



**The British-Yemeni Society**  
**Journal**

2016

# THE BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY

Registered charity No. 1027531

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2016–2017

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Vol. 24. 2016

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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-third Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 1 June 2016)

### The situation in Yemen

At last year's AGM, outgoing Chairman Dr Noel Brehony gave a detailed account of the internal developments in Yemen, leading up to the prospect of a round of peace talks that might at that time be going to start in Geneva. I think that I can be more brief because sadly there have been too few developments to give hope that a real end to Yemen's calamitous civil conflict is in sight. The talks foreseen by Noel were delayed and delayed, while fighting continued, with the attendant destruction of property and infrastructure, and causing death and devastating hardship to the population.

It was only in April this year that UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed succeeded in persuading some of the parties to the conflict to attend peace talks in Kuwait. These are representatives of the internationally recognised government of Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi on the one side, and representatives of the Huthis and the part of the GPC that remains loyal to ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh on the other. A cease-fire was supposed to begin on 10 April, and the talks on 18 April. I think that we have to be cautious about the prospects for these talks. The cease fire has been repeatedly broken by both sides, and the talks have dragged on now for over a month. There have been repeated appeals from Ould Cheikh Ahmed and the international community – and of course from Yemenis – for the two sides to reach some sort of agreement and agree on a pathway to peace. But I have to agree with our Journal editor Helen Lackner who has recently written about the talks, and who said “their main achievement is that they have not definitively broken down. Insofar as any negotiations are taking place, it is thanks to the systematic interventions from the Shaykh of Kuwait or other senior figures from different countries to bring one or the other side back to the table after their routine, almost daily, walk outs.” That sums it up pretty well. And of course they are not the only ones involved in this complex set of struggles. The Saudis have continued their bombing – perhaps with less intensity – and threatening overflights. The status of the south is not part of this discussion. Separate attacks are happening by and against elements fighting under the banners of al-Qaeda and ISIS. And what about the youth who sparked things off in 2011? Will some sort of resolution between the Huthis and Saleh on the one side and Hadi's government (such as it is) leaving the original players in power provide a stable

solution? Or will it at best reset the clock to 2011 for it all to start over again?

Nevertheless, there are occasional small optimistic signs. The sides seem to have agreed on a prisoner exchange on the eve of Ramadan which starts in a very few days. We must hope that both sides will release their captives. And Ramadan falls this year at the hottest time of the year, when everything is lacking – water, food, electricity to power fans or air conditioners. Anyone who has lived in Aden or Hodeida at this time of year will know how extreme the discomfort can be.

The humanitarian situation may be deteriorating slightly less rapidly than before, but I don't think that there is any evidence that it is getting better. The UN World Food Programme warns that it simply doesn't have the funds to provide what is needed. The House of Commons International Development Committee issued its fourth report on Yemen recently, noting that “the humanitarian response to the crisis has been significantly underfunded, with last year’s UN Fund just 56% funded and with the UN 2016 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan requesting \$1.8 billion to reach over 13 million people in need.” It also noted that civilians are bearing the brunt of the fighting. In particular the impact on children has been severe: the number of children not able to attend school has nearly doubled since the start of the crisis, with 47% of Yemen’s school age children currently not attending. It also reports that attacks on facilities and medical staff, coupled with a severe lack of medical supplies, have left the health sector in a state of collapse. Whatever happens in Kuwait, or on the ground in Yemen, the country is going to need a lot of help to get back even to where it was in 2011.

## **BYS activities**

### *Meetings:*

- 23 October 2015: HE Edmund Fitton-Brown, HM Ambassador to Sana‘a, “Prospects for a Return to a Peaceful Transition in Yemen”
- 8 December 2015: Joint Event with the RSAA. Panel Discussion on The War in Yemen: Political and Social Developments, with Nawal al-Maghafi, Baraa Shiban, Noel Brehony, and Natalie Roberts of MSF
- 26 February 2016: The Reverend Peter Crooks – “A Work of Faith and a Labour of Love” – Report on the Ras Morbat Eye Clinic, Christ Church Aden

- 4 April 2016: Brian Whitaker, “Yemen: What Went Wrong 1990-2016”
- 5 May 2016: Dr Michael Fradley, “Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa” his talk on the damage to Yemen’s cultural heritage included showing satellite imagery.

*The Society also issued the following:*

- 22 December 2015: Christmas Message – The situation in Yemen
- 28 January 2016: Newsletter.

## **Website**

The Society's new website, [www.b-ys.org.uk](http://www.b-ys.org.uk), launched in September last year, does us credit, thanks to the efforts of Thanos Petouris in particular, and has had over 3,600 visits. We also get a good bit of interest in the Society’s Facebook group page, with over 1300 members, of whom almost 40 are classed as recent.

## **Oher Yemeni-related events**

- 11-13 September 2015: Friends of Soqatra 14th Annual Meeting in Portugal, Conservation of the Natural and Cultural Heritage of Socotra
- 22 October 2015: SOAS Yemen Society, SOAS MENA Society and LSESU Middle East Society hosted a panel event on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen (Baraa Shiban and Nawal Al-Maghafi)
- 14 November 2015: Workshop on post-war reconstruction of the Yemeni health care system at the MEDACT Forum “Health through Peace”, organised by Kate Nevens, Sharif Ismail, and Taher Qassim
- 16 November 2015: Saferworld launched their report “Federalism, Conflict and Fragmentation in Yemen” written by Peter Salisbury
- 10 December 2015: The Overseas Development Institute hosted a seminar on “Yemen's Forgotten War”, chaired by our former chairman, Dr Noel Brehony
- 4 March 2016: Oxfam’s invitation to gala film screening, Regent Cinema, London W1: “I am Nojoom age 10 and divorced”, directed by Khadija Al-Salami
- 11 March 2016. Launch of the Yemen Growth Forum at SOAS with a panel discussion “Yemen: A Forgotten Crisis”, with André Heller Pérache, Rasha Mohammed, and Rawan Shaif
- 17 March 2016: Prof. Trevor Marchand, “Building Traditions in Highland Yemen” (MBI al Jaber Foundation lecture)

- 21 March 2016: Dr Elisabeth Kendall, “The War Drags on for What?” organised by the European Atlantic Group in the House of Commons
- 4 June 2016: Yemen International Health Workshop on the “Impact of War on Health in Yemen” in Liverpool
- 13 June 2016. Chatham House launched their report “Yemen: Stemming the Rise of a Chaos State”, written by Peter Salisbury, which is available online.

A number of other workshops on Yemen were hosted by the Foreign Office, Chatham House, and the European Council on Foreign Relations.

### **New books on Yemen**

A quick look on Amazon reveals quite a number of new releases of books on Yemen, though many turn out to be reprints, or compilations of earlier articles.

- *Rebuilding Yemen: Political, Economic, and Social Challenges*, edited by Dr Noel Brehony and Dr Saud al-Sarhan, in the Gulf Research Centre Series published by Gerlach Press
- Helen Lackner's *Yemen's 'Peaceful' Transition from Autocracy: Could it have succeeded?* published by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. This is available on line at: [www.idea.int/publications](http://www.idea.int/publications)
- *Migration from Yemen* IB Tauris (UK) Collective volume of conference papers; edited by Dr Noel Brehony, with a foreword by Muhammad Bin-Dohry, to be published in approximately November 2016
- *A Year in Yemen* by Nathan Tamblyn.

I might note here also the substantial *Crisis in Yemen, 4th report* produced by the House of Commons International Development Committee which came out just over a month ago. It is available on line.

### **Membership**

We have seen a small number of new members – ten or a dozen – this year. We regret to note the death of the following members since the last AGM:

Mr Jeffery Orchard

Wing Commander John Lacey Ireland OBE

Hugh Leach OBE

## The committee

Until relatively recently I had been an ordinary member of the Society, like many of you here today, and I don't think that I appreciated enough how much work goes into keeping the Society going. I think that I would like to start by giving special thanks to our Hon Secretary, Audrey Allfree, for the immense amount that she does, co-ordinating, organising, corresponding, minute-taking and following up. She has been a tower of strength to me in my first year as Chairman and I pray that she will continue to do so.

As I mentioned, running the Society can be more of a commitment than one expects, and unfortunately Peter Welby, who took over as Hon Treasurer from John Mason last year, found that he would be unable to continue in that role. Fortunately, Audrey spotted that we might have an ideal candidate to take over in the form of John Huggins, who is a professional accountant and happens to live only a short distance from ex-Treasurer John Mason. He brings valuable experience of working with registered charities, and has brought our accounts into line with Charity Commissioners' requirements and expectations. He agreed to be co-opted as Hon Treasurer and the Committee hopes that the meeting will formally elect him in that position today.

I would also like to highlight the important work done by our Journal editor, Helen Lackner, who has maintained the high standard of the Journal while also researching and writing on Yemen.

Most of the members of the executive committee have agreed to continue to serve though a couple of our new names elected last year found that unfortunately distance and other commitments meant that they could not become as involved as they had hoped. Our constitution states that the committee should consist of the officers plus between three and ten ordinary members. Provided the remaining committee members are re-elected this year we will still have the required number on the committee, but we would welcome nominations or volunteers, and especially some younger faces, to help to keep this Society vital and relevant.

I need also to mention ex-members of the committee who continue to support and to offer advice and suggestions, and we must continue to thank Thanos Petouris for his sterling work in managing the website and the BYS Facebook page. Finally, I'd like to thank our events secretary, Helen Balkwill, for her valuable support, including standing in for Audrey as secretary whilst Audrey was away.



## THE YEAR IN YEMEN

NOEL BREHONY

A year ago the UN Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed managed to get the main Yemeni protagonists to Geneva for the start of negotiations to end the civil war. Discussions in earnest began in Kuwait in April 2016 but as this was being written on 1 August, the talks were on the point of collapse and it seems that the war will continue. Since 26 March 2015, when the Saudi-led coalition initiated the offensive to restore the regime of President Hadi, Yemeni ports and airports have been blockaded and only limited amounts of food, diesel and other vital supplies have been allowed to enter. Coalition air forces have pounded Huthi-controlled cities and areas and all sides have made heavy use of artillery and rockets against targets in urban areas. Over 9,000 Yemenis have been killed, tens of thousands wounded, millions displaced and the country's endemic humanitarian crises have got much worse. Yemen's physical and human infrastructure, its economy and cultural heritage have been severely damaged. Famine threatens in some parts of the country.

### The war

Prima facie, there appear to be two sides in the war. On one side are the forces supporting President Abdu Rabbuh Hadi, the internationally recognised head of state, and on the other, the Huthi militias and those parts of the elite units in the Yemeni army still loyal to ex-President Ali Abdullah Saleh. President Hadi has the backing of leaders of the Islah party and its political allies and some leaders of the General Peoples' Congress, which has split into pro-Saleh and pro-Hadi factions. Much of the fighting takes place at district level between tribes and militias more focused on local issues and rivalries. The Saudi-led coalition has deployed relatively few ground troops (except in the south) but has helped the pro-Hadi part of the army to regroup and has trained and equipped thousands of Yemeni fighters, which it supports from the air. Signs of progress are first that the main protagonists have sought to avoid speaking of the war in sectarian terms, and secondly that Riyadh has recently toned down its accusation that the Huthis were Iranian lackeys. The evidence is that Teheran has given some help but avoided any high cost and high risk involvement.

For most of 2016 the main battle fronts have been:

- In and around Ta‘izz with militias, including Salafis, fighting inside the city and more organised military units supported by the coalition on its approaches and neighbouring areas within the governorate. Ta‘izz city has suffered extensive damage and casualties. Fighting has also been heavy close to the Bab al-Mandab
- A significant pro-Hadi military force was assembled in Mareb and has been slowly fighting its way towards Sana‘a to the west and into al-Jawf to its north-west. The stated objective is to take Sana‘a but progress has been slow in difficult terrain and against tenacious resistance
- In Hajjah and along the border with Saudi Arabia in Sa‘ada with the pro-Huthi forces firing missiles into Saudi Arabia and making occasional incursions. Sa‘ada has been heavily bombed by the coalition
- In Al-Bayda and other parts of the central Yemen involving mostly tribal and local militias.

One area where there had been a de facto ceasefire has been the border area between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The Huthis had launched a number of small attacks over the frontier as well as firing long range missiles towards Saudi cities. The two sides reached an accommodation through talks in Muscat (and later in Saudi Arabia) in early 2016 that restored calm the region though it did not stop the occasional launch of Huthi missiles into Saudi territory, which have recently once again increased in intensity.

After over 15 months of conflict, there is stalemate: The Huthis remain in control of Sana‘a and much of the north as well as Hodeida and its Revolutionary Council continues to function from the capital. The Faustian pact between the Huthis and Saleh’s allies has remained solid despite tensions emerging periodically. On 28 July 2016 Ansar Allah, the Huthis’ political party, and the pro-Saleh faction of the GPC agreed to form a ten-member Council that will replace the Revolutionary Council. It was seen as a provocative move and seems designed to show Yemenis and the GCC that the Huthis and Saleh are far from finished and will continue fighting.

Pro-Hadi forces have been attempting to consolidate their control of the south [here defined as the area within the borders of the former PDRY] from Aden with the backing of the UAE, which has provided significant military, financial and practical support, deploying at least two brigades of its army. It took time to stabilise the security situation in Aden where a

governor was assassinated last year but significant progress has been made following the appointment in January of a governor who had proved himself in the fighting against the Huthis in Lahej – but is also known for his links to the Southern separatist movement (al-Hirak). He has brought in other militia leaders from Lahej and, with UAE support, has been able to drive AQAP/ISIS militias out of the city. The governor provided enough security to allow the return of the Yemeni prime minister and most of his ministers, where they started to restore some government services in the city (even trying – unsuccessfully – to ban *qat* sales except at weekends) and gradually across other parts of the south. Instability and the war, in the south and elsewhere, empowered a variety of local groups which, since 2011, have learned to be self-reliant in defending themselves, providing security and maintaining essential supplies to local people. Any future government is likely to find it difficult to restore authority to these areas.

