



## BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY JOURNAL

Vol. 23. 2015

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*Published by*

**THE BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY**

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ISSN: 1356-0229

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(Twenty-second Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 3 June 2015)

### The Situation in Yemen

In my 2014 Annual Report I wrote as part of a cautiously optimistic survey of Yemen's prospects: "The emergence of al-Huthi from Sa'ada is transforming the politics of the region north of Sana'a in a way which may have profound consequences for Yemen." That has proved something of an understatement. The Huthis, clearly in alliance with elite elements of the armed forces still loyal to ex-President Saleh, had taken Amran by July and Sana'a by September. It appeared that an accommodation had been reached when all parties signed the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA) in that month. However, the Huthis strengthened their grip of the capital and continued to advance into other areas including Hodeida and piled on the pressure in Sana'a on President Hadi who resigned on 22 January 2015 and was put under house arrest. The Huthis on 6 February set up a new Revolutionary Council to run Yemen. President Hadi managed to escape to Aden on 21 February, withdrawing his resignation and seeking to establish the seat of government in Aden. The Huthi militias supported by parts of the army began to move rapidly and in force towards Aden. On 23 March, President Hadi's government called on the international community for military support. He left the country and on 26 March a Saudi-led coalition, with some support from the UK, launched the offensive first known as Operation Decisive Storm later modified to Restoring Hope. The UNSC Resolution of 14 April neither endorsed nor criticised this action and blamed the Huthis and Saleh for provoking the action through their failure to implement earlier resolutions.

The combatants agreed to a five day cease fire to allow humanitarian support from 12 May but fighting resumed when it was over. By 31 May, the coalition may have destroyed much of the army's military equipment but had not loosened Huthi/Saleh control of Sana'a, Hodeida and others parts of north and central Yemen. On the other hand, the Huthis and Saleh were unable to maintain the pace of their advances elsewhere. Fighting was particularly fierce in and around Aden, Ta'izz and some southern provinces as well as the strategically important Marib with its oil and gas and Yemen's main power generation station. Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), part of which declared loyalty to the ISIL leader, fought in central Yemen alongside tribes with which they had links against the Huthis,

posing as defenders of Sunni Islam. AQAP bands have been in Mukalla and other parts of the Hadhramaut coast but tribal alliances are preventing further expansion and seem determined at the same time to keep the Huthis out of their province.

Many thousands of Yemenis have been killed, injured or forced to flee their homes. There has been much damage to infrastructure. Shortages of diesel and gas are causing major problems, not least for the agencies trying to provide relief. Medical services can barely cope. Most schools have been closed. The government has ceased to function. Even before the fighting started the economy was in very bad shape. We have shown in our briefings the scale of the humanitarian problem and several members of the BYS have been active in bringing the problems to the attention of our government and a wider UK audience. There is now again a need for a further ceasefire – at a minimum – to allow for the delivery of support and provide an opportunity for negotiations.

The first attempt to start negotiations involving all parties in Geneva on 28 May had to be postponed. It was clearly ill-prepared and the sad fact is that none of the combatants were ready for negotiations and thought they had more to gain through force, despite the consequences for Yemen's people. The international community will need to bring as much pressure to bear as possible to get the Geneva discussions going based on the GCC deal of 2011 the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and may have to take into account the Riyadh Declaration issued after a conference organised by President Hadi in late May and possibly the PNPA, which the Huthis see as being important. Neither side can win this war: all will have to learn to work together through negotiations or see their country destroyed. The new UN Special Envoy (Ismael Ould Sheikh Ahmed) is trying to get talks started and there are now promising signs that negotiations – possibly only about negotiations – may start soon in Geneva. There may also be another humanitarian pause to the fighting.

In these circumstances, it is very difficult for the BYS committee to decide how it can best help its members and fulfil our constitution's aim of educating the British public about Yemen. We have set aside our normal program and organised instead briefings on the situation. We are trying to provide a forum for our British Yemeni and Yemeni members to discuss their concerns. We have held two briefings so far and a third is planned for 18 June. I applaud the efforts of our committee member Taher Ali Qassim for using dialogue as a means of conciliating the differences which affect

the Yemeni community here. We do what we can behind the scenes mostly – but publicly when necessary – to draw the attention of governments to the concerns and help the relief agencies to publicise the scale of need in Yemen and urge the international community to push the warring parties into negotiations. We all wish we could do more to help the many Yemenis seeking somewhere safe to live outside Yemen as long as the fighting continues.

### **BYS activities**

We agreed following the publication of our book *Why Yemen Matters* to arrange an annual lecture with the London Middle East Institute. The second of these was given in February by Sir Alan Duncan, the British government's Special Envoy to Yemen, and previously the Minister of State in DfID where he was noted for his strong interest in Yemen. That event was again sponsored by the MBI al Jaber Foundation. I want to thank Shaikh Muhammad bin Isa al Jaber for his personal support and that of his foundation for our activities.

I am delighted to report that Saqi, the publisher of *Why Yemen Matters*, is negotiating a deal that will see the book translated into Arabic within the next two years. That book was intended for a Yemeni as well as international audience and its availability in Arabic will thus be an important achievement.

We organised the following events:

- Aaron Edwards, Senior Lecturer in Defence and International Affairs at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst: on his book *Mad Mitch's Tribal Law: Aden and the End of Empire*.
- Dr Elisabeth Kendall, Senior Research Fellow in Arabic and Islamic Studies, Oxford University: Youth Activism in Eastern Yemen, Mahra in Transition.
- Dr Mohammad Seddon: on his book *The Last of the Lascars: Yemeni Muslims in Britain*
- Maria-Louise Clausen, winner of the BYS academic grant 2014: 'Can Federalism save the state in Yemen'
- Two open briefings on 9 and 30 April on the current situation
- In addition the BYS with the London Middle East Institute at SOAS organised a lecture on Yemen by Helen Lackner at SOAS in December 2014.

## Survey

We conducted a survey of members to help guide the committee in arranging future activities. The results will be published in the journal but I noted the following:

Most of our members are aged 50 or over, live in or close to London and have belonged to the society for at least five years – despite a considerable increase in members in the last three years. Members would like to see us arranging more lectures and events related to history and culture though the situation in Yemen has made that difficult to do so far. However the new committee will no doubt take note.

## Website

We have finally taken the plunge and, thanks to sponsorship, developed a new website that should be launched within the next three months. I would like to record our thanks to Brian Whitaker for hosting us for so long on his al-Bab website. We could not have done without his support. I would also like to thank Thanos Petouris for his work in developing the new website.

## Other Yemeni-related events

The crisis in Yemen has generated a much higher level of interest reflected in events, discussions and media articles. It has stimulated Chatham House and others to consider trying to re-establish the Yemen Forum. BYS members have been taking part in conferences and workshops here and abroad. The Gulf Research Centre organised workshops on Yemen in 2014 and again in 2015. Some of the papers presented in 2014 will be included in a book I am co-editing to be published in the summer in English and Arabic under the title *Rebuilding Yemen: Political Economic and Social Challenges*. One of our members organised the first conference of the Hadhrami Research Centre at SOAS in March and we hope that an edited book will emerge from that. I am aware of at least one other edited book to be published this year. Others to note are:

- *Yemen* edited by Steven Caton of Harvard with chapters covering geography, history, politics, economics and culture from leading academic scholars on Yemen
- *Yemen: Revolution, Civil War and Unification* by the Israeli scholar Uzi Rabi

## **Membership**

We have had 13 new members this year. It is with great sadness that we note the death of three of our members:

James Edgar Taylor

Abdullah Asnaj

Leila Ingrams

Abdullah Asnaj was a famous figure in Yemen since he founded the Aden Trade Union Congress and the People's Socialist Party in the 1960s. He was known and admired by many of our members. I was fortunate to meet him last August when he visited London shortly before he died.

Leila Ingrams was also known to most of our members for her work in maintaining the interest in Yemen established by her parents Harold and Doreen Ingrams. The Friends of Hadhramaut are organising a musical recital at the Royal Geographical Society on 27 August in memoriam.

## **Congratulations**

BYS member Salma Samar Damluji has been awarded the prestigious Médaille de la Restauration 2015 of the French Academy of Architecture. The medal is awarded to a personality who helped rescue or preserve buildings of particular architectural importance. It will be conferred on 10 June. Her inaugural lecture last year at the Ecole de Chaillot in Paris has now been published and is reviewed in the journal.

Joshua Rogers has won the BYS Award for 2015 for his study of Civil War and State Formation: Violence and the Making and Un-making State in the Yemen Arab Republic 1962-1970.

## **The committee**

I am not standing for re-election as chairman as I feel that societies like ours need a change in leadership every five years. I have greatly enjoyed my time as chair and I am delighted that Robert Wilson has been proposed as the new chair. As a student of Arabic at Cambridge University, he first went to Yemen (then the Yemen Arab Republic) in 1972 to teach English and learn spoken Arabic. He went on to complete a doctorate on the historical geography of north-western Yemen. After teaching at Cambridge for 5 years, he joined the FCO and spent 32 years working on or in the Arab world, finishing with two years as a Counsellor at the British Embassy in Sana'a, from 2012 to 2014.

John Mason, who has been treasurer for many years, is standing down from that position but is seeking election to the committee for a further year as an ordinary member to advise the new treasurer. We all owe great deal of thanks to John for his efforts and it will be great for the new committee to have his expertise and experience as Peter Welby settles in as treasurer.

Adel Aulaqi, Safa Mubgar and Thanos Petouris are also standing down. All have made a tremendous contribution to the BYS in the last five years and I want to thank them on behalf of all of us. They have been ideal committee members, assiduously attending meetings and volunteering to take on often time consuming tasks.

In addition to John Mason, we are proposing that four other members join the committee: Afrah Taher Qassim and Shaima Saif both live outside London and may not be able to attend meetings as often as they wish but it helps the BYS to extend its contacts with Yemenis beyond the M25 and brings two very active young women on to the committee.

The committee will also greatly benefit from the advice of Helga Graham, the well-known writer and journalist, and James Firebrace, a considerable expert on Yemen's water and economy and the author of a recent letter to the Times about the need for urgent action on Yemen.

I would like to give special thanks to Audrey Allfree, our secretary, for all the time she gives to the BYS and to Helen Lackner for the enormous amount of work she puts into making our journal so good.

Before we finish I want to acknowledge the presence of Edmund Fitton-Brown, the British Ambassador to Yemen and one of our honorary Presidents and to Abdel Kader Ahmed Alsubeihi, the Chargé D'Affaires of the Yemeni embassy. I would also like to thank personally and on behalf of the society His Excellency Abdullah al-Radhi, the former Ambassador who was a great supporter of the BYS and to welcome – when he arrives – his successor Dr Yassin Saeed Nu'man, who has served as the Prime Minister of the PDRY and Speaker of the Yemeni Parliament.



## **BYS MEMBERSHIP SURVEY: WHO ARE OUR MEMBERS AND WHAT ARE THEIR INTERESTS?**

The BYS Committee carried out a survey among members to help plan its future activities and ensure we address the interests of as many members as possible. Over 27% of our 310 members participated, which is deemed a very good response rate. Almost half of respondents (44%) have been members for over 10 years, but 35% have joined in the past five years, demonstrating that membership is being renewed, though younger members are still a small minority: 2% under 30, but 84% over 50. The Society has more male (65%) than female (35%) members, the majority of whom (78%) are British, and only 9% are of Yemeni origin.

Members join for a variety of reasons: 55% travelled to Yemen, 31% were involved with the South of the country during the British period; 21% are also members of other societies with similar concerns, primarily the Friends of Hadramaut. Only 24% have a current professional involvement in the country, mostly in research (70%).

More than half live in Greater London or have easy access to London, with 23% elsewhere in England and 5% in Scotland. Topics of interest are wide ranging: over 60% are interested in political, social, cultural issues and close to 80% in history. Meetings are our main activity and overwhelmingly take place in London: of the 17 meetings held in the past two years, 19% of respondents attended none, mostly because of accessibility problems, 38% attended between 1 and 5 meetings and 22% attended more than five. The overwhelming majority (90%) would like to attend more events, and expressed interest in events taking place at different times of the day, on different topics and nearer their homes.

At a time when the Society is planning its own website, it was good to note that over 64% visit the BYS website, including 40% who use it monthly or more often, mostly seeking information on the society and its events (78%) and for access to journal articles or information about Yemen (86%). Nearly half of those who do not visit it are unaware of its existence, or don't use the internet at all. Requests for additional content have been taken into consideration in the design of the new website.

Only 19% of respondents visit the BYS Facebook group page, largely because the majority (74%) do not use Facebook at all. It is consulted for information on events, to access articles, and to network. Close to 80% of members read the whole of the journal. Suggestions for articles



included 60% asking for more cultural, archaeological and political analysis.

The overwhelming majority (99%) of respondents expressed satisfaction with the value obtained from their membership and almost 80% would be willing to pay a higher subscription. Over 90% of respondents are keen to invite new members to the BYS. Recommendations for future activities include holding more academic seminars, fundraising for projects in Yemen, supporting Yemeni students to come to the UK and a strong interest in resumption of the Society's annual tour in Yemen. Involving more younger people and Yemenis are also important priorities.

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Women and children working at sardine drying

## THE BYS SUPPORTS A STRATEGICALLY LOCATED HEALTH UNIT IN AL-DHALA' GOVERNORATE

ABDULLAH AL-DUKAIL

In 2014 the Society supported a proposal submitted through Al-Dhala' Community Resource Management Project (ACRMP) for the supply of equipment for the laboratory of the then non-functioning Zubaid Health Unit in Al-Dhala' Governorate for a total cost of USD 10,775.00 (£ 7,075). These funds arose from previous donations earmarked for a medical project on Soqotra that never materialized.

Full details of the items to be purchased were provided to the Society, including both consumables and equipment. These were reviewed by our medically qualified member and the committee approved funding for this project. The Director of the ACRMP, on behalf of the BYS, then signed a financial agreement on 01/02/2015 with the Head of Al-Ajyal Community Association in Zubaid area, representing the community. This funding also enabled the association to persuade the Governorate Health Department to finance the rehabilitation of the laboratory rooms, provide medical staff, power, running cost and supervision the health unit.

The Association followed correct procurement procedures, getting quotations from three different suppliers and the best quotation was chosen. The equipment was delivered to the health unit and inspected by a specialized doctor who was satisfied with the quality of the items and that all had been delivered as per the invoice. The ACRMP paid the invoice, and a copy of all documents was provided to the BYS. Thanks to the support of the BYS and the health department's commitment, the Zubaid Health Unit was re-activated and able to provide medical services to hundreds of poor men and women, young and old who have easy access to this Unit and no longer have to travel to the crowded and distant Al-Nasr Hospital in Dhala' town .

### **The Zubaid Health Unit provides exceptional services during the conflict**

Due to its position on the former border between the YAR and the PDRY, Al-Dhala' has long been a focus of military conflict between the troops of the central Government and opposition forces. The Zubaid Health Unit is located on the main road, which is a site of intense conflict which causes many casualties among innocent people. It is also easily accessible for the



populations of a number of densely populated villages which have been exposed to daily shelling. So nowadays, the Unit plays a significant humanitarian role in treating hundreds of injured people during military operations, as well as people suffering from non conflict-related problems; this is very important, bearing in mind that going to the town is impossible much of the time, particularly at night. Although some medical aid has come from other organizations, the Unit has suffered from severe shortage of medicines and treatment material due the siege imposed on Al-Dhala'. Thanks to the efficiency and quality of its service, the community in Zubaid and the surrounding area in cooperation with the Health department in Al-Dhala' are planning to upgrade the Unit to the status of a rural hospital.

Despite these difficult circumstances, the medical staff have been doing their best to save the lives of hundreds of people. Its records show that it has been treating an average of 170 cases daily up to July 2015. The BYS contribution has played an important role in the development of the Unit which, as of mid-July, was still fully functional.

## THE FIGHT FOR STABILITY AND HOPE

SIR ALAN DUNCAN KCMG

SECOND ANNUAL LECTURE OF THE BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY

*The lecture was delivered to the BYS on 4 February 2015. Sir Alan Duncan is an MP and envoy, and not a minister. His analysis and comments are his own, and they should not therefore be taken in all respects as a definitive statement of British government policy.*

I first visited Yemen in 1984 and have taken a continuing interest in the country throughout the last thirty years. My visit then was as a young oil trader and I believe I was the person who bought the first ever exported cargo of Yemeni crude oil. There were high hopes for the oil and gas sector and hence for the future economy of the country. Over the years I have been visiting I have had the pleasure of walking through the narrow streets of Sana'a and travelling on a number of occasions by road down to Aden. Sadly, none of these pleasures are as open to me now as they have been in the past.

Britain, through its historic association with the south of the country in particular has a special connection with, and a deep affection for, the entire country. During my four years as Minister for International Development I was able to focus heavily on Yemen's needs, both political and humanitarian. So when I asked to step down as a Minister last summer I was very pleased to accept the Prime Minister's invitation to remain with one foot in government by becoming the UK's Special Envoy. I may only be a semi-Minister, but the last six months have kept me as occupied as I ever was as a full-Minister.

Compared with other Arab countries over the last few years, Yemen is in some respects unique. A couple of years ago its leadership changed, and it did so without excessive strife. The GCC initiative under which power transferred from Ali Abdullah Saleh to President Hadi was skillfully implemented and, at least for a time, prevented the country lapsing into mayhem and unrest. It has been accompanied by the herculean efforts of the UN envoy Jamal Benomar alongside significant pledges from the GCC and the wider world, and growing humanitarian activity to support the rising percentage of the country's population who are food insecure. For two or



photo: MBI al Jaber Foundation

three years, therefore, it is fair to say that the focus of the international community helped keep the country together and introduced a measure of stability that otherwise might not have existed.

The mood tonight, however, is sadly rather different and is overshadowed by recent events which have led to a serious deterioration in the country. The UK Government, and I as its envoy, continue to believe that a stable, united, democratic and economically developing Yemen would be the best future for the country. But no-one can fail to admit that the route to that end is becoming increasingly uncertain and much more difficult to map out. Despite these challenges the UK will, so long as the security situation allows, continue to work within Yemen, and with like-minded governments and organizations, to do everything we can.

### **Arab Spring**

I mentioned a moment ago that Yemen's transition during the so-called Arab Spring was unlike other countries', which either managed to stabilize their own population under the same regime or which replaced their leader after protest or vicious conflict. The GCC countries fall into the first category and Egypt, Libya and, to a lesser extent, Tunisia fall into the latter. Yemen was somewhere in between. A number of pressures, including those from the GCC, and the effects of the bomb attack on the President led to Saleh's resignation and a relatively smooth transition to his long-standing deputy Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

It is what went with that change, however, that mattered enormously over the next couple of years. Within the GCC a high oil price equipped governments to buy off trouble, yet in contrast the failure of enough countries – or indeed any of them – to take firm steps to help stabilize Libya after the fall of Gaddafi, has allowed a completely different outcome. Yemen, on the other hand, with almost no resources of its own to give it urgent hope and recovery did attract the coordinated attention of other countries.

The Friends of Yemen group, co-chaired by the UK and Saudi Arabia, did an enormous amount to galvanize substantive assistance, including \$7 billion worth of pledges for its economic recovery, humanitarian aid through the UN and individual country programmes, and a fully designed IMF package. Although much of the assistance has not come fully into fruition, quite a lot of it has and without this coordinated effort one has to ask whether Yemen would have survived with as much stability – against all the odds – as it has.

### **The National Dialogue**

There was also another strand to Yemen's transition, which has been crucial to the legitimacy and momentum of the transition process for which President Hadi deserves enormous credit – and that is the National Dialogue. The National Dialogue was designed to be an all-inclusive process for political reconciliation and constitutional development and as such was the main building block for the shape and structure of future government. No progress would have been possible without widespread political engagement advanced in a constructive spirit with a view to future elections which could be seen as fair and honest. In my view that process still remains as the foundation for any hope we might have that a united Yemen can be governed effectively and legitimately through the consent of its people.

