the Libyan President, 'Do you want to repeat my mistake of intervening in Yemen?'

The Saudi side of the Peace Committee stayed in a small building in Sana'a situated in Abdul Mughni Street. It soon became apparent that the unstable security conditions in the capital made our quarters a compulsory residence from which we only emerged under strict guard. Once or twice we went to the cinema near the house, but stopped after the building was the target of a bombing attack (none of us ever found out whether the attack was connected with our presence or whether the films being shown there caused offence).

Our life was complicated by the strange relationship between the Yemeni government and the HQ of the Egyptian army. In theory the Yemeni government enjoyed full sovereignty but in practice it was unable to take any decision of significance without reference to the Egyptian army HQ. Thus the Peace Committee had to deal not only with the Egyptian and Saudi governments but also with the government in Sana'a, with the Royalist side and with the Egyptian army HQ (whose views did not always agree with those of Cairo!).

Our task required unlimited patience. We made patience our profession, and resorted to novel means to deal with problems on several occasions. Abdullah al-Sudairi was the most patient among us. In this respect I remember how he dealt with his Egyptian counterpart, General Muhammad Farid Salama, who was in the traditional military mould; he had previously instructed Nasser at the War College. The General's mentality was purely military; he could only see friend or foe, black or white. Abdullah needed all his reserves of patience to deal with him.

The Haradh conference convened. It was assumed that it would result in a temporary coalition government formed from the two warring sides to prepare for a permanent government. But, after a month of continuous discussion, the conference failed to achieve this. Much has been written about the history of this period, so I will confine myself to saying that by the beginning of 1966 it became clear that the hoped-for peace would not be achieved. During the truce, the Egyptian forces had redeployed and were based in the Sana'a-Ta'iz-Hodeida triangle, leaving the mountainous regions to the tribes whose loyalty changed with that of their shaikhs whose affiliations would shift from time to time without prior warning.

In the light of events it became clear that there no longer was any role for the Peace Committee, and in the spring of that year the Saudi side returned home. Affairs in Yemen remained disturbed until after the June War and the withdrawal of the Egyptian army. Then the royalist side failed in its

attempt to storm Sana'a, which bolstered the position of the young Republic. Soon after the Egyptian withdrawal, the Kingdom ceased to concern itself with what happened in Yemen and recognised the Republic.

It will come as no surprise that Dr Ghazi chose Yemen as the subject for his doctoral thesis at University College, London, where he studied in the late 1960s

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Above: Dhamar – Utma, shopping for gas; below: Ma'alla Aden photos Helen Lackner

SOCOTRA: NOTES FROM THE SOCIETY 2013 VISIT

JULIAN LUSH

Socotra has often been described as 'an island forgotten by time'. Forgotten? How? Would it be because its great granite mountainous backbone was never quite submerged beneath the ocean? Would it be that during the ages when the great sub-continents of Arabia and India separated from Africa and the ancient Gondwana land-mass, Socotra became an independent land in the surrounding ocean? Again, would it be because the plants that found themselves marooned there had the time to evolve into their own distinct species? Lastly, is it because the Socotri people had the time and remoteness to develop their own brand of south Arabian language and their own distinct set of cultural beliefs?

The trip

The BYS group who visited Socotra in February 2013 included John Mason on his fourth visit and Thanos Petouris on his second. Others were first-timers: Julia Couchman, Felix Wu, Ben Goss, Sarah and myself. Logistics for visits are now very simple: Felix Air flight from Sharjah via Mukalla, and arrival at Hadibu airport, some 20 kms from the town itself. Our arrangements for accommodation and travel were handled by Socotra Eco Tours, one of the few companies offering these services. It is owned and run by two young Socotris, Ahmad Abdullah and Sami Ali, the latter accompanying us throughout; he was knowledgeable (Latin names for plants), delightful and competent. We stayed in a hotel whose friendly staff made up for a few practical shortcomings. This enabled us to eat at a restaurant at the other end of town and we walked through the main street on a daily basis, so we did not miss the newly opened de-luxe hotel.

Travel on the island is now very easy, with an asphalt road reaching the main areas of interest. Camping is restricted to designated sites provided with minimal facilities: a sun-shelter of palm trunks and fronds, and a simple lavatory with a tank of water supplied by truck. As we were the sole occupants of the sites for our five nights camping, this was an ideal arrangement.

Our tour of the island took us to Wadi Ayhaft and down into its rocky gorge to bathe in its pool amongst palm gardens; to a camp at Tarhur at 900m altitude before walking for a day upwards, downwards and upwards

Dancers photo Felix Wu

again, through dense woodland towards the Haghier mountain tops. We drove onwards to the Diksam plateau, home to groves of *adenium socotranum*, before reaching the southern shore at Aomak where we camped on the white sandy beach and watched the full moon rise over the Indian Ocean. Proceeding next along the coastal sand dunes of Zahac, we struck inland to another deep, water-filled wadi with dense palm gardens called Farhoh, before ascending to the ethereal plateau of Homhil, forested with *Boswellia* and *Euphorbia* trees, with yet another gorge with sides strewn with *adenium obesum*. We walked down the Wadi Shifa and crossed back to the island's extreme eastern end. We stopped at Araher on the shore and swam in the Arabian Sea before camping under a white sand dune piled against the mountain whence emerged a clear, fresh water stream between grassy banks in which to wash off the salt. Next day we climbed to penetrate the wondrous depths of the Huq Cave and observed the incense-burner placed centuries ago on a plinth at the cave's dank extremity.

We returned to Hadibu by way of the ex-slave colony of Suq, with ruins of a Christian Portuguese church. Its people of African origin had entertained us the previous evening with animated dancing on the beach. With Ahmad, son of Issa bin Ali al Afrar, last ruler of Mahra and Socotra, we also visited the sad ruins of his family house at Ilhah. Issa had ruled from 1951 until he was deposed after independence 1967. He was saved from

public execution by a last minute reprieve from Aden. However the whole family suffered long imprisonment. Ahmad posed for his photograph in front of the fine door of the house.

The second town is Qalansiyah, situated at the western end of the island. Nowhere near the size of Hadibu, it is an expanded fishing village whence small craft are beached on the shingle, with a vast stretch of palm groves nearby. On the way, we passed a row of derelict Russian tanks, reminders of perceived threats to the PDRY regime of the 1970–80s. Arriving, we crossed the final promontory on foot, looking down on to an idyllic expanse of brilliant white sand and azure water, the tidal lagoon of Ditwah which was to be our first camp spot. The next morning we took two fishing craft, each with an outboard motor and a *nakhuda* in charge, and set out to reach the bay of Shuaib. On the passage we saw all kinds of sea birds including the indigenous sooty gull, cormorants and brown boobies. Suddenly there appeared above us a flock of azure blue birds; disappearing, they transformed into a flock of white terns – the azure blue of the sea had been reflected on their undersides. In Shuaib Bay we found a small settlement of dwellings either in caves or made of intertwined driftwood. A man was scraping the flesh from a ray; after preparation he offered us some with tea; delicious! On the return the wind had got up so we got spray from the bows, but we did see schools of dolphins hoping we would join in the fun.

Qalansiyah bay boats photo Julian Lush

Social, economic and political observations

Having described the main features of our trip, what else did we learn? Hadibu, the capital, is a town with a scruffy main street including the suq and administrative building. The black-top roads have transformed mobility for the population which is said to number about 60,000. The previously remote settlements can now be readily in touch with Hadibu and other centres. Air links have allowed groups of Socotris to take up residence in Ajman and they work in the UAE, sending remittances back to families on the island. While Socotri is still spoken, the influence of schooling, TV, and the internet is having its effect and Arabic has become the dominant language.

The economy is still based on traditional fishing off the coast and pastoralism of goats and the dwarf Socotri cattle inland; a few other activities have emerged, including some vegetable gardening and bee keeping. We met a beekeeper whose apiary was under the lee of the main mountain. He turned out to be a young man called Salim bin Mohammad who had been trained under a French assistance programme. Like so much else, there is a Socotran bee, *Apis meliferra socotrana*, which is small and well adapted to the island. In the wild, it makes nests and honey in cavities in rock walls where the small combs of honey are extracted with difficulty, but the bees have also been kept in log hives. Modern methods involve the use of box hives with removable frames which facilitate beekeeping and increase the yield of honey. Salim had learned these techniques and was using both the universal Langstroth hive and also a wedged-shaped hive from Kenya. Fortunately the Socotran bee adapts well to the change of home although it is renowned for being rather aggressive by nature. Salim's Dragon Blood Tree honey is on sale in Hadibu suq – a thick, dark, musty flavoured honey as so greatly favoured in Arabia.

Politically, while we were there we witnessed a small demonstration by the Southern Separatist movement in the Hadibu fish market, marking a link to mainland affairs. How representative that is of islanders' views is open to debate. Most notably socially and politically, there has been a significant influx of mainland Yemenis who, among other activities, run shops in Hadibu. Many are former military personnel who chose to stay on.

BYS support to Socotri organisations

We visited the two organisations which the BYS is supporting. First the Socotra Training Centre teaches English, operating from premises in a house off the main street in Hadibu. It is an Australian charity which the BYS has

supported over the years. Currently it is run by Matt Byrne assisted by five teachers; it provides English language teaching on an extra-curricular basis to some 120 Socotris at a time. When it opened for registration, the day after our visit, 500 youth applied! It could use more gap-year type teachers.

Next we visited our good friend Dr Salem Yousr whom the BYS sponsored for his Masters in Paediatrics at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in 2011. He is now Director of the Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Hospital, built and fully equipped by Abu Dhabi, which opened in December 2012. We met his team of doctors and medical assistants, some of whom run clinics elsewhere on the island. He is also assisted by a Dutch surgeon with previous experience in mainland Yemen. The BYS is currently supporting the training of two female medical students and one nurse in Mukalla. The hospital's main needs for further assistance focus on TB, ophthalmology, reproductive health as well as the provision of mobile clinics to extend coverage to the islands' outlying areas.

Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Hospital photo Felix Wu

Socotri nature

The Dragon's Blood Tree – at last! The *Dracaena cinnabari* is quite magnificent; a huge, dark green mushroom of a tree that is found all over the island; individual trees and groves are mainly on the Diksam Plateau while

on Homhil plateau there are veritable forests. Like so many Socotran endemic plants, it is a succulent, meaning it has a hollow, fibrous stem filled with water stored from the last monsoon rains. Another feature of Socotran plants is their preference for growing straight from rock rather than from soil. The Dragon's Blood is not alone amongst notable succulent trees. There are for example the incense tree *Boswellia socotrana*, of which there are several more *Boswellia* varieties and the magnificent *Adenium socotranum* or *A. obesum* with a vast, beer-belly trunk and delicate pink flowers sprouting on top. There are also aloes, *ficus*, *euphorbia* in many varieties – in all, about 300 endemic Socotran species out of a total of about 900 plants.

Our final encounter was with Ahmad Adheeb. This truly inspired individual has, on his own initiative, created a plantation of 300 or so species of endemic Socotran plants and trees. There they were growing in well-ordered plots, awaiting transplantation to permanent settlement in the wild. There is a problem with natural reproduction of many Socotran species, in particular the Dragon Blood tree, in getting young plants to establish and grow to adulthood. Goats have been blamed but they are not necessarily entirely the cause. Ahmad Adheeb has recently obtained support from Abdullah Buqshan of Saudi Arabia for his project.

Dragon's Blood Trees photo Julian Lush

A PERFECT STORM – TACKLING YEMEN'S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

RICHARD STANFORTH[1]

During the crisis we slept without eating … I cannot work. My business has stopped. Sometimes I pray to die. Sometimes I think about committing suicide. Samar, mother of six, Sana'a, 2011

Samar is one of 10.5 million people in Yemen who do not have enough to eat. At the height of the Arab Spring in 2011, Oxfam employees heard similar stories from ordinary Yemenis who were struggling to find enough work to feed their families. Oxfam[2] is one of the few humanitarian institutions which have been working in Yemen for over 30 years tackling the structural causes of poverty, including education and the severe inequality between men and women. In recent years, it has increased its involvement in humanitarian relief in the country.

Aid policies in recent years

Yemen's humanitarian crisis had been brewing long before the uprising of 2011. In 2009 aid per person in Yemen was less than USD10 a year. Among the least developed countries, only Bangladesh and Myanmar received less. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, US development aid had declined from as little as USD 56.5 million in 2000 to USD 25.5 million in 2008. Following the attempted bombing of a US-bound aircraft in December 2009, Western leaders decided to address not only Islamist insurgency but also the high levels of poverty. Then British Prime Minister Gordon Brown convened an international conference the following month that established the 'Friends of Yemen' as a long-term aid forum. The conference highlighted what Hilary Clinton called the 'appalling indicators' of development and failure of the international community to meet their aid pledges. It also raised the issue of the 2006 London Conference that had pledged USD 5 billion in development aid, of which only USD 415 million had been delivered by 2010.

The first 'Friends of Yemen' conference re-asserted earlier policies which the international community had been attempting to introduce in

[1] Regional Policy Adviser, Oxfam, UK

[2] Readers can find out more about Oxfam's programme in Yemen on the website www.oxfam.org.uk/yemen

Yemen, and in particular to transform the Yemeni economy along the models it applied everywhere, including the standard IMF package designed to gradually cut government spending and raise revenues. This was claimed to be a recipe that would help the state cope with dwindling oil revenues, which are expected to disappear in the coming decade. Yemen's central bank had haemorrhaged two billion dollars in the previous two years and if the trend continued the country could soon be left with insufficient foreign currency reserves to import food. Over 90% of staples are imported. With one of the world's fastest growing populations, it is estimated Yemen only has sufficient arable land available to feed a third of its population.

Reducing the diesel subsidy has been a main focus of the IMF sponsored programme since 1995. While it uses over a third of government spending, and is widely diverted to smuggling by powerful agents, reducing the subsidy is a very unpopular measure as everyone needs it and it leads to the increase of prices of all basic commodities. The World Bank, IMF, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), as well as multiple NGOs including Oxfam championed the need for funding agencies to support social protection schemes – cash transfers and benefit programmes targeting the poor and vulnerable. At the Friends of Yemen conference in September 2012, the international community made a commitment to provide additional support to social protection schemes.

Social welfare and hunger in Yemen

Despite the pledges, most funding failed to materialise, causing increased hardship given the dramatic rises in all basic necessity prices as well as diesel in 2011. Yemen's Social Welfare Fund provides very limited regular payments to some of the poorest in the country. But is has insufficient resources to increase its payment levels or expand its coverage to reach the hundreds of thousands of other poor Yemeni households who need urgent humanitarian assistance.

Despite growing awareness of the high levels of poverty in Yemen, hunger was not on the radar of many funding agencies in 2010, and reports of malnutrition were often ignored. UNICEF Ambassador Martin Bell's images of malnourished children for ITN News secured little global attention. In a prescient and bold statement the World Food Programme's Country Director Gian Carlo Cirri said:

> The destabilising role of hunger should not be underestimated…It is of high concern because when people don't have food they have three options. The first one is to revolt. The second is to migrate. And the third is to starve.

In 2009, the World Food Programme undertook a national Comprehensive Food Security Survey and found that 58% of Yemeni children under 5 were chronically malnourished, and more than 1 in 10 were suffering from acute malnutrition. At the time, Yemen was second only to Afghanistan for the prevalence of young children with stunted growth in the population. By 2010, surveys in several governorates showed malnutrition levels exceeding the emergency threshold and indeed in some pockets were as severe as found in the Somalia food crisis.

Tihama: basket making as a basic form of income generation photo Helen Lackner

A perfect storm

In 2011, Yemenis came into the streets throughout the country to protest in their hundreds of thousands seeking the downfall of the regime. There was also fighting between military factions in Sana'a, leading many embassies to close their doors. Hundreds of millions of pounds of aid were suspended or delayed by the international community, either as a political measure to influence the political situation and encourage reforms, or out of funders' fear that aid could not be managed or monitored remotely. The European

Commission was one of the few funders who sought to continue assistance, and non-government local and international aid agencies continued their programmes throughout the country. Yemen's Social Welfare Fund and Social Fund for Development continued providing some services, if erratically.

The political and economic situation was compounded by frequent cutting of the oil pipeline and the electricity network by tribes complaining of the lack of attention to their problems. These actions had considerable impact on the humanitarian situation. In Hodeida governorate, Oxfam found that the price of rice increased by 60% in some rural areas. Two-thirds of people Oxfam surveyed reported they were skipping meals to try and cope with the crisis. Food was readily available in local markets yet people could not afford to buy basic staples demonstrating, yet again, that the issue of hunger is not one of availability but one of having the means to access food. Cash payments can thus allow people to purchase what they need as well as ensure local markets can continue to operate and provide food. They also help give beneficiaries freedom to pay for other expenses such as fuel and water.

Oxfam asked the European Commission if it would trial a monthly cash transfer programme of payments to thousands of the poorest households. This programme was to complement the work of the Social Welfare Fund, as it used the beneficiary information provided by the Social Welfare Fund, though the amounts paid by Oxfam are higher. This programme also used the Yemeni Post Office to deliver the funds. Oxfam surveys showed that beneficiaries were not 'wasting' payments on *qat* but buying food, medicine and paying off their debts. The programme was tremendously effective and the European Commission agreed to expand it. Oxfam is now working alongside the Social Welfare Fund to find ways to improve service delivery and ensure long term funding from the Yemeni government and funders.

Sadly, many Yemenis tell us they have not recovered from events of 2011 and continue to struggle to make a living. Cash transfers are a necessary but insufficient response. With DFID's help, Oxfam and other aid agencies are now working alongside communities to help build their resilience, enabling them to cope with future problems without triggering a humanitarian crisis. For example, Oxfam is supporting 300 people in the town of Hays in Hodeida Governorate. Beneficiaries have been provided with seeds to help re-establish their livelihoods. Yusuf Salim Abdullah, one of the beneficiaries, told Oxfam:

> It was difficult because of the 2011 crisis. I used to harvest about 170 kgs in a normal year. But in 2011, I stopped farming; we didn't harvest one kilo. It was hard because we couldn't buy food and medicines. We ate half of our normal portions of food. Oxfam's help makes a difference. I can farm again. Nowadays, we don't have money to buy diesel or seeds but now we can farm. If we didn't have this help, God knows what would happen.

Oxfam staff in Yemen report that while communities used to see a hunger season followed by a harvest. Now they face hunger all year round. The future for millions of Yemenis will remain uncertain without sustained investment from donors, and commitment from the Yemeni government and civil society to tackle the humanitarian crisis. While USD 8 billion have been pledged at the Friends of Yemen meetings, little of this has yet materialised and, at the time of writing, the UN's Consolidated Humanitarian Appeal for Yemen is only funded at about 40% for the year. There is clearly an urgent need for continuing humanitarian assistance to help the poorest Yemenis who have insufficient resources and cannot find paid employment.

Dhamar – Wusab al Ijraf suq photos Helen Lackner

THE LIVERPOOL ARAB ARTS FESTIVAL (LAAF)

HAYFA SHOWQI ABDULRAHMAN [1]

Let me take you back to the year 1997. Vibrant festivities representing a vast array of cultures, notably the African Oye, had already emerged as a prominent feature on Liverpool's social calendar. The dream of an Arab festival started with the Liverpool Yemen Festival, which I remember fondly from my childhood. Today's LAAF is the result of many years of hard work.

In 1993, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, members of the Yemeni community, supported by Liverpool City Council, researched the Yemeni community in Liverpool, which then numbered about 2000 people. The research revealed a number of issues for the community, and in particular the need for an Arabic school. Parents felt that their children were losing a vital part of their heritage, and thus their identity. As a result the Nadey al Cul, literally 'the club for all', was established in 1996 by Taher Ali Qassim MBE, the late Abdulrahman Abdulwarith, Ilham Ali, Showqi Abdulrahman, Ilham Al Hakimi, Afrah Qassim, Muna Khasaf, and a few other Yemenis who were prominent in the community. The acronym Nadey al Cul stood for News, Advocacy, Development, Education of Yemeni Arabic Language and Culture.