President Hadi has also been struggling to maintain and build support from his exile in Riyadh. He is internationally recognised as the legitimate head of state but his position has often seemed insecure. He dismissed his Vice President and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah in April and appointed General Ali Mohsen as Vice President, a controversial figure long associated with Saleh and Islah, and a southerner from the GPC, Ahmed Bin Daghr as prime minister. The sacking of Baha caused consternation in the coalition leadership (which had not been informed in advance) who saw him as a potential successor to Hadi – and someone whom the Huthis respected. This move is symptomatic of the tensions within the leadership group.

### **AQAP and DAESH (ISIS)**

AQAP and its insurgency arm Ansar al-Sharia had been waiting since their expulsion from the towns it occupied in Abyan in 2011–12 for another opportunity to take territory and set up Islamic “emirates”. They exploited the war – and the removal of official security forces – to recruit new militants and acquire cash and arms. AQAP moved into Mukalla and adjoining coastal areas of Hadhramaut in late 2015 and then struck a deal with tribal and local groups for a share of control of the area. AQAP was finally driven out in May and June 2016 by newly-trained Yemeni security forces in an operation that was planned and supported by the UAE with some US advisors. Though AQAP lost some men, it managed to get many of its fighters out of the area and dispersed in small groups in the difficult terrain of

Hadhramaut and Shabwa where it will try to regroup using the large sums of money it stole from banks and companies to finance its operations.

More recently, the UAE has supported moves to clear AQAP and Daesh out of parts of Lahej and Abyan, but it will take a sustained effort to keep the south secure. Both AQAP and Daesh have been able to mount terrorist attacks in Aden and Mukalla in recent weeks. Despite its setbacks AQAP is still producing its online journal (Inspire) which seeks to encourage lone wolf attacks in the West, including the UK, and provides information on how to acquire materials for bombs. This shows that AQAP retains the aim, if not necessarily the means, to launch terrorist attacks in the UK and elsewhere. Throughout the year, drones have killed AQAP leaders including some of the most senior. AQAP in 2015 presented itself as defending Sunni Islam against Shia invaders, seeking to stir up sectarianism. It might have had some success at local level, and the growth of Salafi militias has been feature of the war.

### **The south**

Support for al-Hirak appears to have increased markedly in the last year and new local leaders – as opposed to the exiled leaders of the ex-PDRY – are now at the fore and seem to have the ambition to work towards creating a united leadership and a common vision. Southerners saw the Huthi moves into the south – clearly supported by Saleh’s military forces – in 2015 as an assertion of northern power, almost an invasion. A backlash led some local groups to expel northerners from Aden earlier this year. The GCC and the international community oppose southern secession but may be more sympathetic to demands for a self-governing southern region in a federal Yemen.

### **The economy**

The economy has been devastated and it will take years for it to recover, requiring a long and sustained effort by the GCC and the international community. Oil and gas output has virtually ceased as many of the companies have declared force majeure. Fortunately, the oil and gas infrastructure has not been destroyed – local tribes have protected it in Hadhramaut and Shabwa – but much else has gone. Foreign exchange reserves have fallen from about \$5 billion to under \$1 billion in the past year, leading to accusations that the Huthis have used the money to pay for the war. One of the curiosities has been the way that the Central Bank has been able to function

in Sana'a and pay salaries even in the governorates in all parts of the country under an internationally supervised system approved by both sides. The flow of money to the south stopped in the late spring and a tussle has broken out between Sana'a and Aden over the control of the bank and thus its funds.

### **The UK and the coalition.**

The western media scarcely reported on the war and it was left to individual journalists, activists and NGOs to tell the world what was going on. Criticism of Western support of the Saudi-led action has grown. Human Rights groups have accused the coalition of causing many casualties among innocent civilians. (A UN Panel of experts attributed 61 per cent of civilian casualties to coalition activity.) Some have called for an investigation into UK arms supplies to Saudi Arabia. The UK government is increasingly uncomfortable in backing the coalition though in public its support has been unwavering.

### **Peace negotiations**

Both sides appear to agree that any deal will require that the Huthi/Saleh forces withdraw from the cities and hand over weapons to a new government, which will include the Huthis. The question is in what order: President Hadi insists that withdrawal and surrender of arms must come first; the Huthis want the government to be formed first. Both sides have agreed to ancillary arrangements over ceasefires, handover of prisoners etc. but remain far apart on the fundamental issue. Regrettably it seems they feel that they can win the war – or at least not lose it. They were not ready by the end of July 2016 to compromise.



# THE MAKING OF THE TRIBAL REPUBLIC: NORTH YEMEN'S TRIBES AND CENTRAL AUTHORITY DURING THE CIVIL WAR

1962–1970

JOSHUA ROGERS<sup>1</sup>

As archives have been opened and retired politicians, generals and tribal leaders have felt able to write memoirs without adhering too closely to the established scripts of official historiography, Yemen's modern history has become a topic of renewed interest. New sources are now available to fill some of the blanks in the early history of the Yemen Arab Republic and the last decades of the Imamate.

This essay picks up on one important dynamic of the civil war period in the 1960s, which has been sometimes remarked upon, but rarely explored. For the civil war re-shaped Yemeni politics as a 'tribal republic' in ways that were then novel and are now taken for granted. The war – and the violence, foreign money and weapons that accompanied it – significantly expanded the role of tribal leaders in Yemeni politics, reversing decades of centralisation.

## **Background: The Imams, Tribes and the State in North Yemen 1918–62**

At least since the 1970s, students of Yemeni history have highlighted Imam Yahya's "notable feat" of constructing a unified state after Ottoman withdrawal in 1918. Through "more or less constant campaigns of conquest" during the 1920s and an extension of the hostage system, whereby young relatives of tribal leaders were handed over to the court, Yahya tipped the balance towards the central court and away from the tribes during his 30 years of rule, a state of affairs maintained and expanded by his son and successor Imam Ahmed.<sup>2</sup>

The Imams replaced tribally-chosen arbiters with government judges, moved recognised markets, which were often the site of tribal arbitration, to locations where the Imam had a monopoly over justice, and imposed centrally-chosen governors and even, on occasion, tribal leaders. Although tribal custom was routinely accommodated, it was accommodated only so

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1 Joshua Rogers is a PhD candidate in International Development at the School of Oriental and African Studies and winner of the British Yemeni Society annual research grant 2015.

2 See Robert Stookey, 1978. *Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab Republic*. Boulder: Westview. p.167

long as the tribes accepted the Imam's sovereignty, and the attendant officials, taxes and other trappings of the state.

Of course, the extent of central control should not be over-stated, and tribes' role in practice was greater than that accorded to them in official chronicles. It was, after all, tribal leaders and their followers, not the Imam's regular army, who proved decisive in defeating challenges to Imam Ahmed's rule in 1948 and 1955 and to both the royalist and republican war effort after 1962.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless as the 1960s dawned in Yemen, while armed, organised and politically relevant, tribal leaders played virtually no role in formal politics. They had been repeatedly defeated by the regular army, cut off from Ottoman-era stipends, only had access to limited numbers of rifles and no heavy weapons, and were negotiating local power with centrally-appointed governors, commanders and other officials. All of this was about to dramatically change.

### **Changes during the Civil War, 1962–70**

Shortly after the death of Imam Ahmed, on 26 September 1962, a group of young officers seized control of Sana'a. Mohammad Al-Badr, then Imam for barely a week, managed to flee and rally tribal support and Saudi Arabian funding. Nasser's Egypt, which had supported clandestine Yemeni opposition to the Imam since the 1950s, backed the newly declared Yemen Arab Republic with direct funding and tens of thousands of soldiers. Thus began the civil war. Highly internationalised, it was also profoundly local and most of the fighting occurred in the 'north of the North', the areas surrounding and to the north of Sana'a dominated by the Hashed and Bakil tribal confederations.

From the outset, the need to attract as much tribal support as possible was central to the calculations of all parties. As territorially defined units, support of a tribe meant both access to tribal fighters as well as control of an area, denying access to the opposing side. As a result, mobilisation for the conflict quickly became a bidding war for tribal support.

### **A flood of guns and money**

Tribal leaders benefited from a veritable flood of weapons and money during the civil war. Between 1962 and the first months of 1965, the

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3 Cf Paul Dresch, 1990. "Imams and Tribes: The writing and acting of history in Upper Yemen." in Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner. *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*. Berkeley: University of California.



Imam Mohammad al-Badr with royalist commanders among tribal supporters (courtesy of Col. David Smiley).

royalists distributed at least 80,000 rifles to tribal fighters and were spending in excess of £100,000 per month on payments to tribal leaders. Saudi support for the royalists in these first two and a half years of the war — most of which made its way in the form of weapons or money directly or indirectly (through payments for safe passage) to the tribes — was approximately £25 million, or roughly five times the annual government budget of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom before 1962. These were only the payments passed on from the Imam and the Hamid al-Din princes. In addition, Mohamed al-Sudairi, the governor of Jizan province in Saudi Arabia, began establishing independent relationships with tribal leaders in the border regions. Moreover, it appears that the Saudi “Special Committee” was born in 1965 or 1966 and began direct payments and the supply of trading licenses to Yemen’s tribal leaders. According to information relayed to the UK government by Tony Boyle, one of the British mercenaries in Yemen, these payments reflected the privately-admitted Saudi goal of ruling Yemen directly through the tribal shaykhs without the Hamid al-Din.<sup>4</sup>

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4 All cited amounts are in currency contemporary to the time. See Clive Jones, 2004. *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-1965: Ministers, Mercenaries and Mandarins*. Portland: Sussex Academic pp. 39, 46, 48, 101, 194



Similarly, the new republican government, which reportedly found some 40 million Yemeni Riyals (YR) in the Imam's treasuries, exhausted these funds within 6 months mostly due to large gifts to tribal leaders. In addition, republican military commanders granted funds to shaykhs sympathetic to the Republic to act as recruiters and commanders of the auxiliary Popular Forces. These payments, of up to 30 YR per person per mission, were equivalent to the monthly salary of a regular soldier. One of the Septembrist officers and a republican commander during the civil war remembers the relationship as follows: 'During the war, we relied on the tribes a great deal. We gave them weapons and equipment in exchange for cooperation on specific missions... We would meet with tribal leaders we knew were sympathetic to the revolution and ask them for fighters. They would send a specific number under the command of a mid-level shaykh. In exchange, we would give them weapons and equipment. The tribesmen would fulfil the mission and then return to their home [*balad*]. If we wanted to conduct another joint operation, we would go back and negotiate with the shaykh.'<sup>5</sup>

Within months of their arrival in Yemen, the Egyptian command likewise established a Tribal Affairs Office, which instituted tribal subsidies of up to 20,000 Egyptian Pounds per month and established direct relationships between the Egyptian command and tribal leaders. As the war wore on, these payments increased to the 'fantastical' level of up to 200,000 YR, according to the Egyptian ambassador to Yemen, although, at the same time, transfers became more conditional, providing money and services such as water pumps in exchange for specific missions. Leaders of tribes in contested areas found it politic to accept payments from both sides, becoming 'republican by day and royalist by night.'<sup>6</sup>

After the Egyptian retreat in 1967, the republican government took-over payment of the tribal subsidies and was soon spending 1.6 million YR in direct monthly payments to the tribes.<sup>7</sup> This support continued after the

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5 Interview with Hamoud Baidar in Amman, Jordan, May 2016.

6 Mahmud 'Adil Ahmed. 1992. *Dhikrayat Harb al-Yaman 1962-1967*. Cairo: Mutaba'ah al-Ikhwah. pp. 530-532. Jesse Ferris, 2012. *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power*. Princeton: Princeton University. p.188. Egyptian National Archives, Foreign Ministry Papers, 0078-044109, Report of 8 October 1962.

7 For the sake of comparison, the monthly budget of the military in 1965 and 1966 appears to have been approximately 500,000 YR. Interview with Hamoud Baidar in Amman, Jordan, May 2016.



Royalist fighters showing off modern pick-up trucks mounted with machine-guns and recoilless rifles (courtesy of Col. David Smiley).

end of the war, as did direct Saudi payments. Many previously weak and poorly-resourced shaykhs thus found themselves with significant personal incomes and in command of large, well-armed forces as the war came to a close. As such, tribal leaders gained a new measure of independence from the central government and greatly expanded their patronage opportunities within the tribe. This is particularly true, since the war devastated the livelihoods of ordinary tribesmen and their families. Egyptian bombing raids destroyed crops and drove people out of their villages, fighting disrupted agriculture, and Yemen experienced a series of droughts between 1965 and 1967. As their independent incomes were destroyed, payment for fighting and patronage from the shaykh became central to the livelihoods of most tribesmen.

### **Extension of local influence**

While tribal leaders gained new resources through the war, in much of the north effective political functioning reverted to the village or tribe and life for most Yemenis in the areas with active fighting became a very local struggle for survival. The new balance of power fell to local shaykhs, under-

writing a further expansion of their influence. In regions in the north that were nominally republican, but without large military garrisons, tribal leaders likewise gained room for manoeuvre, for tribes supporting the republic were provided with food, arms and money and otherwise left alone and republicans, like royalists, insisted on the voluntary nature of taxation.<sup>8</sup>

In areas controlled by the royalists, the war hardly changed local administrative arrangements, but it severed the linkages to the Imam's court. Central appointments, oversight, and taxation virtually ceased. According to a royalist commander: 'Wherever the royalists held sway, the courts, governors and other institutions of state continued to function as they had under Imam Ahmed and the important people remained the same. But there were no new central appointments. When the Princes or others passed through these villages, the officials would renew their allegiance, but they were focused on their own region and their own men, whereas the focus of the Imam and the princes was on military activity and there was no capacity for anything else.'<sup>9</sup>

### **Government insiders and 'Tribal Sovereignty'**

In this way, tribes and especially tribal leaders emerged from the civil war far stronger than they had been at its outset. Loyalty payments instituted during the war continued and the most successful shaykhs were able to significantly expand their power and become government insiders, holding governorships or ministerial positions.