The trouble is that there were spoilers. Competing – let's call them warlords – ripping off the economy, enriching themselves and fighting against each other in a non-stop power play and balancing act poisonously derailed the initial optimism which followed the GCC transition. There can be no future for Yemen unless and until real power, authority and military strength rests in the proper government of the country and only in the proper government.

## The Huthis

The Government, and hence the country, cannot survive if there are ever larger pockets of power and force outside the sphere of government, strong enough to undermine and threaten it. The tragedy of the last few months is that, although some of the spoilers have fled, the country – rather than benefit from the removal of such people – has seen them being replaced by a dramatic new force – namely the Huthis – who nobody ever thought would exercise such force and dominance so quickly and so widely. This has dramatically changed the entire political landscape in Yemen and has introduced a worrying degree of uncertainty. The Huthis have always been there and everyone has known, given that they are Zaydi Shia, that they are a distinctive grouping and potentially at odds with the government in Sana'a. The simmering conflict in the north has been going on for years and has been the subject of many ceasefires. They are also at odds with their Saudi neighbours.

The proposed federal structure for a future Yemen involving six distinct areas was always thought by the Huthis to work against them and so angered and motivated them, and their association with Iran has created constant anxiety in Sana'a and Riyadh. Despite this underlying tension, even when they captured the heavy armour of the 301 Brigade in Amran no-one thought that their firepower would extend far beyond the confines of their traditional areas in the north. But it did, and it has, and that is why we are where we are today.

So let me paint a picture of the Yemen we now have to deal with. To all intents and purposes we have a President and a Prime Minister who along with the Cabinet have all resigned, albeit the formality of resignation has yet to be accepted by Parliament. Abdel Malik al-Huthi and his gunmen have, let's face it, displaced them within Yemen. Every Ministry has been overrun by the Huthis but none of them is fully functioning. Government has largely ground to a halt. In practice, the Huthis have displaced the government without properly replacing it. They have assumed power without responsibility and in almost every respect the functions of government have become inoperative. There is an enormous question mark over their legitimacy, with many voices in the previous government, the south and the international community demanding that their takeover should be labelled a coup.

The Huthi advance, in a curious, perhaps perverse turn of public opinion, was greeted across much of the country in a mood of acquiescence if not popularity. Even though fuel subsidies consumed a third of the



national budget, benefited the rich and not the poor and were completely unsustainable, their removal gave the Huthis a cause which – if only temporarily – lent them a modicum of popular support. Yemen is not a traditionally sectarian country but given who the Huthis are, and given the utterly undeliverable economic hope their protest offered, any support they might have had before is likely to evaporate. That is already happening. Many of the people who supported the Huthis when they arrived in Sana‘a in September are now turning away from them.

Many people have faced low-level harassment while going about their daily lives and the heavy handling of anti-Huthi demonstrations were a tipping point for many as people suffered from shootings and *jambiya* attacks. The Huthis may be dominant in Sana‘a, but the situation is fast-moving and volatile and even the prospects of a typically Yemeni political fudge appear impossible to attain.

So, politically even though all of us would like to speak in terms of supporting the National Dialogue Conference, the Peace and National Partnership Agreement of 21st September, the GCC Initiative, and a steady path towards a new constitution, with a referendum and future elections, the fear that grows day by day is that whereas six months ago such an agenda still retained a glimmer of hope, it might now have become complete fantasy. We must hope that it has not. This vacuum of power and progress carries with it enormous dangers for the future.

If what I have said so far paints a sad picture of the politics of Yemen, the issues of security, the economy, and humanitarian need are equally dire. While the Friends of Yemen have been doing all they can to help Yemen



along, the continuing poisonous threat, which only a legitimate government can tackle comprehensively, are the attacks by Al-Qa'ida. The number of AQAP attacks has increased and to compound the problem the targets for these attacks have begun to change. In the past AQAP have always maintained that their attacks have deliberately avoided civilians and, sick though it might be, they even issued an apology when their December 2013 attack on the Ministry Of Defense Hospital in Sana'a did not go according to their plan. But they have now declared that Huthi civilians are legitimate targets, something which has significant implications by adding a more sectarian dimension to an already vicious conflict.

Widespread instability and insecurity have spread beyond Sana'a and despite its origins in the north, the Huthi movement has extended its territorial hold through the capital and towards some southern governorates. Weapons, oil and human trafficking are all adding to this general climate of instability and danger. Just as threatening to the country is the prospect of near total economic collapse. Yemen is already the poorest country in the Middle East and depends to a large extent on its declining oil reserves. It is characterised by endemic corruption and high unemployment, with a shrinking economy and a per-capita GDP equivalent to that of Pakistan. It is going to struggle to pay salaries even over the next few weeks, has an unfinanced and probably unfinanceable deficit and it may prove unable to pay for its required energy imports, thus threatening power generation, transport and cooking. For an economy that shrunk by about 11% in 2011 there is no chance of it turning around and heading in a positive direction while it has no effective government.

As if the government, security and economic pressures were not enough, the true cost of the crisis is its effect on the daily lives of human beings. Infant mortality and malnutrition were already serious problems across much of the country and the UN appeal for humanitarian assistance has been painfully underfunded. While Yemen has been limping along with a glimmer of hope for the future, recent events mean that it could be looking at a grave humanitarian catastrophe similar to some of the worst famine and human suffering we have seen over the last fifty years in parts of Africa. The UK has been a generous donor over the last few years to Yemen, committing about £70 million a year in direct assistance and probably as much again through our large annual payments to UN organizations and global funds. But if the security situation deteriorates further, even with the best will in the world it will become increasingly difficult to deliver the aid

we would like. Even last year, before the weakening of government we have seen recently, over 60% of the entire Yemeni population were in need of some form of humanitarian assistance.

Human need cannot be segregated from the wider political and economic difficulties in the country. Humanitarian need is both a symptom of under-development and a cause of political instability. All of these components are entwined and all international partners must remember that no credible political transition can take place unless the needs of the most vulnerable are addressed. For thirty years I have always been an optimist about Yemen. I have always had faith in the human spirit and the community of nations in always being able to haul Yemen back from the brink.

Some people say that Yemen is always Yemen: that it is always a mess, but that somehow it will always muddle through. For the first time ever I regret that I have swung away from my habitual optimism to the point where I fear the only rational view one can take now is one of pessimism. The worst scenario could be nearly catastrophic and push Yemen to the point where it resembles the worse characteristics of Somalia and Afghanistan. If things get markedly worse we could see a dysfunctional government in Sana'a – or more accurately an utterly dysfunctional non-government in Sana'a; a proxy conflict between Iranian and Saudi interests; increased attacks by Al-Qa'ida escalating into a more direct confrontation between Al-Qa'ida and the Huthis directly; tribal conflict that turns into a broader civil war; the re-awakening of southern secessionism leading to a re-division of the country; economic collapse; humanitarian disaster; and Yemen becoming an easy route for human trafficking. On top of all this, the world might suddenly see a Yemen which is wholly ungoverned space, a country in anarchy, and a ready haven for the unrestrained training of terrorist radicals.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that my pessimistic scenario does not materialise, and that a measure of common sense can break out between the competing parties in the current turmoil in Yemen's politics. Yemen deserves better than tribes, factions and interests all fighting each other in a way that pushes Yemen to deep and troublesome danger. It remains a country that some think can be ignored, but which I strongly feel must never be. We must never push it aside – labelled: 'Too difficult to handle'. However difficult it may be we must always try and that is why the UK will continue to do everything it can to take a continuing long-term interest in the country and, more importantly, to the plight of every human soul who lives there.

# THE ORIGIN OF THE ALPHABET AND THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUTH ARABIAN CIVILISATION: A REVIEW OF CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP

WERNER DAUM

This review article deals with exciting new material on ancient Yemen: the edition and translation of yet another group of everyday letters and contracts in the newly discovered minuscule/cursive<sup>1</sup> writing. These texts provide fascinating insight into private life and legal/commercial relations over a period of 1600 years, from the 10th c. BC to the 6th c. AD. I then address the issue of the origin of the ancient Yemeni civilisation: did it come about through indigenous development or immigration? The origins of the South Arabian languages and their alphabet play the key role in this discussion. This article then presents an overview of current scholarship on the origin of the alphabet, highlighting its often neglected South Arabian connection, and what it teaches us about the origin of this greatest of civilisational tools.

## Letters from pre-Islamic Yemen

In the 1980s, a considerable number of everyday documents from ancient Yemen came to light. Most of them are letters and documents of commercial transactions. They are written in minuscule characters, scratched lengthwise on freshly cut palm-leaf ribs, juniper sticks, or small decorticated *'ilb* branches, mostly around 10 cm long, but sometimes up to 50. This kind of writing (using a pointed stylus) is as smooth and easy as is writing with ink. The texts are organised in neat horizontal lines; the writing is right to left. Thanks to the extreme dryness of the climate in the Jawf, these organic materials have been successfully preserved.

The largest collection (of about 4000 items) is housed in the National Museum and another 2000 sticks in the Military Museum, both in Sana'a; about 800 are in the Bavarian State Library in Munich, and a further 300 in Leiden. The Munich collection is currently being published by Peter Stein<sup>2</sup> and has already enormously enriched our knowledge of ancient Yemen and

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1 Minuscule is the opposite of monumental in epigraphy. Cursive writing refers to normal joined handwriting

2 See my review in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2012, p. 466-468

its languages. Mohammed Maraqtén's book<sup>3</sup> is thus the second major publication of this extraordinary material. He has been able to study the entire collection of the Sana'a National Museum; his selection of 101 items is therefore representative of the whole corpus. They cover the period from the 10th c. BC to the 4th c. AD.

The sticks come from the ruins of ancient Nashshan (the site today called al-Sawda') in the Jawf. Their deciphering obviously posed great problems: until the late 1970s only the clearly legible monumental script ("*musnad*") had been known. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of Mahmud Ali Ghul, Yusuf Abdullah, Walter W. Müller, and Jacques Ryckmans, the texts can now be read quite safely. Today, the foremost experts in the field are Mohammed Maraqtén and Peter Stein.

It is important to note that the earliest documents (from the 10th c. BC. onwards) use the monumental letters, without connecting them, using the wonderful South Arabian invention of a vertical stroke to separate words. This usage of the *musnad* characters on cheap material on which writing is quick and easy continued for about half a millennium, the letters gradually becoming less angular. A true cursive developed in the 5th/4th century. Maraqtén dates the earliest cursive stage (which he calls *Früh-zabur*) to the 4th/3rd c. BC. Of course the writing style underwent further changes in the later history of South Arabian writing until the early 6th c. AD, when it was no longer practised.

What was the name of this script? It was called "*zabur*" (long u), in contrast to the monumental

3 Mohammed Maraqtén, *Altsüdarabische Texte auf Holzstäbchen. Epigraphische und kulturhistorische Untersuchungen*, Beirut, 2014 (Beiruter Texte und Studien, Orient-Institut Beirut, Band 103), 498 pages, Würzburg (Ergon-Verlag) 2014 ISBN 978-3-95650-034-3, €98



Text 52, 10-8 C BC.  
Allocation of  
irrigation water



Text 63, 7-6th c. BC.  
Tithes for the god  
'Athtar

script, known as *musnad*. The term *zabur* is not only found in these texts, it continued to be used by pre-Islamic poets, such as Imru' al-Qays and Labid. They also transmitted the name of the material (the palm-leaf sticks) as *'asib*. Classical Arabic dictionaries also mention the word *zabur*, qualifying it as a “Yemeni term”. The word occurs three times in the Qur'an, in 4,163, in 17,55 and in 21,105.

Both Arab commentators and Western translators render it as (David's) “Psalter”. However, this is not correct. The word simply means “the writings” (of David). In this context, I take the opportunity to mention that it is high time that a new translation of the Qur'an took into account the numerous Yemeni words, facts, and descriptions contained in the Holy Book which sometimes considerably change traditional understanding. It is sad to note to what extent orientalist and Qur'anic scholars insist on reading the Holy Book from exclusively Jerusalem or Alexandrian perspectives, totally neglecting the fact that Mecca was at the time part of the Yemeni cultural sphere, and that – from the mid-4th century AD onwards – it had been part of the Himyarite empire.

The overwhelming majority (99%) of the sticks known so far come from Nashshan. It is assumed that they were kept there in some kind of temple archive. However this explanation raises some questions: who would have wished to keep private letters that are of no legal value, in a public archive? How come letters were collected in a storeroom for the incredibly long period of 1600 years? My personal guess would rather tend towards a *Geniza*. People were reluctant to throw away documents that contained divine names, as is the case in the greeting formulas. *Genizas* are not restricted to Jewish custom and Cairo, they are also known in Yemen: suffice it to mention the unique Qur'anic manu-

scripts from the Sana‘a Great Mosque that have revolutionised our understanding of the origins of the Qur’an. Deposits of damaged letters also existed in a great many village mosques in Yemen.

### The letters

The largest group amongst the sticks are letters, the earliest ones representing the period between the 10th and 8th centuries. After a lengthy greetings formula came the text itself. It was written by a professional scribe who often signed his name. One of these scribes bore the name *dwm*; Maraqtan proposes the transliteration *dawim*, but it is of course *Daum*. The text itself (be it letter or document) was then signed by its initiating author; his or her signature was usually done with distinctive strokes, resembling Roman numerals, but sometimes also in writing. Some documents were sealed.

Maraqtan’s introduction (146 pages beefed up with 367 notes) is a monograph in its own right. The 101 texts are published in an exemplary way: every single item is photographed, transcribed, transliterated, and translated. An exhaustive commentary explains grammar, words, formulas and names. It also deals with the contents, and provides sources and parallels. The most common type of documents and letters are delivery notes for goods (mostly agricultural), receipts, financial transactions, loans, and of course private correspondence that deals with various problems, but also with health, relationships, etc. A number of letters are written by women, proving that women in ancient Yemen had full legal capacity, and could act as businesswomen in their own right. An interesting group are abecedaries (to be understood as school exercises). We will come to these later.

The following examples of texts will give the reader an idea of the breadth of the material: text 30 is a transfer note for a sum of money for a



Text 43 2-3rd c. AD.  
Lease of ewes



Text 45 2nd-3rd c. AD. A dunning letter against a business woman

business trip to Najran. Text 32 is a 10th/8th century delivery note for 50 measures of honey, a product for which Yemen continues to be famous today. Text 39 is a signed loan agreement where the debtor is a woman. Text 45 deals with a delivery that was transmitted through a woman who in turn was supposed to deliver it to a third person. Text 63 (7th/6th c.) contains a list of tithes due by various towns in the Jawf to the temple of 'Athtar in Nashshan. Tithes are a well-known means of public financing in ancient Yemen. The system is mentioned in the Qur'an, and continued to be practised unaltered (but of course to the local Wali and his shrine) until a few decades ago.

Maraqten's exemplary editorial work brings this fascinating material to life. It is an extremely important new window on pre-Islamic South Arabia, its economy and linguistics. The importance of these texts is twofold: their substance (including their sheer number), and linguistically. Within two or three decades, they have more than doubled our written documentation from ancient Yemen. Today, we have far more texts from Yemen than from Ugarit, Phoenicia, in Punic, (old) Aramaic, or indeed, (old)

Hebrew. The South Arabian corpus is thus (after Akkadian) the second largest from the ancient East. It is astonishing that students of the region's history and its institutions make practically no use of this material!

The second ground breaking element concerns the language: the monumental inscriptions which until very recently constituted our sole window into pre-Islamic Yemen (and Arabia) are necessarily limited in scope, contents, and grammar. They deal with royal themes, the divine, and public information, such as decrees. Peoples' private lives, their everyday transactions and concerns had no place there. The monumental (*musnad*) inscriptions were therefore composed in the third person. The *zabur* texts provide us at last with first and second person (singular and plural): they give flesh and life to the civilisation of pre-Islamic Yemen. Also, a total of five rhymed religious compositions is now known from Yemen (3 of them in *zabur*), shedding new light on the origin of Qur'anic rhyme.

## The origin of the South Arabian alphabet, and the alphabet as such

As we saw above, the earliest handwriting was not yet cursive, but used the – unconnected – letters of the monumental alphabet. They are to be dated to the 10th century. One of the Leiden sticks has been carbon-dated in Oxford, at between 1073 and 902 BC.<sup>4</sup> In the collection of the Yemeni National Museum, Maraqtan identified approximately 100 sticks that belong palaeographically to the earliest period (10th to 8th c.). This is however not the only clue for a more precise dating of the beginning of South Arabian civilisation. Some of the letter shapes on ostraca found by the Italians in Yala have also been dated by archaeologists to the 10th century. Sedov<sup>5</sup> attributes the inscribed shards from Raybun to an even earlier period, before the turn of the millennium, possibly the last quarter of the second millennium. Peter Stein<sup>6</sup> also sees the emergence of the ancient south Arabian script in the late second millennium.

The alphabet specialist, Benjamin Sass<sup>7</sup>, doubts these attributions. He believes that Sedov has erroneously ascribed such an early age to the Raybun shards and that Yala also should be later than assumed by the archaeologists. In his view, both the alphabet and writing in southern Arabia emerged around 850, on the basis of a West-Semitic alphabetic prototype of the *same* period. Apart from

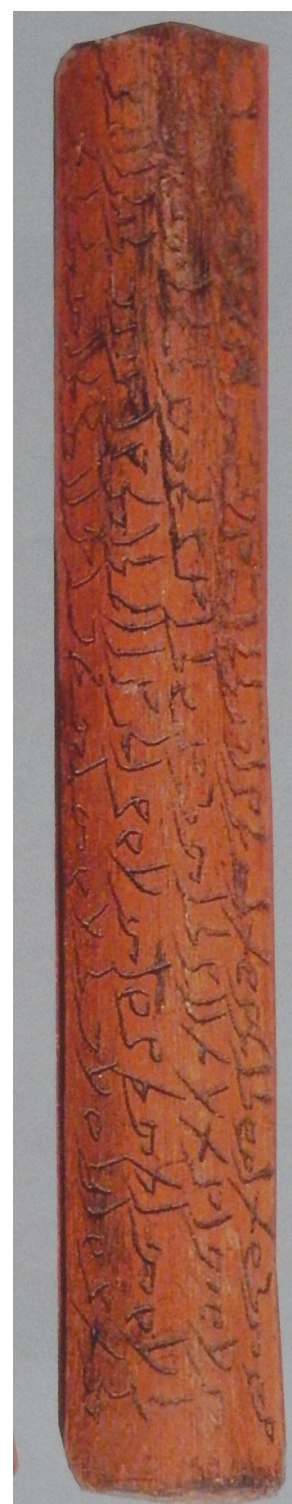
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4 A. J. Drewes et alii, Some absolute dates for the development of the Ancient South Arabian minuscule script, in: *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, vol. 24, issue 2 (2013), p. 196-207

5 Die archäologischen Denkmäler von Raybun im unteren Wadi Dau'an, in: *Mare Erythraeum I* (1997), p. 31-106

6 P. Stein, Palaeography of the Ancient South Arabian script. New evidence for an absolute chronology, in: *AAaE op.cit* (see note 4), p. 186-195

7 B. Sass, *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*, Tel Aviv 2005, p. 131



Text 2 3rd–4th c. AD.  
A letter by children to  
their mother



doubting the archaeologists' dating of their excavations, he bases his arguments on his view of the North-West-Semitic languages of the early *first millennium*, of which he considers the South Arabian alphabet to be an offshoot. In my view, it is somewhat daring to doubt the archaeologists' judgement from a studio perspective (Sedov is the South Arabia archaeologist with the longest and broadest experience on the ground). It also seems wrong to me that Sass focuses on the first millennium languages of the region, such as "Canaanite", Byblos, Hebrew or Phoenician. This focus prevents him from realising that the Southern languages branched off far earlier from the North-West-Semitic ones.