The club initiated community projects, promoting Arabic language and culture in various formal and informal settings. It organised an Arabic school for children, which was unique at the time for incorporating arts, drama and educational trips. I remember attending the Arabic school as a child, and how I would wait eagerly for 'English' school to end, so that I could rush to Arabic school, to meet my friends from many different backgrounds such as Morocco, Sudan, Iraq, as well as non-Arab friends.

The club also held events, showcasing Arab culture, initially largely of Yemeni inspiration, held for the Yemeni community. In 1997 the first 'Liverpool Yemen Festival, a unique event for Merseyside' was held. It included poetry performed by al Mihdhar and Yemeni musicians also featured, alongside exhibitions, and numerous workshops. The local newspaper went on to say that these events were 'enthusiastically received'. This was followed by the establishment of a partnership between Nadey al Cul

[1] Hayfa is a young British Yemeni from Liverpool currently studying Philosophy and Politics at the University of Leeds. She thanks Taher Qassim for his help and encouragement in writing this article.

Razak Mossa, Marcel Khalife, Musaad Mohsen and Najib al Hakimi in front of the LAC office photo Taher Qassim

and the Bluecoat Arts Centre which used the Club's knowledge and expertise of Arab culture and combined this with the respected status of the Bluecoat which had the venue to host events and the ability to provide financial support. They formed Nadey al Bluecoat.

The evolution of Nadey al Cul is shown by the shift of advertising for the festival from small homemade postcards to the stylish 25 page brochures of today. Nadey al Cul, remained focused on broader perspectives with the 1999, 'Fusion of live Arabic and Celtic music' with over 450 guests. Amongst the fun dancing, eating and socialising, we also discovered the similarities of Yemeni and Celtic music through the use of instruments like the Bodhran. The switch from Dabke (folk dance from the Levant) to Irish line dancing back to Lahji (Yemeni folk dance) was amusing.

Celebrations continued throughout the summer of 1999 with the 'Arab Weekend' hosted by Nadey al Bluecoat, which hosted an impressive array of artists: Palestinian Adel Salameh, impressed the audience with his famous classical *oud* alongside the Lebanese Eyal Sela and Asaf Sirkis. This was followed by a fun and lively 'Sundance Plus'. Guests were encouraged to bring instruments from home and participate in making music. Arab dance workshops, and poetry also kept the audience entertained. The standard was set, and from then on, the bar could only be raised for the future

annual event which would become a main feature of Liverpool's social calendar, as each year excelled the previous.

The following year guests were invited to a village of the Yemeni highlands in the heart of the city. Close your eyes and imagine being amongst friends and family deep in the heart of Yemen, as people experienced the famous hospitality in a tent in Liverpool's City Centre. The simple design, yet intricate attention to detail were evident in the colours and patterns. The aroma of homemade cakes served with mocha coffee. Adults enjoyed wearing traditional costumes, whilst children were mesmerised by the storytelling of Amel Tafsout, whereby the senses depicted the scenery, transporting us to the Middle East, to further appreciate the experience.

The spectacle continued the following year with dance workshops taking centre stage. Most notably, Hossam Ramzy, the famous Egyptian artist, master of the tabla, performed classical and baladi music. Additionally, Marrakesh arrived to Liverpool, bringing its delicious cuisine, music and dance. A permanent feature of the Arab Arts Festival is the 'Family Day' held at the Palm House, located in Sefton Park, while the Big Saturday was organised at the Bluecoat. Families came together in a socially appropriate setting, immersing themselves in the unified culture. The festival has been successful in removing social barriers to allow people of different faiths, backgrounds and interests to enjoy the celebrations together.

In 2002, the official launch of the LAAF took place at St George's Hall, as part of the 'One City, One World' to support the council's bid to be 2008

LAC Sheba Group, Bluecoat Big Saturday photo Taher Qassim

French and Yemeni Musicians at St George's Hall photo Taher Qassim

European Capital of Culture. That year also marked the introduction of contemporary Arab cinema at LAAF. In 2003, several prominent new partners participated: the National Museums Liverpool, BBC Radio Merseyside, the Palm House, Neptune Theatre and the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) cinema. During 2004, we were also joined by a further two partners, the Philharmonic Hall and the Yemeni Community Association. Liverpool City Council dedicated 2004 as the year of faith which put LAAF in good stead through their contribution in highlighting knowledge and understanding across all communities.

Closure of the Bluecoat Centre in 2005 for major building works only reinforced the importance of partnerships, not only in the sharing of planning and expertise, but also the practicalities, as LAAF events heavily relied on partner venues during the renovation. In 2005 LAAF presented a fascinating talk on the architecture of Yemen, Oman and Egypt. That year, tributes were made to the late Edward Said, the renowned writer and political activist from Palestine, as 'The Last Interview' was showcased in Picture House at FACT, offering an in depth account of his life and works.

Annual features include the 'Family Day' at the Palm House, and films showing at the FACT cinema. Each year also promises to offer something new whether sound, sights, or themes. In 2007, despite the bad political news from the Middle East, the LAAF had a wide variety of entertainment and interests to cater to everyone, regardless of backgrounds. Beautiful visual ceramic arts were exhibited, and iconic photography, capturing the

Young artists at Saturday Arabic School preparing their comics exhibition photo Taher Qassim

'ancient incense and spice routes of Yemen'. The Lebanese musician Marcel Khalife is famous and has been honoured by UNESCO as Artist for Peace 2005; he has become one of LAAF's patrons.

In 2008, Liverpool was the European Capital of Culture and saw the richest and biggest LAAF programme to date, with the 'One World One City' programme, including the hit single 'Didi' by Cheb Khaled played at the Philharmonic. With its catchy chorus and combined Algerian Rai and Western music, it is the signature song that has made him most popular across the world. Devout fans had travelled from all over the UK wearing the Algerian flag, flaunting their patriotic pride.

Egyptian singer Natacha Atlas returned to LAAF in 2009, after a successful appearance in 2004 in a breathtaking collaboration with Syrian musician Abdullah Chehadeh at the Philharmonic Hall. That year the youth also danced to the sounds of Palestine's young hip hop group Ramallah Underground. This ability to cater to the tastes of all generations demonstrates LAAF's sense of fun, and variety. The LAAF received the esteemed Arab British Culture and Society Award in 2010. Highlights from the 2010 festival included a performance by the revered Egyptian singer Mohamed Mounir.

In 2011, LAAF celebrated its tenth anniversary. This was a pivotal year in the Middle East thanks to the Arab Spring, with revolutions as daily occurrences. To reflect the political situation, the theme of LAAF was 'History and Change,' and the selection of art reflected religious and geopolitical perspectives of the resistance. The artists were given a platform to express their opinions and feelings about the political situation, through their art and literature. 'The Freedom Hour' and the Egyptian Independent Theatre Ahmed El Attar's 'Revolution Diaries' are examples of works exhibited, that evoked thoughts and ideas that we may have not previously considered.

With the continuing political instability in parts of the Arab world, and the concern from Arabs in the Diaspora, in 2012 LAAF created an arena celebrating people's interpretation of their worlds, demonstrating that the power of humanity and endurance can be used as a catalyst for optimism and hope. This year saw acts such as the Palestinian American Maysoon Zayid's stand-up comedy act; this was a well-attended night, providing laughter and fun for all. Additionally the Walker Art Gallery displayed samples of Arab political cartoons thus making light of an otherwise controversial issue.

The concept of identity was the topic for LAAF 2013. The Arab people are one of the world's most diverse which contributes to the richness of our culture. The Arabs also have a long, compelling history, both domestically and in their international relations, most notably with the British and French. The LAAF promised to represent each 'Arab face' independently of any media induced distortions and reveal the treasures of the 'million different faces' through the rich art, philosophy, and history, giving us the Arab culture we know and celebrate today. This year, the festival received more media interest than previously as correspondent Anwar al-Ansi and video producer Stuart Antrobus prepared an impressive report that was broadcast on the BBC.

Each LAAF is preceded by a long sequence of activities and tasks in its preparation. The outcome is the reward of years of meticulous planning, preparation and organisation which highlight the major efforts and inputs of the team and its ability to ensure continued good community relations, effective marketing, publicity and handling of media interest. Despite today's negative image of the Arab world and the difficult circumstances which the Arab world is living through, in Liverpool we have a festival which brings people together to learn, appreciate and understand other cultures and build bridges between them. The festival focuses on the positive through its involvement with both local communities as well as bringing international artists and audience. Whilst LAAF has no political or religious affiliation, it provides a platform for expression of a wide range of views through the mediums of art, music, cinema, and academic debate.

The potential of LAAF is profound. We have already seen it expand from a small, close knit community in Liverpool, to receiving international recognition and prestige, which inevitably boosts the social dynamics and economic climate of the city. The challenge that LAAF will have to address in future is how to remain original while reinventing itself annually.

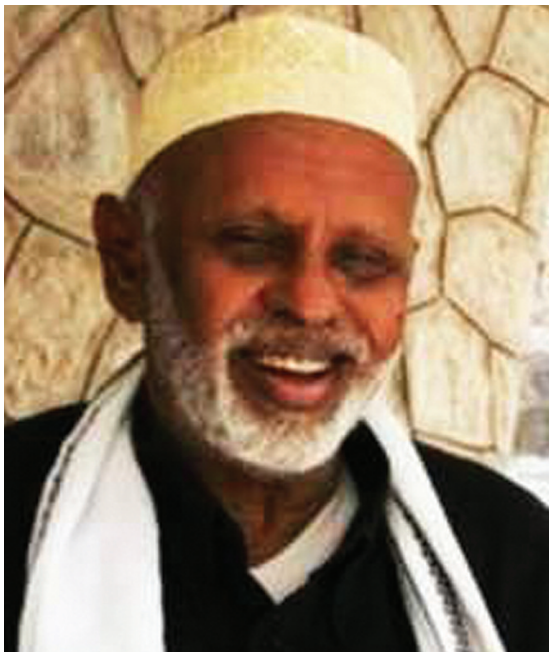
MOHAMMAD MURSHED NAGI: A MAJOR YEMENI MUSICIAN

ADEL AULAQI

The outstanding Yemeni musician of the twentieth century, Mohammad Murshed Nagi, fondly called Abu Ali, al-Murshidi or simply Murshidi, was born on 6th November 1929 in Shaikh Othman, Aden. His mother, Orla Abdi, was Somali and his father from the village of *Ma'afer al-Showaifah* in *Hujariah*. His father had migrated from the Yemeni Imamate and settled in Aden where he worked in sea-salt manufacturing, first as a labourer later rising to become a supervisor.