Most visibly, this is evident in the political careers of various members of three prominent shaykhly families that came to dominate post-war politics until Yemeni unification and beyond: the Abu Luhum, Abu Shawarib, and al-Ahmar. Though their trajectories are well-known, it is worth recalling their origins in the civil war: Sinan Abu Luhum, one of the few influential figures within the Bakil tribal confederation to clearly align himself with the republic, became governor of Hodeida during the civil war, gaining influence over customs duty and imports (including of weapons and undeclared goods) through the YAR's most important port. Shaykh Abdullah al-Ahmar, the paramount Shaykh of the Hashed confederation and an opponent of the Hamid al-Din from the outset, held increasingly

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8 Interview with Hamoud Baidar in Amman, Jordan, May 2016.

9 Interviews with Ahmed al-Sayyani and Abbas al-Makhtafi in Amman, Jordan, May 2016. See also: Shelagh Weir, 2007. *A Tribal Order. Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen*. London: British Museum. p. 282.

important posts over the course of the conflict, including as governor of Hajjah, Interior Minister, and speaker of the Majlis al-Watani.<sup>10</sup>

At a less visible level, the increasing power of tribal leaders is still more striking and transcended the republican-royalist divide. Studies of the 1970s consistently stress the absence of central influence on the selection of government officials up to and including the position of governor in many areas. These had all been positions dominated by centrally-appointed and usually non-tribal officials before the war.<sup>11</sup>

Tribal self-administration became enshrined in law and established practice during the presidency of Qadhi Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani. Formal authority for public order was delegated to tribes in 1973; tribal control of appointments in their areas became accepted practice, and tribal 'taxation' of travellers passing through their territories increased in the late 1960s, even as ever greater proportions of locally-collected taxes were earmarked for local development and the cooperatives that began to emerge during the war.

## Conclusion

Wartime attempts to mobilise tribal fighters through the distribution of money and weapons transformed the relationship between the central government and tribal leaders in the course of the 1960s. The resources lavished on the shaykhs provided them with many new opportunities, while crowding-out other actors, particularly the previously influential sayyed families, as well as traders and other groups outside of the tribal highlands, who had been among the most enthusiastic early backers of the Republic. Much subsequent scholarship on Yemen has highlighted the local initiatives spurred by this involuntary decentralisation, just as others have highlighted its far more problematic effects on national-level governance. For better and for worse, it is worth remembering that the YAR's emergence as a 'tribal republic,' with extensive Saudi-Arabian influence, was in important ways rooted in the specific dynamics of the royalist-republican civil war.

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10 'Abd Allah bin Hussein al-Ahmar, 2008. *Mudhakriyat al-shaykh 'Abd Allah bin Hussein al-Ahmar: Qadhaya wa mawaqif*. Sana'a: Mu'assasa al-mithaq lil-taba'ah wa al-nashr

11 Charles Swagman, 1988. *Development and Change in Highland Yemen*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press. p. 198; Mohamed El-Azzazi, 1978. *Die Entwicklung Der Arabischen Republik Jemen: Sozio-Politische Grundlagen der Administration*. Tübingen: Horst Erdmann. p. 175.

## THE ITALIAN RESTORATION PROJECT OF THE GREAT MOSQUE IN SANA'A: SENSATIONAL DISCOVERIES

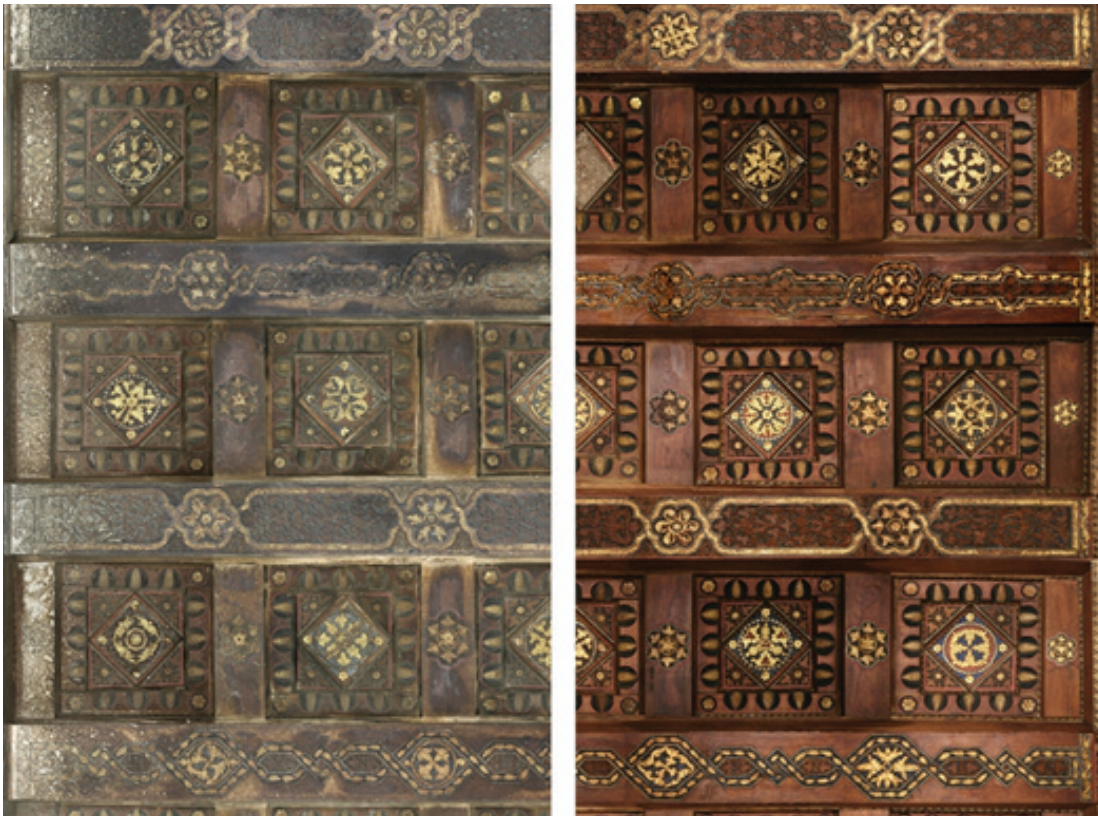
WERNER DAUM



The Great Mosque of Sana'a seen from the North-East

The Great Mosque (al-Jami' al-Kabir) of Sana'a is the oldest extant and the most important early Islamic building in the world. Its fame is of course due to its venerable antiquity, having been built on the orders of the Prophet, two years earlier than that of Mecca and, as a work of art, thanks to its unique and magnificent coffered ceilings that cover the four aisles of the mosque, with a total of 3,800 square meters. A number of studies have been published on their painted decorations, all of which dated the ceilings to the middle ages.

It has been known for quite some time that the Great Mosque contains architectural *spolia* from previous buildings: columns and capitals with Himyaritic as well as Christian symbols. While these are of great historical interest, the unique splendour of the Sana'a mosque lies in its coffered and painted ceiling. Its beauty had always been appreciated – but its scientific dating has now totally overturned all previous approaches in the history of



Western prayer halls (detail), before and after restoration



Cleaning test



NW-corner of the Mosque (dating to Queen Arwa's restoration), reassembled from fragments from the Eastern prayer hall destroyed during an earthquake in 1111.

art. Many of the decorated ceilings are *spolia* from previous monuments. These can only be the palace of Ghumdan of legendary fame, and the cathedral-church of Abraha, still known to every Muslim, the two most splendid and most famous buildings of pre-Islamic Arabia.

In recent decades, the ceiling fell into grave disrepair. A number of its supporting beams had deteriorated; some of them had been repaired with crude supports. Rainwater and other degradation seriously damaged the paintings. There was an urgent need to restore this unique work that has no parallel anywhere in the Arab or Muslim world. The Italians are among the pioneers of modern scientific restoration. The Yemeni Government was therefore well advised to select the Istituto Veneto per i Beni Culturali for a complete restoration of the ceilings. The work began in 2005, and was fortunately almost completed when the Italian experts were forced to leave the country in February 2015.

During the restoration, the Italian team took samples for carbon dating. These revealed that large areas of the ceilings of both the northern and the southern prayer halls were *spolia*, originally dating to the centuries before Islam, ranging from the 2nd to the 6th centuries AD, with a majority from the 4th to 6th centuries AD. The later transformations from the Islamic period, including repairs and rebuilding of coffers imitating the earlier styles, particularly those in the Western and Eastern prayer halls, were also



Detail from the ceiling in the Eastern prayer halls

classified and carbon dated. The ceilings of the Great Mosque thus have been shown to have a material history that stretches from the 2nd to the 11th centuries AD.

Let us however conclude our survey of the Italian team's results: They have stabilised the ceilings and secured the massive beams that support them. They have stabilised the coffers. They have cleaned, secured and restored many of the paintings. But of course the sensational thing is the radiocarbon dating. Their final publication will certainly provide the necessary detailed interpretation. Here I am anticipating its major conclusion: The *spolia* must have come from two different buildings (or from two different ceilings of one and the same building).

Abraha's church is probably the most likely candidate for the origin of the ceilings. The church was not situated where local tradition would have it, pointing to the well-known unbuilt circular hole in the eastern part of the old city. This tradition has been generally accepted by scholars, including Serjeant, Lewcock, Finster, and Schmidt. Robin has however recently assembled convincing evidence that the church lay opposite Ghumdan, on its western side, roughly where the mosque is today. I also follow Robin's new and good arguments for dating the construction of the church to ca. 560 AD.

Abraha's church was the most splendid monument of its time in Arabia and greatly impressed the Koran and Muslim tradition. The sources tell us



that Abraha wanted to attract the Mecca pilgrims to Sana‘a, through the beauty of his church, and substitute his church for the Ka‘ba. The church was erected on the grounds of a pre-Islamic sanctuary, the grave of prophet Hanzala, which still exists inside the Western minaret of the mosque. Abraha’s church adopted Hanzala’s grave, its main cultic objects, its ritual, and its pilgrimage. Thus Abraha could reasonably hope to outdo the Meccan pilgrimage which was identical in substance (another water sanctuary), but now looked so meagre and so much poorer compared with his own impressive and beautiful building.

The Italians have also made another discovery, almost as a by-product, that by itself merits the qualification “sensational”: it is yet another large trove of ancient manuscripts, discovered in two niches which were bricked up into the walls of the western minaret. This follows the first manuscript trove of the 1970s, which has revolutionised our understanding of the origins of the Koran (“the Koran is the text predicated by Muhammad”, contrary to the general opinion of Western scholars). At the time, I was in a position to help establish the preservation project that saved these manuscripts and made them available to scholarship. They have since been housed in the Dar al-Makhtutat museum opposite the mosque. In the 1990s, another trove was found, walled in the eastern library; now comes this third and very large collection. It is now also located in the Dar.

The Italians’ findings were presented for the first time by Renzo Ravagnan, the director of the Istituto Veneto, at the 20th Rencontres Sabéennes, held at Perugia in June 2016. I am grateful to Renzo for having provided me with the text of his communication. The results will be published in 2017 (Renzo Ravagnan, *La Grande Moschea di Sana‘a nello Yemen. Storia e restauro*).

The Great Mosque of Sana‘a and its 2,000-year-history, both spiritual and material, is one of the wonders of the world. In its architecture and its magnificent ceilings, it is the oldest great monument of Islam. Through the incredible work of the Italians, its beauty and its meaning have been reborn, and preserved for future generations. It is as if God’s own hand had bestowed this wonderful gift on us at a time when the Saudi-led coalition bombing campaign (the targets being programmed by American and British advisors) has bombarded the dam of Mareb, the greatest engineering work of the Ancient World that so prominently figures in the Koran.

Photographs courtesy of Renzo Ravagnan, Istituto Veneto Per I Beni Culturali.

## THE YEMENI COMMUNITY IN SHEFFIELD

ABDUL GALIL SHAIF<sup>1</sup>

### From Yemen to Sheffield and back

The vast majority of Yemenis arrived in Sheffield directly from Aden in the 1950s and 60s. In the 1950s, Britain was in need of workers. Just as it had brought many from the West Indies, there were also recruiting drives in Aden. Advertisements appeared in the Adeni press, asking for strong men to work in the steelworks. My father, living in Sha'ib, a good 24 hours travel from Aden by car in those days, heard that Britain wanted workers and recruitment was taking place in Aden. He travelled from his village; in Aden he met a Briton whose interviewing method consisted entirely of assessing the physical strength of the potential recruits. As a farmer, my father had strong arm and leg muscles and this was deemed sufficient for him to be accepted, despite the fact that he was both illiterate and spoke not a word of English. A form was filled, he was given a British passport and sent on his way. He travelled to India by ship and from there to Britain. He arrived in Cardiff and made his way to Sheffield to his friends in Attercliffe.

Prior to the 1950s there were about 100 Yemenis in Sheffield. Like most Yemenis in Britain they or their fathers had arrived as seamen in Cardiff or South Shields between the 1890s and the 1930s, and had moved to Sheffield in the 1940s and 50s. Almost all of them worked in the heavy steel industry. Until the 1970s, most Yemenis lived in boarding houses, mostly in Attercliffe. These were three bedroom Victorian houses where they shared rooms and lived communally, cooking Yemeni food in turns and eating as a group. Occasionally meals were cooked for residents of more than one house. This system disappeared in the 1970s as workers obtained council housing and more of them brought their families over.