I will now examine the origins of the South Arabian alphabet. There is general agreement that this alphabet is not an indigenous invention but part of the development of the Semitic alphabet, from which all the world's alphabets are derived, the Greek, Latin, Cyrillic, Arabic, etc. The origin of the alphabet is and has been a major subject of interest, both for scholars and the public at large. It has however mostly been discussed without, or with insufficient, attention to evidence from South Arabia.

The earliest undisputed archaeologically datable evidence has been found in Ugarit and in 'Ayn Shams/Bet Shemesh (west of Jerusalem). Ugarit, a very old settlement on the Syrian coast, became a kingdom of regional importance in the 14th century BC. Its capital was therefore in need of a chancellery, where official and religious texts were produced, and this had to include facilities for scribal education. The Ugarit scribes were fluent in several languages, but were trained in the region's international language, Akkadian. In the 14th century, writing in Ugarit was mainly done in Akkadian; only in the 13th did scribes begin to also write in their own language, Ugaritic. The city was destroyed around 1190 (possibly in 1185) by the "sea-peoples", which sets a terminus *post quem*.

To date, 18 alphabets have been found in Ugarit, including some for which there are only a few fragments. They are written with wedges ("cunei") – but *not* in the cuneiform signs known from Akkadian. These letters are an approximate rendering of the *shapes* of the earlier "linear" (i.e. the pictographic signs) alphabet with wedges. This is easily explained by the fact that the scribes were so accustomed to cuneiform, and that writing on clay tablets is so much easier by impressing the wedge-formed stylus (true alphabetic writing is appropriate for *ink*, on papyrus, leather, or parchment). Unfortunately, no trace of the Ugaritic linear alphabet has been found. The early/classical Ugaritic alphabet had 27 (plus 3) letters.

The great number of alphabets excavated in Ugarit has enabled a secure deciphering of their letters, and thus the reading and understanding of Ugaritic literature.

We must now stress a very important fact: a specific order for letters that allows an alphabet to be memorised and transmitted through teaching is not merely an added element but part of its constituent identity. An alphabet can only exist in a specific order. That characteristic is even more important than the shapes of the letters themselves. Ugaritic, like all alphabets, had a specific order for its letters. Basically, the same order continued into the Phoenician alphabet and from it to the Greek, etc. until our own. The shapes of the letters, their names, and above all their order: these are the three constituent elements of an alphabet.

There are only two letter orders in the world's alphabets: the *abjadiya* (a-b-j-d, alpha-beta-gamma-delta, where the pronunciation change from j to *gamma* might indicate that the Phoenicians pronounced *jim* like “g”, in the manner of modern Egyptians), originating in early Semitic, via the Phoenicians to the Greeks and Romans, to the Cyrillic, Indian and South Asian alphabets, but also, for instance, Aramaic, Arabic and Hebrew, Pahlavi, Tibetan, Mongolian, etc. The other letter order is that of the South Arabian and Ethiopian alphabets; it is called *halhamiya*, after its first four letters (h-l-h-m, the first ha is the normal h, such as in *hijra*; the second is the h in Muhammad).<sup>8</sup>

Most alphabets found in Ugarit display the *abjadiya* order. But in 1988, a sensational discovery was made: excavations brought a new alphabetic tablet to light. In cuneiform characters, of course, but in a different order! The tablet (RS 88.2215, Damascus Museum), and the invention of the Ugaritic alphabet as such have been dated by Bordreuil/Pardee<sup>9</sup> to the first half of the 13th century. Its scholarly publication and a drawing are also due to them.<sup>10</sup> It rapidly became evident that the order of letters of this tablet (containing the 27 phonemes of Ugaritic) was identical to the South Arabian (29 letters).

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8 While the *abjad* or *abjadiya* remains the Arabic alphabet, memorised at school, a different order (alif-ba-ta-tha) has been developed by grammarians for use in dictionaries etc, just as the keyboard of our typewriters and computers does not follow the alphabetic order.

9 P. Bordreuil and D. Pardee, *A Manual of Ugaritic*, Winona Lake 2009, p. 19

10 Textes alphabétiques, p. 341-348, in M. Yon et D. Arnaud (eds.), *Etudes Ougaritiques I* (2001). A good photograph is available in G. Galliano et Y. Calvet (eds.), *Le royaume d'Ougarit*, Lyon 2004, p. 95

The other tablet of interest here was found in 1933 in Beth Shemesh. It dates from the 14th or 13th century. For over half a century, it remained impossible to understand. Only in 1987 did the Russian scholar, Lundin,<sup>11</sup> have the ingenious idea to compare it with the South Arabian alphabet, discovering that it was indeed an alphabet, and that it had the South Arabian letter order, i.e. that it was a *halhamiya*. Hayajneh and Tropper<sup>12</sup> rightly qualify this deduction as “pioneering”; other scholars called it “brilliant”, and so it is.

### Origins in Egypt? – The “proto-Sinaitic” alphabet

Before further examining this evidence (i.e. the two *halhamiyas* from Syria/Palestine and their connection with Southern Arabia) we must address the widely accepted view, particularly in popular works, that the Semitic alphabet originates from the so-called proto-Sinaitic letters discovered at Sarabit el-Khadim, in Southern Sinai, an Egyptian turquoise mining town where Semitic speaking workmen were living under Egyptian supervision. These few very crude signs were discovered in 1904/5. The only clearly legible ones are scratched on a small sphinx, 23.7 cm long (BM 41748) which bears the name *Hathor* in roughly drafted hieroglyphs, and below the word *ba‘lat* (“Lady”) in even rougher Semitic graffiti. There is general agreement that the word *ba‘lat* and possibly a few others are written in an early form of Semitic letters. Unfortunately, there are no archaeological clues for dating the inscriptions (the sphinx itself dates from about 1800 BC). Opinions vary widely, between 1800 and 1300; any narrowing down is speculative and a function of any author’s preconceived opinion on the origin of the alphabet. The British Museum catalogue says that it is “likely that the script” (on the sphinx) “originated in Palestine or Syria”, which means that the Sinai inscriptions constitute a later phase. This sounds reasonable.

In 1999, Darnell<sup>13</sup> discovered another group of proto-Sinaitic graffiti in Wadi el-Hol, west of Thebes. On the basis of nearby late 12th Dynasty writing, he dated them to the 18th century BC. Again, this is speculative –

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11 A. G. Loundine, L’Abécédaire de Beth Shemesh, in: *Le Muséon* 100 (1987), p. 243-250

12 H. Hayajneh and J. Tropper, Die Genese des altsüdarabischen Alphabets, in: *Ugarit-Forschungen* 29 (1997), p. 183-198, see p. 183 and 195

13 J. C. Darnell et alii, Two Early Alphabetic Inscriptions from the Wadi el-Hol: New Evidence for the Origin of the Alphabet from the Western Desert of Egypt, *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* vol. 59/2 (2006)

there is no clear connection between those Egyptian inscriptions and the Semitic graffiti. Sass who had advocated an 18th century dating in 1991,<sup>14</sup> has now<sup>15</sup> modified his earlier assumptions about such a 12th Dynasty date for the proto-Sinaitic signs. His current position is that the Sinai and the Wadi el-Hol signs are contemporary, that they constitute the earliest forms of Semitic writing, that they are inspired by Egyptian, but that they date from the 14th/13th century. This dating is plausible and consistent with my opinion.

We must now look into the claim that the Semitic alphabet was somehow inspired by Egypt. This theory was born a hundred years ago, around the discovery of the Sarabit el-Khadim signs, whose location seemed tangible proof of Egyptian-Semitic cultural interaction. In 1916, the two giants of Egyptology, Gardiner<sup>16</sup> and, in the very same year, Sethe<sup>17</sup>, concluded that here was the earliest Semitic writing, and that it was Semitic speaking workmen, inspired by Egypt, who had here developed an alphabet for their own language. The alphabet would thus have originated from an Egyptian-Semitic cultural encounter. While most<sup>18</sup> later Egyptologists saw the “idea” that had inspired Semitic speakers to develop their letters in the Egyptian one-consonant hieroglyphs, Gardiner and Sethe tried to derive the *forms* of the graffiti from certain hieroglyphic signs.

But the genius of the Semitic letters is *not* their form, but their acrophonic value (“a” from *alpu*, ox, “b” from *bet*, house, etc). At the same time, while the Semitic letters are pictographic, none of them is even remotely inspired by hieroglyphs. And how could workers drawn from a Bedouin background develop a totally new form of writing? To say so, assumes that they had previously mastered the Egyptian writing system, including the language’s last frontier, the one-consonant-signs! In this case, would they not have adopted Egyptian forms and sound equivalents? How

14 B. Sass, *Studia Alphabetica*, Freiburg i. Ue. und Göttingen, 1991

15 B. Sass, Wadi el-Hol and the alphabet, in: C. Roche (ed.), *D'Ougarit à Jérusalem -Recueil d'études ... offert à Pierre Bordreuil*, Paris 2008, p. 193-203

16 A. H. Gardiner, The Egyptian Origin of the Semitic alphabet, in: *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* III (1916), p. 1-16

17 K. Sethe, Der Ursprung des Alphabets, in: *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, 1916, p. 88-161; *Die neuentdeckte Sinai-Schrift und die Entstehung der semitischen Schrift*, ebenda, 1917, p. 437-475

18 Not all Egyptologists would adduce the one-consonant-signs for the posited Egyptian origin of the alphabet; others, such as Gelb, *A Study of Writing*, 1963, would argue for a link with syllabic signs; other hypotheses are also proposed.



Fresco from the Assyrian style palace in Til Barsib, Syria, 8th c. BC. It shows two scribes, one with a clay tablet (for cuneiform), the other one with a scroll (for alphabetic writing): It was during this period that alphabetic writing dethroned cuneiform. The fresco captures this very moment. A similar depiction from the palace of Tiglath-Pileser III in Nimrud (ca. 728 BC) is in the British Museum Assyrian Sculpture Gallery

could they, just to give an example for a very common letter (part of the *ba'lat* word), attribute the sound value of the letter 'ayn (meaning "eye") to the Egyptian hieroglyph showing an eye, but having the sound value *j r* (sign list D 4) in Egyptian? And when they heard the Egyptians pronouncing the word/letter 'ayn (sign list D 36), they would have been told that 'ayn was written picturing a forearm. Of course they would then have taken a forearm (or a simplified version of it) in order to write 'ayn in their own language. I believe that it is obvious that this revolutionary new thing, the alphabet, cannot have been inspired by Egyptian hieroglyphs. The Sinai workmen do not stand at the beginning of alphabetic writing. The signs were scribbled on those stones by persons who had had some rudimentary exposure to a developed form of writing in the central Semitic lands.

We should however try to understand why this theory emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, on such flimsy evidence. There was of course the intellectual conditioning prevalent at the time that one of mankind's greatest inventions must have come from one of the two major civilisations of the Middle East, Egypt or Mesopotamia, our ancestors. We must also note that the civilisation of Syria was completely unknown at the time: Greater Syria was not only a terra incognita, it was simply empty. Ebla was not known, nor

was Mari, nor Ugarit, nor Qatna. It was not known that writing/bookkeeping in Habuba Kabira is almost contemporary with Uruk and Susa: that today we see Syria, in its own right, as one of the three great Near Eastern civilisations was unimaginable at that time. Therefore we should not blame Gardiner and Sethe for not knowing what they *could* not know. Today, however, it is high time to throw these outdated theories overboard.

### Two more brilliant observations

After having dismissed the Egyptian connection, we are left with the only secure archaeological documentation, the *abjadiya* alphabets from Ugarit, and the two *halhamiyas* from Ugarit and Bet Shemesh. How can they bring us forward in our quest?

I think that, once again, the solution is found in two other brilliant observations by Lundin.<sup>19</sup> In retrospect, they seem obvious, but unless somebody spelled them out, they simply did not feature on the scholarly horizon. Here are Lundin's two observations: first, that an alphabet, any alphabet, lives and transmits itself through memorisation, i.e. it is the *oral* version which constitutes its identity, not the *written* version. As we have seen, the original Semitic alphabet has preserved the order of its letters even when it moved into totally different languages and cultures (Indo-Germanic: Greek, Latin, French, German, Russian, etc, or Semitic Arabic, or the various South and East Asian alphabets). It is logical that such a fundamental aspect of the alphabet should have functioned/operated from the very beginning, from the very moment of its invention. What this means for our investigation is that *alphabets with a different letter order cannot have been derived from each other*. In other words: the *halhamiya* alphabets cannot have branched off from the mainstream alphabets.

Lundin's second observation relates to the shapes of the letters. We have seen above that the Ugarit alphabet is unfortunately not the original *linear* alphabet, but the rough transformation of its letter forms into wedges. Still, the linear forms can safely be reconstructed, retrospectively re-activating the shapes of the later Semitic letters (Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, South Arabian, Dedanic, Ethiopian, etc.), and through the meanings of the acrophonic signs. There is agreement that the forms of the earliest Semitic alphabet can be reconstructed; this has been done convincingly by a number of scholars.

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19 Der Ursprung des südarabischen Alphabets, in: *Mare Erythraeum I* (1997), p. 9-18

Now comes Lundin: his argument stresses the fact that the second alphabet in Ugarit (of the *halhamiya* type) as well as the South Arabian alphabet have exactly those *very same letter forms* as the other one (the *abjadiya*), only in a *totally different order*. The same letters, based on the very same ingenious idea of acrophony, but in a different order. He concludes that the alphabet was only invented *once*, in one particular place, with the letter forms clearly designed and named, *but* in two different memorising orders. Lundin believes that it was two different schoolmasters, working in the very same building, who devised the system, but parted ways for the preferred order of the letters, at the very moment of the invention: one went for the *abjadiya* order, while the other one went for the *halhamiya* order, both no doubt on the basis of a simple colourful memorising song which we unfortunately do not have. Given the history of the transmission of the alphabet, unchanged in its letter order, between totally different cultures, it is indeed unimaginable that either the *halhamiya* would have been derived from the *abjadiya*, or vice versa. Lundin is right. His explanation for the existence of two identical alphabets (but with a different order of their letters), is the only one compatible with logic and the historical record.

### **A recapitulation of the origin of the alphabet**

While we have thus traced the origin of the alphabet(s), we are still not able to date the invention. Anything in the 2nd millennium goes (before the 14th century). Still, we may be able to narrow it down. The South Arabian alphabet will be key to this. We have located the origin of the South Arabian alphabet somewhere in Greater Syria. But how did it travel to the South, to the shores of the Indian Ocean? This question is intimately connected with the much disputed question of the origin of the South Arabian civilisation as such, of which it is of course one, if not the, major element.

The alphabet is a Semitic invention. Its revolutionary uniqueness was due to the insight of its inventor that the smallest elements of a language are not words or syllables, but a very restricted number (around 30) of phonemes, i.e. letters (consonants, we are in the Semitic world). These phonemes could be symbolised by a pictographic element that no longer meant the object illustrated, but the first sound of its name, such as “a”, illustrated with an ox-head, *alpu*, or “b”, pictured with a square, for a house, *bet*. Calling this inventor a genius is more than appropriate. Thus,

it is the names which connect the acrophonic principle with the pictographic form of the letter. Nothing could be further away from Egyptian. The inventor cannot have been inspired by Egyptian. On the contrary: any exposure to Egyptian would have actively blinded him and prevented him from making these discoveries. The hypothetical Sinai Bedouin producing the proto-Sinaitic graffiti inspired by Egyptian would have expressed the idea of “the ox is in the house” by drawing an ox head into a square, and not through words composed of letters. All forms of writing (Sumerian, Egyptian, Chinese, and Maya) began with pictographs for *words*. Only the Semitic alphabet is based on different principles.

### **The origin of the South Arabian civilisation**

Current scholarship proposes two theories: The Italian school (Avanzini: linguistic continuum with the 2nd millennium; Mazzini: there must have been a formative period before the advent of the first millennium South Arabian civilisation) sees its emergence (i.e. writing, monumental architecture etc.) in continuity with the previous Bronze Age civilisation in Yemen.<sup>20</sup> In short: as an autochthonous development. The other view (Nebes, Sedov, Gerlach, and, I believe – on the basis of personal conversations – a majority of scholars) notes the suddenness of the emergence of those characteristic Southern Arabian elements, and explains them as a result of immigration from somewhere in Greater Syria.<sup>21</sup>

What are those characteristics? First of all: writing. Writing appears in Yemen around the year 1000 BC, without any known antecedents. While irrigation goes back to at least the 3rd millennium, sophisticated forms of irrigation only appear around the turn of the first millennium, and so does monumental stone architecture. Sedov notes the sudden emergence of quality (painted) pottery, which manifests no connection with the Yemeni Bronze Age, but instead has some relationship with Palestinian/Syrian wares. Another sudden development was that settlements were constructed

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20 Both in P. Fronzaroli and P. Marrassini (eds.), *Proceedings of the 10th Meeting of Hamito-Semitic (Afroasiatic) Linguistics* (2001), Firenze 2005, p. 117-126 (Avanzini) and 215-238 (Mazzini)

21 N. Nebes, Zur Genese der altsüdarabischen Kultur, in: R. Eichmann und H. Parzinger (eds.), *Migration und Kulturtransfer*, Bonn 2001, p. 427-435; I. Gerlach, Zu den neuen Forschungen des äthiopisch-deutschen Kooperationsprojektes in Hawelti und Yeha: W. Raunig and Prince Asfa-Wossen Asserate (eds.), *Orbis Aethiopicus*, vol. XIV, Dettelbach 2014, p. 39-76; the facts quoted in the “Envoy” are also based on Gerlach’s article, and other publications of hers



according to a plan, with houses built into a kind of protective circle.

The question was again hotly debated at the 2015 Rencontre Sabéenne, in Pisa, where Holger Hitgen added more elements in support of the immigration model, such as the presence of tripartite domestic and religious buildings in Iron Age Palestine and Yemen, and the unprecedented earliest fine stone masonry dam in Marib (“Bau A”, 10th century). In response, Avanzini pointed to what, in her view, was some ceramic continuity between the Yemeni 2nd and 1st millennia; she also felt that the Yemeni pantheon could not be related to Syrian divinities.

I would however argue strongly for religious parallels between Syria and Yemen. Although we know little more than names through the inscriptions, a number of clearly pre-Islamic rituals have continued to be practised in Yemen (under an Islamic layer, of course), and can thus be observed in detail by the modern anthropologist: water rituals, a kind of Sacred Marriage, communal banquets provided by divinity, pilgrimages. The inscriptions tell us about deities such as ‘Athtar and El (= “Al”-maqahu) whom we know from Syria. There is clear inscriptional evidence for the battling weather-god. All this points to the Syrian region, as none of it can be detected in Yemen’s indigenous 2nd millennium cultures.

Countering these arguments, the Italian scholars ask: *how could we imagine the necessary mass-immigration from Syria?* In my view, this is the wrong question. History tells us that a total change of language and culture does *not* require a massive movement of people. I would refer to the Arabisation and Islamisation of the Sudan that happened almost without any significant immigration of persons, except for a limited number of holy men who established places of learning, and married into the existing elites. It is not migration, it is the prestige associated with a higher form of civilisation (or rather one which is perceived as such) that has the power to fundamentally change a society. There is no need for substantial immigration, and even less for mass migration. What we have just said about the Sudan can also be observed in early Islamic Yemen: there was no immigration at all, on the contrary, there was mass emigration! Only small elite groups came to Yemen and propagated the new language, the new faith, and the new writing. The language change, from Sabaic/Himyaritic to Arabic, and the cultural change, the adoption of Islam, took place thanks to the higher cultural prestige associated with Arabic and with Islam.

Similarly we have to imagine the numerically insignificant, but culturally and religiously very powerful migration of some elites from Syria into

Yemen where the elements of their civilisation ignited the splendour of the South Arabian civilisation as we know it.