Murshidi's early years were joyful; his mother was his anchor and provider. Her death in his final year of primary school devastated him and coloured his life for a considerable time. After learning the entire Qur'an at the *madrasah* of Faqih Ahmed al-Gabali, he entered Shaikh Othman's government primary school. Here he met a number of people who were to become influential intellectuals later in life and started life-long friendships with Mohammad Saeed Muswat (who later become a founder member of the Teachers Union and the Aden Trade Union Congress, ATUC), Othman Abdo Mohammad, Saad Qaid, and sportsman Abdul Razzaq Ma'tooq. His long list of friends included poets such as Mohammad Saeed Garadah, Abdullah Hadi Subait and Lutfi Jaffer Aman, and many others in Aden's thriving literary world, in politics and in ordinary life. His primary school teacher, Ahmed Hassan Abdul-Lateef discovered his talent and encouraged him to sing. His first public singing performance was at his primary school.

His family's lack of funds and lack of a patron to intercede on their behalf limited the scope of his early education. After primary school he had a few brief and unsettled periods of schooling in the Keith Falconer Mission Hospital School in Shaikh Othman, St. Joseph's Catholic School in Crater (*madrasat al-badri*, The Padre School) and an apprenticeship with Saleh Hassan Turki followed. Turki was a teacher, singer and an accomplished musician. His schools offered teaching of the Qur'an, as well as standard primary, middle and secondary education. Here Murshidi received a good grounding in English. However, self-education became his life-long mission. He was still only sixteen when his father followed local custom and arranged for his marriage. In 1948, aged seventeen, his first son, Ali, was born; a year later the marriage was dissolved.



Mohammad Murshed Nagi.
By kind permission of his family

To earn an income and obtain a clerkship certificate, he sought employment with Aramco in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Soon he fell ill with TB. Before the advent of streptomycin in 1950, treatment involved eighteen months recuperation in a sanatorium which he underwent in late 1948 in Shaikh Othman under Dr. E. Cochrane; he made a full recovery. Music ran in his family. His father had a good voice, and his older half-brother played the *simsimiya*, a hand-held four or six string lyre (see picture on page 42). Both gave him his first singing lessons. Initially he played the drum (*tabla*) in musical bands that were an essential component of wedding celebrations. He absorbed a great deal of the art of singing and musical techniques from the numerous singers and musicians he played with. He also listened to shellac[1] records on gramophones. For a period he sang, accompanying lute players. His neighbour, Ahmed Quradi, gave him his first *oud* which Murshidi quickly mastered. Shortly after that he created his own band with whom he sang.

As Murshidi became better known, Idris Hanbalah, a teacher, labour union activist and archivist, recommended him as a member of the Aden Musical Club which had been established in 1948. The poet Garadah suggested that Murshidi compose his own music and presented him with his beautifully composed and evocative poem '*he-yah waqfaton*' (It is a Pause). In 1951 Murshidi surprised and captivated the audience with his first musical composition inspired by Garadah's '*he-yah waqfaton*'. He sang a new kind of melodious and passionate love melody that brought fresh meaning to a single moment of furtive love in Aden. It launched him as a serious composer/singer.

The arrival of Radio in Aden in 1954 instantly gave artists like Murshidi a much wider audience both in terms of numbers and of geographical

[1] Shellac is a resin used to make records during the era of 78-rpm records.

Yemeni musical instruments on PDRY stamps. including the *simsimiya* (bottom right)

coverage. Previously, artists had performed live in confined traditional spaces in social clubs or *diwans*, in school or cinema theatres and mostly at weddings in *makhdaras*[2]. Murshidi recognised that radio turned him from an amateur into a professional artist.

Like all artists of the day, his were labours of love spiced by intense competition to innovate and excel. However his art did not provide a living income, so he and other artists sought various salaried posts, a few in teaching. His non-musical career included the post of secretary to Deputy Sultan Hussein bin Abdullah al-Fadhli in 1950, and teacher and deputy head at al-Nahdha al-Arabia School in Shaikh Othman. In 1956 he returned to Abyan as secretary to Sultan Abdullah Othman al-Fadhli with whom he travelled across Europe. By now he was already an accomplished musician. While working for the Fadhli sultan in Zinjibar, he was happy to play his lute (*oud*) on request in the afternoons. His individual style of

[2] The term *makhdara* is used to cover both a ceremonial event as well as the temporary secluding structure erected in the street to hold the celebration.

playing, his sweet and distinctive voice, and the clarity of his lyrical expression defined him as a musician. In 1959, he returned to office work in British Petroleum (BP).

In 1956 Aden was predominantly Arab but was also a multicultural and multiracial melting pot. It was the time of an *apogée* of a cultural flowering and economic prosperity, accompanied by a fair degree of freedom of expression. I attended the premiere of his song *ya-dhalem* (You unjust/oppressor). Taking Abdullah Hadi Subait's lyrics he composed and delivered a rousing memorable anthem. It vividly portrayed the plight of the oppressed Yemeni people and served notice of their striving for freedom. His *ya-dhalem* and *ya-biladi* (Lutfi Aman's 'Oh my Country') epitomised a new openly political attitude. Such songs challenged both the colonial and the Imamate ruling systems simultaneously. In this and in new love songs he was not alone.

The period between the 1940s and the mid-1960s saw the birth and flowering of Aden's new cultural and political elite. Other musicians, composers and singers, Ahmed Qassim, Abdullah Hadi Subait, but especially Mohammad Mohsen Atroosh and many other artists, writers, poets and satirists also chanted to the new rhythms and freer expressions of love between men and women. They also voiced incessant calls for freedom from the Imamate rule in the North and for independence in South Arabia.

Musicians and singers such as Khalil Muhammad Khalil and Salem Ba Madhaf had a distinctively languid Adeni style. Ahmed Qassim and others, influenced by the Egyptians, used musical notes and introduced mixed gender choruses and new orchestral sounds and styles. Using transparent metaphors, they sang of subtle encounters between men and women beyond the traditional restrictions. They went beyond the *Diwan* and the *Makhdarah* and took their works to a wider audience on the public stage. Murshidi consistently contributed to this cultural renaissance. He worked closely with many including perhaps the only famous local performer of monologues and satirist Fouad al-Sharif. The two took their work to East Africa to connect with Arabs and Yemenis there, and Murshidi also took his band to the Gulf and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

He differed from his musical contemporaries with his deep interest in analysing the legacy of works and his efforts in reviving traditional Yemeni songs. Referring to their origins, he coined the term 'the four colours of Yemeni song'; the *Sana'ani*, *Laheji*, *Hadhrami* and *Yafi'i*. He also modernised the *Sana'ani* song beyond its narrow traditional confines and

was the first to popularise the Tihami song. In 1959, he published his first book *Aghaneena al-sha'biah* (Our Traditional/popular Songs); a rich source on musicians and poets of the day.

He showed great respect and admiration for his talented band, orchestra and chorus who, like him, performed without written musical notes. A versatile artist, he composed and sang across a number of Arabic musical scales and styles to poems in classical Arabic as well as lyrics in various dialects. Much of the latter was allegorical. He translated old and current Yemeni hardships and projected them into the political arena and common consciousness. In a recent interview he described himself fundamentally 'as a political man whose art was not created for entertainment but to deliver political statements'.

His strongest political comment was through his anthems in the period of transition from the Imamate and colonial rule to independence. In the mid-1960s his art and fame went beyond Yemen. He visited the Gulf States and collaborated with many Gulf artists and a number of others, including Mohammad Abdo and the Lebanese singer Fahd Ballan. The latter sang Murshidi's love melody *ya najm ya samir*. He continued to contribute in the various and difficult post-independence upheavals and transformations in the People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). Perhaps somewhat excluded in the earlier post-independence years, it was in 1980s PDRY that he became a Member of Parliament and President of the Federation of Yemeni Artists. Then, in Aden, he also licensed new musicians. In 1977 he turned into song the overtly political poem by Sultan al-Sareemi, *Nashwan*, which was critical of the regime in the YAR and in praise of the PDRY. But Murshidi added a final verse 'and do not believe the league of our uncle Rashwan' which was censored in the South for its thinly veiled criticism of then President Salem Rubai' Ali (Salmeen) whose politics Murshidi disliked. A few years later, he was encouraged by Ali Nasser Mohammad and colleagues to sing it for its criticism of Northern failure to care for its citizens.

Another moment of dissent was his scoring a tune to Abdul Fattah Ismail's words *Taj al nahar* (Day's Crown) when Ismail was being exiled to Russia. Having sung the song to Abdul Fattah when he was still in power, Murshidi recorded and distributed it discreetly when the leader was in exile, sailing close to the moment's changed political wind. In *Hujariah* dialect and rich in symbolism *Taj al nahar* was published under Ismail's pen

name *dhu Yezen*, after Saif bin dhu Yezen (516–574), the Himyarite king who rescued Yemen from the Ethiopians. Much of Murshidi's best social commentary during the PDRY period found expression in dialect songs such as *layh ya-booy* (Oh why my friend?) a symbolic question superficially expressing rejection by a romantically loved one but equally on being ignored or side-lined.

In 1983, supported by then president Ali Nasser, he organised a major and somewhat controversial Arab Conference on the Yemeni Humaini[3] and Andalusian origins of Arab *m-wash-ahat* (a post-classical form of Arab poetry, arranged in stanzas).

From 1990 onwards, soon after Yemeni unification, he held the post of Adviser to the Minister of Culture. Between 1997 and 2003 he was a member of the House of Representatives, in Sana'a. This was a period when he was much decorated by Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the Arab Institute in Paris and, on at least two occasions, by President Ali Abdullah Saleh, first in 1982 and then in 1997.