Although no statistics are available, by the 1970s there were about 10,000 Yemenis in Sheffield. They came from both the YAR (Rada', Juban, Shamir, and even Sana'a) and the PDRY, (mostly from Yafi', Dhala', Subeiha and a few Adenis). Most of them remained single for much of the time, some for their entire stay. Their prime objective was to save money to build a nice

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1 Abdul Galil Shaif is currently the chairman of Aspiring Communities Together, until 2015 known as the Yemeni Community Association. He was a founding member of the YCA and the Hadfield Institute. He obtained a PhD in political science from Sheffield University in 1991 and was chairman of the Aden Free Zone Authority from 2008 to 2015.

house at home and have enough for their retirement. None of them expected to stay in the UK for the rest of their lives; so many of them did not attempt to bring their families. Until the immigration restrictions of the late 1960s, cash was the main constraint preventing them from bringing their families. They all dreamt of making much money and going home, but this did not happen.

Many Yemeni workers became politicised soon after their arrival in the UK. Some of those who had come from South Shields had been radicalised by the race riots which took place there in the 1930s. But the majority were not involved or interested in British politics, their politics focused on Yemen. They established the Yemeni Workers' Union, which included most people, from both North and South. They bought the building at 68 Burngreave Road in 1971 in the name of the Yemeni Workers' Union. It was the first base for Yemenis in the UK. The Union focused on helping Yemenis at home by sending money to build schools and other community facilities in their villages. They celebrated the major events in the Yemeni calendar [26 September, 14 October], and held political meetings. They also raised money for the National Liberation Front and later on for the Yemeni Socialist Party. They established connections with trade unions in Sheffield and the left of the Labour Party. They were very active politically with the Yemeni revolutions, particularly the 14 October revolution. They had very little political activity on issues affecting their living conditions in Sheffield. They saw themselves as being on a journey which would eventually take them back home to Yemen.

### **Working in steel**

The steel workers of the 1960s and 1970s were completely focused on Yemen, rather than the UK. They worked extremely long hours, up to 80 hours a week, in really tough conditions in the steel works. Their working conditions meant they had many work accidents and injuries, there were large numbers of serious cases of deafness, but they just carried on working. They had neither the language nor other skills to get treatment or compensation. They built the economy of the city, and it is sad that they have not yet been celebrated or their contribution recognised. My father said "We did the jobs that the white working class community refused to do, such as the furnace, the hammer, the melting machine and the crane driver, dirty and dangerous jobs." He said the only language they spoke was the language of the steel factory.



The Yemeni Community Centre at 68 Burngreave Road.

### **The second generation**

The next generation, the children who came with their mothers to join their fathers, take a different approach. We are focused on the situation in the UK. I came in 1971 when Dad had saved enough to bring us over; I was 11 at the time and completed my schooling here and am one of the few who went to university. My generation is far less involved in Yemeni politics and more concerned with helping the workers in the steel mills, most of whom are now retired, and many dead. We realised that they needed help to get fair treatment and medical support for the various diseases and injuries they had suffered at work and so we started to campaign to get them compensation for the unacceptable working conditions they had suffered. So starting in 1983-84 we started working on these issues. In 1985 we formed the Yemeni Community Association replacing the Yemeni Workers' Union, using the same building. There were a few of us who spoke English and who realised that the vision for our presence must change and that the focus of our work should be to build on the work of our fathers but to actively engage on the issues that matter to Yemenis in the UK.

We set up an advice centre in 1986 with the first salaried advice worker. One of our first activities was to organise hearing tests for 20 steel workers and found all of them had problems. We started a campaign to get them compensation and between 1990 and 1993 over 1700 Yemeni workers gained compensation for hearing problems and dermatitis caused by the working conditions in the steel mills. Between 1988 and 1993 we also ran a

major literacy campaign supported by Sheffield City Council, which employed Yemeni teaching assistants to teach older Yemenis and their wives English. This also opened the door for young Yemenis to become teachers, and 14 young people, including 10 women, became full-time teachers. Over 2,000 Yemenis, including my mother, learned English through the scheme and it also persuaded Sheffield City Council to set up similar campaigns for other communities. Ours was the first, but the funding finally ended with the cuts.

Other activities we ran included a family support unit and trips around the country and other help for the older men. Sometimes we would organise trips for 500 people at a time. The Yemeni community was very engaged in this period and very active to improve itself as a core member of British society. The Association organised and established with other communities the Black Community Forum in 1990 and at least 10 Yemeni were by 1999 working in mainstream posts.

### **The third generation**

Now with the third generation, the main activists are our own children. The name of the organisation has just been changed again to 'Aspiring Communities Together.' This has helped us shift away from the issue of separatism in Yemen, which is an important debate within the Yemeni Sheffield community, and so we have staff from Britain, Yemen and Pakistan. We run a 'healthy living' centre, a gym, a sauna, sports, well-being sessions. In 2016, we obtained £650,000 of lottery funding to support these activities. We now have three buildings, the original one in Burngreave Road, a large complex in Attercliffe and an old school turned into a gym for women only in Fir Vale in the heart of the area where Yemenis live. In Attercliffe we run a project for Roma children who have been excluded from schools, and they are looked after by third generation Yemenis. So the community activities have shifted from the 1970s when the focus was on return to Yemen to a new generation of Yemenis supporting excluded European immigrants.

Starting with one building in the 1970s used mainly for political meetings, we moved to the current situation where we have the three buildings with 37 staff and a £1 million annual budget to run them. Sheffield City council for example finances the support we give to the Roma children.

With Yemenis, the main activity now is a support project for the elderly, mostly for single old steel workers, aged 60 to 90 who did not bring their



## MUDIA JOURNAL: CHRISTMAS 1951

KAY CLAY

*Kay Clay (née Katharine Cambell) worked for the British Council teaching English in Italy after the Second World War, and married Lieutenant-Commander Richard (R G R) Clay in 1950. In July 1951 Richard was posted to serve temporarily as Resident Naval Officer at HMS Sheba, the Royal Navy's shore establishment in Aden. Kay joined Richard in Aden for Christmas 1951, and within 24 hours of her arrival they set out into the Western Aden Protectorate (WAP), where Richard had become friendly with the Political Officer at Mudia, Archie Wilson. We present a short extract of her fascinating diary, which provides many other details of considerable interest and is available in full from the editor on request and with permission from Kay's son, John Gittings, who has made the diary available to the B-YS.*

### **Mudia, 27 December 1951**

The souk was about half an hour's drive away, out in the middle of the valley. There were no buildings of any kind. Nothing but men and cattle and goods set down in the middle of the dusty desert, in the full glare of the sun. The brilliant green millet growing in the distance, the low-growing succulent scrub, the dark shadows on the mountains gave a degree of coolness, but the souk itself was hot and smelly, and very, very, dusty. We hadn't struck a very good day. Cattle, spices, cereals, a quantity of very rough basket work, some very cheap, gaudy jewellery, cheap cotton cloth, and that was about all. The size of the market varies greatly since most of those who go to it are tribesmen from tribes many miles away who may have had to walk for two days or more to reach it, and who consequently will probably not go every week. We wandered around, getting progressively stained with indigo from the many hand-shakes with tribesmen who knew Archie ... One or two baskets looked attractive enough to buy, though the workmanship was rough and the cracks were thick with dust. I had hoped to find some silver jewellery, but there was none. Ever since the Jews left the country two years ago there has been practically none available, as they were the principal silversmiths.

The school was an impressive building with a beautiful arched alcove running along the entrance side of it, like one side of a cloister. There were

small Arab boys of all ages from three or four to eleven or twelve, grouped in four classes of about twenty to thirty boys in each. One class was studying the Koran, another Arab history, another arithmetic, and the lowest form was learning how to write. We were introduced to the teachers in turn. They were all pupil teachers – one as old as sixteen, the others younger. The teacher in the history class and the teacher in the Divinity class were self-possessed and went on confidently teaching in front of us. The arithmetic teacher called out a small sturdy boy and got him to recite a poem in Arabic. Though he spoke a different language, the small boy might have been any bright boy of any class anywhere. His voice took on the false shrill note and overemphatic, declamatory tone of all children forced to show off as exhibits. The room at the end was for handicrafts and contained a number of imaginative clay models and paintings and paper cut-outs. The standard was high, especially in the modelling. There was one terrifying portrait-head of a very evil-looking man, and a fine recumbent cat, with an exaggeratedly feline expression on its face, of smug gloating.

Archie had to select half a dozen men as new recruits for the Tribal Guards. The Tribal Guards bear the same relationship to the Government Guards as the County Police do to Scotland Yard. They are recruited locally from the various tribes, a handful from each to prevent ill-feeling. They deal with all the smaller problems of law and order, and act as a display of force wherever it is needed. For anything really serious the Government Guards, with longer years of service, more careful training and better equipment, are called in ... Some seventy had turned up, having heard in some mysterious way of the vacancies which had only been announced two days before ... Six reliable men from three different tribes had been chosen. The best candidate of all had, alas, to be rejected, as he was the son of a slave. He was a magnificent young man, tall, strong, dignified, obviously intelligent and responsible. But because he was the son of a slave he would never be able to command respect in the others. He went away in tears.

Archie had arranged a tea party for me with local ladies. The two ladies from the Danish mission had also been invited, as interpreters. The ladies were waiting to greet me on the first floor at the top of some stone stairs. Ali's sister was about thirty-five, and had an authoritative air as though she governed the household. She was pretty and plump and lively, with black, well-oiled hair, covered by a loose, hand-woven net in black and red, in texture not unlike the fawn and blue dishcloths we use in England for



washing up. Her face was without make-up, but there was delicate tattooing on her forehead and between her eyebrows. Her dress was completely shapeless – a broad strip of bright blue satin, sewn down the sides, with holes for the neck and arms. It was gathered in at the waist by a heavy silver belt from which dangled the keys of the household in a large bunch. She wore beautiful silver ear-rings, like small bird-cages, and her feet were, of course, bare. In shaking hands, or rather in having my hand stroked and patted by her, I felt I was being introduced to the Middle Ages. I was greeted, and patted too, by Ali's wife, younger, with sad, cow-like eyes and a very large, attractive mouth. She was shortly expecting a baby and her face had a patient beautiful expression.

They took me into their sitting room, which was also Ali's sister's bedroom – and there, perhaps as a concession to me as a European, or perhaps as a result of Ali's Aden upbringing, I was given a wicker chair to sit in. There were three chairs and two beds in the room and that was all. All the rest of the party of women and children who had followed us in, clustered round, standing or sitting on the floor, or squatting on the beds. Since I speak no Arabic, all the conversation had to be carried out through Miss Nielsen, and I tried to convey my happiness at being with them by smiling broadly. We drank tea, heavily sweetened, ate chocolate cake made by Ali's sister according to a recipe supplied by Miss Nielsen, discussed and praised the children, of whom there were several. The eldest little boy, Ali's sister's only child, had been ill – a tubercular germ was suspected. Now he was better but was still very pale and heavy-eyed and fractious. Only the sister and little boy ate with us. Miss Nielsen explained that it would not be considered polite for the others to do so.

They asked questions about where I came from, whether I was married, how many children I had. The idea of my working was too difficult to explain to them and I was obliged to let them consider me a lady of leisure. Every now and again I felt a soft hand on my face, on my knee, stroking my back, feeling my arm. It was one of the children creeping up to see if I was real or perhaps to feel the texture of my skin and clothes. The children were lovely to look at, with very large eyes, beautiful dark olive skins and very well-formed bodies. The little girls' hair was thickly oiled and twisted into innumerable cork-screw curls starting right from the tops of their heads, an elaborate coiffure which must have taken a lot of time to prepare. I asked Miss Nielsen more about their lives. "Oh they have plenty to do, they cook and wash clothes, make their dresses, gossip, dance among themselves.



Kay Clay at a market in Mudia, December 1951 (courtesy of John Gittings)

Some of the younger ones are even beginning to learn to read and write now.”

**Dec 28th.**

Archie explained that he had been trying to make up the surface of the road from Mudia to Lahmar where he was hoping to build a fort. He had had difficulty in getting the work on the road done. “Can’t get ’em to do the bits in between the villages, afraid they’ll be shot as soon as they get out into the open. Can’t really blame the poor devils. Road’s no use to them. Camel tracks all they want.”...“Want to get them to grow millet here too,” he said. But millet could only be grown if peaceful relations existed between the tribes. The Jaadini tribe on the south bank of the Waddy Lahmar was at present outside the boundary of Dathina state, but Archie hoped eventually to persuade it to take advantage of an advice and protection treaty. The first step had been building the road through the territory. Hitherto the tribal leader had levied a toll on all strangers from outside who used the camel route. Archie hoped during our visit to persuade him to accept a sum in shillings, the equivalent of what he would normally receive in a year from the road. “Anxious to keep the prestige that levying the tax gives him.

Doesn't need the money," said Archie, "fabulously rich without. But we'll never get peaceful millet-growing conditions unless the road is free to everybody." The fort, when built, would give protection, prevent intimidation; and check any abuse of authority about access to the waddy.

## Lunch

I took off my sandals before stepping in [the tent], and walked barefoot across the matting to the other side. As I did so a whole carpet of flies rose from the matting, and buzzed around me. The four walls were lined with cotton-covered sides and leather-covered cushions ... Cups of tea were poured out as an aperitif for us from the customary kettle (government issue, I wondered?) and as usual it was strong, boiling hot and heavily laced with milk and sugar. For the flies it was a huge treat ... The meal was brought in – first the huge, flat, griddle cakes, *chepattis*, usually made of local wholemeal flour and very good to eat, but now made of white government flour in our honour and tasting rather insipid ... Then three bowls were brought in steaming, the large one contained boiled goat piled high of every conceivable cut ... the two small bowls contained a thick sauce with odds and ends in it: it had a vague curry flavour and was very good. I dipped my bread in it and made a reasonable show of eating and toyed with the meat. After the meal, coffee with ginger was served for those who liked it and tea for the rest. I chose the coffee and liked it. It tasted very little of coffee and rather strongly of ginger.