But where exactly did these elites come from, and when? This question can now be answered. At the 2013 Seminar for Arabian Studies, Ingo Kottsieper and Peter Stein presented the revolutionary results of their decades-long research into Aramaic and South Arabian languages.<sup>22</sup> The two scholars found so many morphological parallels between early Aramaic and Sabaic that they could only be explained with a common origin. These elements begin with the inventory of the phonemes: 29 for both Aramaic and Sabaic.

With the term “early Aramaic”, I designate here the period (which has not yet been attested) that preceded what is generally known as “Old Aramaic” (850-612 BC). Even in the period of Old Aramaic, “the Proto-Semitic phonemic inventory survives virtually unchanged ... Since the linear consonantal alphabet used for Aramaic, borrowed from a Canaanite/Phoenician source, had only twenty-two graphemes, several of the characters had to be polyphonous”.<sup>23</sup> We recapitulate: Old Aramaic and even more so early Aramaic had the full early Semitic consonantal inventory of 29 phonemes, identical with Sabaic where we have not only those 29 phonemes, but even 29 consonantal *signs*.

Other major elements that connect Aramaic and Sabaic (but set them apart from every other Semitic language) are the post-positioned article, the complete identity of the verbal stem system, and a number of other phenomena listed by Kottsieper and Stein. The verbal stem system, the most important morphological marker of Semitic languages, is *not* shared by the other “South Arabian” languages, such as Hadramitic, Qatabanic, Minaean, and the so-called modern South Arabian languages. This evidence leaves only one conclusion: *There is no such thing as South Arabian languages!* (I hope readers will share my shock at seeing a more than one hundred year old conviction shattered, but this is what happens when ground breaking new research changes even the most basic assumptions of previous scholarship). When the Sabaeans imposed their language, their religion, and their political dominance in the Yemeni region, the

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22 Sabaic and Aramaic – a common origin? in: O. Elmaz and J. C. E. Watson (eds.), *Languages of Southern Arabia, Suppl. to the Proc. of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 44 (2014), p. 81-87

23 St. A. Kaufman, Aramaic, in: R. Hetzron (ed.), *The Semitic Languages*, Abingdon (UK) and New York, 1997

Sabaic speakers did this upon an already Semiticised population. As we noted above, we do not need to imagine this process as a mass immigration of the “Children of Saba” under some charismatic leader. The immigrating Sabaeans were thus not only the forebears of the earliest and most powerful state in South Arabia, the kingdom of Saba; they also brought the alphabet with them. Kottsieper and Stein try to localise the original homeland of the Sabaeo-Aramaeans more precisely; those interested in the question should refer to their publications.

Can we date these events? The earliest records of “Aramayn” date to the reign of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser I. who ruled from 1115 to 1077 BC. We should therefore position the still united “Sabaeo-Aramaeans” a century or two before that. But maybe the alphabet can be of more help: As we have seen, centuries later, the Aramaeans borrowed their alphabet from the Phoenicians, a 22 letter alphabet that was remarkably unfit for their language. But the Sabaeans had a 29 letter alphabet that was perfectly adapted to their language and its sound-inventory. These are the 29 phonemes that the hypothetical (reconstructed) proto-Semitic possessed. Sabaic is thus the only Semitic language with a full alphabet, representing the earliest known stage of Semitic. We might conclude that the alphabet was indeed invented within the (“proto”-) Sabaeans cultural sphere, in Syria, (or a place very near to the original homeland of the Sabaeo-Aramaeans), while the Aramaeans waited a few more centuries to become literate. The 27 letter Ugarit alphabets (both the *abjadiya* and the *halhamiya*) would thus document a secondary development of the alphabet, i.e. not only secondary because it was a cuneiform version of the linear shapes, but because it was itself a *descendant* of the original Semitic alphabet, created or adopted by the Sabaeans when they were still domiciled somewhere in the North.<sup>24</sup>

One question still needs to be answered: did the Sabaeans invent the alphabet, or did they pick it up on their way south? Theirs is the original 29 letter alphabet. All the others are shorter. In my view, it is therefore probable that they invented it rather than adopt it from an unknown source (of which we have no trace), and adding letters to it.

As this Journal goes to press, the respected Egyptologist, Karl-Theodor Zauzich, offers a new theory to support an Egyptian origin of the

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24 J. F. Quack, Die spätägyptische Alphabetreihenfolge und das ‘südsemitische’ Alphabet, in: *Lingua Aegyptia*, vol. 11 (2003), p. 163-184; for “secondary” see p. 175

alphabet<sup>25</sup>: the inventor of the alphabet would have translated the Egyptian sign names into Semitic. The basis for Zauzich's thesis does however seem rather narrow: his comparisons are made on the basis of the Hebrew and Phoenician alphabets, both a reduced and quite late development of the original linear alphabet. Zauzich is not aware of the two *halhamiyas* from the Levant. He also ignores the South Arabian alphabet: its full inventory of the proto-Semitic phonemes might have complicated his thinking productively. His general approach can be illustrated with his doing away with the "house" etymology for the letter "B": Zauzich argues that its Phoenician form does not resemble a house. This is correct. But the earlier Sabaic alphabet has preserved the original square form of a house. It is regrettable that Zauzich has not included the South Arabian evidence in his argument.

### The South Arabian alphabet returns to ... Egypt

We have not yet come to the end of our truly "Grand" Tour: we shall now return to where it all began, back to Egypt where the proto-Sinaitic alphabet was supposed to have been invented on the basis of a Semitic-Egyptian cultural encounter. It is only recently, that Jochem Kahl<sup>26</sup> discovered that the Egyptians ... did, yes, *did* have an alphabet! Not at the time of the classical Egyptian civilisation, but in the late period, in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. This research was pursued by Quack<sup>27</sup> who was able to locate a total of 7 papyri, with 8 alphabets; future research will no doubt add more examples. Quack not only expanded upon Kahl's discovery, but made another revolutionary discovery, when he recognised that the letter order of this Egyptian alphabet is the ... *halhamiya*!

Quack believes that the Egyptians took it from the South Arabians (he goes for the Minaeans). There can be no doubt that the Ptolemaic and Roman Egyptians borrowed their alphabet from an outside source, but some Egyptologists probably were somewhat uneasy at the idea that the Arabs were cultural donors. It is probably for this cultural reason that Tropper<sup>28</sup> and Kammerzell<sup>29</sup> connected the borrowing to the two known

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25 K.-Th. Zauzich, *Hieroglyphen mit Geheimnis*, Darmstadt 2015

26 J.Kahl, Von h bis k, in: *Göttinger Miszellen* 122 (1991), p 33-47

27 See note 24, and: Ägyptisches und südarabisches Alphabet, in: *Revue d'Égyptologie* 44 (1993), p. 141-151

28 J. Tropper, Ägyptisches, nordwestsemitisches und altsüdarabisches Alphabet, in: *Ugarit-Forschungen* 28 (1996), p. 619-632

29 F. Kammerzell, Die Entstehung der Alphabetreihe, in: D. Borchers, F. Kammerzell, St. Weninger (eds.), *Hieroglyphen – Alphabetete – Schriftreformen*, Göttingen, 2001, p. 117-158

*halhamiyas* from 2nd millennium Syria (Ugarit and Bet Shemesh). Quack considers this somewhat audacious (and I agree with him): had the Egyptians availed themselves of a second millennium Syrian alphabet, they would of course have adopted the *abjadiya*, which was so widespread, and not the obscure *halhamiya*, let alone the further difficulty that both existed not in linear form, but only in cuneiform versions. Furthermore, the Tropper and Kammerzell hypothesis assumes that this Syrian *halhamiya* alphabet remained dormant, somewhere in Egypt, for a thousand years or so. This is impossible. Tropper himself acknowledges that “There are no explicit hints for such an early dating of the Egyptian alphabetic tradition”.<sup>30</sup> So what?

Leaving modern cultural sensitivities aside, the Egyptians can only have taken the alphabet over from the South Arabians. Contacts, during the Ptolemaic and Roman period, were a matter of course. The India trade, via Mouza and Aden, was regular business.

### Envoy

The story doesn't end here: from the very beginning of their history, the Sabaeans continued to expand, in Southern Arabia itself where they quickly became the dominant power, but – with a move that changed world history – equally into East Africa. It was from the 9th c. BC onwards, latest, that a stratified society developed in the northern Ethiopian highlands, where elite settlers from Marib built the largest palace in South Arabian style (around 800 BC), and the great temple of Yeha (mid 7th c.). There is no doubt that this was a society of immigrating elites: not only did they bring their architecture, language, writing, and names to Africa, but they also brought their material culture: Thus, a master stone mason from Marib signed one of his majestic blocs. The very large slabs of shining white calcite flowstone used for the revetment of the temple walls had been quarried near Marib and transported over the Yemeni mountains, across the Red Sea, and again high up into the highlands of Tigray, a distance of 700 km as the crow flies, but much longer in real terms, and through forbidding landscapes. Not only did these Sabaean settlers bring monumental architecture and writing to the other side of the Red Sea as well as plus the legend of the Queen of Saba – or did this one travel in the opposite direction? – they also sparked the Semitisation of

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<sup>30</sup> Tropper, *op.cit* p 627

Ethiopia which is today a mostly Semitic speaking nation (Ge'ez, Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigre, etc.).

## Conclusion

We have seen in this article that the South Arabian civilisation was originally linked with Syria, developing very quickly its own unique architectural (such as square pillars, instead of columns) and artistic language. Its alphabet also originated where they themselves had originated: somewhere in Greater Syria. But it is the South Arabian alphabet that has preserved the oldest stage of the Semitic phonemic inventory. It seems therefore highly probable that it was those forebears of the Sabaeans who invented the alphabet, this greatest of human civilizational tools. From these origins (in two letter orders) all the world's alphabets are derived, the Phoenician, the Greek, the Roman, ours, the Cyrillic, the Arabic, the Hebrew, the Pahlavi, the Tibetan, the Indian and other South Asian alphabets.

All photographs, except the one below, by kind permission of Mohammed Maraqtan.



This inscription is a fine example of classical early *musnad*. I discovered it in the sanctuary on the summit of Jabal al-Laudh, Arabia's sacred mountain, where the *mukarribs* (early rulers of Saba) held their annual celebration of the union between the state and its gods. The festival included a lavish banquet for the people offered by the god 'Athtar, represented by the king. The banqueting halls seating many hundreds are still finely preserved at the foot of the mountain. This inscription (dated ca. 680–670 BC) was set by Sumhu Raiyim Dhubyan, the son of Karib Il Watar, the greatest Sabaeen king, the true founder of the majesty of Saba, who ruled in the early 7<sup>th</sup> c. BC. It commemorates the great annual feast: "the day when 'Athtar gave the banquet" (full text in Daum, *Der heilige Berg Arabiens*, in: Daum, *Im Land der Kö. von Saba*, ed. Daum et alii, München 1999, pp 223–232).

## DR MARION SERJEANT: HARVEST OF MEMORIES

PRESENTED BY JOHN SHIPMAN

I used to send Marion Serjeant<sup>1</sup> copies of the BYSJ. Invariably something would catch her eye – an article or book review or obituary – and trigger memories of people and places familiar to her through her husband’s pioneering research in south west Arabia<sup>2</sup> or from personal knowledge. She recorded these memories in a series of letters. I have extracted from these letters texts which I believe are of interest to BYS members. Where possible, I have presented them in the chronological order in which the incidents she describes occur. Occasional repetition of the same subject in different letters has been synthesised. I have added notes to put her comments into context and clarify when necessary.

Her memories are random and expressed with a light touch and innate candour; they were not written nor polished for publication. They span some seven decades of interaction with the society and culture of the Arab world, indicate the close interest Marion Serjeant took in her husband’s work, and explain why, for her husband’s former students, friends and associates, she became a cherished trustee of his legacy. H. St J. Philby might well have said of her, as he did of Doreen Ingrams, that ‘she hides her light under the bushel of her husband’s fame’. Judging from the tone of her letters, she would not have wished otherwise.

“The first I knew of Yemen was from Bob’s letters in 1940-41. Professor Tritton at SOAS had sent him [to Aden] to learn the local Arabic – they told him in Cambridge, when he signed on for the Army, that they didn’t need him yet! Shep [Sheppard]<sup>3</sup> got Bob as an extra Government Guard [GG] with a Governor’s commission and they used his O.T.C.<sup>4</sup> basics to recruit people from Aulaqi to Wahidi for the ‘Mobile Force’, known as ‘Mobile Farce’ I believe! Then they sent him with some GGs to patrol the coast to Perim, checking for any invasion attempts [by the Italians]. He and his men (on camels and horses) seemed to be based in a place called Am Fajairah in Subeihi country. He had some green ink

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1 Her brief obituary appears on p 64 of BYSJ 2013

2 Professor Robert Bertram Serjeant (1915-1993), celebrated Arabist and scholar. They married in 1941.

3 Sheppard was then Commandant of the Government Guards, a tribally recruited force established to guard key points and personnel in the Aden Protectorate. He later served as a senior political officer in Mukalla.

4 This acronym relates to his basic military training while at Edinburgh University.

and his typewriter with him!... He ate with the men – but slept in a snake infested old *husn*. Then they suggested he stay on for the rest of the war, but he was scared of losing his new job in SOAS so he left on a ship full of Italian prisoners of war and they sailed via the Cape. I still have those letters.”

The ‘Mobile Force’ was part of an ill-conceived British plan to raise an irregular body of Arab tribesmen and Somalis to invade Italian Somaliland. It languished due to poor leadership and the propensity of Arab recruits to abscond rather than to serve abroad; it made no tangible contribution to the war effort until its role in the capture of Berbera in March 1941. An account of the plan and the British team involved is recorded in Gordon Waterfield’s *Morning will Come* (1944). Waterfield, a well-known journalist, was one of the team posted to Aden. He was impressed by Bob Serjeant’s ability to drill local tribesmen but soon concluded that the ‘Mobile Force’ was irregular only in the sense of its irregularity of purpose and the marked eccentricity of certain members, notably Cordell Ryan. Ryan was in charge of the team’s naval element comprising two dhows without engines, thus being of limited operational use.

An entertaining sketch of Ryan<sup>5</sup> was penned by a young Army wife<sup>6</sup> in social contact with the British team. She wrote: “...a man looking like Charles Laughton with a bearded face, and a little red fez sitting on top of his enormous bulk....such a character I never expected to meet outside the covers of a book; in his past he has been Krupp’s representative in India, has done a spot of gun-running, and dealt in slave traffic; he is an exhibitionist, throws his weight about, possesses a flow of conversation and good stories, ... but obviously not to be trusted one inch; somehow or other he obtained the rank of Lieutenant Commander in the Navy, but they did not keep him very long; added to all this, he pretends to be a Moslem, which may have suited his commercial interests, but he is not at all averse to alcohol.”

“Another scene I remember was when Doreen Ingrams<sup>7</sup> proposed the opening of a clinic for women and children in Tarim to be initiated by me while

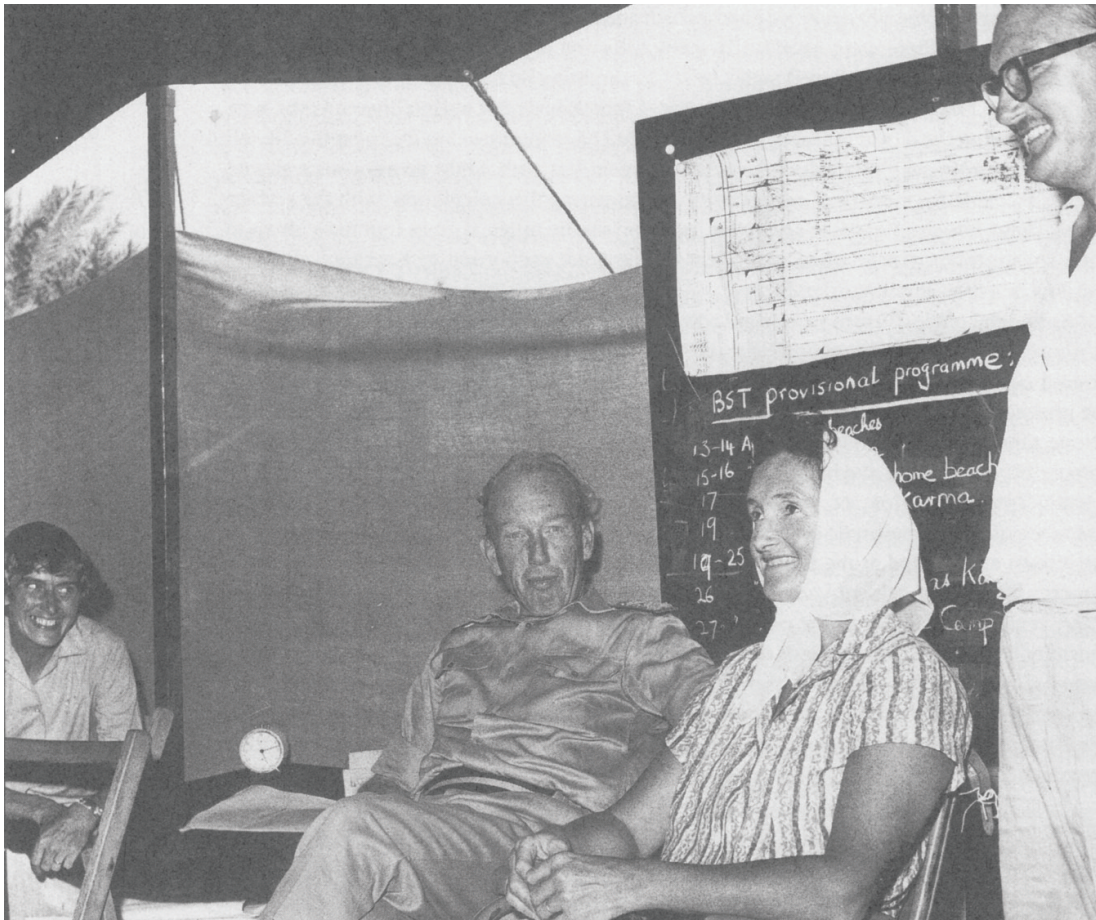
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5 Marion Serjeant mentions Ryan among the ‘strange arrivals’ encountered by her husband in Aden but identified him only as ‘the naval part of Mobile Force’.

6 Helen Joly de Lotbiniere in an unpublished letter dated 28 Oct. 1940, Middle East Archive, St. Antony’s College, Oxford.

7 Wife of Harold Ingrams who was appointed British Adviser to the Qu’aiti and Kathiri states in the Eastern Aden Protectorate in 1937. Her memoir *A Time in Arabia* (1970) was republished by Eland in 2013.





Dr. Marion Serjeant and Sir Michael Le Fanu with Lady Le Fanu and Brian Doe in Major Boxhall's Information Tent

accompanying Bob on his year's study leave in 1947. The al-Kaffs provided the money for the clinic. A German girl in Shibam took on the job when I left<sup>8</sup>. Imam Ahmad's doctor, Luigi Merucci, came on a *rihla* to Hadramaut in 1947 and his arrival in Tarim coincided with a visit by a *miskin* from Bor with a strangulated hernia, so he offered to unstrangulate it if I'd assist....It was done in a welter of flies and a lot of antiseptic but he survived! In Mukalla in 1948-9, Christmas, Brian [Hartley]<sup>9</sup> arrived with a turkey for each of us. That was the beginning of my second year in Hadramaut. I had opened another clinic for women and children there with the help of the State Secretary, Saif Al Bually. We chose a discreet place for the gate. His son was Omani ambassador in London for a while – in the '70s?

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8 She must be referring to Eva Hoeck, the German doctor in Shibam and author of *A Doctor Amongst the Bedouins* (1962).

9 Brian Hartley CMG OBE served as Director of Agriculture, Aden 1938-54.

Shep [Sheppard] was *mustashar* [Adviser] still, before Fletcher took over. I was in Mukalla when Imam Yahya was shot, south of Sana'a, with Hussain al-Amri's father, his adviser, I think. It was the same year, 1948, that Ghalib al-Quaiti was born in Hyderabad.