He wrote and also gave a number of interviews about wedding celebrations or *makhdarah* and the intimate role these ceremonies played in the development of Yemeni music. At these events guests, concealing money in their right hand, walk a carpeted central reservation flanked by *qat*-chewing men comfortably socialising whilst reclining against firm cushions. Musical bands loudly entertain the guests with old and new songs. High on the platform at the farthest end of the *makhdarah*, the resplendent reclining groom-to-be, chewing *qat* too, receives his guests with a smile. Shaking right hands, the money is adroitly accepted and transferred to the collection box. The guest then joins the others to chew *qat* and socialise. It was one way for family, relatives, friends and members of a community to aid each other without embarrassment. Repayment would come soon enough at other *makhdarahs*. Today the structures are often replaced by modern weddings and entertainment halls and live music by digital reproductions.

Murshidi expounded on the significant role the *makhdarah* played in keeping the traditional Yemeni song alive in his substantial work *al-ghinaa al-yamani al-qadeem wa masha-heeruhu*, (Old Yemeni Song and its Eminent Singers). Live music was central to wedding celebrations. It sometimes lasted uninterrupted for three days and nights. Demand on musicians

3 Humaini is one of two genres of traditional Yemeni poetry, often sung with the *oud* and normally performed by professionals. It is characterised by being colloquial and not adhering strictly to classical rules of language and versification.

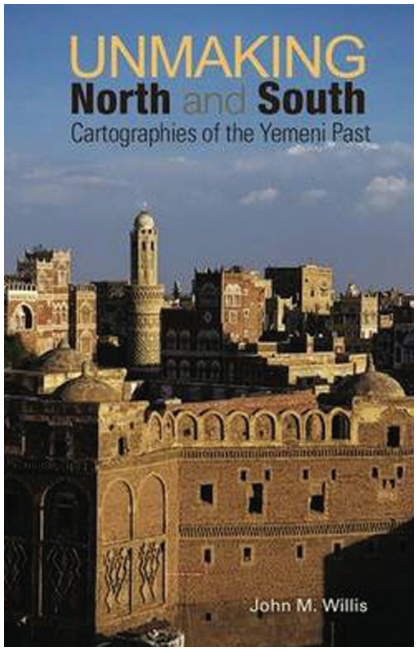
was such that none would re-sing someone else's song. Each could use another's score or tune but applied his own creative virtuoso variation. Such intense competition ensured the creative development of the Yemeni song. Lyricists also competed to better the others in love songs and nationalistic compositions.

The post-independence political realities in southern Arabia led many to leave the area taking their musical memories. Hearing Murshidi's recordings evoke pleasant memories of music and song reminding one of an Aden of bygone days. When researching this article, many people confirmed this orally and in some cases in writing. Murshidi's major role as part of a large collective musical memory has helped them retain an important emotional connection with their Aden. Despite the challenges he faced, Murshidi accomplished much, especially in music and writing. His distinctive voice and range of musical works defined him to the public, brought him his best achievements and arguably led to his involvement in politics.

Murshidi also published four valuable documentary books including *aghani Sha'abiah* (Popular Traditional Songs), *al-ghinaa al-yamani al-qadeem wa masha-heeruhu* (Yemeni Song and Its Renowned Singers), and *safahat min aldhikrayat* (Pages of Memories). His last book *oughniat wa hikayat* (Songs and Stories) was completed shortly before his death. It contains nuggets of the tales behind the songs and promises to be a valuable source for future researchers as well as of considerable interest to anyone interested in the history of Yemeni music. He also wrote a great deal on music and its art in newspapers. These need detailed collation and appropriate archiving, which his family is in the process of doing. His impact in the post-independence political arena awaits detailed analysis.

Perhaps it is fitting to end with musicologist Anderson Bakewell's lines on Murshidi's musical works:

> As a musician he was certainly an accomplished representative of the 'southern style', fluid of rhythm and sweet of voice, but amongst the great names of post-1970 Yemeni musical artists, he stands out, for as well as being a fine musician and bard, he was also an author. His book *al-ghinaa al-yamani al-qadeem wa masha-heeruhu* is a comprehensive study of traditional Yemeni songs and features biographical material on their most accomplished practitioners of the twentieth century.
>
> Murshidi died on 7 February 2013 from chronic heart illness and was buried the same day, thus his family avoided State official involvement. His life touched many and he will be missed by those who knew him as well as others who only knew him through his art. *Allah Yarhamuh*.



Unmaking North and South: Cartographies of the Yemeni Past by John M. Willis, Hurst & Company 2012, pp. 273 (figures, maps. notes, bibliography, index), paperback, £21. ISBN: 978-1-85065-981-5.

John Willis sets out to answer the question 'how were North and South Yemen made possible as bounded political, social and moral spaces?' He examines the history of the two Yemeni lands in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the light of the complex and manifold linkages between them and how they were influenced by the power structures of British and Ottoman imperialist systems and ideas and movements coming from the Indian, European and Muslim worlds. Willis describes the evolution of the Aden protectorate and its relations with the Ottoman authorities, which re-occupied much of North Yemen from 1872 to 1918, as well as the interactions between both empires and the Hamid al-Din Dynasty up to 1934, the year that the Yemeni and British authorities 'agreed' the border that eventually separated the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) until they unified in 1990.

As the British expanded their influence from Aden after 1839 they engaged with the 'nine tribes' (Abdali, Aqrabi, Alawi, Amiri, Awlaqi, Fadhli, Hawshabi, Subayhi and Yafi'i) which had rejected rule by the Qasimi dynasty a century earlier. Following the Ottoman return to Yemen and suspicions that it would attempt to assert control over these tribes, the British 'requested' in 1873 that the Porte recognise the 'independence' of the tribes. They were brought into the Aden Protectorate (later Western Aden Protectorate) as the British signed agreements with the 'chiefly families'. Willis shows that the British were greatly influenced by their experience in India, which directed British policy in the region at the time. There was an assumption that the 'native chiefs' ruled their subjects in the same way as those in the Raj. Loyalty to the British would flow via the Amir, Sultan or Shaikh from the people. In reality, as many political advisers on

the ground later learned, the entities were composed of many tribes and clans whose relations with the so-called ruling families were not those of obedient citizens but of independent-minded people whose loyalty had to be earned and retained with the help of money, weapons and other support the British could provide. Willis examines in detail how this worked in the Abdali Sultanate and the Amirate of Dhala', the two areas most susceptible to influences from the north. Misunderstandings of the nature of relationships between the tribes led to the demonisation of the Subayhi, in part because of their rejection of Abdali leadership. A chapter is devoted to examining the highly complex situation in Dhala', where the British were forced into much closer engagement than they wished, but this helped them reach a better understanding of the realities of the situation – marking the demise of the Indian approach to 'protecting' the south.

The policies of the Ottoman governors were similarly shaped by the Porte's long experience of empire but also were influenced by 'tanzimat' reforms of the late nineteenth century. Under Ottoman thinking, Yemen was not up to the level of other provinces and needed 'uplifting'. The resulting administration was a pragmatic mixture of modernist and more traditional forms of rule. This saw the Turks, faced with fierce resistance by the Yemeni tribes, seeking to co-opt the Zaydi Imam whilst maintaining a firm Ottoman military hand. However, a rebellion by Imam Mansour against the Turks was taken to a new level under the rule of his son Yahya Bin Muhammad Hamid al-Din, who succeeded him in 1904. He obliged the Turks in 1911 to sign the Treaty of Da'an that recognised his religious and temporal authority over the Zaydi lands whilst accepting, clearly only for as long as necessary, his subordination to the Ottoman Sultan. When the Ottomans left in 1918, Yahya set about extending his control first to the Sunni south and then to other parts of Yemen. Willis shows the influence on Imam Yahya of the ideas and thinking of Muhammad Ali al-Shawkani, who was Chief Judge under the Qasimi rulers of the early nineteenth century and associated with bringing together Zaydi and Sunni concepts. Imam Yahya, who was also in touch with broader reformist movements in the Arab and Muslim Worlds, emerges in this study as a remarkable modern ruler. He sought to bring order and obedience to what had been disorder and chaos. Like Yemeni rulers before and after him, he understood that he would need to build a modern army powerful enough to subdue and coerce powerful tribes. He extended his rule to the borders of what later became the YAR but over-reached himself in taking on the resurgent

al-Sa'ud regime under King Abdul Aziz and was obliged in the Treaty of Taif of 1934 to lose the former Yemeni provinces of Asir and Najran.

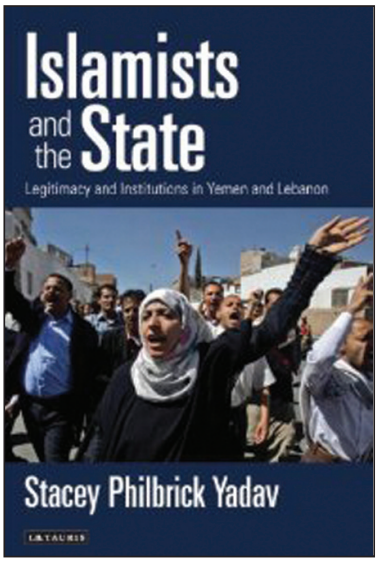
In this same year, Yahya agreed on the southern border with the British, based on an earlier accord signed by London and Istanbul (that did not prevent Turkish troops occupying Dhala' for several years up to 1918). Yahya's power was in decline and the British, following the appointment of Bernard Reilly as Political resident in Aden, launched their forward policy. This further developed the tactics begun in the late 1920s of using British air power to make up for the weak support on the ground for the Amir of Dhala' and others and forced the Yemeni armies to retreat behind the 1934 border. The treaty may have marked the end of Imam Yahya's irredentism but it also set the limit of British influence. The Imam and many of the Yemeni elite continued to regard the South as part of their Yemen, albeit one that was under temporary British control. The border was never a line on the map but – at least viewed from the North – something much less determined or permanent. It did not stop Yahya and his successor from using a variety of means to extend their authority into the lands of the nine tribes.

The end of the Imamate came with the arrival in Yemen of Arab nationalism. The new Republican regime supported the National Liberation Front that inherited the South from the British in 1967 – and ruled for less than 23 years before signing the unity agreement of 1990. There are echoes today in al-Hiraak in the south of the revolt of the nine tribes in the nineteenth century perhaps indicating that the 1934 border has not yet been eradicated in the minds of at least some Yemenis.