Archie was asked if he would see the tribal leader with his right-hand man. I had been told that the tribe was a very wealthy one and that its leader was one of the richest men for miles around. I had expected magnificence. What I saw was a wizened-looking tiny old man, black all over, dressed in the briefest of indigo *foutabs*, and with his greasy black hair tied back with string. To European eyes he looked like a beggar. In age he might have been anything from seventy to a good one hundred and fifty. His followers claimed that he was, in fact, well over a hundred ... he was completely blind. Archie's introductory speech was persuasive propaganda. He looked forward, he said, to an era of peace and prosperity for the tribe. They had seen that peaceful conditions had brought improvements in the Dathina area ... Now, with the fine road through their own territory, and the protection they would get from the fort, they, too, could enjoy prosperity on a scale they had never reached before. Moreover, when Major X came back from his leave, the British agent for the W.A.P., "he will never

allow him to levy a toll on the road – and that’s all got to stop.”

Then, it was the old man’s turn ... As I watched, he ceased to look like a beggar and became a leader, a man used to making decisions, of life and of death, a man who must have seen all sides of life and witnessed much violence – someone whose position had been achieved and maintained by a subtle combination of craft and ruthlessness and force ... “He says, in effect”, replied Ahmad [to Archie’s query], with unexpected brevity, “that his business is with you and not with Major X, and that he wishes to continue the toll.” “The devil he does,” said Archie explosively. “Tell him he damn well can’t, and that I am only acting for Major X, and that this road has damn well got to be free for everybody.” A tactful translation of these words by Ahmad was a signal for a general discussion ... “We’ll leave them to talk this over,” said Archie, jumping up. “We’ll go down and see the water”. The only way to the waddy was by a steep rock face sloping abruptly down ...

The water flowed wonderfully cool and clear in the river bed. It was dappled in places with shoals of very tiny fish, minnow-sized, basking in the sun just below the surface. “Cause of all the trouble in these parts,” said Archie, “source of all the scraps and fighting.” It was a series of intermittent pools separated by a gravel bank, the first water I had seen since I left the shore at Shukra, six foot of water flowing quietly through dry and dusty desert, the only source of water for miles around, the most precious of all substances: the key to life for everyone there. How understandable the tribal battles became, if you considered the struggle they had for this basic element of life.

When we got back to the fort the meeting had just broken up. “Well?” queried Archie. “They have agreed,” replied Ahmad.

**[A few days later in Aden]**

Archie stayed two days with us. On the third day he received a wire to tell him that the fort had been attacked by the tribe on the north bank, that the builder and two other tribesmen had been killed and that the fort had been pulled to bits. None of the raiders had been caught.

“What will you do?” I asked Archie.

“Go back and put the fear of God into them,” said Archie “and start building the fort again. Can’t have them thinking they can frighten us.”

## ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND'S IMPRESSIONS OF ADEN

PRESENTED BY JOHN SHIPMAN

*In December 1892 Archduke Franz Ferdinand (FF), nephew of Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria embarked on a world tour which brought him to Aden via the Suez Canal and Red Sea. The long sea voyage across the Indian and Pacific Oceans was to have the beneficial effect of curing his incipient TB, which had been a cause for concern.*

*Deaths in the Austrian Imperial family were to bring FF close to the Austro-Hungarian throne. The execution of the Emperor's brother, Maximilian, in Mexico, and the suicide of the Emperor's only son, Crown-Prince Rudolf were followed by the death in 1896 of FF's own father, Karl Ludwig, from typhoid after drinking water from the River Jordan in the Holy Land. The latter's death left FF at the age of thirty-three as the heir presumptive.*

*But in 1892 FF, who then held the rank of Colonel in the Imperial army, was still unburdened by high office with the freedom to pursue his leisure interests, principally hunting and travel. He married his wife, Sophie, in 1900. They were a devoted couple until their marriage was shattered by an assassin's bullet in Sarajevo in 1914, thus triggering the First World War.*

*FF's impressions of life and landscape at the southern end of the Red Sea are vivid and compelling. They reflect his intense intellectual curiosity, his appetite for factual information and his self-discipline in recording everything that caught his attention during his brief visit to Aden on 27 December 1892. FF's notes and observations on his world tour were published in their original German in 1896. Conscious of demonstrating his ability to rule, FF put on display the artefacts he collected during his tour, 10,000 of which are today housed at the Weltmuseum in Vienna. A recent English translation has now come to light on the internet ([www.franzferdinandsworld.com](http://www.franzferdinandsworld.com)). We are indebted to Thanos Petouris for this discovery and for his help in checking the translation of FF's impressions of Aden. An edited and slightly abridged version of these follow.*

*It is noteworthy that in the period 1897–1900 the Austrian Imperial Academy was to sponsor seven separate expeditions to South Arabia, including two to Soqatra. These were in search of pre-Islamic inscriptions and to study the unwritten languages of the region.*

## 25 December

In the afternoon the islands of Jebel Teir and Zebayir came into view, bare empty islands without any vegetation. Again some flying fishes crossed our path like silver stars. Of birds, I observed multiple flocks of swifts besides the common seagulls. The sea grew more and more violent; wave upon wave crashed onto the bridge, on which we, completely drenched, stayed during nearly the whole evening and admired the impressive play of waves.

## 26 December

During the night we passed the reefs of the dangerous narrows between the islands of Jebel Zuqar and Hanish. Our Arabian pilot demonstrated cat-like eyesight as he could locate even the most distant reef on this dark, moonless night. In the morning, the sea is quieter. On the right is the African mainland, on the left the Arabian coastline on which appear the high jagged mountains of Yemen whose steep cliffs reveal a different type of landscape from the granite mountains on the northern coast of the Red Sea. A view through the telescope also shows some sparse vegetation on the surface of Yemen's mountains. On the shore glimmer huts and tents, probably occupied by Arab nomads. After the church service we pass through the straits of Bab el-Mandeb, 'the gate of grief', a name verified by the silent witnesses of so many wrecks.

The practical English occupied this important location on the way to India in 1857 that is, even before the Suez Canal was opened. A seemingly strong fort on the rocky island of Perim guards and blocks the passage of the narrowest point of the Red Sea. Both coasts are within cannon range of a passing ship. When we signalled to Perim's lighthouse the name of our ship, we received the common answer at the end of the year: "The compliments of the season."

A giant turtle nearly 2 metres in length surfaced a few paces ahead, observed us with its large yellow head for a few seconds and vanished again in the sea. Now the African coast disappears more and more while Arabia's 844 m high rocky Jebel Kharas comes into view. A large mass of jellyfish is approaching. They glitter and glow in the most beautiful rose red and dark violet colours, which make us stop the engines in order to pick up some of these sea flowers.

At 8 o'clock in the evening the lighthouse of Steamer Point was blinking and soon we were anchoring in the outer harbour of Aden. A small English patrol boat (the cannon boat "Redbreast") and three large steamships were



Franz Ferdinand (third from left) and his entourage on board the *Kaiserin Elisabeth*, Christmas Eve 1892 © Weltmuseum Vienna

moored in the harbour, where a powerful English transport was hoisting its anchor. This colossus blew its steam whistle and moved quickly towards the East, probably in the direction of India. Just after we had dropped anchor, the consular representative<sup>1</sup> came on board, followed by a couple of merchants who eagerly offered their services in numerous languages.

### 27 December

When I woke up early in the morning, much activity around SMS Elisabeth was already going on. With infernal yelling customary to the place, coal was being loaded onto the ship. Out of countless dinghies and dugouts circling round our ship, with naked brown or black boys on board, came howling cries for baksheesh. The small Arabs and Somalis, splendid fellows, were diving for the coins, which we threw as prizes into the sea. The dexterity and stamina of these boys, many of whom were not yet six years of age, astonished us. How they moved under water only to finally re-emerge with their mouths full of copper coins. Anna upon anna, a small East-Indian coin worth about 5 kreutzer, flew from the deck into the sea and we enjoyed watching the scene for a long time. In the meantime, Jewish merchants and Parsee peddlers had climbed on board and offered ostrich feathers, antelope horns, conches, local weavings and many other products so that a brisk trade was established at the gangway.

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<sup>1</sup> Austria had posted a consular agent to Aden when the Suez Canal opened in 1869.

Aden with Perim, Little Aden and the newly acquired territories are part of the Bombay Residency and are governed by a political resident. Aden has been an English possession since 1839. The south oriented peninsula jutting out into the sea carries on its east coast the fortress city of Aden, on the west coast 8 km distant the small harbour township of Steamer Point. As the harbour of the actual city, East Bay, only offers shelter to ships during the summer months, all trade has shifted to West Bay, a good roadstead.

Aden's population, including that of Perim but excluding the garrison, numbers 35,932 souls and consists mainly of Arabs and Somalis. The peculiarity of this bustling place is that it brings together members of different nations to make a colourful mix of people. What Aden is, has been entirely created by trade. In 1892 Aden's exports had a value of 26,067 fl. in Austrian currency and imports a value of 30,788.033 fl. In the same year, 1572 ships with 2,582.221 tons entered port and 1573 ships with 2,585.808 tons departed port.

The territory of Aden yields only very meagre produce due to the tiny amount of rain and the rocky soil, which is only partially cultivable. Thus food has to be imported from more favoured regions and the Somali coast. Steamer Point harbour is picturesquely framed: in the east by the mighty steeply jagged crater of Jebel Shamsan, to the north by the high mountains of the Arabian coast whose terraces plunge to the shore. Especially at sunset, when the horizon is glowing red and green, such a powerful image is created that a visitor might imagine that he is looking at a vividly painted stage decoration.

At 8 o'clock the territorial salute of 21 rounds was fired which was answered by the land battery. Then the Resident, J. Jopp, in the scarlet uniform of a brigadier general, came on board and invited me to a luncheon, a dinner and a lion hunt. In consideration of the very limited time allocated to my stay, I had to decline all these offers with thanks.<sup>2</sup> Because General Jopp only speaks English, I had to call the captain for assistance as an interpreter. The Resident had spent 36 years in India before he was given the post in Aden and is said to be a great tiger hunter and has personally killed more than 70 tigers, certainly a colossal result as these animals in all probability aren't as common as hares in a field. After the visitor had bid farewell, I changed out of the uniform adapted for tropical

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2 Jopp was not always so obliging. A year later he embittered Theodore and Mabel Bent by refusing their expedition the support promised earlier by his deputy. Jopp served as Resident in Aden 1890-95. His previous post had been that of deputy Adjutant-General of the Bombay army.



use that I had put on to honour him and went on shore to visit Steamer Point and Aden to make some purchases.

In the black carriage of the consular agent, driven by a black Somali, we drove first to the military part of Steamer Point where barracks and officer quarters stand row upon row, mostly airy one storey buildings with verandas and flat roofs in red and white, standing on yellow sand or bare volcanic stone without any decorative vegetation. Numerous tennis courts as well as cricket and football grounds are tribute to the fact that Englishmen are housed here. The garrison consists of around 2500 men, the artillery is one company strong, the cavalry one squadron; the rest of the troops are infantry – bronze coloured Indians, tall as trees in their practical and really becoming uniforms.

The non-military part of Steamer Point is situated on a semi-circular quay and contains mostly big stores as well as the consulates and two hotels; large coal depots, storage areas and wharfs are situated next to the quay and continue alongside the road to Aden. The Jewish community is strongly represented in Steamer Point; as soon as a visitor sets foot on land he is surrounded by money changers in original costumes with long side-locks.

My first visit was to the Resident, who, together with his very charming wife, occupied a very pleasant ground-level house in the middle of the military quarters, equipped with all comforts and with a beautiful view of the sea. Inside the house it was refreshingly cool. One could almost forget the tropical heat that ruled outside.

In a small horse-drawn carriage with a hood we drove quickly along the first rate roads to Aden where a very colourful view presented itself: long caravans moving at a slow pace, heavily burdened camels, silent Arabs, clad in long burnous, or yelling half-naked Somalis riding on dromedaries or on small donkeys. One conveyance after another passed by. One, occupied by a Parsee identifiable by his distinctive headdress; another with a full harem of veiled women. Somalis, men and women, all to the last person beautiful like statues cut from ore, the head most often closely cropped or with a short bit of curly hair, walked with uncovered heads in the heat of the sun and the dust of the road. Bleating, blocking herds of fat-tailed sheep moved along the road creating whirls of dust. To the right and left sat or circled in the air countless vultures and kites.

Through a small narrow gate cut into the stone one enters into the fortress zone of Aden which continues in an ingenious way the peaks and ridges of the mountains and secures the whole city against the threat of

Arab attack. After a few more skilfully built passes and two more tunnels we are in Aden, a city laid out as a square grid. Situated in the middle of a crater it offers a desolate view. Hot, clear and bare – that is the signature of the city and its enclosure. The sharply dropping rock walls, that are criss-crossed by caves, surround the city and are devoid of any vegetation. They serve as roosts and nesting places for all sorts of birds of prey.

Every stranger first visits the famous ancient cisterns. Large tanks, some cut into the stone, some cemented, hold about 1.5 million hectolitres that collect the water for the city during the heavy rains: a potent and imposing work that featured the only bushes and trees. Two handsome bulbuls were hopping about them. During my visit nearly all the cisterns were empty. Only from a cavern deeper down did some Arabs draw water which, however, tasted foul.

The city itself impresses only by the monotone look of its houses, which are all low and stark white, and look like one another. To compensate for this, there is a large variety of colourful people in the streets from different countries. Somali boys with happy and beautiful faces, pitch black eyes and snow-white teeth were circling around us like a swarm of bees. Eager for baksheesh, they cried and sang, demonstrated their prowess in wrestling and performed their national dances, clapping their hands.

On the way back we passed the “Towers of Silence”. These burial places of the Parsees are square small buildings on which they place their dead which are then eaten by vultures. This abhorrent practice offers the benefit of a quick disposal, because in no time there is nothing left of the body but a few bony remains. A hundred replete vultures were sunning themselves at the foot of the towers. Through another gate we left the fortress and returned to Steamer Point. Here we spent some hours, negotiating and bargaining, in the different shops, before returning on board, taking four Somali boys with us to have their photographs taken.