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During the Champions' visit<sup>10</sup> that year, at the inter-forces games on Sultan Saleh's *maidan* an armed policeman was tripped up by a Hadrami Bedouin Legion man and they went for each other's throat and others joined in, dust rose, cars came for the visitors, but Fletcher tore past where I sat, white feathers flying, and disappeared into the dust. Jamal al-Lail al-Kaff<sup>11</sup> touched me on the shoulder and said 'Can I come with you?'...I said 'I'm not going anywhere!'...A little later, a figure appeared out of the dust, still with white helmet on, but carrying his sword. The tension was gone after that, and we all walked home together.

\*

Ahmad al-Shami<sup>12</sup> and Bob were friends. They met, of course, when Bob was trying to go to N. Yemen in the 1950s. He never got permission and his first visit was in 1964 during the Egyptian invasion. He went in a truck from Beihan and joined the Royalists for a couple of months. He got to know Ahmad No'man<sup>13</sup> in 1966 on his second visit. In 1969 Ahmad al-Shami came to Mahmud al-Ghul's flat in Beirut where I was staying, while I got a visa for N. Yemen to meet Bob there (who was keen to show me the place). Ahmad said he'd come to assure me I'd be quite safe as he intended going there himself in a month. Nice man. We visited him a little later in hospital in London. He'd been shot in Beirut by a hitman. It went along his facial nerve near his ear. No wonder he remained in Bromley!

\*

Qadhi Ismail al-Akwa<sup>14</sup> became very important [to us] just before the Festival of the World of Islam in London in 1976 and we even took him on a *rihla* to see Richmond and Balmoral Castles!... He remarked, while looking at the river in Glen Feshie, "I see now, where the whisky gets its colour". We didn't take him to a distillery to show him the process. His wife got a washing machine through the good offices of Paolo Costa in 1972, when we were there with the people involved with the Sana'a book<sup>15</sup>. [Washing machines] use an awful lot of water. How many of them will there be now?

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10 Sir Reginald Champion was Governor of Aden 1944-51.

11 Son of Sayyid Abdulrahman bin Sheikh al-Kaff, wealthy entrepreneur and benefactor, and head of the al-Kaff family until his death in 1948.

12 His obituary appears on pp 67-69 of BYSJ 2005

13 Ahmad Muhammad No'man was briefly Prime Minister of North Yemen in 1965 and again in 1971.

14 His obituary appears on pp 65-67 of BYSJ 2010

15 This was *San'a': An Arabian Islamic City* "City of San'a" edited by Professors R B Serjeant and R B Lewcock, 1983, republished 2013.



Professor R B Serjeant at Qadub, Socotra

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Socotra now must be a little different from our time... We arrived with camping equipment, in a Beverley in April 1967. Peter Boxhall's army adventure training outing<sup>16</sup> included Bob and myself. He got me to open a tented clinic for women and children in our camp and later in Qalansiya where some of us went by dhow... Sir Michael Lefanu<sup>17</sup> and his wife visited the camp for a week-end, perhaps glad to get out of Aden too then. A violent storm, in April, swept away the sand where we had been bathing every morning and kept us holding on to the tent poles and guy ropes for hours. It left what seemed a bottomless pit. No wonder [the island] was no good for a coaling station. East of Hadibu there was a Portuguese fort with bits of pot lying about and the remains of a church below it. Also a cave full of human bones nearby! A Russian cruise-ship visited Hadibu while we camped about three miles east. They could hardly wait, obviously!

\*

Why does everyone want to denounce *qat* so vehemently. It was a blessing in a country so cut off from medicine until the 1960s. Ahmad No'man's sister offered me some when I arrived in Ta'izz in 1969 with a heavy cold. 'Try our medicine', she said. In half an hour I was breathing freely. It's like ephedrine, I thought to

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16 Major P G Boxhall, Intelligence Corps, led an RAF/Army expedition to Socotra Dec.1964-Feb.1965.

17 Admiral Sir Michael Lefanu was then C.in C. Middle East Command, Aden.

myself. The following day, on our way, with the Muhafidh, her husband, to see Ahmad's house, now a museum, he passed me another handful of *qat*, urging me to chew. So I did.

\*

The Yafi' article<sup>18</sup> reminded me of the letter I had in 1998 from a young Yafi', a Harhara, now in Saudi Arabia, asking Bob for an account of his ancestry. Someone must have advised him to try Bob. So I sent him a copy of the piece Bob wrote for Lofgren's 90th birthday Festschrift<sup>19</sup> which comprehensively covers the Yafi's – for which he wrote to thank me.

\*

[You published] a superb picture of Abu Shawarib<sup>20</sup>... We heard a lot about him from Robert Wilson who was carried off to Hajja to teach English when Bob consigned him to friends in Sana'a for a year's immersion in Arabic. Bob and I and Freddie Beeston met Abu Shawarib on our way to Dhibin in 1972 – on a narrow road. We gave way, but he got out of his Toyota to chat while our vehicle manoeuvred round and back on to the road. I liked him.

\*

Looking again at Werner Daum's review of the CEFAS publication of 'Nur al-Ma'arif'<sup>21</sup> I thought I'd just tell you that Rex Smith has sent me his production of "The Rasulid Mulakhkhas al-Fitan, a Mediaeval Administrative and Fiscal Treatise from the Yemen", published by the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, OUP, 2007. Bob found this [early 15th century] document on customs dues in the Red Sea area in the Ambrosiana in Milan, and he and Claude Cahen worked on it [intermittently] for ages. The Rasulid and Ayyubid period is Rex's territory so he was well able to put it all straight. Life in Aden port in 1412 wasn't dull – the rich goods coming in and out are amazing – which is why the document caught Bob's eye. But what fascinates me about it is the businesslike way the taxes are apportioned for running the little state they had set up – with the mosques being built in Ta'izz and the vast numbers of hostages they had to maintain in order to hold on to their power. Jock Snell once took me to see the hostages in Dis when I was working in Mukalla in 1948 ... I never knew old Sultan Saleh had any hostages till then. 500 years and not a lot different?

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18 *Passage to Yafa'* pp 23-35 BYSJ 2007.

19 Yafi's, Zaidis, Al Bubakr b. Salim and Others: Tribes and Sayyids by R B Serjeant in *On Both Sides of Al Mandab: Ethiopia, South Arabia and Islamic Studies presented to Oscar Lofgren on his 90th birthday*, by Ulla Ehrensvar and Christopher Toll (eds) pp 83-105, Swedish Research Institute, Istanbul, 1988.

20 See pp 62-64 of BYSJ 2005

21 Pp 52-53 BYSJ 2006.

You know Eng seng Ho<sup>22</sup> came to see me after Bob died. They had been corresponding about the *muwalladin*. His sister was working in Dundee. They even invited me to a barbecue!

\*

Hussain al-Amri<sup>23</sup> and his wife, Haseeba, spent a week-end with me before he went back to Sana'a. For a while, after Bob died, Hussain used to write to me. His only news was of the growing number of his grandchildren.

\*

Qabus of Muscat has funded a new chair of Arabic in Cambridge – Yasir Suleiman<sup>24</sup> is taking it up...I shall miss them when they go ... Do you know we've even got a Maktum Institute in Dundee teaching Arabic. It offers evening classes.

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The Hakluyt Society has published Rex Smith's 'A Traveller in 13th Century Arabia' (Ibn al-Mujawir's *Tarikh al-Mustabsir* ), 2008. Rex is an old friend. Bob and he enjoyed spells together untangling the Arabic of the 13th century ... Bob used to carry his Arabic copy about with him. Ibn al-Mujawir was from Khorassan – on the Haj – but came down the Red Sea and arrived in Rasulid Yemen. He was very interested in the trade going on in Aden but writes about his journey home. He mentions seeing the seven birds before Socotra comes in sight! It is quite a big book and must have given Rex a lot of work. There are tales in it that aren't for delicate ears.

One year, as if in return for the journal which she had recently received, Marion Serjeant sent me a copy of the reprint of her husband's translation of *The Book of Misers* ... This was the first English translation of the comical masterpiece by Al-Jahiz, the ninth century Muslim writer and theologian ... Given Marion's own lively sense of humour, this particular enterprise must have enlisted her enthusiastic support.

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22 Author of *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, University of California Press (2006).

23 Former Yemeni Ambassador in London.

24 Professor Yasir Suleiman held the Chair of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Edinburgh 1990-2007

## WOMEN AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM IN YEMEN

JOANA COOK

Security sector reform (SSR) in Yemen was critical to distinguishing new state institutions and practices from those of the previous regime. Indeed, it was a core pillar of the Gulf brokered transition, the focus of a working group during the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), and an important component of the draft constitution that emerged in 2015.

Women had taken certain roles in the security sector prior to the Arab Spring, though these were often quite niche and few in number. During the NDC, women were not only present in the working group on security, but their roles in the security sector were specifically mentioned in the draft constitution that emerged. With the status of the Yemeni state currently in question, this analysis considers the roles of women in the security sector up to September 2014, and the implications of recent events for their future roles.

### Characteristics of Security Sector Reform

State security is a key requirement to address many of the concerns that have long plagued the stability and advancement of underdeveloped states, threatening the creation of an environment conducive to investment in, and proliferation of, economic opportunities. Furthermore, institutions which are cognizant of, and responsive to, enforcing the rights and protection of its citizens, including women, are critical to ensuring the emergence of an approach to state security based on human rights and the rule-of-law. Concepts of security are also increasingly expanding to include consideration of women and women's security in relation to the state, often through the concept of human security.

Security sector reform is an important concept related to the reform of a number of institutions within government that provide security to the state and population. Most recently, SSR has been a key factor in transitions from communism to democracy for a number of states that emerged from the former USSR, as well as previously authoritarian states like Tunisia undergoing democratization following the Arab Spring. SSR often engages a wide range of actors from across the security, political and development fields, as well as other actors who have a specific interest or link to state security. SSR is “essentially aimed at the efficient and effective

provision of state and human security within a framework of democratic governance.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Heiner Hänggi, there are six key SSR aims in the Arab region in particular. First, security agencies must be disengaged from politics and from other non-security roles (especially economic). Second, the roles of security institutions must be redefined and differentiated, especially separating military or external defense from internal security, and setting clear substantive and procedural rules for the deployment of armed forces for internal security in extraordinary circumstances. Third, states must aim to reinforce the civilian policy-making role, and re-professionalize the security services in terms of its skills, systems and ethos. Fourth, the security sector in post-conflict situations should be restructured.<sup>2</sup> Fifth, regional frameworks for cooperation must be strengthened and sixth, relations with outside providers of security-related assistance must be managed. Overall, the principal challenge is for Arab states to develop comprehensive national security policies that are responsive to citizens’ needs.<sup>3</sup>

SSR must also be considered with respect to domestic versus external interests – it is critical that security institutions reflect a locally owned process (often supported by external actors), and the interests of the wider population. These points will now be considered in the case of Yemen.

### Yemen’s security sector reform

Security institutions in Yemen, in particular the Yemeni Armed Forces and Yemen’s police forces, should reflect the interests of the Yemeni people. They are also a critical source of employment to Yemenis – the public sector is the largest employer in Yemen, and the military and security forces account for 40% of the government budget.<sup>4</sup> However, these security institutions have, for many years, been in desperate need of extensive reform and professionalization.

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1 Heiner Hänggi, “Conceptualising Security Sector Reform and Reconstruction,” *Reform and reconstruction of the security sector 6* (2004): 1.

2 While this may seemingly include Yemen, previously undertaken and defined reforms from the National Dialogue comprise one component of this, though these will have to be readdressed in the present situation.

3 Yezid Sayigh, “Security Sector Reform in the Arab Region: Challenges to Developing an Indigenous Agenda” *The Arab Reform Initiative* (December 2007): 28.

4 Adam C. Seitz, “The ‘Arab Spring’ and Yemeni Civil-Military Relations,” in *Why Yemen Matters: A Society in Transition*, ed. Helen Lackner (Great Britain: Saqi Books, 2014), 59.

There are a number of negative legacies that remain from the Saleh era that must be considered in post-2011 SSR initiatives. These historically revolved around patronage politics, which excluded significant and powerful actors in the country, including the Huthis and the southerners. Furthermore, rather than attempting to bring tribal forces under state control, given that monopoly on force is a critical element for state control, Saleh instead reinforced his position by fomenting and perpetuating inter-tribal conflicts. This also consistently detracted from the idea that the state was working in the interests of the population, or concerned with advancing agendas that would benefit all Yemenis.

The Arab Spring movement challenged such corruption and policies. It was a golden opportunity to not only reshape the national government to reflect the interests of all Yemenis, but also to take critical steps to reign in and realign security institutions to reflect these aspirations. SSR became a core component of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative and subsequent UNSC resolutions No. 2014 (2011) & No. 2051 (2012), which were intended to facilitate Yemen's peaceful "political settlement."<sup>5</sup>

Women in Yemen proved to be some of the country's most articulate, animated political actors in this period and emerged as key actors in the country's transition. Whereas women constituted 3% of the previous government, there was a 30% quota in place for the National Dialogue Conference thanks, in large part, to their participation in the protests and demand for an increased place at the table, indicative of the more prominent roles women were demanding and taking in the emergent government. Women were also present in the security working group and the roles they should have in future state security institutions was discussed.

In the first draft of the new Yemeni constitution which came out of the NDC in January 2015, Article 314 confirmed the aim to, "Empower and expand employment opportunities for women in the Armed Forces, Police and General Intelligence" as a key principle.<sup>6</sup> Women's important roles in both the government and security sector appeared set to expand, and both were defined and included in the state. This also demonstrated local ownership of such initiatives.

Many had also advocated for a reduced size for the military and an

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5 Amb. Marwan Noman and David S. Sorenson, "Reforming the Yemen Security Sector," *CDDRL Working Papers* 137 (June 2013).

6 Government of Yemen, "Draft Constitution English," (2015).



increase in the strength of the police force.<sup>7</sup> This was likely to be an important security sector institution in which women would become engaged. While women numbered only 2,868 or 1.7% of total police forces in 2014, this was the state security institution where their representation was highest.<sup>8</sup>

A number of significant and positive changes occurred after 2011. The Ministry of Interior underwent some transformations, in particular the Central Security Forces became the Special Security Forces. An Inspector General's Office was put in place to address human rights transgressions, corruption and police violations within the ministry.

However, the Huthis and members of the southern Hiraak felt excluded from these and challenged the inclusiveness of the reforms, while those from Islah believed the Republican Guard had been stacked with Saleh loyalists and Huthis.<sup>9</sup> What is clear is that throughout the entire security transformation process in Yemen since the Arab Spring, distrust has been rampant, as has been the perception that major actors are continuously looking out for their own interests, not necessarily those of the state.

Such steps become further complicated as security challenges persist and exacerbate. These have included the continuous threat from AQAP, as well as the significant violence that has come with the Huthi challenge to the state and subsequent 'Operation Decisive Storm', and increasing support for independence for the South. Hand-in-hand with these challenges was the lack of an inclusive political process, which remains fundamental to a long-term solution, which also includes SSR. Indeed, "Only by closely integrating the process of military-security restructuring within the larger effort to produce an inclusive political consensus – a national pact and new constitution – can the two be successful."<sup>10</sup>

## Moving forward

The literature on SSR demonstrates the importance of advancing both political and security reforms simultaneously. Other areas of emphasis include civilian oversight, transparency, accountability, adherence to democratic norms, as well as the state gaining a monopoly of force over all secu-

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7 International Crisis Group, "Yemen's Military-Security Reform: Seeds of New Conflict?," in *Middle East Report No. 139* (4 April 2013), 27.

8 Mary Christine-Heinze and Sarah Ahmed, "Integrating Women's Security Interests into Police Reform in Yemen," in *A YPC Policy Report*, ed. Yemen Polling Center (June 2013), 28.

9 International Crisis Group, "Yemen's Military-Security Reform: Seeds of New Conflict?," 24.

10 *Ibid.*, i.

rity actors in the country. In Yemen, “SSR must eliminate those “islands”, or centres of power and loyalties in a divided army, which Saleh carefully carved out to guarantee tribal patronage.”<sup>11</sup> These are all important points to consider in whatever solution may emerge in Yemen.

As Adam Baron notes, “The original sin of the GCC deal – that is, its privileging of traditional elites over all other parties – must be rectified by including groups such as the Huthis and previously marginalized southern factions as stakeholders along with mainstream political factions.”<sup>12</sup> Such points are also key to SSR initiatives. Both political and security sector reforms based on inclusivity are key if Yemen hopes to see a future that is both peaceful and distinct from the Saleh regime that the 2011 Arab Spring emphasized no longer has a place in Yemeni life.

Such reforms must, over the longer term, also reach out and cover broader concerns which may, if left unaddressed, contribute to an environment of political instability that is not conducive to such reforms. These can include things such as economic development, job creation, and important judicial and intelligence reforms. Women can be key actors in all areas here, bringing new faces and perspectives that are less closely aligned with former agencies.

Good governance in the country would also consider proactive actions to ensure that women and youth, among other marginalized populations, have their interests reflected in such reforms. As Luethold suggests, this would imply greater transparency and an open discussion about the institutions’ performance and possible alternatives. It would also imply “greater inclusiveness by all those who have a stake in security sector governance, the civilian administration, the parliament, political parties, men and women, whose security is directly affected, and a proper grievance procedure to redress occurred violations.”<sup>13</sup>

The NDC outcomes and draft constitution may still present a valid framework to proceed forward, though they will probably require significant amendments. However, the advances that women have achieved in the political sphere, as well as the important steps they were poised to take in the security sector, are too important to be sidelined in a future solution.

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11 Noman and Sorenson, “Reforming the Yemen Security Sector.”

12 Adam Baron, “Civil War in Yemen: Imminent and Avoidable,” in *Policy Memo*, European Council of Foreign Relations (ECFR) (23 March 2015), 7.

13 Arnold Luethold, “Security Sector Reform in the Arab Middle East: A Nascent Debate,” *Reform and Reconstruction of the Security Sector*, Münster: LIT Verlag (2004): 21.

## PRIMARY EDUCATION UNDER PRESSURE – THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

MARIA-LOUISE CLAUSEN

Every morning, the sound of a loudspeaker and a school yard full of children singing the national anthem would resound through my room in Sana'a's old city. Yet, sometimes their singing would be interrupted by a breakdown in the electricity supply, so unluckily timed that the loudspeaker would stop just as the children were getting started, signalling the children to stop as well. Even though this scene is repeated on a daily basis all over Yemen, a large number of children never see the inside of a school, and many who do enrol will not even finish the 6th grade. Yemen has one of the world's highest illiteracy rates at around 34% (17% for men and 50% for women), and despite improvements in expanding primary education since the 1970s, there are still substantial challenges.<sup>1</sup> The net enrolment rate for girls is approximately 70% while being close to 80% for boys. However, completion rate is low; only 63% complete the 6th grade<sup>2</sup> and the quality of education is not very high. Indeed, Yemeni children who do attend school are generally outperformed by children in other Arab and low to middle income countries.

The uprising in 2011 further undermined the quality of education in Yemen as schools were closed or children were kept at home because of the deteriorating security situation. In total, according to the Yemen Education Sector Plan, Mid Term Results Framework 2013-2015 (MTRF), 1.2 million boys and girls lacked regular access to education during the uprising. The educational infrastructure suffered as well. Armed confrontations left around 820 schools out of service, either totally or partially damaged by fighting, occupied by one of the parties in the conflict or used to provide shelter for Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Finally, the second semester of 2010/2011 was shortened by approximately two months while many schools experienced increases in teacher absenteeism and exacerbated problems with delivery of school equipment in conflict-affected areas

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1 UNESCO, 2012 ([http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT\\_DS&popup-customise=true&lang=en](http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS&popup-customise=true&lang=en)) Last accessed on March 8th, 2015).