Willis describes and analyses these events in a brilliant scholarly manner, drawing on primary sources in the literature and archives but also on travel writing and the press and periods of research in Yemen. His narrative is full of interesting detail and is fascinating reading for those who want to know about this formative period in the making of modern Yemen and the contrived artificial nature that once divided North and South. It may be a little too dense for the general reader and does require determined concentration to follow the intricacies of his arguments but his fluent writing assists. Those that make the effort are rewarded by his insights (and some remarkable anecdotes) into how events and human endeavour – and failings – helped forge the Yemen we see today.

NOEL BREHONY

Islamists and the State. Legitimacy and Institutions in Yemen and Lebanon, by Stacey Philbrick-Yadav, London: IB Tauris, 2013, pp. 267, £59.50. ISBN 978-1-780765-21-1.



Comparative studies of Islamist movements have, overall, been scarce. Interestingly, they often include Yemen (which is by any standards understudied and considered as peripheral by most), as a point of comparison. Both Janine Clark and Jillian Schwedler produced stimulating books on issues of political participation and charitable activities taking Yemen as one of their case-studies. Stacey Philbrick Yadav in this book presents us with a fascinating analysis of the way two Islamist parties, Hezbollah in Lebanon and al-Islah in Yemen, interact with state institutions and contribute to their strengthening. These two case studies appear at first to be unsuitable for comparison for historical, social, economic and religious reasons, hence the decision to compare them is in itself a thought provoking endeavor and an interesting attempt to build bridges between academic sub-areas that unfortunately often tend to ignore one another.

The author starts off with the assumption which for a long time was non-conformist but is now increasingly dominant, that the practices and discourse of Islamist movements are driven less by ideology and transnational commonalities and more by their local context. As François Burgat once claimed 'Islamism is politics as usual'. Stacey Philbrick Yadav brilliantly proves the relevance of such a statement in the case of both Lebanon and Yemen. She makes a strong point presenting the minute details of the internal struggles within al-Islah and Hezbollah during various periods of crises. She further highlights 'the transformative effect on the political identities' of Islamists of a variety of interactions and institutional practices with other parties and state institutions. Her focus on the way these two parties have debated and forged public discussion beyond the Islamist realm on issues of accusations of disbelief in God (*takfir*) and allegations of treason (*takhwin*) are most interesting case studies. They explicitly demonstrate the capacity of both parties, in specific and ever-evolving contexts, to establish their authority over the definition of religion and the nation through 'local markets of meaning'.

While the variety of sources used by the author is notable both in English and Arabic, some important gaps remain, in particular in the field of the historical roots of Islamism in Yemen and Lebanon. It is a pity, for example, that academic publications in French have not been used more widely and that certain recent Arabic works have passed unnoticed, in particular some that document Muhammad al-Zubayri's (one of the founding fathers of the Islamist movement in Yemen and a republican figure) establishment of a political movement he called 'Hezbollah' in 1964 during the civil war.[1] This event, which would have, at least symbolically, built bridges between both case-studies, ends up being ignored. While maybe only anecdotal in Philbrick Yadav's perspective, this attempt to establish a Yemeni Hezbollah more than twenty years before the creation of the Lebanese Hezbollah, which al-Zubayri legitimised by stating that 'no one would ever dare to present himself as an opponent of the party of God', nevertheless illustrates a number of interesting dynamics and contextual variables, in particular the social and historical significance of labels and of self-identification of Islamist movements.

LAURENT BONNEFOY

Yemen, Le Tournant Révolutionnaire edited by Laurent Bonnefoy, Franck Mermier and Marine Poirier, Centre Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales de Sanaa (CEFAS) – Karthala, 2012, pp. 367, €29.
ISBN 978-2-8111-0693-5.

Every ten years or so, a French collection appears on contemporary Yemen. This one, published in 2012 was largely prepared during the height of the popular upheavals in 2011–12. This is happily reflected in the numerous portraits and sketches focusing on the personalities and characteristics of the revolutionary movement. Thus in addition to providing background analysis of the country's recent politics, it brings back to life some of the euphoric and dramatic moments of the events of that year, including a strong set of photos, and follows the situation up to mid-2012 with useful analyses of issues which remain prominent today. It also provides good background interpretation of the main political problems facing Yemen, in particular an excellent and detailed analysis of the origins and factions within the Southern Separatist movement, as well as of the Huthi

[1] 'Abd al-Malik al-Tayyiab, *al-Tarikh yatakalam*, Sana'a, no date, also translated in French in *Les Chroniques Yéménites*, no. 6–7, 1999 (http://cy.revues.org/49).

movement. Given one of the main editors' interests, issues of jihadism and the role of islamist ideology and groups are discussed in a variety of chapters and contexts. One of the book's strengths is to provide a 'snapshot' of Yemeni politics in the early phases of the transition from the Ali Abdullah Saleh regime, addressing the role of both internal and international actors at that very important moment in Yemen's contemporary history.

The book gives prominence to the Ta'iz region, largely subscribing to a 'Ta'izi' view of the importance of that region in the intellectual and political life of the country as well as to the influence its people have in a variety of intellectual as well as professional and semi-professional sectors. While this view is open to challenge, the information and analysis of Ta'izis's role are an important contribution to scholarship.

Efforts to be comprehensive, as well as giving voice to most francophone scholars on Yemen, gives the book a slightly eclectic coverage, which in itself is also an opportunity to alert a wider public to aspects of the country's development which are often considered to be of purely specialist interest. Thus we have a general chapter on the economy but little on individual sectors, though the major issue of water is addressed in two chapters, which are among the weaker presentations. International relations are only sketchily addressed. On the other hand, there is a significant section on cultural aspects, including literature, pre-Republican history, poetry, art and music. Interesting and useful analyses of the stresses under which the media operate might have been better placed within the political section of the book as they really address the political constraints imposed by the regime and the way these were partly overcome in the widespread popular movement of 2011. A general bibliography of further reading seems to have listed all the major works in English, French and Arabic, and would serve its purpose effectively, guiding readers towards the main publications necessary to an understanding of modern Yemen. Altogether an important book that should be on the shelves of all francophone experts on the country.

HELEN LACKNER

Arabia and Ethiopia by Christian Julien Robin in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* ed. by Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, Oxford University Press 2012, pp. 247-332. ISBN 978-0-19-533693-1.

Juifs et Chrétiens en Arabie aux Vè et VIè siècles: Regards croisés sur les sources. Eds. Joëlle Beaucamp, Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet, et Christian Julien Robin, Collège de France / CNRS, Paris 2010. ISBN 978-2-916716-23-7

These books (the first-one is in fact a monograph, disguised as a book-length article) deal with the period of the last few centuries of the state of Himyar, addressing a fascinating question: to what extent was it a Jewish kingdom and what was the nature of its conflicts, initially with pagan and later Christian Ethiopia? The author is the most respected scholar in this field; many of the book's conclusions are based on the inscriptions discovered by himself and his school. These books are not based on library research – they have been written by Columbus himself. They constitute the *summa cum lauda* of decades of research and fundamentally change our understanding of the history of the period and of the forces operating in it.

After a succinct survey of the ancient history of both Yemen and Ethiopia, Robin jumps into the subject, introducing the Yemeni dynasties 'favouring' Judaism. In the early 4th century AD, he detects a tendency towards monotheism, while under Malkikarib Yuha'min (*ca*. 375–400) a 'consensual form' of monotheism was adopted officially. The rulers did however adhere to Judaism, without saying it in so many words. At the same time, the political might of Himyar expanded greatly. Under Malkikarib's son, Abikarib As'ad (*ca*. 400–445), Himyar dominated most of the Arabian Peninsula, anticipating Arabia's later unification under Muhammad. Religiously, Judaism now became almost officialised: 'From 380/400 onward until 525/530, the only religion attested in the inscriptions of Himyar was Judaism.'

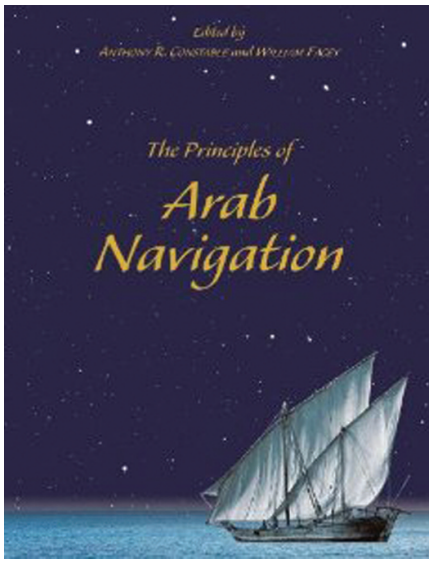
In parallel (and encouraged by Byzantium), 'Ezana of Axum converted to (monophysite) Christianity, in the middle of the fourth century, and gradually extended his political and religious influence to Yemen. As a reaction, a Yemeni prince from another line, Yusuf As'ar Yath'ar (known in Arabic sources as Dhu Nuwas) took power, and began to campaign against the Ethiopians, to massacre the Christians in Yemen, destroying several churches, including the one in al-Mukha (Mocca). His most resounding deed was however the conquest of Najran where his commander committed the massacre that reverberated so strongly throughout the Christian world, and is also remembered in the Qur'an.

The Ethiopians then sent an army on 70 ships provided by Byzantium. During the battle on the shores near Mocca, Dhu Nuwas was killed (or committed suicide, by jumping with his horse from a cliff into the Red Sea). In 552, the Ethiopian viceroy Abraha decided to attack Mecca, with war elephants, a campaign vividly recorded in the Qur'an. At this time, the Sassanians had established themselves in Eastern Arabia, soon to nominate

Badhan as governor for Yemen who resided in Sana'a. When he followed Muhammad's call, the united state of the Arabian Peninsula, with its capital at Medina, was established.

This very brief review does not account for the wealth of material provided in those two books. They redefine our view of the period, in particular the names and the dating of rulers, the meanings of the term Judaism ('judaisant'), monotheism, Rahmanism in Late Antiquity Yemen, and the international setting of Yemen and Ethiopia between Byzantium and the Sassanian empire. Everything that has been written before must be re-examined in the light of these two magnificent works of scholarship.

WERNER DAUM



The Principles of Arab Navigation, edited by Anthony Constable and William Facey, London: Arabian Publishing, 2013, pp. 160, (hardback, jacket 258 x 200 mm, colour throughout, 11 maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index.) £35.00.
ISBN 978-0-9571060-1-7.