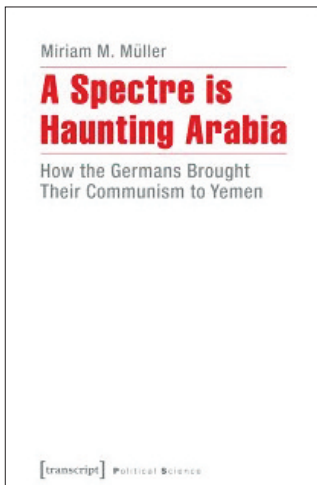
After Ramberg<sup>3</sup> had completed the photography of this black quartet, the youngest among them, a barely six year old boy, astonished us by jumping head first from the height of the bridge into the sea, in return for a small consideration. Many an adult would have considered a jump from such a height too dangerous. Lavishly compensated, smoking cigarettes, these engaging youngsters returned to land in a small dugout.

The remainder of the day was given over to postal matters, as we were due to depart the next morning.

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3 August von Ramberg (1866–1947) Austrian Naval Officer and Painter.

## BOOK REVIEWS



**A Spectre is Haunting Arabia: How the Germans brought their Communism to Yemen**, by Miriam M Müller, Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2015, 440pp ISBN 978-3-8376-3225-5, €39.99, e-book ISBN 978-3-8394-3225-9 €39.99

**South Yemen under Leftist Rule: A personal testimony**, (Arabic) by Fawwaz Traboulsi, Riad Rayyes Books, Beirut 2015, pp 255, ISBN 978-9953-21624-9, Pb. US\$12

Dr Müller in this translation of her PhD thesis examines the impact on the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) of the German Democratic Republic (the GDR – East Germany) and its ruling communist party. She asserts the GDR aimed “to reproduce its very own state – and national building process.” It pursued this policy until 1990 when the PDRY united with the north to become the Republic of Yemen, and the GDR joined the Federal Republic of Germany. Her book draws extensively on the East German archives, including those of the Stasi, to add to our knowledge of the PDRY-GDR relationship.

East German advisers helped draft the PDRY's first constitution. Berlin trained NLF party cadres and gave substantial technical and economic aid – at one stage there were over 2,000 East German experts in the country. Special priority was given to developing the PDRY's State Security Service which resembled a mini-Stasi. This all took place when the Soviet Union was playing a larger strategic role in reorganising and equipping the PDRY's armed forces, bringing the country into the Soviet Bloc's political and economic orbit and helping transform a revolutionary movement – the NLF – into the Yemeni Socialist Party in 1978, modelled on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Other Soviet allies were in support, notably Cuba.

Moscow and Berlin expected the PDRY to contribute to their strategic aims in the Cold War. The Soviet Union never established a base in Aden but valued the potential offered by the PDRY's airfields, Aden port and anchorages off Socotra. South Yemen's strategic importance to Moscow was enhanced in the 1970s after Egypt switched sides in the Cold War and

the PDRY supported Russia's allies in the Horn of Africa, sending, for example, troops to Ethiopia in 1977–78 to help repel Somali forces. A GDR listening post was located in Aden as part of a worldwide system to monitor Western communications.

Dr Müller divides the relationship into four phases following Fred Halliday's analysis of the Soviet Union's involvement (Fred Halliday: *Revolution and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge, 1990). In the first phase, up to 1970, Moscow and Berlin tried to work out how seriously committed the PDRY leaders were to the cause of socialism. This was followed by the rapid expansion of support in the early and mid-1970s until the relationship was consolidated in a third phase after the YSP was formed in 1978 following Abd al-Fattah Ismail's elevation to the presidency. The high point was the signing of Treaties of Friendship between the PDRY and its Russian and German allies. In the early 1980s under Ali Nasser Muhammad it seemed that South Yemen was moving steadily on the path to becoming a communist state. However, the Soviet and the East Germans failed to assess that the rivalries within the YSP, especially between Ali Nasser Muhammad and Abd al-Fattah Ismail, would lead to the disastrous quasi civil war of 1986 which marked the start of the fourth phase. Dr Müller describes this final period of neglect as Russian and East Germany leaders, disillusioned by the fratricide of the YSP leaders, were increasingly affected by the events that led to the breakup of the Soviet Union and demise of the GDR in 1990. They also began to question the value of their relationship with the PDRY. Moscow could never quite exert the influence it expected from its investment. The East Germans were disappointed that their substantial aid to the security services failed to yield much valuable intelligence. These services did not meet GDR standards of efficiency and, no doubt, gave greater priority to the regime's internal enemies than to working against those of Moscow and Berlin.

One of the interesting aspects of both the Soviet Union's and the GDR's relations with South Yemen was the strength of the personal bonds between their respective leaders. Brezhnev and his successors including Gorbachev – and Erich Honecker, the GDR head of state from 1976 – devoted an unusual amount of time to engaging with PDRY leaders. They were especially close to Abd al-Fattah Ismail, who understood Marxism better than his colleagues, and Ali Nasser Muhammad, who was admired for his administrative skills. They were disappointed that the PDRY ultimately failed to create a proper socialist state, concluding that the country

was not stable enough and society was still too tribal. Nonetheless even today, former Soviet and GDR officials speak with some nostalgia of their involvement in the “socialist experiment” that was the PDRY.

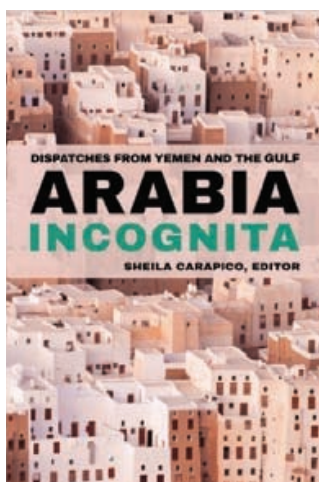
There is much to admire in this book but it reads too much like a PhD thesis and is in sore need of editing to make it something that readers of the journal might want to buy. There are probably three books inside it struggling to get out. A section is taken by detailed analysis of the GDR’s foreign policy and another by an unoriginal account of how the PDRY functioned. Many nuggets of new information are in the book but they have to be dug out of the narrative. What it does show is that the East German archives are a rich source of material and insight on the history of the PDRY and its relationship with the GDR and the Soviet Union.

Fawwaz Traboulsi’s book – for those who read Arabic – could not be more different. He was a leading figure in the Lebanese left who got to know many of the PDRY leaders when they were students at the American University of Beirut in the 1960s and was a frequent visitor to Aden throughout the life of the PDRY. His writings show how much importance was given to the PDRY by the Arab left of that period, particularly the founders of the Movement of Arab Nationalists and the communist parties.

He gives a vivid but sympathetic description of the key personalities: Salim Ruba‘i Ali, the peasant revolutionary; Abd al-Fattah Ismail, the ideologue and poet and Ali Nasser Muhammad, the man of government. Personality and policy differences between these men and others shaped the evolution of the PDRY and eventually led to the 1986 disaster. The most interesting part concerns the PDRY in the 1970s and 1980s (a period also covered in his book *Promises of Eden: Yemeni Travels*, Riad El-Rayyes Books 2000) when he personally advised the PDRY leaders on policy and sometimes acted as a mediator in their disputes. He reflects on what led to unity in 1990 and to the civil war of 1994. The northern elite saw unity as the return of the south to its natural place in Yemen whilst the southerners saw it as a union of two states and two systems in which power would be shared. Throughout the life of the PDRY the ruling Yemeni Socialist Party reacted against those leaders that sought personal power. Yet Ali Salim al-Beedh in 1990 negotiated the unity deal directly with Ali Abdullah Saleh without any advisers being present and then virtually imposed it on his colleagues and oversaw the merger of two such very different regimes without adequate preparation.

The book is full of personal anecdotes and a great read. It is indispensable for anyone interested in the inner life of an Arab regime and for those with nostalgia for the heyday of the Arab left.

NOEL BREHONY



**Arabia Incognita, Dispatches from Yemen and the Gulf**, Sheila Carapico editor, Just World Books, Charlottesville, 2016, pp 304, ISBN 978-1-68257-003-6, Pb. US\$24.99

This collection of 57 articles from the Middle East Research and Information Project's various print and on-line publications covers the period from 1980 to 2015. Over forty of these concern the situation in Yemen throughout the period and, between them, provide a range of views on some of the major political events which have affected the country mainly since its unification in 1990.

The book is organised in 9 chapters, the first setting out the overall situation in the peninsula in the 1980s by Fred Halliday and Joe Stork. The second deals with both parts of Yemen prior to unification in 1990, focusing on the 1986 crisis in the PDRY and socio-economic conditions in the YAR. Chapter 3 on the early years of unification reminds readers of the optimistic atmosphere which then prevailed, though one of the two pieces on the 1993 elections does hint at coming problems, while the other, on the 1994 civil war, reveals the fundamental faultlines in the unity agreement. The next two chapters, first on *jihadism* and then on water and oil are distinctly more eclectic, and include sections on other peninsula states. Overall they lack cohesion, leaving the reader to wonder why these particular pieces have been selected. Did MERIP not publish more relevant ones giving a better overall picture of the problems addressed?

The second half of the book focuses on the last five years, ie the period since the 2011 popular uprisings first addressing the roots of the uprisings and their course, and then focusing on the collapse of the transition and the first months of the full-scale war. The timing and selection of items here does give an overall flavour of the situation and also permits readers to benefit from a range of views and interpretations.

Given the nature of the publication, articles reflect the particular

concerns of authors, with two results: many important issues are not addressed, while those given attention are primarily the political ones which attract broad public interest, namely jihadism and political conflicts. More positively, the range of authors means that very different, and sometimes conflicting interpretations of events are presented, reminding readers that the same event is open to multiple interpretations, for example Philbrick Yadav sees the 2011 uprisings as run by the Joint Meeting Parties and not particularly popular [p 175], whereas Carapico [p 184] emphasises the spontaneity and popularity of the movement.

While the pieces on Yemen altogether build a fairly comprehensive picture of the transformations which the country has undergone, those on other peninsula states are almost exclusively concerned with criticism of US foreign policy, rather than informing readers of details on broader aspects of politics in these countries. For the period since 2011, the focus on the role of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi-US alliance, gives the impression that they are the only relevant external players in the current crisis, thus ignoring the important and interesting role of the UAE and others. Although partners, for example, Saudi Arabia and the UAE differ profoundly on the role of 'Muslim Brother type' Islamists, and probably also on the future of Yemen.

Given its reasonable price and broad coverage, as well as the scarcity of new publications focusing on Yemen since 2011, this book will be of interest and use to those wanting to better understand the country, until such time as a book fully devoted to Yemen's current situation provides a more comprehensive and complete vision of the situation there. As for other peninsula states, or indeed even US policy in the region, readers are advised to complement their understanding elsewhere.

THE EDITOR

**Rebuilding Yemen: Political, Economic and Social Challenges**, edited by Noel Brehony and Saud Al-Sarhan, Berlin, Gerlach Press, 2015, pp. 181, 3 Maps, Chronology, Abbr. ISBN 978-3-940924-68-1, Hb, £ 60.00.

This collective volume is the product of an academic panel on Yemen organised by the editors as part of the 2014 Gulf Research Meeting at the University of Cambridge. Dr Noel Brehony, a former chairman of this Society, has a number of significant publications on Yemeni topics under his belt; Dr Saud al-Sarhan, Research Director at the King Faisal Centre for



Research & Islamic Studies in Riyadh, is a regular commentator on Yemeni affairs in the Arab press. Conceived before the catastrophic war that is still devastating Yemen, the title of the book reflects the sense of optimism that followed the conclusion of the National Dialogue Conference and the unraveling political transition process.

The introduction to the volume, written by the editors in collaboration with Helen Lackner, offers a concise, sober, and the most up-to-date account of political developments in Yemen. It is particularly useful to anyone seeking to understand what

happened since the 2011 youth uprising, and the challenges which any future government will face. In this sense, it remains highly relevant in spite of the continuation of hostilities since the publication of the book. The seven chapters that follow deal with a number of different topics, including among others the history of federalism in Yemen, the role of corruption, economic development, agricultural and water policies.

Iain Walker's contribution stands out as one of the first attempts to map the trajectory of the Hadhrami community in Saudi Arabia. Proximity to the homeland, but also political developments there, have affected the ways in which Hadhramis negotiate their liminal identities and the degrees to which they have been assimilated in their adopted country. Joana Cook's chapter argues that encouraging the police and security sectors to recruit more women will not only improve security, but will also benefit the social position of women in Yemen, and their political engagement. The author paints an interesting picture of women's political participation, showing that as many Yemeni women turn out to vote as men, but are marginally represented within political parties and institutions for a variety of reasons, mostly relating to social conservatism.

The question of water cannot be excluded from any discussion on Yemen's present and future. In this vein, James Firebrace explores the experiences of water scarcity in the city of Ta'izz, "the most water challenged city in the world". His study demonstrates how desalinated water from the Red Sea remains the only affordable solution to the problem, and the significant potential a reliable source of water presents for the economic and social stability of the city. Martha Mundy and Frédéric Pelat analyse in their chapter the agricultural policies of a succession of Yemeni states

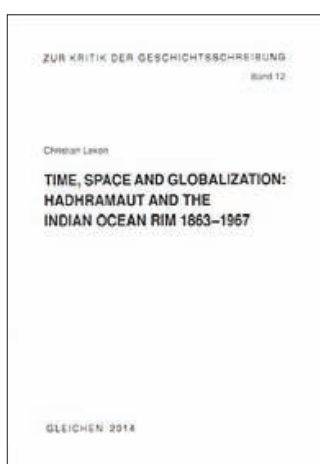


(YAR, PDRY, RoY), and deplore the absence of a meaningful body of institutional knowledge in relation to both policies and foreign developmental interventions.