2 Yemen Education Sector Plan. *Mid Term Results Framework 2013-2015*. A document of Yemen Ministry of Education, MTRF, February 24, 2013: 10.

impacting on the quality of teaching even in schools which were functioning.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the existing difficulties in the Yemeni primary school sector have been aggravated since 2011, and the Yemeni state does not have the resources or the capacity to invest substantial funds despite recognizing the importance of education.

### **Decentralization in primary education**

Community participation has increasingly been seen as a way to improve the quality of service delivery at lower cost. Since more than 70% of Yemenis live in rural areas, characterized by scattered villages which are often difficult to reach combined with a weak central state, decentralization and community participation have been popular concepts for decades.

The Local Authority Law of 2000 formally introduced decentralization into the Yemeni system.<sup>4</sup> In 2001, the first local elections were held for councils at district and governorate levels. When the Ministry of Education (MOE) formulated its Basic Education Development Strategy (2003-2015), decentralization was considered weak, mainly because of limited capacity at both central and local levels, unclear understanding of the mechanisms for decentralization and limited willingness to delegate decision-making powers and resources. Additional constraints were a deficient infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers and inadequate technical and managerial skills. Many of these constraints are due to lack of resources but there is also a lack of clear separation of responsibilities and understanding of the different roles of local councils and local education offices. Local education offices are executive offices and function as branches of MOE. The relationship between local councils and local executive offices is occasionally problematic resulting in lack of effective planning, especially at district level.

Moreover, despite official support for involvement of local communities in improving the quality of education, for example through Fathers and Mothers Councils, the value of including the local community in decision-making or in the delegation of authority has not always been recognised: there have been conflicts between executive offices, local councils and community members which participate in the running of local schools. Some local councils have a negative view of Mothers and Fathers Councils

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3 MTRF 2013: 18-19.

4 Ministry of Local Administration, Yemen, "Law No. 4 of 2000 Concerning the Local Authority", 2000: 2.



A school in Wadi Masila, al Mahra Governorate

and believe that they interfere in their work. The distribution of responsibilities is not always clear and different actors, at central and local levels, have been known to struggle for influence. Formally, the Mothers and Fathers councils have the following tasks: monitoring teacher attendance, caring for school facilities and assisting needy children. And indeed, initial evidence suggests that the presence of active Fathers and Mothers Councils has a positive effect especially on the number of girls enrolled and on teacher absenteeism.

Moreover, not surprisingly, there is occasionally substantial overlap between the people occupying different roles: the local sheikh may simultaneously head the local council and a Fathers Council. This multiplicity of responsibilities can facilitate coordination between different groups but creates the risk of elite capture where the least resourceful are not heard since both non-government and government resources are controlled by the same elite. Yet, at the same time, there are indications pointing to how the presence of strong tribal structures can help distribute resources and offer a precedent for community organization which makes tribally organized communities in general more efficient in both attracting and distributing government resources.

The push towards decentralization within education has been supported by the Social Fund for Development which spends almost a third of its budget on education projects. A substantial part of aid allocated to Yemen is channelled through the Fund, which is therefore an important partner in decentralization in general and education in particular. The Fund works with the Ministry of Local Administration (MOLA) to support decentralization in Yemen by capacity building of local councils. The Fund has worked to include local communities in school construction and to train teachers and increase enrolment. The Fund especially focuses on girls' education and quality in education.

However, the number of actors and the lack of overall strong coordination do occasionally lead to waste of resources. A school may be built but there are no teachers – or there are no students because transportation is difficult or because there was already a school which fulfilled the needs of the area. This is problematic in a situation where resources are scarce, and consequently there is a great need for coordination and approaches that are context sensitive. However, in general the programme of community participation was described as one of the most successful programmes of the Ministry of Education exactly because it did not depend on the government system, but was instead linked to local communities.

### **The situation in early 2015**

Despite claims of decentralization, the formal framework and the involvement of different actors, education remains highly centralized with the Ministry of Education playing a central role in teachers' training, supervision, hiring of education staff at all levels, curriculum development, textbook publishing and distribution, and allocation of human and financial resources. During the National Dialogue Conference in 2013-14, the right to education was stressed including the need to secure quality and impartiality of education at all levels. The importance of education in fostering a sense of community spirit was furthermore accentuated as well as the need to strengthen local participation and self-administration. These elements are reiterated in the draft constitution<sup>5</sup> of January 2015 which reaffirms the Yemeni government's commitment to compulsory and free

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<sup>5</sup> This was drafted by the Constitutional Development Committee and part of the transition process arising from the November 2011 Gulf Cooperation Council Agreement. The draft was the trigger for the civil war which has marked Yemen during 2015, though its proposals on education were not considered contentious.

education. The draft constitution proposes that the federal authorities be responsible for the curriculum and general quality standards, whereas the regions are to be in charge of educational policies, education and training services. Finally, the governorate level will preside over school construction. Although much remains to be discussed in relation to this structure, it is clear that the area of education remains a priority and that there is a continued commitment to decentralization based on the cooperation of all levels of government.

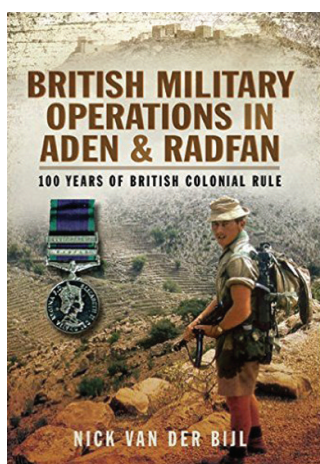
In conclusion, despite improvements in primary education in the last decades, Yemen lags behind on most educational indicators, particularly with respect to girls' education. Education remains a priority. This was underlined when, at the turn of 2015, the year was named that of education, thus signalling the government of Yemen's continued prioritization of education. However, the subsequent widespread fighting in Yemen and the Saudi-led intervention from March 2015 have worsened the situation and increased the severe difficulties which need to be overcome if primary education in Yemen is to improve. Instead of becoming the year of education, 2015 has become the year of grave violations of children's rights, including increased recruitment of children into armed groups, attacks on schools and children being killed or wounded as collateral damage by the warring parties. The immediate effect on the education sector is obvious, but these events will also have long term effects on children's ability to complete and benefit from primary education.

The involvement of local communities in education is a mechanism to improve educational infrastructure, enrolment and quality. Local communities have a long tradition for and proven willingness to participate in and pay for services including education, if there is a clear relationship between input and outcome.<sup>6</sup> However, local participation alone is not sufficient. Resources must be allocated to the local level combined with realistic expectations as well as clear separations of responsibilities to ensure that all actors understand and respect the roles of each other if decentralization is to lead to improved quality of primary education in Yemen.

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6 Swagman, "Development and Change in Highland Yemen", 70-72.

## BOOK REVIEWS



**British Military Operations in Aden and Radfan: 100 Years of British Colonial Rule** by Nick van der Bijl: Barnsley, Pen & Sword Military, 2014, pp 256, ISBN-10: 178303291X £25 / \$50

This book does what it says in the title: it gives a reasonably detailed overview of British military operations in South Arabia up to the withdrawal from Aden. Much of what it recounts is painfully reminiscent of recent British and American military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, failed policies and doctrine conveniently white-washed in favour of successes in Malaya and Ulster. There is much useful detail, particularly in the final years, but occasional irrelevancies also intrude.

Mr van der Bijl is not a Yemen specialist nor (probably) an Arabist, which is evident in various erroneous details. This generalism also produces a major flaw for many: the wandering transliteration/spelling of various Arab names is confusing. Proof-reading appears to be mostly “spell-checking” the English, but not reading for sense: periodically, one must cast back to try to work out what is happening. The appendices, in particular, are riddled with uncorrected typographic errors, while the abbreviations for military units are decidedly unofficial! The index is not as comprehensive as it might be, and it, too, suffers from the same wandering transliteration.

For all but the leisure reader, however, the most fundamental drawback is an almost complete lack of reference or citation, castrating what might have been a useful primer. Another drawback is the limited scope of sources; many which might have added greatly to the depth of the work are strangely omitted: retrospective published and self-published books; contemporaneous regimental and service journals; and particularly accounts by/about the enemy.

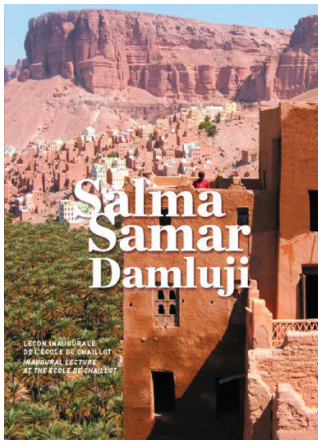
The mapping is less good than it might be, and suffers from the same transliteration issues. There is little difference between the first two maps; the third map (of Radfan) is presumably the area noted on the first map and provides more detail, although the spot-heights on the peaks would be more useful with a ground-level reference. The fourth sketch (of Crater)



again gives useful detail; but there is no map of Aden as a whole, nor of the key hinterland of Aden. And, as far too often, important places mentioned in the text do not always appear on the maps.

To be fair to the author, he states quite clearly in his Foreword that “[t]he work is not a researched history but a collation of information from those ‘who were there’ and from existing books, publications and pamphlets”. In that aim, Mr van der Bijl largely succeeds for the general reader, although the book is marred by the many unnecessary flaws (mostly not of his making.) It merits shelf-space, but it could have been so much more useful with citations and better editing!

JAMES SPENCER



**The Other Architecture: Geometry, Earth and the Vernacular, Inaugural Lecture at the Ecole de Chaillot**, by Salma Samar Damluji, Paris: Editions des Cendres, 2015, pp 144, €19.00. ISBN 978-2-916183-33-6.

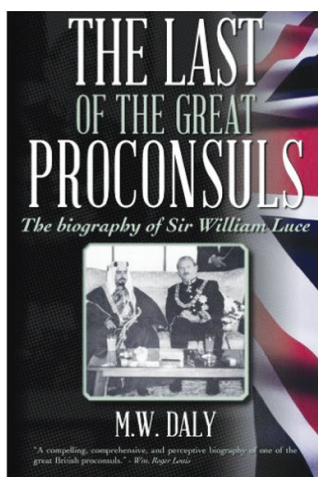
Salma Samar Damluji is well known to members of this Society for her efforts to preserve Hadhrami architectural heritage through the work of the Daw'an Mud Brick Architecture Foundation. In 2012 she won the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture, and this year the Gold Medal of the French Academy of Architecture. She currently holds the Binladin Chair for Architecture in the Islamic World at the American University of Beirut. On 4 March 2014 she became the first woman to deliver the Inaugural Lecture of the prestigious Ecole de Chaillot in Paris, which this reviewer had the privilege to attend. Her lecture is now published in a handsome tome alongside an introduction by its president, and a foreword by the director. The book also includes a biography and bibliography of the author, and an interview with the late poet Abdelwahab Meddeb (1946-2014).

The bilingual text [English and French] retraces Salma Damluji's career from her formative years at the Architectural Association in London, her work alongside her Egyptian mentor Hassan Fathy – a pioneer in the use of mud brick and the revival of Arab traditional crafts – to her two periods of work in Yemen, with an interlude in the construction of the Sheikh Zayed mosque in Abu Dhabi. The lecture is thematically structured around the

author's own work, and, much like Hadhrami homes, which develop around a central staircase, it opens up to a plethora of 'rooms' full of ideas about the essence of Islamic architecture and the ways in which it relates to vernacular art, its highly politicised role in the modern Middle East, urban culture in the Arab world, and the intersections of architecture and the individual. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in Damluji's work in the Hadhramaut. The process of restoring houses and places of worship in Hadhramaut involves her conscious commitment to actively engage with the local community. Each project not only rehabilitates a building to its proper function; it also contributes to the continuity of local architectural tradition. It requires learning the disciplines and rules that led to the creation of such masterpieces of urban planning as the walled city of Shibam, and their transmission to the next generation of local builders.

This is by no means a book addressed to a specialist audience. It will form an indispensable companion to anyone with an interest in vernacular architecture, and Hadhrami architectural heritage in particular, serving as an intelligible and concise introduction to the topic. Furthermore, it is enhanced by an abundance of arresting photographs, which do more than bring the text to life; they also serve as a reminder of the stunning beauty and measured elegance of the Hadhrami built environment at a time when its preservation is being challenged by events in Yemen.

THANOS PETOURIS



**The Last of the Great Proconsuls – The Biography of Sir William Luce** by M. W. Daly, Nathan Berg, San Diego, 2014. pp 337. \$50 hb, \$19.95 pb ISBN: 13-978-0-692266-46-5.

Sir William Luce spent 25 years as a member of the Sudan Political Service (SPS), he was Governor of Aden for four years, and then spent five years as the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf. Finally he spent two years negotiating the creation of the United Arab Emirates. The author had access to the archives in Khartoum and at Kew as well as to the enormous correspondence between Luce and his wife.

After 25 years in the Sudan, Luce arrived in Aden in 1955. His first year

there was dominated by the Suez crisis of 1956 and the surge of Arab nationalism which accompanied it. The author describes how, contemplating the mixed population of Aden Colony with its large-scale maritime activity and the tribal state of the Aden Protectorate, Luce sought ways to have a practical impact on the country through development expenditure. He encountered lethargy in Whitehall, despite the increased significance of Aden in Britain's strategic and military planning. His ideas for the future of the territory slowly matured but in early 1958, Luce wrote four letters in two days to the Colonial Secretary and the Under Secretary, including comments on strategic and military matters, considered by some as being beyond his own terms of reference. Though the British Government failed to follow his proposals at the time, his appreciation of the situation was almost clairvoyant and is of great interest historically.

Luce argued that Aden was 'in the grip of four powerful currents' – decolonisation, Arab nationalism, the 'decline of British power' and 'Russian expansionism'. All four flowed towards the same point – the termination of British power in Aden. The aim should be to enlist Arab nationalism against Russian expansion. The first option would be to 'dig in', an option he considered 'utterly bankrupt' – the value of the colony would decrease in inverse proportion to the cost of defending it and would only end by being defeated or by voluntary abdication. The second would be to leave now, an option Luce considered would be an act of despair. The third, which he advocated, was a policy of gradual disengagement accompanied by 'a new relationship more in keeping with modern trends and the realities of the situation'. By this he meant not just a vague degree of self-government but decisive steps towards full self-government and self-determination for the colony and the protectorate states, which he thought could engage the population in constructive ways. Though the Ministry of Defence in London did start looking for alternatives to Aden, in the end the option pursued by HMG was 'digging in', in Luce's view the worst option.

The rest of Luce's time as Governor was spent in inaugurating the Federation of South Arabia, fatally without the initial inclusion of Aden Colony, overseeing new elections in Aden Colony on an exceptionally limited franchise (which the author describes as "constitutional baby-steps"), handling industrial and commercial trade union militancy which was edged with political ambition, and in paying a visit to Yemen where the Imam declined to meet him. In retrospect, Luce had only a limited impact on the future of Aden and the Protectorate.

The author summarised Luce's period as Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, based in Bahrain, as containing two opposing trends "efforts towards forging the greatest degree of progress towards independence in – and amalgamation of – the small principalities, and concomitant intervention in their internal affairs, a contradiction conjuring up all the hoary metaphors of paternalism". Soon after his arrival in May 1961, Kuwait declared independence and called on Britain to honour the defence clauses in the Anglo-Kuwaiti exchange of letters which gave effect to this independence. Britain assembled sufficient military, naval and air power to deter an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and as the British forces withdrew, Kuwait joined the Arab League as a means of solidifying its independent status.

Daly traces the multiple factors bearing on the future of the Gulf states, some tiny and becoming extremely wealthy as oil production increased, and all influenced by the views and objectives of the larger Middle Eastern states, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Egypt. Luce concluded that their future required what he referred to as "Gulf Solidarity". As in Aden, he ran into obstacles within HMG, including the Treasury, but also within the Foreign Office which did not favour 'activism' as an approach to the small states. As in the case of Aden, HMG was allowed to make public utterances about British departure from the Gulf, which alarmed those who relied on Britain's support. The nature of the unstructured role of the Political Resident had emerged over a long period and its success depended much on the personal qualities of the holder of the office. The writer quotes Anthony Parsons, a colleague, who said that Luce " had, perhaps to a greater extent than his predecessors, secured the love as well as the respect of the rulers from Muscat to Bahrain and Qatar; his personal prestige and influence were great".

These qualities were indispensable during the remarkable and intensive period of negotiation and diplomacy from July 1970 to December 1971, during which Luce paid six extended visits to the Gulf area, which culminated in the creation of the United Arab Emirates and its admission to the United Nations on the 9th December 1971. This task required a detailed knowledge of all the interests involved, the trust and respect of many actors for Luce's arguments and diplomacy, and the energy and persistence to see the negotiations through to a successful conclusion by the time of the formal British withdrawal from the Gulf. All this is well described in Daly's book.

JOHN DUCKER



**After the Yemeni Spring, A Survey of the Transition**, edited by Anna Maria Medici, Mimesis International, 2014, pp 268, £19.50. ISBN 978-88-5751-437-6

This publication was prepared for a meeting at the Italian University Carlo Bo in Urbino intended to bring together diplomats, politicians and representatives of Yemeni civil society. As a contribution to the work of the Friends of Yemen, it was intended to provide a background briefing on Yemen for use by Italian and other officials involved with Yemen.

Different authors address a broad range of issues, each writing a short section of the five chapters. The first, on the political transition process, is very marked by its timing. It focuses on the years 2011 to early 2013 though, frustratingly, the cut-off date is not indicated; many of the events and views of that time have since been forgotten due to later developments, but it is useful to be reminded and get a ‘feel’ of the period. While the book clearly identifies some of the risks faced by the transition, including that of ‘elite capture’ and the importance of control of the military/security institutions, it at least hints at the inability of the National Dialogue Conference to solve all the problems.

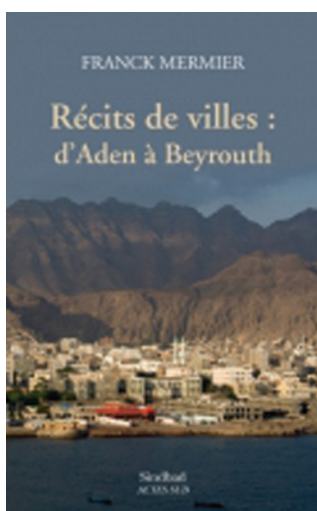
The chapters on society and the economy offer brief profiles of a number of issues, including gender aspects, the legal framework for the media, banking and the role of micro-finance in development, describing the overall situation and the problems needing attention: the section on micro-finance certainly would benefit from a more critical approach. Many important sectors are left uncovered. However, the section on tribalism and citizenship usefully challenges widespread preconceptions about both the role of tribes and the use of qat in Yemen, with a heartfelt and fully justified attack on the over-simplifications all too often accepted by foreign actors and the international media alike.

One of the chapters on international relations discusses the current and potential role of Italy, emphasising the role of its navy, which it sees as possibly playing a significant role in marine surveillance. The other addresses a range of international questions which, for once, are not exclusively concerned with counter-terrorism. Discussion of the issue of piracy in the Arabian Sea certainly looks rather dated now that the problem has

declined. The book also contributes basic information on a number of international agreements and the issues surrounding the difficulties to attract investment funds, relations with the GCC, and other aspects which are not often brought together in a concise form in a single volume.

Despite its inclusion of some errors which should have been avoided, for example the statement that the Hadramaut region covers the governorates of Izz [sic], Ta'izz and Hodeida and the misnaming of the UN special representative, it is a useful document, reasonably priced and containing background 'guidebook' type information on a range of aspects which are not easily available elsewhere. So, it should find a place on the shelves of Yemen specialists.