The Principles of Arabian Navigation is a comprehensive treatise on the fascinating subject of stellar navigation. The editors are among the six contributors to the nine chapters. Will Facey maintains his impeccable publication style with the right balance of history and technicality, supported by lucid diagrams and charts to clarify the intricacies. Anthony Constable is a specialist in the history of science and developed his interest in Arab navigation while at Sultan Qaboos University; the other contributors include Hasan Salih Shihab, a Yemeni maritime historian, Yacoub Yusuf Al-Hijji, Eric Staples and Paul Lunde.

Crossings of the Arabian Sea have of course been practised for millennia by craft generally hugging the coast. However, deep-sea crossings of the Indian Ocean only became feasible as the Arabs developed an understanding of navigation and could determine how far they had travelled by observation of the stars at night. From about 1000 AD Arab navigators began to develop a simple technique for measuring the height of the Pole Star and other stars from the horizon (using the *kamal*) and gradually to

acquire an intricate knowledge of the movements of particular stars during the night and throughout the year. By around 1500 AD this complex knowledge had been well understood and recorded in Arabic almanacs such as the navigational manuals of Ahmad bin Majid of Julfar and Sulayman al-Mahri of Shihr.

This comprehensive book is likely to be of interest to many BYS members. I personally had the use of the *kamal* demonstrated by a rather ancient Omani mariner at the Sur Maritime Museum, but *nakhudas* along the Yemen coast would no doubt be able to do the same.

JULIAN LUSH

San'a', an Arabian Islamic City, edited by R. B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock, first published in 1983 by the World of Islam Festival Trust, London, reprinted in 2013 by Melisende UK Ltd, London, pp. 588 (48 pages of colour plates) £85.00. ISBN 978-1-901764-68-0.

This book is a monument of scholarship and information. Published 30 years ago, it has not been superseded as a comprehensive, encyclopaedic introduction to traditional San'a'. The reprint also includes a short biography of R. B. Serjeant reproduced from the very first issue of the BYS Journal. Otherwise there are no changes. Nobody seriously interested or indeed writing or lecturing about the history of San'a' and/or the Yemen can do without it. It is to be welcomed that this monumental mine of information is now available in a reprint at a reasonable price. It should also be said immediately that much – or even most of it – is now somewhat dated.

The book's main editor/author was R. B. Serjeant, one of the major twentieth century Arabists. In his understanding, serious Arabian studies had to be grounded in *reality*. This real world of Arabia is present everywhere in the book: in Serjeant's incredible command of the minutiae of the language, both classical and spoken, in his love of the people, and in his hallmark, the meticulous study of their intellectual environment. What he could not suffer was grandiloquent scheming nourished exclusively from the bookshelves of the ivory tower. I cannot resist recommending his review of Patricia Crone's musings about the Qur'an (see Wikipedia). All other authors are equally well-respected scholars.

The two chapters on the history of San'a' are a masterpiece. They are still basically valid, although much additional material now exists, particularly for the Rasulid period (Eric Vallet). Six (!) chapters deal with the

urban development of San‘a’ and its markets (buildings, structures, traditional crafts, regulations). The two chapters on the mosques of San‘a’ are still the only comprehensive study of the subject. The chapter on the Great Mosque continues to inform about every major aspect, although much specialised writing has added to our understanding since. The good photographs of the columns (removed from its predecessor, the Cathedral, with some of the capitals still showing the cross) and of a metal door with a majestic Himyaritic inscription are very useful. A separate chapter is devoted to the cathedral, intended to rival Mecca, and to surpass it in beauty.

The chapter on the Jews of San‘a’ and their quarter is still the only comprehensive one on the subject. Two more unique things should also be mentioned: the list of the Islamic governors of Yemen (page 53) and the finger-signs-language for bargaining (thus preventing bystanders from following the progress), a heritage from ancient Rome, but not known to us in detail. Other such heritage from Rome includes the multi-coloured gypsum-frame windows, and the baths of San‘a’, and indeed, the Islamic world.

San‘a’ is not the oldest town in Yemen, in spite of al-Hamdani’s (d. between 961/970 AD) claim that it had been founded by Sem, the son of Noah, shortly after the Deluge. The oldest inscription mentioning San‘a’ dates from the mid first century AD. San‘a’ (meaning ‘fortified town’) was established as their highland stronghold, by the Sabaeans who continued to have their capital in Marib. Its most iconic monument was the palace of Ghumdan (East of the Great Mosque; it is certain that its construction included much material from the palace). According to al-Hamdani, Ghumdan, the Arabian Peninsula’s most magnificent palace, was 20 storeys high, the room on the top glazed with transparent sheets of alabaster. This has long been dismissed as fantasy. The recent sensational discovery of rock-paintings in Khaulan, showing a group of tower-houses, *qusur*, including the date-palm in one of the courts, mentioned by Hamdani, would seem to be an accurate depiction of Ghumdan. Dated between the first and the third century AD, the main palace depicted seems to be more than 10 storeys high. Of course, houses fell into disrepair. The oldest one still standing was identified by Serjeant and Lewcock as dating from the twelfth century AD (p. 487).

I would like to end with a brief discussion of Serjeant’s chapter 5, ‘San‘a’ the “Protected”, Hijrah’. Serjeant believes that San‘a’ was a *hijrah*, a

religiously protected enclave in tribal territory, exempted from tribal strife and rules, in parallel with the institution of the *hautah* in Hadramaut, and the Haram in Mecca. The *hijrah* is a venerable and specifically Yemeni institution; it was established by a 'holy man', i.e. a man from a holy family, creating an inviolable sacred space within tribal territory. Serjeant believed that Muhammad's *hijrah* should also not be understood as a 'flight' from Mecca to Medina, but as the establishment of a 'hijrah' (in the Yemeni sense) in Medina. This question has generated much ink in recent decades. Wilfred Madelung has strongly opposed the idea, arguing that the earliest *hijrah* in Yemen was established by the first Zaydi Imam, when he *fled* from the land of disbelief to Sa'da in Yemen. However, this argument no longer holds; Yemen's oldest *hijrah* is slightly earlier (see Qadi Ism'ail in his *hujr al-'ilm*). The debate remains open as to whether Islam's hijrah is indeed an ancient Yemeni institution.

WERNER DAUM

Le Yemen vers la République, Iconographie historique du Yemen (**1900-1970**) edited by François Burgat and Eric Vallet, Second edition, Centre Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales de Sanaa (CEFAS), Sanaa 2012, pp. 413, €49 + postage. ISBN 978-2-909194-26-4.

The BYS Journal's 2006 review of the first edition of this remarkable book published in 2004 was critical and pointed out a significant number of unfortunate errors as well as weaknesses in explanations. This new, considerably enlarged and restructured edition has clearly taken into consideration these and other suggestions. It is really an entirely new book presenting the main features of Yemen's twentieth-century history in a very accessible manner. This is particularly important for its Yemeni readership, specifically younger generations who have very scant knowledge of their country prior to the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh and who will find this bilingual book, with its images of the past, most useful as it provides both information and stunning images of the past.

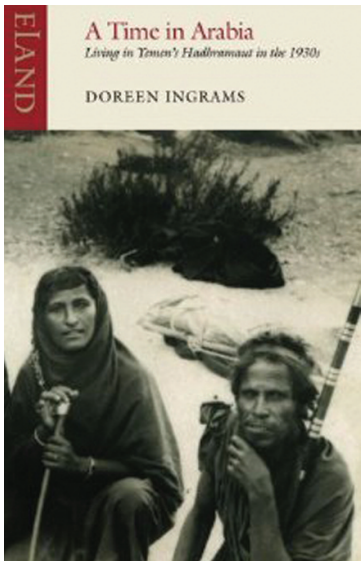
Unlike the first edition, this one devotes far more space to ordinary life, including both rural and urban sceneries but, even more usefully, people and activities, showing the various forms of enterprise and agricultural techniques used throughout the country in earlier times, some of which, such as weaving, persist to this day but others, such as the use of dried dung for fuel, have largely disappeared. City views will remind readers of the

extraordinary population explosion which has transformed the country and its cities in recent decades and of the changes in architectural techniques. Political events and personalities of the Imamate and early Republican years are given the attention they deserve, with both useful commentary and illuminating photos.

Like its predecessor, this edition is weak with respect to the area of the former Southern part of the homeland. Having removed some of the southern flags which had been wrongly labelled in the first edition, all we now get are sceneries in Aden and the Hadhramaut. It would have been better to explicitly and exclusively focus on the area of the former YAR. The introduction acknowledges that photography was introduced initially in Aden and there is no doubt that there are multiple illustrated books and information about social and architectural aspects of Aden and the Protectorates, though the political iconography of the 1950s onwards in that part of Yemen has not been published, as far as this reviewer is aware. Including this would have been a major contribution though it would certainly have lengthened the volume. Another quibble concerns the quality of reproduction which, in this edition, is generally inferior to that of the first edition.

However, this should remain the first reference for anyone interested in the history of the Imamate and the early years of the YAR. A few copies are available from the Journal's editor.

HELEN LACKNER



A Time in Arabia: Life in Hadhramaut by Doreen Ingrams, reprint by Eland, 2013, first published in 1970 by John Murray, pp.164 (map. B/W illustrations, index), paperback, £12.99. ISBN 978-1-906011-80-2.

The reprint of Doreen Ingrams's absorbing memoir is to be warmly welcomed. The original edition has long been out of print and beyond the reach of new readers. It includes an eloquent introduction by Tim Mackintosh-Smith in addition to a biographical afterword by the author's daughter, Leila Ingrams, covering in detail the careers of both Doreen (1906–1997) and her

husband, Harold (*d*. 1973), a senior member of the Colonial Service. The subtitle 'Life in Hadhramaut' is new, and in the second paragraph of p. 135 (unexplained) changes have been made to the originally published text .