Peter Salisbury grapples with the chronic ‘illness’ of Yemeni society, that of corruption, and shows that the instability of the political transition period reinforced the tendency of political élites to resort to trusted networks of patronage. Stephen W. Day’s chapter attempts to contextualise the failed plan to divide the country into six federal regions by looking into previous similar ventures. He reiterates the argument of his earlier monograph that Zaydi highland tribes tend to impose authoritarian control over the resource-rich lowlands and dominate the rest of the country. Lastly, Charles Schmitz explores the multiplicity of Yemen’s economic crises and concludes that they are “politically constructed” reiterating the argument that runs along all chapters of this volume that a stable, representative government can provide long-term solutions to the festering problems of the country.

One regrettable oversight in the production of this book, also given its price, is the lack of a comprehensive index of terms and names. Whilst the partitioning of the volume into eight distinct, self-contained chapters can partly mitigate this, an index would in any case have offered researchers a better way of navigating the contents. Nonetheless, *Rebuilding Yemen* makes an important contribution to the understanding of post-2011 Yemen and the challenges ahead. It should remain, therefore, a useful reference for anyone looking for a comprehensive review of Yemen’s multitude of troubles.

THANOS PETOURIS



**Hadhramaut and the Indian Ocean Rim (1863–1967): Time, Space and Globalization** by Christian Lekon, Muster-Schmidt Verlag, Gleichen, Zurich, 2014, pp. 340, glossary, abbreviations, bibliog. ISBN 978-3-7881-2033-7 pb £20.

Between the unprepossessing covers of this paperback lies a richly detailed account of the political, social and economic history of Hadhramaut and its diaspora from the late 19th century until independence in 1967. It is well-written, balanced and

meticulously researched. The book has grown out of the author's thesis entitled *The British and Hadhramaut* which he completed in 2001. Since then his thesis has been drawn upon by area specialists, just as Lekon has drawn on works preceding publication of his own in 2014. He has also added 'nutshell' histories of the territories where the largest number of Hadhrami migrants settled over the centuries: Hyderabad, the Dutch East Indies and Singapore, Zanzibar (East Africa) and Hijaz (Red Sea). Following the Second World War, the demise of colonial authority and the rise of the nation state with its bureaucratic controls shifted the focus of Hadhrami migration from Asia and East Africa to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

Lekon's book is the most up-to-date account of the subject available. In reviewing the literature on Hadhramaut and the historiography of the homeland and its diaspora, Lekon is generous in his acknowledgement of the contributions of other scholars. He considers the Report on Hadhramaut by Harold Ingrams in 1936 as still unsurpassed in its scope. He applauds Linda Boxberger (2002) for her insights into all aspects of Hadhrami history between the 1880s and 1930s, and describes Ulrike Freitag's monumental work (2003), covering the period from the late 18th century to independence in 1967, as the most comprehensive history of Hadhramaut. Lekon has had the advantage of being able to draw on all of them.

Probably reminding the reader that this book started life as a thesis is the space devoted to the theories of the celebrated sociologist, Anthony Giddens. Lekon seeks to conceptualise the flow of history using Giddens' typologies as a testing ground. He uses terminology and categories of analysis such as 'authoritative resources' (power to enforce state authority) and 'allocative resources' (state control of economic or material resources), borrowed mainly from Giddens, to facilitate his understanding of the historical process. Lekon disarmingly dubs social theory 'mumbo-jumbo' and readers who have a limited appetite for it may wish to skip pp 13–38.

In his analysis of Hadhrami society, Lekon distinguishes between the 'Segmentary' (or tribal) inhabitants and the 'Patrimonial' (townspeople) in what was a pre-industrial age. They are separate but interact at certain levels. He presents a lucid picture of the country's unique social stratification which, despite two decades of Marxism, has shown remarkable resilience. He stresses the point that Hadhrami society was not based on class but status.

Lekon charts the process whereby the Kathiri and Qu'ayti dynasties,

established with wealth made as mercenaries in Hyderabad, consolidated their position and extended their authority under British tutelage. What had been a mosaic of largely autonomous entities gradually took shape as two functioning states, albeit ill-matched in territory and resources. The Kathiri sultanate was confined to parts of Wadi Hadhramaut and overshadowed by the much larger Qu‘ayti sultanate stretching from the coast to the interior and exerting a virtual stranglehold over its Kathiri neighbour. Lekon gives a detailed picture of the development of their respective administrations and local government. Symptomatic of their unequal status was that the Kathiri state had no *wazir* (minister) like the Qu‘ayti state, (although Lekon suggests it did) but only a ‘State Secretary’ who was described as such in Arabic and on paper.

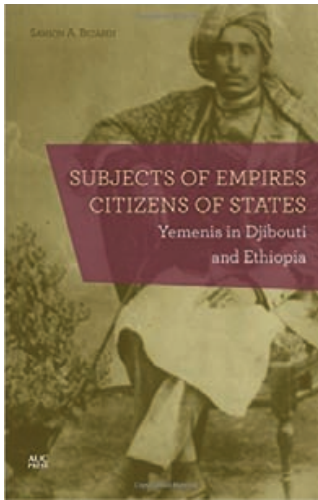
Lekon attributes the first stirrings of nationalism to the influence of the diaspora and outlines the politics which culminated in the National Liberation Front (NLF) taking power. He expresses surprise that the ‘revolution’ was bloodless, but this should not be a matter for surprise. NLF influence was more embedded at all levels of society than the British realised. Before departing, Britain handed the country into the protection and care of the Hadhrami Beduin Legion (HBL); the new HBL Commander was not Faysal al-‘Attas (a school teacher aka al-Nuayri) but a professional soldier and tribesman named Salem Omar al-Johi; his deputy being the dynamic Hussein al Minhali. In the power vacuum created by the absence of the Sultans for talks in Geneva, and with the British packing their bags, they assessed that the future lay with the NLF. Lekon’s contention on p 172 that ‘the revolution was not the result of mobilization from below but, rather, of a self-inflicted collapse from above’ is open to question.

Lekon concludes with some reflections on globalisation as seen largely through the lens of Giddens. It is tempting to view Arabs of Hadhrami descent, especially those settled in Southeast Asia (previously a major destination for migrants) with their linkages and entrepreneurial skills stretching across the Indian Ocean, as pioneers in the field of globalisation long before the expression was invented.

It is regrettable that this impressive work lacks maps and, crucially, an index, but I imagine they would have added considerably to the costs of publication. Lekon’s chapters of factual history deserve translation into Arabic so that this valuable record is fully accessible to Hadhrami and Arab researchers.

JOHN SHIPMAN

## NOTES ON OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED



**Subjects of Empires / Citizens of States**, by Samson A. Bezabeh, American University of Cairo Press, 2016, pp 252, maps, index, ISBN 976-977-416-729-4 Hb US\$49.50 £55

This book reached the Journal too late to organise the review it deserves. An important contribution to knowledge of the Yemeni diaspora, by contrast with so many others, it focuses on the place of Yemenis in the overall political contexts of Ethiopia and Djibouti at the different moments of the past century and a half. Contrary to frequent assumptions that Yemenis had a privileged position in the many societies where they moved, this book demonstrates to what extent they were systematically marginalised. The community suffered discrimination despite the prominent positions of a few of its leading members who successfully compromised with the ruling groups. Within the overall framework of Indian Ocean studies, the book does compare the situation of Yemenis in these countries with studies carried out elsewhere in the Indian Ocean. Its main weakness is the limited extent to which it addresses the relationship of the Yemeni diaspora in Ethiopia and Djibouti in relation to the political changes within Yemen itself.

**A Year in Yemen**, by Nathan Tamblyn, self-published, 2016, pp 97, photos, ISBN 978-153-3018- 717 pb £4.99

A memoir by a Durham student of Arabic turned instant political officer in Radfan in the 1960s, when the area was the heart of the anti-British military struggle for independence. Short, easy read, but with interesting anecdotes.

**Nightmare in Yemen, a Welsh-Yemeni family's ordeal** by Razaz Mohamed with Neil Sinclair, New Generation Publishing 2014, pp126, ISBN 978-1-910266-83-0 HB £12.99, Pb, £7.99

A detailed account of gutter press harassment of a Welsh-Yemeni family, falsely accusing the father of attempting to sell his daughter. Finally settled

through a libel suit won against the Express. A second strand of the book focuses on corruption in Yemen over attempts by an expatriate Yemeni to invest in his homeland by starting a small export-business. A warning to anyone who might be inclined to trust tabloid journalists.

## OBITUARIES

### DR ABDULKARIM AL-ERYANI

1934-2015



Dr Abdulkarim al-Eryani died of natural causes aged 81 on 8 November 2015. Save for a brief hiatus as adviser to the Kuwait Fund in the late 1970s, he was a major presence and influence in Yemeni government and politics continuously over the past 45 years. Dr Abdulkarim was born in 1934 in the town of Iryan in Ibb Province into a *qadi* family prominent for many generations for its judges, government officials, teachers and scholars. Abandoning late in his youth the traditional training required of a judge, he received a modern secondary education in Aden and Cairo in the 1950s. In 1958, as one of the first four Yemenis to receive a Point Four government scholarship, he began his ten-year educational odyssey in the US, one that took him to universities in Texas, Oklahoma, Georgia and Connecticut, culminating in a PhD in biochemical genetics from Yale University in 1968. He returned to Yemen that same year and began his long career in public service, first as an informal adviser to his uncle, Qadi Abdul Rahman al-Iryani, who had just been elected as the YAR's first and only civilian president.

Dr Abdulkarim al-Eryani occupied many of the most important governmental offices in the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and then in the unified Republic of Yemen (ROY). In the YAR, he was head of the Wadi Zabid Agricultural Project 1968-1972; chairman of the YAR's Central Planning Organisation (CPO) from 1973-1976; Minister of Development 1974-1976; Minister of Education and president of Sana'a university 1976-1978. In the YAR and then in the ROY, he was secretary-general of the General People's Congress (GPC) from the early 1980s to 2005, prime minister twice (of the

YAR 1980-83 and of the ROY 1998-2001), Foreign Minister almost continuously from the mid-1980s through the 1990s and, finally, over much of this period, official or unofficial adviser to President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

More important than the offices held by Dr Abdulkarim were the accomplishments during his tenure in those offices. As founding head of the CPO, he fashioned it into the primary link between the world of international development aid and a Yemen desperately in need of that aid; during his short tenure — but, alas, only during his tenure — the CPO became the model modern government agency for a country in desperate need of such agencies.

It was Dr Abdulkarim who largely devised and orchestrated the lengthy, multi-staged process that led to the creation of the GPC and brought much-needed political stability to Yemen and consolidated the Ali Abdullah Saleh regime in the early 1980s. (Between 1974 and 1978, the YAR had lost one president by coup and two by assassination). This complex, protracted process involved the framing of the National Pact in 1980, the National Dialogue on that pact, the adoption of the pact by a general people's congress and, finally in 1982, the transformation of that congress into the de facto ruling party of the Saleh regime, the GPC. Dr Abdulkarim served as secretary-general of this party for nearly twenty-five years.

As foreign minister, Dr Abdulkarim al-Eryani was an architect of the YAR's very hard line and then much improved relations with South Yemen (the PDRY) in the 1980s. Indeed, he was at the centre of the intense unification process that began in 1988 and resulted in 1990 in the creation of the ROY with Ali Abdullah Saleh as president. Four years later, although no longer foreign minister, he shuttled between the UN in New York and Washington DC, to play a leading role in preventing the kind of truce in 1994's War of Secession that could easily have resulted in the de facto restoration of two Yemeni states.

A major component in the often-strained relations between ever-intrusive Saudi Arabia and the ROY (and previously the YAR and PDRY) was their very lengthy un-demarcated border. The subject of off-and-on talks and partial settlements over several decades, a "final and permanent" border agreement—the Jeddah Agreement—was finally reached in 2000. Occurring during his second term as prime minister, Dr Abdulkarim was at the centre of these difficult negotiations.

Finally, having helped create and manage the political party that helped make possible President Saleh's 32-year tenure, Dr Abdulkarim also played

a role in the president's peaceful exodus from office in 2011. He helped design and orchestrate Saleh's resignation in exchange for immunity from prosecution and the right to remain in Yemen.

Dr Abdulkarim was, above all else, a Yemeni nationalist and committed to advancing the interests of Yemen and the Yemeni people. As such, he was a public servant, deeply committed to serving the Yemeni state and the Yemeni people. Although dressed in western suit and tie, Dr Abdulkarim, deep down, may well have been a traditional *qadi* in the service of Yemen. He was a modernist and technocrat committed to state building and economic and social development. He was also a democrat, but he put state building and development before further democratisation; indeed, he regarded a stronger, higher-capacity Yemeni state as a prerequisite for a more democratic Yemen.

When it came to change, he was a moderate—a reformer, not a revolutionary; he was an incrementalist who believed that lasting change was best and most likely achieved gradually, step-by-step. As such, he was prepared to compromise, to settle for what was possible rather than hold out for what was perfect. He was a pragmatist, and this helped make him a successful negotiator. Given these traits, he had his critics, both those who thought he should have held out for more and others who opposed even modest steps in a particular direction. Yemeni unification in 1990, the ending of the War of Secession that saved the ROY in 1994, and the Jeddah Agreement on the full border between the ROY and Saudi Arabia in 2000 all involved positive trade-offs in which Dr Abdulkarim played big parts. Ironically, however, the last deal in which he played a part, the one that exchanged the peaceful departure of President Saleh from office for his right to remain in Yemen with immunity from prosecution with his family and colleagues, set the stage for the struggle that led to civil war and possible breakup of the ROY by 2016.