THE EDITOR



**Récits de villes: d'Aden à Beyrouth** by Franck Mermier, Actes Sud, Paris, 2015, pp 272. Euro 25,00 – ISBN 978-2-330-05080-1. An Arabic edition, with a slightly different text is **Mudun mutanâzi'a, Beyrouth, Sana'a, Aden** [Contested cities, Beirut, Sana'a, Aden], Beirut, Dar al-Furat/CEFAS, 2015, USD 9, ISBN 978-9953-417-23-3; it can be ordered from [sales@alfurat.com](mailto:sales@alfurat.com)

Mermier's anthropological itinerary started in Aden and Beirut in the 1970s. The first part of this book reminds the reader both of the way all Yemeni cities [not just Aden] and Beirut were perceived in the 1970s and 1980s and how their changes influenced the author's anthropological perspectives over the decades. This introduction is followed by two chapters focusing on the added understanding he gained of Beirut through political events there in 2008 as well as the social and political negotiations surrounding the construction of the Muhammad al Amin mosque.

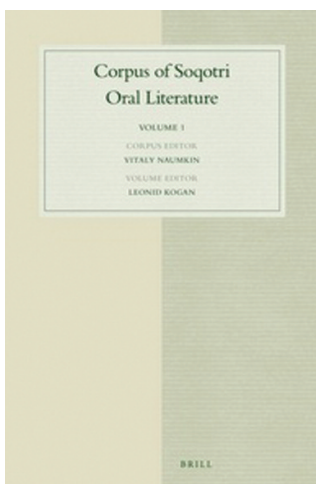
The following chapter on Aden discusses its features during the colonial period, and provides details on the origins and composition of its population, details which remain relevant today and could serve as reference to both supporters and opponents of Yemeni unity. Unfortunately, the discussion of Aden during the PDRY period gives insufficient attention to the internal social dynamics of the period, the relationship between 'old' Adenis and the NLF [later YSP] immigrants from rural areas, as well as the

social responses of its people to the new and very different socio-cultural system brought by the socialist regime. Instead he concentrates on the presence of international ‘revolutionaries’ from a range of movements whose role in the city’s society was, at best, marginal. More in-depth discussion of the changes in the city’s social composition after unification in 1990 would have been most welcome, as this was another anthropological watershed for Adenis, whether long-established or not and the author’s insights are deep and innovative.

The book ends with two further theoretical chapters, addressing some major issues concerning urbanisation. In particular he discusses different forms of urban solidarity and the implications of the shift from support systems based on descent to those based on characteristics shared through common use of space. He challenges the assumptions often made about the social impact of rural-urban migration, as well as those arising from the nostalgia associated with idealised visions of the past. Excursions into comparisons between older Middle-Eastern cities with the ultra-modern Gulf ones emerging from the desert in the past 30 years suggest topics for more anthropological research.

This short note cannot fully address the conceptual breadth of this book which is an important contribution to the understanding of Arab cities, Aden in particular, as well as of urbanism in general. Francophone readers will certainly benefit from its highly sophisticated analysis. Its availability in Arabic will also enable those most concerned by these issues to benefit from Mermier’s contribution.

HELEN LACKNER



**Corpus of Soqotri Oral Literature, Volume 1**, by Vitaly Naumkin, Leonid Kogan, Dmitry Cherkashin, Maria Bulakh, Ekaterina Vizirova, Isa al-Daarhi and Ahmed al-Daarhi, Leiden, Brill, 2015, pp 750, €195,00, \$253.00, ISBN 978-9-004278-41-7, E-ISBN 978-9-004278-40-0

The team of Russians and Soqotrans listed above, who produced this magnificent work included Kevin McNeer who edited the English translations and Dr. Adham al-Labban editing the Arabic. Leonid Kogan with his customary meticulousness was responsible

for the introduction, the philological annotations and the glossary, as well as analysing most of the texts.

The valuable introduction gives a brief catalogue of the texts, followed by a description of the transcription systems and a detailed presentation of Soqotri phonology. It discusses the difficulties of translating the texts into English and explains the system and structure of the philological annotations. The Vienna Corpus of Müller is appraised and its great value acknowledged, and this is followed by a fascinating description of how the system for transcribing Soqotri in Arabic characters evolved. The parameters of the extensive glossary in the appendices are outlined, and the structure of the Soqotri noun, adjective and verb described. There follows a brief note on Arabic loanwords, and on the colour plates. A website address is given where further audio-visual material can be found (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004278400>), though I have not been able to access this. After the introduction come the texts themselves, and then three appendices: 3 fully glossed texts; a 243 page glossary of the Soqotri terms appearing in the texts, often with further lexical illustrations provided by the Soqotran team members; 121 colour plates of varying sizes illustrating topographical features, cultural skills and items; and finally, a bibliography.

There are 30 recorded texts, mostly related by members of the same family of the Da'rho tribe. They comprise well-known traditional stories from Soqotra, some from the wider Arabic tradition, others constructed around short poems, an example of a rain prayer, and a few modern stories – two about the follies of tourists. They are set out in numbered sentences on facing pages: on the left hand page, Soqotri transcribed phonetically, with the English translation beside it; and on the right hand page, Soqotri transcribed using a slightly modified Arabic alphabet, with the Arabic translation beside it. Each text is followed by detailed philological notes. The number of Arabic loanwords in many of the texts suggests that many of these stories were recorded by people of the younger generation. For one text, number 5, the Soqotri informants declined to provide either a recording or an Arabic version, considering the text too improper.

This is a marvellous book to use. It is easy to find one's way around it: it is clearly set out, the formatting and typeface are clear, each glossary entry is cross-referenced to the texts, with the number of the text appearing at the top of each page. It is a most impressive achievement, and I would say far and away the most important work on Soqotri to have appeared since the publications of Müller.



A few observations<sup>1</sup> on some major aspects of the text follow: on page 40 the authors state “There is no strict guide by which homonymous verbal roots represented by various derived stems .... could be distinguished from derivatives from a single root...Our general approach has been to list together only those verbs united by a relatively transparent intuitively convincing semantic relationship.” I think comparisons across dialects can be useful for this. The western dialects preserve the /‘E/ and /x/ realised respectively as /p/ and /‘H/ in the central dialect of this work, and this can help clarify verbal roots. For example, the central dialect /‘Hbr/ means ‘to be cold’ as well as ‘to pass on news; to inform of a death’, but in western dialects theses are differentiated: /‘Hbr/, ‘to be cold’ but /xbr/‘to pass on news; to inform of a death’. Can we hope that this will be addressed in a future volume including material from other dialects of the island?

To the earlier Soqotran publications mentioned on p. 27 one might add Ahmad Sa’id Al-Anb li’s ‘*Taπrīkh Jazīrat Su‘OuΓrā*’ (2006) which contains poems transcribed in Arabic script, and the commendable work of Nu‘H Abdallah pAlmihi, ‘*Al-Ma‘Hkiyah Al-Su‘OuΓriyah*’ (2013) which uses both Arabic- and Roman-based transcription.

The English can be rather idiosyncratic – ‘to pink’ for ‘to pierce, hole’ or ‘to crisp one’s fingers’ for ‘to snap one’s fingers,’ for example – but it is unlikely that these and other infelicities not noted here will prevent any reader from being able to work out what is intended. Perhaps the next volume might make more use of an English editor? However, I noted very few typos which is really remarkable in a book of this complexity.

The Arabic translation seems to be mostly reliable, and in many cases more faithful to the Soqotri original than the English. However it is quite often rather summarily abridged: to give just one example, on p. 249/10 the English, which translates the original Soqotri sentence literally, reads ‘When he was about to stand up from his wife, his fate caught up with him and he died – he died right on top of his wife’, is reduced in the Arabic to ‘*wa-jāpa al-mawt fī aEnāpa dālik*’, ‘and death came during that’. Indeed, sometimes an Arabic translation of Soqotri phrases is entirely missing.

I have only one slight reservation about this admirable work, and that is a sense that it might have been presented for publication before it was

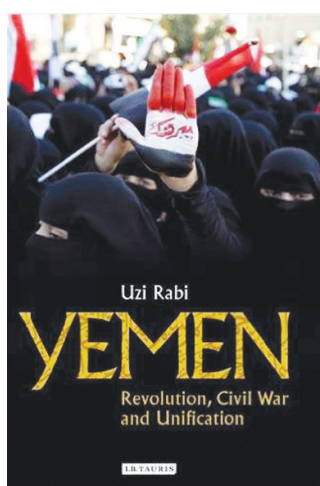
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1 There is no room here for the many detailed comments I made for my own use (anyone interested in these can contact me at [miranda@mirandamorris.com](mailto:miranda@mirandamorris.com)), but I will make some more general observations.

entirely ready: I am sure that the inconsistencies between the Arabic, English and Soqotri would have been rationalised given more time. However, I appreciate that given the current difficulties in visiting the island (or islanders visiting Moscow) this is probably unrealistic. Anyway, it is a minor quibble, for there is no doubt that this will remain a reference book of lasting value for linguists and many others interested in Soqotra. For Soqotrans themselves it is a ground-breaking event: a published work with a consistent and comprehensible written form of Soqotri based on the Arabic alphabet. The prime movers in this, Leonid Kogan, ‘Isa Gum’an al-Da’rhi and Ahmed ‘Isa al-Da’rhi, are truly to be congratulated on this remarkable achievement, the result of four fieldwork sessions on Soqotra, three working sessions in Sana‘a and, especially, three lengthy and fruitful stays in Moscow. This enabled the team to study the earlier recordings made by Vitaly Naumkin (about a third of the published texts) and to make and work on many new recordings.

And what hope their combined labours give for the future of the language: “The once passive narrator is now becoming the collector, writer and editor of his own oral lore...” (p. 27). It is sad that the cost of the book will put it beyond the reach of the Soqotrans to whom it would be of such significance. So we must hope that the wish expressed on p. 31 is realised: “... we would welcome the eventual publication of the “Arabic section” as a separate, inexpensive booklet, perhaps accompanied by a brief Soqotri-Arabic glossary.”

MIRANDA MORRIS



**Yemen: Revolution, Civil War and Unification**, by Uzi Rabi, I B Tauris, 2015, pp 275, four maps, £62.00 ISBN 978-1-78076-946-2

Uzi Rabi is the Director of the Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle East Studies at Tel Aviv University and is well known for his writings on Arab countries, most recently on Oman. He pays tribute to the work of the late Joseph Kostiner, an Israeli scholar noted for excellent studies on southern Yemen and Yemeni unity in the 1970s and 1980s. The book succeeds in its aim of exposing “the reader to the history of Yemen in the modern era” and providing “some

insights into the dynamics of state and society ... throughout the 20th century". It is not, however, "likely be the definitive study on Yemen for many years to come" claimed on its dust jacket. Its merit is that it draws extensively on Arabic written sources as well as those in European languages.

In the opening chapter he assesses the historical, geographical, economic and social influences that have had enduring effect on Yemeni politics before discussing the impact on later history of the 1962 revolution in the north and the accession to power in 1967 of the National Liberation Front in the south. He is kinder than other scholars in his judgements of the performance of the Imams in the 1900-1960 period. It was "a state in which time stood still" but the Imams administered "rather successfully" and were "pragmatic in defining boundaries while they dreamt of Greater Yemen".

He covers familiar ground in dealing with the history of the YAR up to the coming to power of Ali Abdullah Saleh in 1978 and in examining the evolution of the PDRY in the same period. Whilst Ibrahim al-Hamdi, the outstanding YAR leader of the 1970s, and Salim Rubayya Ali in the PDRY both spoke of their desire for unity their real focus was on building their states. Professor Rabi shows how the PDRY government used the administrative structures inherited from the British to create a well organised state but failed to find a mechanism for resolving the violent disputes that led to the fall of Ali in 1978. The disastrous quasi-civil war of 1986 undermined the legitimacy of the regime and so weakened its economy that its leaders had little choice, following the reduced involvement of the Soviet Union in 1989 (prior to its demise in 1991), to enter into serious unity negotiations with Ali Abdullah Saleh. I discussed these in much greater detail – supplemented by interviews with the surviving participants, in *Yemen Divided* (I B Tauris 2011) which I assume was published after Professor Rubi had completed his text. However, I am glad to note that he included Helen Lackner's earlier study "The PDR Yemen" in his reference list.

Few people thought that Saleh would survive for long as President of the YAR as in the early 1980s, he faced challenges from the National Democratic Front (which had close links to the ruling Yemeni Socialist Party in the south) and the growing influence of political Islam whilst trying to persuade powerful tribes to accept the authority of the weak state. Professor Rabi shows how Saleh held on to power by expanding the armed forces and appointing generals from his tribal and political allies. He used patronage to consolidate support and divide and rule tactics to keep his

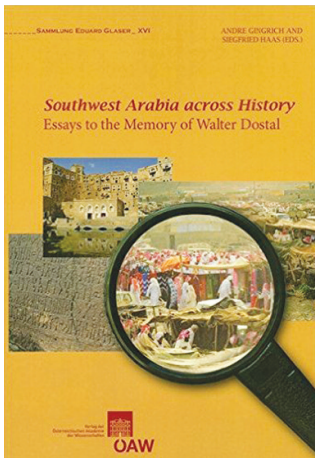
opponents in disarray. Saleh set up the General People's Congress (GPC) and used it to deliver majorities in presidential and parliamentary elections. As Professor Rabi puts it "through careful juggling of different and often contradictory interests among tribal confederation, military and urban constituencies he developed a pragmatic and balanced stance towards the various power centres in Yemen". Saleh extended his methods of control to the south after unity in 1990 first through political manoeuvring and then by force after the civil war of 1994.

The penultimate and most enlightening chapter "Heading towards a Failed State" analyses the major challenges of the 2000s – the rise of the Southern Movement (al-Hiraak), the Huthis and Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). On the south he makes use of writings by southern leaders and whilst bringing out their many grievances does not quite capture the divisions that have prevented al-Hiraak (so far) from achieving its goal of independence. The Huthi leadership drew its strength from deep tribal roots and exploited the resentment of Zaydi traditionalists at the intrusion of Salafism into their already marginalised region. Typically, Saleh at one stage encouraged the Huthis to counterbalance the growing power of the Salafis just as he used Salafism against Marxism in the 1980s. Saleh's decision to fight the Huthis in the 2000s "not only failed to defeat them but served to strengthen their cause". The legacy of that is only too clear in 2015. Though the book has a short chapter on the Arab Spring this seems to have been tacked on as an afterthought.

Professor Rabi draws on a wealth of Arabic and other written sources. Though scholars will find little new, general readers looking for an understanding of Yemeni politics will find this book readable and valuable. It may lack the insight and perspective that can be obtained through knowledge of the personalities under discussion and perhaps a lack of familiarity with the day to day. For example on page 150, he says that the 2009 parliamentary elections "had gone relatively smoothly". In fact they were postponed and have still not taken place. Ali Salim al-Bayd is not another president of South Yemen but of the short-lived Democratic Republic of Yemen of May 1994. The maps are difficult to read. Anyone looking for an accessible and authoritative modern history will find this book helpful but are advised to read it as an update on Paul Dresch's *History of Modern Yemen* (published in 2000), which remains the best book available on the topic.

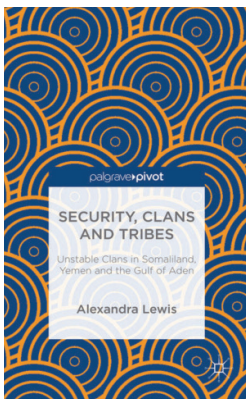
NOEL BREHONY

## NOTES ON OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED



**Southwest Arabia across History, Essays to the Memory of Walter Dostal**, edited by André Gingrich and Siegfried Haas, Oesterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 2014, pp 128, €49, ISBN 978-3-7001-7603-9

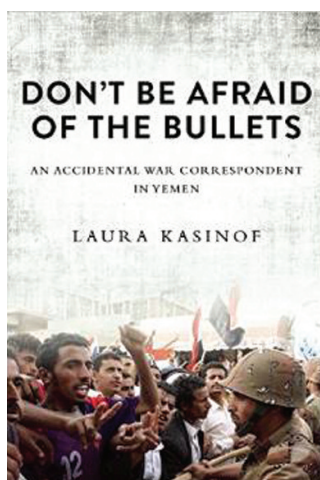
This important and interesting volume opens with a short biography of Dostal's academic work summarising his main achievements, complemented by a detailed bibliography which demonstrates the breadth of coverage of his research. This is followed by eight chapters covering the following topics: water management from ancient to modern times, focused on the Marib Dam and Wadi Zabid (Ingrid Hehmeyer), legal aspects of the management of water tanks in the highlands (Eirik Hovden), a detailed study of al Hamdani's discussion of types of monumental constructions in his *al Iklil* (Daniel Mahoney). The book also has two chapters addressing the situation in the far north of Yemen, the first (Johann Heiss) on the social and cultural divisions in Sa'ada over recent centuries. The other by Marieke Brandt is a long and detailed analysis of the tribes in the Sa'ada region, detailing the relationship between the tribes associated with the two major descent groups, the Khawlan bin Amir on the one hand and the Hamdan bin Zayd, the latter including both the Hashed and the Bakil currently relevant tribal confederations. It ends with a discussion of the role of anthropology in understanding Yemen's pre-Ottoman's past by Andre Gingrich, one of the editors.



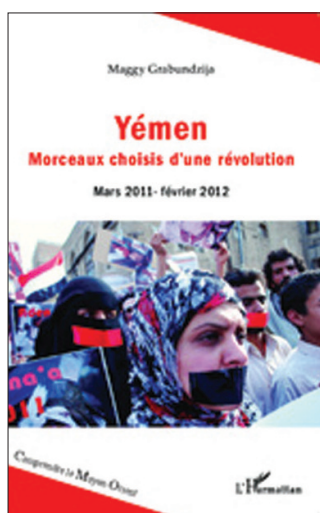
**Security, Clans and Tribes: Unstable Governance in Somaliland, Yemen and the Gulf of Aden**, by Alexandra Lewis, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp 152, £45.00. ISBN 978-1-137-47074-4.

This is a very disappointing book. A comparison of Yemen and Somalia, as well as their relationship across the Gulf of Aden would contribute significantly to understanding characteristics shared and differences

between the two sides of the Gulf. This book claims to contribute to the tribe-state debate, explain the difference between clans (Somalia) and tribes (Yemen) as well as demonstrate the role of regional politics within each of these countries in the emergence of their weakness and failure. It fails on all fronts, as it makes no attempt to link any of these elements and is a mere succession of items. It is also replete with errors of fact, the most stunning being the repeated statement that the Ottoman Empire ruled the northern part of the country until 1962 (pp 111-12). These errors further undermine what might have been an interesting work.



**Don't be afraid of the bullets, an accidental war correspondent in Yemen** by Laura Kasinof, New York, Arcade Publishing, 2014, pp 320, Hb £16.47, pb £9.66, ISBN 978-1-62872-463-9, **Yemen, Morceaux choisis d'une révolution**, Mars 2011-Fevrier 2012, by Maggy Grabundzija, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2015, pp 372, €37, ISBN 978-2-343-0397-18



Both these books by young women cover the events of 2011 in Yemen, and particularly in Sana'a with sympathy for the participants in the uprisings. Kasinof worked as a journalist for the *New York Times* and thus covers not only events in the streets but also met some of the senior politicians involved. Her account includes her own perceptions and reactions to her experiences. Grabundzija, with far longer experience of Yemen is an anthropologist. Her contribution, in the form of a diary of life and discussions in 'Change Square' focuses on political developments and changes as lived at the heart of the revolutionary movement, with involvement of a full range of participants representing a wide variety of views. Unfortunately she fails to provide

sufficient context or details of her interviewees and only focusses on the issues that interest her personally. Both books are well written; they are essential reading for anyone wanting to understand the details of events during this historic year in Yemeni politics.