Doreen and Harold first visited Hadhramaut, in the Eastern Aden Protectorate, in 1934. Harold's active involvement in the ultimately successful efforts of the local Qu'aiti and Kathiri Sultans to negotiate a three year truce (later extended) between the region's myriad tribes, explains why the ensuing calm became known as 'Ingrams's Peace'. Pacification led to a new treaty with the Qu'aiti Sultan and Harold's appointment in 1937 as Resident Adviser in Mukalla, a post which he held until 1944. Harold and Doreen were thus the first Europeans to live in Hadhramaut. As an Arabic speaker, Doreen's access to women enabled her to enlist the support of an important constituency for peace. Moreover, Doreen had the opportunity to travel in largely unexplored areas of the country, sometimes by herself with only an escort of Bedouin camel men and wayfarers. But she spent much of her time acting as her husband's unpaid political and administrative secretary.

The author's charming and evocative memoir offers precious glimpses of a way of life which has all but vanished. Her contact with Hadhrami families from different backgrounds, men and their secluded womenfolk (to whom Doreen was the object of lively and affectionate curiosity), children and servants, enabled her to record local manners and customs with unusual insight. The book includes a fascinating chapter on a nine-week overland visit to Imamate Yemen which Doreen and Harold undertook in 1940.

Doreen's concern for the welfare of others touched many lives, especially during the devastating famine of 1943/44 when she was directly involved in organising relief centres and emergency medical care in Mukalla for many of the victims. Unlike most expatriate wives, Doreen was ahead of her time in her ability to transcend barriers of culture and race. As her book attests, the ease with which she engaged with Hadhramis from all walks of life made a substantive contribution to the success and consolidation of her husband's 'peace'.

JOHN SHIPMAN

Hawks of the Hadhramaut by P. S. Allfree, first published in hardback 1967 in Great Britain by Robert Hale Limited, reissued 2013, pp. 192 (map, 16 pages of colour plates), paperback, £12.99. ISBN 978-0-7198-0738-1.

Phillip Allfree spent eighteen months in Hadhramaut in 1962 and 1963 as a political officer in the Eastern Aden Protectorate of South Arabia. The Protectorate was administered from Mukalla and policed by the Hadhramaut Bedouin Legion, with whose help the political officer or assistant adviser tried to keep the peace and settle feuds between the tribes. Earlier some peace and stability had been brought to the area through 'Ingram's Peace' which could not have been achieved without the help of a Tarim Sayyid, Sir Abubakr bin Shaikh al Kaff KBE, whom Allfree says was 'knighted by the King-Emperor' but was in fact knighted by the Queen on her visit to Aden in 1954. Feuds and raids among the desert tribes continued, and Allfree explains the limitations of the government advisor's role in settling tribal disputes as well as the problems of providing water and some limited development of the country under British administration.

The main contribution of this paperback edition is its colour photos including many new ones provided by members of the British-Yemeni Society. They not only show the harsh and bare landscapes where Allfree worked but also magnificent views of different parts of Wadi Hadhramaut and its outstanding architecture, as well as some of the characters mentioned in the text. His descriptions of his colleagues are sometimes apt but rarely complimentary. He also recalls the harsh desert environment and brings to life everyday situations with wry good humour. The author does not subscribe to any romantic notions about the Bedouin whose way of life is portrayed as basic in the extreme. One of the best of many lively descriptions concerns traditional tribal hospitality: 'I sat down cross-legged and awaited with apprehensive stomach the dreaded but inexorable meal. The arrival of the Assistant Adviser necessitated the killing of a goat.'

His final words 'I left Arabia for good' turned out not to be true. After dabbling with tourism and journalism in Kenya, the spell of Arabia was too strong. He joined the Foreign Office in 1968, serving in Amman, Beirut and Sana'a. After a posting to London he retired in 1990 and died in 2006 aged 75. It is clear from this review that Hawks of the Hadhramaut is not a serious academic work of historical record, but an amusing and lighthearted account, very much reflecting a worldview of an earlier age.

JULIAN PAXTON

OBITUARIES

MICHAEL CROUCH
(1935–2013)

Michael Crouch who served as a political officer in South Arabia during the twilight years of the British presence, died in July 2013. His name will be familiar to members of the Society who have read his book *An Element of Luck* (1993), and to those who lived or served in South Arabia during his nine years there between 1958 and 1967.

His autobiography focused on his time in Aden and the Protectorates. It is a highly readable account of an adventurous and eventful life. Michael's personality was highly suited to his chosen career: energetic, dedicated and self-confident. These were influenced by his father's Colonial background and his mother's family connection with the prestigious Indian Civil Service. His sharp eye and fluent pen combined to produce some vivid sketches of daily life in remote outposts, and in the urban milieus of Mukalla and Aden. He was unsparing in his criticism of British policy and of senior officials involved in its execution. Michael seemed unabashed by the possibility that his candour might cause offence.

Michael was brought up in the Sudan, where his father was a senior member of the Sudan Medical Service, and in Kenya. After graduating in Law at Downing College, Cambridge, he joined the Colonial (later Overseas) Service. He spent four arduous but rewarding years in the Northern Deserts of the Eastern Aden Protectorate and in the state of Wahidi (by then part of the Western Aden Protectorate). His last four-and-a-half years were spent in various posts, frequently under fire; on one occasion his house in the Federal capital of Al-Ittihad, with his wife and baby son in residence, was the target of a bazooka attack. In the summer of 1967 Michael was posted to Mukalla as acting Resident Adviser. He was only 32 but wore his new and somewhat daunting responsibilities lightly. Within a few weeks of arrival he was unexpectedly instructed to arrange the early evacuation to Aden of all British staff in the East Aden Protectorate, without alerting any Arab staff or local authorities. Michael accomplished this painful mission with calm efficiency.

Michael took early retirement from government service in September 1967 and made the courageous decision to emigrate with his family to Western Australia where he took up a completely new career as a teacher

and management consultant. More recently he obtained a PhD at the University of Western Australia.

In late 1992, alongside three other former British political officers, Michael was invited by the Government to visit Yemen. Having overcome his doubts, he accepted. The group were touched by the warmth of their reception at every level throughout their week-long tour of the country in April 1993. The experience revived his interest in Southern Arabia and helped lay to rest painful memories. In particular he was happy to meet again with old friends, such as the veteran tribal leader Ahmad Nowah Ba Rashaid. This was the first of many visits which helped him stay in touch with many old acquaintances, including a former NLF activist and senior local government official, Abdulrahim 'Atiq, who had unsuccessfully plotted to assassinate Michael in Mukalla in mid-1967. Their instant rapport seemed entirely in keeping with the adage: 'old enemies make the best of friends'! A photograph of Abdulrahim appears on the cover of the paperback reprint of *An Element of Luck* published in Australia in 2000.

JOHN SHIPMAN

MAJOR GENERAL JACK DYE, CBE MC DL
(1919–2013)

Major General Jack Dye, who died on 10 June, was the first and last commander of the South Arabian Army which had grown out of the Aden Protectorate Levies raised in 1928. The Levies became the Federal Regular Army (FRA) in 1962 in preparation for the independence of the South Arabian Federation. On 1 June 1967 the Federal Regular Army was merged with the Federal Guard to form the South Arabian Army prior to the British withdrawal. By then it had expanded to become a professional force of 15,000 troops with proper military training and promotion in the ranks based on merit. By way of contrast the Federal Guard was a national *gendarmerie* tribally recruited and led by shaikhs and the sons of shaikhs who were given limited military training.

Amalgamation of any armed forces is sensitive and difficult at the best of times, but with the tension caused by the Six Day War when the British were accused of supporting Israel, political and tribal tensions were unleashed. As military discipline broke down in some units, Brigadier Dye, the newly appointed commander, was faced with a mutiny of some of his force on 20 June 1967. He showed outstanding

Major General Jack Dye
photo Framlingham College

leadership in steering the South Arabian Army out of this volatile state of affairs.

Dye had previously played a notable part in the Radfan campaign before being appointed in 1966 to take over command of the FRA from Brigadier Gordon Viner. He was an unlikely candidate since, unlike his predecessor and several of his contemporaries, he neither spoke Arabic nor had he previously served with Arab forces. However he proved to be the right man in the right place at the right time and was thus able to manage the most difficult period in the existence of the 'Gaysh'.

Major Frank Edwards who wrote the history of 'The Gaysh' which was reviewed in the 2004 edition of this Journal, includes a letter from Dye, who pointed out:

> that the true worth of the Army did not really display itself until the last twelve month period not covered in your book. It played a most significant role after the demise of the Federal Government and co-operated fully with the British political and military authorities in those final months. Through certain senior officers I was able to conduct negotiations with the National leaders both inside and outside Aden and as a result the transference of power from the British to the NLF went very smoothly and without bloodshed.

It is a pity that 'General Jack' as he was known did not want to disclose more about those events, since he was a very unassuming officer and a private person. Many military commanders like to publish their memoirs, others with equally or more challenging experiences do not. He was in the latter category and his lips remained sealed about the last days of the South Arabian Army.

JULIAN PAXTON

OTHER LIVES

The BYS is also sorry to announce the death of **Dr Marion Serjeant** (née Robertson, widow of the leading academic Bob Serjeant) who died on 7 August 2013 in Scotland. She trained as a medical doctor in Edinburgh. Married in 1941, their long and happy partnership ended with Bob Serjeant's death in 1993. Dr Serjeant worked as a medical practitioner in South Arabia in the 1940s when little medical expertise was available. In 1947 the couple spent some months in Hadhramaut where Marion's voluntary medical work in Tarim made her especially welcome. Marion ran a women and children's clinic, funded by the al-Kaff family, in Tarim where they lived. She practised both when on her own and when her husband was with her. Her humour and knowledge as well as service to the population are remembered by those who had the opportunity of meeting her. After Bob left to return to SOAS, Marion moved down to Mukalla where, during 1948, her second year in Hadhramaut, she opened and ran a similar clinic for women and children.

Marion's vivacity and extrovert nature complemented her husband's outwardly more reserved manner, and she took an active part in the social side of his academic life, adopting as her own his legion of friends, Arab and occidental. The couple's hospitality in Cambridge and later, following his retirement, at their cottage near St Andrews was proverbial. She is survived by their son and daughter.

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Geoff Roberts, born in 1929 also died in 2013, leaving another gap in the world of the many British men and women involved in Aden colony. He worked in Aden for BP from 1961 to 1964 and was an active member of British Adeni society during his time there where, among other social activities, he organised excursions to the Hadramaut and in recent years was the chairman of the Aden Dinner Club.