OBITUARIES  
ABDALLA ABDULMAGEED AL-ASNAG  
1934–2014

The veteran Yemeni politician died on 17th September 2014 in Jeddah. He was a friend to many in the BYS. In 2013 he attended the Society's major conference on Yemen; his programme for a new Yemen echoed much of what was discussed then. He left a legacy of struggle for liberation, democracy and modernity in Yemen.



photo Adel Aulaqi

He was born in Crater to a well-known, long-established literary family, at a time when the British Empire was in decline. His father hailed from the Hujarriyah in Yemen and his mother from Hadhramaut. He studied Arabic and received religious instruction at Shaikh Muhammad Salim al-Beihani's *madrasah* in Aden, entered the colonial primary and intermediate schools and in 1950 completed his secondary education at the prestigious Aden College. He also obtained a diploma from Brussels' European Trade Union Institute and gained another in International Relations from Tunisia. Quite early on, his friends described him fondly as "*mushagheb*" [youthful trouble maker] and noted his potential as a political tactician and orator; qualities he developed and that remained with him to the end of his life. An avid reader of history and politics, his life was shaped by his family, friends, British education and by elite revolutionaries he encountered from Imamate Yemen; his father's "Arab Cultural Club" was a crucible for debates on the indivisibility of a Yemen liberated from the tyranny of Imams and foreign hegemony.

Major events informed his early political thought: the creation of Israel in Palestine in 1948 and his father's impassioned reaction to the catastrophe affected him deeply. As a youth of sixteen he flouted the educational establishment's instructions not to celebrate the creation of the Arab League. With colleagues he vented his defiance by touring Aden in a hired bus. During the 1950s ascendant pan-Arab nationalism in Nasser's Egypt and the Ba'ath in Syria and Iraq set his mind on the goal of Arab unity. His British education and access to the UK's organised labour movement predisposed him to see labour rights and peaceful democratic means as the key to political transformation.

In 1951 he joined Aden Airways as a clerk and by 1962 he progressed to manager. In 1953 he organised the Aden Airways employees union, becoming its president. He successfully negotiated and obtained fairer pay and new healthcare rights for Aden Airways local employees. In 1956 he became secretary general to the Aden Trade Unions Congress (ATUC) modelled on, encouraged and assisted by UK's labour institutions. He wrote extensively on the political role of the unions, forged links with the pan-Arab labour movement and politicised the ATUC through strikes and mass rallies against the Suez military intervention. His external support came from Nasser whose military/security services opened an office in Ta'izz to promote an Arab nationalist campaign to liberate British-controlled South Arabia.

Aden colony held elections in 1955 and 1959. Non-Adeni residents and workers, mostly from Imamate Yemen were disenfranchised. Al-Asnag, the ATUC, and other political entities boycotted and disrupted these elections on the grounds that they were a ploy to implement Britain's unacceptable plans for the region.

In 1962 Al-Asnag founded and headed the People's Socialist Party (PSP), the political arm of the ATUC. Yemen's Imam was deposed in 1962 precipitating acute conflicts of interest. Saudi Arabia preferred compliant friendly neighbours on its southern borders; Nasser and Pan-Arab revolutionaries desired a united Arab socialist Yemeni republic whilst Britain favoured a friendly Federation of South Arabia (FSA). Aden's politicians and residents feared that cosmopolitan Aden would become governed by tribes, opposed its merger in a federation and preferred to self-govern. Some Adenis, Yemenis in Aden, the ATUC, PSP and Al-Asnag rejected the FSA as an obstacle to unity with "mother Yemen", a step on the road to pan-Arab unity.

In Aden, Al-Asnag successfully used the ATUC, PSP and its newspaper al-A'amel as instruments of disruption; internationally he argued strongly to discredit the idea of federation. In 1962 he and eleven other nationalists were tried by the Aden State judiciary and sentenced to one year in prison for publishing material inciting sedition and unrest.

In 1964 the London constitutional conference convened to discuss Britain's offer of independence to the FSA in 1968 and retaining its military base. Al-Asnag argued against British and federal rulers' proposals; he "opposed the constitutional conference on the grounds that the delegation was not representative" and independence would be hollow, prompting one observer to describe him as "a sophisticated and independent thinker ... committed to the notion of a united, republican Yemen free of both the



Imams in the North and British in the South”. Although Tony Benn found Al-Asnag extremely impressive and able and rated him with the best of nationalist leaders, Al-Asnag failed to convince the new Labour Government on Aden’s future, describing the conference as a farce.

Events moved fast. While Al-Asnag remained close to Nasser and espoused peaceful democratic means for change, the National Liberation Front (NLF) chose to move away from Nasser and commenced armed struggle against Britain. This forced the PSP to rethink its peaceful approaches and led to the formation of the Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South (OLOS). Under Egyptian pressure the NLF and OLOS merged as the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY). The NLF soon broke away and Al-Asnag now led FLOSY as the armed wing of the PSP. A bloody struggle for power between the NLF and FLOSY ensued; the NLF prevailed and in 1966 Al-Asnag moved to Ta‘izz then briefly to Cairo.

Early in 1968 he was invited by leading North Yemeni personalities and former friends to join the YAR government. From 1971 to 1979 he held various cabinet posts including minister of Trade and Industry and minister for Transport. He was foreign minister in 1971, 1974 and 1975 and between May 1978 and March 1979. He modernised and expanded the country’s diplomatic service and enhanced its foreign profile. He steered YAR deftly through times of political tension between PDRY, Saudi Arabia (KSA) and YAR and negotiated Saudi economic support for YAR and its fledgling airline flag carrier.

Al-Asnag was political adviser to both Presidents Ibrahim Al-Hamdi and Ali Abdulla Saleh. He served as Foreign Minister in the first eight months of Saleh’s presidency. On 15 March 1981 Saleh accused him of high treason and being a political instrument of a foreign power. Al-Asnag called the accusations and his subsequent trial a charade. He was sentenced to death commuted to life imprisonment. Regional leaders may have intervened to secure his release after serving three years between prison confinement and house arrest. Late in 1984 he left Sana‘a for exile in Cairo but first proceeded to the USA for treatment of a heart condition. His ordeal completely alienated him from president Saleh’s regime. Their antipathy played out in Al-Asnag’s calls for Saleh’s removal and in Saleh’s demands for Al-Asnag’s extradition on at least two occasions.

Between 1984 and 1995 Al-Asnag lived in Cairo. In 1994 he briefly held the posts of deputy prime minister and foreign minister in the short-lived

secessionist Democratic Republic of Yemen (DRY) leaving Egypt in 1995 to reside in Jeddah till his death. Over the years he was warmly received by senior members of the Saudi Royal family. In exile, as an elder statesman he voiced opposition to the Saleh regime with sharp wit and consistent penetrating criticism. Many of his opponents, including Saleh paradoxically, maintained open communications with him.

He supported the 2011 youth uprisings, called for regime change and in May 2013 forwarded his views to the National Dialogue via his group *Takkatul al-ganoubeyeen al-mustaqileen* (Independent Southerners Coalition). He acknowledged the need for a democratic separation between North and South Yemen on the lines of Czechoslovakia and called for a referendum on unity and the future political shape of Yemen. Although a strong voice of opposition, yet even at the most critical of separatist times in 1993/94, Al-Asnag did not pose a major problem for Saleh or his regime. He described himself as a “Liberal Socialist” and remained the consummate modernising democrat and advocate for peaceful transition to a civilised, caring democratic Yemeni state, established under full constitutional rule.

His friends highlighted his generosity and almost infinite ability to intercede on behalf of those who sought his help. He was honoured, and decorated by Arab leaders including Order of the Nile from Presidents Nasser and Sadat. Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, whose federal plans Al-Asnag repeatedly disrupted, said it was impossible not to like him and the disarming twinkle in his eye. Many today miss his elder statesman’s calm voice.

His impact on South Arabian and Yemen politics is undeniable. His main publications, all in Arabic were: *This is Our Position*, Cairo, 1965; *The International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU)*, Cairo 1966, *The People are the Socialist Party*, Cairo 1967, and *The Role of the Union Movement in the National Struggle*, Cairo 1991. He is survived by his daughters Manal and Mirfat, sons Mohammad and Mazen and his wife Nadhira.

ADEL AULAQI

## LEILA INGRAMS

1940–2015

Leila Ingrams will be remembered by many a member of the Society for the energy and passion with which she worked to promote the culture and welfare of Yemeni people. She was an indefatigable proponent of culture as



a means of understanding among peoples, and harboured a characteristic aversion to ‘politics’.

Leila was born in Cairo on 16 June 1940. She and her mother spent the first days after her birth as guests of the Daw’ani family of Sayyid Hassan al-Bar avoiding the Italian air raids on Cairo in the safety of the Egyptian town of Zagazig. Her father, William Harold, was then acting Governor and later Chief Secretary of Aden (1940-42), but is best known for his work as Resident Adviser and British Agent to the Qu’ayti and Kathiri Sultanates (1937-40 & 1942-44). He played a crucial role in the pacification of the warring tribes of Hadhramaut, a process that became known as *Ingrams Peace*. Her mother, Doreen, daughter of Edward Shortt MP, Home Secretary in Lloyd George’s Cabinet, was an actress before joining and assisting her husband in his various postings. They were the first Europeans to reside in the Hadhramaut.

Leila got her first glimpse of the Yemen ten months old from the back of a mule alongside her sister Zahra, whom her parents had adopted in 1937 from a Se’iar tribeswoman. After spending her early childhood in Aden and al-Mukalla, Leila was educated at Ashford School in Kent, and Wychwood Girls’ School in Oxford. After studying in Paris, Leila moved to London where she worked for the Centre for Arab-British Understanding (CAABU), of which her mother was a founding member. She became an active supporter of the Palestinian cause, and an advocate of Palestinians’ access to education. In 2004 she set up the *Doreen Ingrams Scholarship Fund* for destitute female students of Birzeit University giving priority to students with special needs whose progress she followed keenly. During the 1970s Leila lived in Muscat, where she worked for John Townsend, economic adviser to the Omani government, as well as the Omani Director of Information Shaykh Nasir bin Seif al-Bu ‘Ali, later to become Oman’s ambassador to London.

Leila’s literary career started in the 1980s, with the publication of *Ethiopia Engraved* (Kegan Paul, 1988) jointly with Professor Richard Pankhurst. Together with her mother she undertook the Herculean task of compiling the sixteen-volume *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960* (Archive Editions, 1993). *Yemen Engraved: Illustrations by Foreign Travellers 1680-*

1903, a companion volume to *Ethiopia Engraved* was published by Stacey International in 2006. Leila also authored a number of articles and contributed chapters to edited volumes. Among these, two stand out for the breadth of her knowledge and interests: “African Connections in Yemeni Music” (*Musike: International Journal of Ethnomusicological Studies*, 1:2, 2006), and “Somali Migration to Aden from the 19th to the 21st Centuries” (with R. Pankhurst in: *African and Asian Studies*, 5:3-4, 2006).

Under Leila’s tutelage her parental legacy flourished. She established and maintained a network of friendships with people connected to her parents throughout the Middle East and the Indian Ocean: for example, she harnessed these links to arrange for the participation of Yemeni musicians at the annual Festival of the Dhow countries in Zanzibar. In 1998 she was honoured with a medal by the principal of the Madrassa al-Wusta in Ghayl Ba Wazir, Dr Muhammad Sa’id Mudehij. In 2002 she met in London Brigadier Ahmad Nowah Ba Rashaid, who was a member of the Hadhrami Beduin Legion camel patrol, which escorted her mother on her 500-mile trip across Hadhramaut in 1944 (see his obituary in *BYSJ* 22, 2014). In 2003 she attended a conference at the University of Aden on her father’s service in Hadhramaut. In 2009 she opened an exhibition of photographs of Yemen taken by her parents at the National Museum in Sana’a. The exhibition was then put on permanent display in the Museum of Say’un. In 2010 she was invited by the National Library of Singapore to contribute to the catalogue and participate in an exhibition on Hadhramis in South-East Asia.

Leila oversaw the republication of some of her parent’s more important books. Her father’s *Zanzibar: Its History and its People* (Stacey International, 2007), and her mother’s *Palestine Papers, 1917-1922: Seeds of Conflict* (Eland, 2009), and *A Time in Arabia* (Eland, 2013). Her friend, the Hadhrami poet Najib Sa’id Ba Wazir, translated the latter into Arabic. She donated her ethnographic collection to the British Museum, and supplemented her father’s papers in the archives of St Antony’s College, and the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

Leila carved a niche for the expression of her own identity. She was committed to educating the British public on Yemen, and reversing the negative image the British media often gave to the country. She put together the *Focus on Yemen* exhibition, which toured universities in the UK. In 2006, she was instrumental in bringing a group of Yemeni musicians to perform at the International Music Village Festival in Kew, in Wales, and at the Arab Arts Festival in Liverpool. In 2007 she convened the successful

First Yemen Film Festival at SOAS which showed some of the most important films produced about the country.

As a Life Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society she organised a number of events on Hadhramaut, including exhibitions of the objects and photographs brought back by her parents, gold medallists of the Society. After her mother's death in 1997, she succeeded her as Patron of the Friends of Hadhramaut. From that position she was able to channel her energies and influence to projects in the region that had hosted her family during her early life. Under her coordination, the organisation was among the first to send necessities after the devastating floods of 2007.

Leila shared her mother's profound admiration for Arab women, and encouraged scholars to study the role of gender in the Middle East. She generously helped academics with an interest in the region and her parents' work. She devoted much of her life to the study of Ethiopia campaigning for the return of its cultural heritage, such as the Aksum Stele. Her ability to understand and empathise with fellow humans irrespective of their background was a great quality: it allowed her to cross social and cultural boundaries and forge friendships everywhere. Perhaps her own love for music stemmed from its very ability to provide a neutral common ground for people of different traditions. Leila used to attend performances at her cousin Leonard Ingrams's Garsington Opera and contributed to the Foundation under his name.

Leila was a true friend of Yemen and personified a direct link to the past of the country. She will be widely missed by her many friends the world over, not least by those of us who were lucky enough to experience her generosity and warmth. Aged 74, she passed away peacefully on 22 March near her home in Kent.

THANOS PETOURIS

**DR. MUHAMMED 'ABD AL-MALIK AL-MUTAWAKKIL**

**1942-2014**

Dr. Muhammed, as he was known to many, was a teacher by both disposition and practice. With a deft educator's touch developed over decades of experience, he laid the foundation for his students' self-discovery and empowerment as a path toward achieving the same for Yemeni society at large. Legions of students in the Department of Political Science at Sana'a University – many of whom would go on to become significant activists

and political leaders themselves – began their exploration of civil and human rights in his classroom, while others (including many foreign researchers) studied less formally in his *mafraj*. In both settings, he taught by example, offering a consistent lesson in tolerance, pluralism, and principled integrity.

But the loss of an individual is never (just) that. While Dr. Muhammed’s death is undoubtedly felt most intimately by his family and closest friends, his assassination



on 2 November 2014 also tells a wider story of social and political disintegration and augurs the death of a distinctive set of political possibilities. The broad strokes of Dr. Muhammed’s life parallel changes in Yemen’s society and polity that have direct bearing on the crisis today, as does the injustice of his death, for which there will likely be no genuine accountability.

### **A Life of Leadership**

Dr. Muhammed ‘Abd al-Malik al-Mutawakkil was a son of privilege, born in 1942 to a member of the court of Imam Yahya in the waning days of the imamate. Unlike the overwhelming majority of Yemenis at the time, he benefited from a formal education in both traditional Islamic sciences and in the fields of journalism and communication, shaping his future role as a political and social bridge-builder. Influenced by the republican modernism of Ahmed Muhammed Nu‘man and the Free Yemeni Movement and educated at Cairo University in the 1960s, he welcomed the rise of republicanism in North Yemen and served in a number of roles in the new government. Making his political values evident in his personal life, he challenged his own family when he publicly approved the marriage of a close relative to a prominent republican shaykh of Qahtani descent, a move that would have been anathema during the imamate. As the regime became progressively less republican and more authoritarian following Ibrahim al-Hamdi’s death in 1977, al-Mutawakkil turned to the academy as an opportunity to

help build a more just political order from the ground up. Following the unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, he endeavored to unite these roles as educator and politician as a leading member of the progressive Union of Popular Forces, eventually serving as its Deputy Secretary-General for more than a decade.

While Dr. Muhammed's commitment to cross-ideological cooperation, pluralism, and equality was longstanding, it took particularly significant expression at two critical junctures in Yemen's post-unification history. The first came in 1993, when he worked alongside socialist leader Jar'allah 'Umar at the National Dialogue Conference to establish a jointly-agreed slate of proposed reforms as a last-ditch effort to forestall the destructive 1994 civil war. Despite the regime's ultimate rejection of this initiative, the experience and the allies he developed through this process informed Dr. Muhammed's later shift toward more strident opposition, as he went on to help establish the more far-reaching Joint Meeting Parties opposition coalition in the early 2000s. Critics will argue that this coalition was unable to achieve substantive reforms, but no matter how neutered and no matter its position today, the JMP unquestionably helped to popularize a discourse of rights that raised younger Yemenis' expectations for accountable governance.

As a committed constitutionalist and staunch advocate of republican citizenship, Dr. Muhammed did not always endear himself to those in power, and his status as a member of a prominent *sayyid* family was always a point of vulnerability. As his outspokenness turned to opposition activism, he came under pressure from the regime of former President 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh, enduring years of surveillance, threats, and sly insinuation with great dignity. When his support for a civil state angered prominent Salafi figures from within the JMP, this devout man for whom Islam was unquestionably the guiding force in his life faced allegations of apostasy and sectarian slurs. The assassins who killed him in 2014 were not the first to try.

### **An Educator's Legacy**

As Dr. Muhammed's son remarked in the immediate aftermath of the assassination, his father's murder was an effort to kill "the dream of building a civil state." That dream had been his life's work, and the non-violent protest movement that developed in 2011 reflected closely the values he worked to inculcate in his students and helped to embody in his daily

life. While Dr. Muhammed's relationship with the populist revolutionary movement was strained by some of the pragmatic compromises that he advanced late in his life, his impact on that movement through his years of committed civic education and human rights activism would be difficult to overstate.

Just as Dr. Muhammed influenced at least two generations of Yemeni political activists and leaders, he had a tremendous impact on foreign scholars of Yemeni politics, both professionally and personally. For successive generations of researchers, Dr. Muhammed was, as Sheila Carapico describes him, "tireless and inspirational." Michaelle Browsers, who wrote about Dr. Muhammed's role in the JMP, recalls that "he was the most generous of colleagues and mentors ... a truly engaged intellectual in the best of senses." Jillian Schwedler remembers the generous way in which Dr. Muhammed adapted to scholars' own growing understanding by offering increasingly sophisticated guidance and advice over time. Throughout all of this, she was moved – as so many were – by his "solid and steadfast vision for what Yemen could become." Gabrielle vom Bruck remarked that her "work was enriched by his knowledge, and ... life profoundly touched by the way he was dedicated to his family." The list goes on.

In addition to his many students and academic colleagues, Dr. Muhammad leaves behind a family of talented, visionary, and kind people, sons and daughters alike. Accomplished educators and activists in their own right, they have defied those who would minimize or marginalize their work, and have often publicly credited their father's faith in them as essential. Their contributions have ranged from building schools, research centers, and leadership programs for Yemeni youth to helping to write Yemen's new draft constitution, each project an actualization of Dr. Muhammed's (and now their own) principles of tolerance and pluralism. They are his finest legacy.

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In recognition of Dr Muhammad's enduring commitment to political pluralism, non-violence and civil and human rights, the American Institute for Yemeni Studies is establishing a memorial lecture in his honour. The inaugural address will be given by his daughter Dr Antelaq Muhammed al Mutawakkil at the Institute's Sana'a facility as soon as conditions there permit. Enquiries should be addressed to the treasurer, Stacey Philbrick Yadav, at [philbrickiyadav@hws.edu](mailto:philbrickiyadav@hws.edu)

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