The more than 30-year relationship between Dr Abdulkarim and President Saleh was symbiotic and usually strained, sometimes extremely so. Saleh who disliked, often suspected, and at times feared, Dr Abdulkarim, needed him. For his part, Dr Abdulkarim needed the president. Although he often disagreed with Saleh, and was often abused and treated disrespectfully by the president, he resisted calls from other modernists and reformers to break with the Saleh regime and join a growing opposition. He remained convinced that to do so would only render him powerless and unable to achieve any of the goals he sought for

Yemen and his fellow Yemenis. In short, he thought he could achieve important goals only by working from within the system. Finally, as the head of a very prominent family, he may have felt that an open, final break with President Saleh would put many members of his family in danger.

ROBERT BURROWES<sup>1</sup>

### **A personal recollection**

Some say that Abdulkarim al-Eryani's untimely death in Frankfurt in November 2015 was the result of a broken heart, caused by despair at the accumulating collapse of governance in Yemen following the end of the National Dialogue Conference in early 2014. I can believe it.

The last time I had a conversation with him was in early 2014. A prominent personality and former minister had invited a number of GPC figures and diplomats to lunch. The various conversations that were taking place were not particularly political, though the diplomats were keen to sound out the Yemeni host and guests about the likely turn of events after the end of the NDC. I found myself sitting next to Dr Abdulkarim at one stage, and somehow or another we spent most of ten minutes or so, until we were summoned to the lunch table, talking about the relative merits of books on tribal lineages and geographical compendia written perhaps half a century previously.

But that was Abdulkarim. You could call on him at his home in Sana'a to sound him out on the latest political developments and sit with him in his comfortable and extensive basement library. He was always friendly and welcoming, and (like most other Yemenis I have known) not at all status conscious. He might offer a prediction about how events were shaping up as the NDC progressed through 2012 and 2013, but he might suddenly have to take a call from an international statesman (he was an active associate of the Carter Foundation and of the Global Leadership Foundation). Or, if he thought you might be interested, he might turn to some curiosity he had recently added to his library and tell you of its provenance and significance. In my view he was no more a politician than the GPC – Ali Abdullah Saleh's ruling party in which al-Eryani played a number of key roles – is a political party. He has been described as an Arab Nationalist, but he was above all a mediator, negotiator and a bridge-builder who believed that

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<sup>1</sup> Recently retired, Professor Robert Burrowes has worked in and on Yemen since the 1960s and cooperated with Dr Abdulkarim on a number of occasions.



logic and dialogue could point the way to the most satisfactory solution to any problem, rather than a peddler of ideologies.

His first senior posts during the 1970s in what was then the Yemen Arab Republic were technical or academic rather than political. Former British diplomat Ivor Lucas recalls him at that time as the most outstanding of President al-Hamdi's lieutenants, a man of "diminutive stature but capacious intellect" combining, at the time he met him, the roles of Governor of the Central Bank, Head of the Central Planning Organisation, and Minister of Education. In October 1980, under President Saleh, he was appointed Prime Minister, a post that he held for three years. In Yemen's developing statehood this was not necessarily a particularly influential post. It was more about making sure that the civil machinery of state worked, and for such a task he was well qualified.

After a spell as head of the Supreme Council for the Reconstruction of Earthquake-affected Areas in the Central Highlands in Yemen he was appointed Deputy PM and Foreign Minister in 1984 under PM Abdul Aziz Abd al-Ghani (whom he had succeeded as PM in 1980). He retained the Foreign Minister portfolio until 2001 and it was in the course of a visit to the UK in 1992 that he proposed the establishment of a British-Yemeni Society.

In early 2012 he was honoured at a symposium held in Sana'a on the role of Civil Society in Political and Democratic Development. In his address to the conference he reflected on the highlights of his life and his many-faceted career. He noted the excitement of going, as a student, to Cairo in 1953, and on to the US to start his studies there in 1958. He highlighted his first role on returning to Yemen ten years later, as head of the Wadi Zabid Agricultural Project and his appointment, in 1972, as head of the Central Planning Organisation. But he said almost nothing of the period from 1980 onwards, which he said were "years of cares and challenges, and little joy" and the "pains and tragedies of [the war of secession]". While he went on to mention the great event of Yemeni unification in May 1990 after years of hopes repeatedly raised and dashed, he passed over his role, in 1994, as head of the Yemeni delegation at the UN which succeeded in blocking robust condemnation of the war to suppress the Southern separatists, an action resented by some in the south to this day.

Perhaps surprisingly, he did not reflect on his cultural activities and interests. And yet he did much to advance cultural relations with the outside world and to encourage academic contacts. This included supporting

foreign archaeological research, sometimes in the face of strong tribal opposition. He played a part in the establishment of educational and cultural foundations, and was the initiator of Yemen's participation in the construction of Oxford's prestigious Islamic Centre, whose entrance hall now boasts a beautiful Yemeni marble floor ensuring that all Muslim states are represented.

After 2001 he remained involved in government and politics, as adviser to President Ali Abdullah Saleh and, after his fall from power in 2011, to President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi. However, he remained a member of the GPC leadership (and Hadi remained notionally its deputy Secretary General) until both were expelled from the party in late 2014, a move rejected by many of the GPC membership. More importantly in this latter period was the role he played in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) as a member of the NDC Presidency representing the GPC.

It became clear during the closing stages of the NDC that Dr Abdulkarim found himself under increasing stress. As a key member of the NDC presidency he could see what concessions might have to be made by all sides to reach broadly acceptable outcomes. But others (Yemeni and international) did not necessarily support the outcomes that he saw as workable and, in his role as a senior GPC member, he found that he was expected to try to persuade ex-president Saleh what was in Yemen's and his own best interests. But, as he stated in a conversation cited in the *New York Times*, Saleh was angry and bitter, determined to regain his lost power and to wreak revenge on his enemies following the assassination attempt of 2011 and his long and painful rehabilitation. I think that Dr Abdulkarim came to realise that what he had sought throughout his working life was no longer achievable, and that indeed his life might be in danger if he tried to persuade the embittered ex-president to look constructively at the future of his country rather than to seek vengeance.

Disappointment that he, the wisest and perhaps one of the most cultured men in Yemen, could not overcome the obstacles to a democratic and peaceful agreement must surely have contributed to his death. But his was a career of notable achievements, particularly on the international stage and in resolving outstanding issues on the borders with Yemen's neighbours. He helped give Yemen a diplomatic and cultural stature that it might never otherwise have achieved, and did much to bridge social and cultural divides within. He is a great loss to this unfortunate country.

ROBERT WILSON

## DR HASSAN MOHAMMED MAKKI

1933–2016



Dr Hasan Makki who died in Cairo on 9 June at the age of 83 was a former Prime Minister of the Yemen Arab Republic, and held positions in government both before and after the inception of the (then) Yemen Arab Republic in 1962.

Makki was born in Hodeidah in 1933 into a family that had moved there from Hajjah governorate further north. After graduating from Cairo University he was one of a group of forty young students sent abroad in the time of Imam Ahmad to pursue a higher degree in Italy, and he returned from Bologna to serve in the Imam's "Ministry of the Economy". They became known as the 'famous forty'.

After the revolution that created the Yemen Arab Republic he served as Foreign Minister under the first President, al-Sallal, later becoming deputy Prime Minister from 1972 to 1974, and President Iryani's last Prime Minister in 1974 until Ibrahim al-Hamdi seized power in 1974. Historians see his short tenure as Prime Minister – approximately six months – as significant for his attempt to initiate a programme of modern development for his country. Although he was never restored to the premiership, elements of the plans he had laid down continued to shape the country's development for some time to come.

He continued to hold government, diplomatic or academic positions for several decades thereafter – as deputy Prime Minister (sometimes with responsibility for foreign affairs), president of Sana'a university, or representing his country as Ambassador abroad. Under Saleh, he retained a government role as deputy Prime Minister through unification with the former PDRY (1990) until becoming acting Prime Minister in the months immediately before and after the outbreak of the War of Secession in 1994, when the south sought to break away from its unsatisfactory union with the north. He played a part in the establishment in 1982 of the General People's Congress, the movement that has ruled Yemen under Saleh's Presidency until 2011.

It was at this time that he survived an assassination attempt arranged by prominent Shaykh Naji al-Shayif, and almost certainly with the complicit encouragement of Saleh, in which his driver and two bodyguards were

killed. He had taken a line which some regarded as showing too much readiness to compromise with the southerners calling for the union to be broken. Thereafter he remained an adviser to the Presidency.

Politically he was inclined towards Ba'thism, but, while this form of Arab Nationalism may have shaped his thinking, he is remembered more as a technocrat and a pragmatist.

ROBERT WILSON

### ALI AHMED AL SALLAMI

1934–2016



Ali Ahmed al Sallami who died in March this year was the last living founder of the Yemeni branch of the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN), which he established with Faysal Abdul Latif, Taha Ahmed Muqbil, Seif al Dhali'i, and Sultan Ahmed Omar.

He was born in al Majhafa village in Tuban (Lahej) and completed his education in Aden College, graduating in 1953. He started work as a teacher in government schools but was dismissed for his political views. He moved to the famous Bazara school where he taught Dr Yassin Saeed Noman, co-President of the BYS, who remembers him vividly for the firm nationalism which he imparted to his students, as well as for supporting the school's wall newspaper with the considerable sum of 5 shillings. He later also taught at the Islamic Scientific Institute in Crater, which dismissed him in 1961 for his political activities. He was then employed by Shell for a mere four months, and left due to disagreements with his British boss.

In 1954, he joined the South Arabian League, and in 1956 he was elected secretary general of the teachers' union. As already mentioned, he established the Yemeni Movement of Arab Nationalists in 1959 which he led in the absence of Faysal Abdul Latif al Sha'bi who was in Egypt at the time. When North Yemen's 26 September Revolution took place in 1962 he gave up paid employment to devote all his time to politics first within the MAN and from 1963 onwards, the armed struggle against the British in the south. In 1964 he participated in the establishment of Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South which, under Egyptian influence, was forcibly merged with the National Liberation Front to form the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen. He announced the merger on

Ta'izz radio on 13 January 1966. When later that year this organisation split, he stayed with FLOSY where he was responsible for finance.

In 1971 Ali al Sallami returned to Aden and was appointed ambassador to Libya and member of the Supreme People's Council (SPC). In 1973 he was elected to the SPC for Tuban constituency including his home area. He was a member of the SPC presidium and headed its International Relations committee until unification, also becoming the secretary of the SPC in 1986. Throughout the period he was also active in the Arab Parliamentary Union.

At unification, in 1990 he became a member of the first Parliament and in 1991 was appointed to the General People's Congress's Permanent Committee; the following year he was promoted to its General Committee. In 2003 he was appointed to the Majlis al Shura, of which he remained a member until his death.

HELEN LACKNER

### ABDULKARIM AL-KHAYWANI

1965–2015



Abdulkarim al-Khaywani was assassinated on 18 March 2015 in Sana'a. He was born in 1965 in Ta'izz, his family roots, however, were in Khaywan, a *hijrah* (i.e., a community of descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, known as *sada* or *sayyids*, living under the protection of local tribes) in Sa'ada Governorate. In fact his belonging to a reputable family of *sayyids* from the troubled Sa'ada region did not endear him to the Saleh regime.

Many people followed the difficulties Abdulkarim encountered during his lifetime. He was a politician, activist and editor of the independent magazine al-Shura when he came into conflict with the Saleh regime in 2004. His critical, independent reporting – despite the enforced news blackout – on the first military campaign against the Huthis in Sa'ada greatly angered the government. During the months after the death of Husayn al-Huthi in September 2004 the government prosecuted and arrested about a thousand people whom it perceived to be Huthi sympathisers, among them Abdulkarim al-Khaywani and judges Yahya al-Daylami and Muhammad Miftah.

Abdulkarim al-Khaywani was sentenced to one year in prison for violating the press law, defaming the president, and supporting the Huthis. As the armed forces continued their military campaign in Sa‘ada in the following years, after his release he was repeatedly arrested and charged with, among other things, espionage and terrorism. His newspaper al-Shura was banned, its computers smashed, and he himself was tortured in prison. Court photos presenting him as a determined criminal handcuffed, behind bars, went around the world. In 2008 Amnesty International awarded him the “Special Award for Human Rights Journalism under Threat.” He experienced the full violence of the regime’s repressive approaches, as it became increasingly authoritarian. Despite these pressures he remained steadfast. He even refused to seek a pardon by apologising to President Saleh. Those of us who knew him, will always remember Abdulkarim al-Khaywani for his exceptional determination in the face of an arbitrary and repressive state. Few of us would have shown his courage.

On the other hand, in the months after the forced resignation of Ali Abdullah Saleh it became clear, understandably, that Abdulkarim al-Khaywani was no “dove”, as he became a Huthi hardliner who determinedly pursued his beliefs. He was one of the few influential Huthis seasoned enough to operate confidently in the difficult political arena of the capital, and was therefore sent by Abdulmalik al-Huthi – along with Abdulkarim Jadban, Ahmad Sharaf al-Din and Abdulwahid Abu Ras – as a Huthi delegate to the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). At particularly critical and fateful moments of the NDC, Abdulkarim al-Khaywani repeatedly threatened to derail the dialogue. At times he took even more extreme positions than the Huthi leaders in Sa‘ada who – after initial hesitation – made every effort to ensure the successful conclusion of the NDC. Again, this demonstrated Abdulkarim’s intransigence.

Almost all the Huthi delegates mentioned above were attacked, apparently in order to derail the NDC. Abdulwahid Abu Ras survived an attempt on his life on 24 March 2013 near the NDC’s venue. Abdulkarim Jadban was shot dead on 22 November 2013 in front of a mosque. Ahmad Sharaf al-Din was assassinated on 21 January 2014, on the very day of the conclusion of the NDC. The loss of Abdulkarim Jadban and Ahmad Sharaf al-Din was a particular blow to the Huthis since they lost two of their influential, moderate, conciliatory voices. Henceforth the “hawks” among them became bolder. If they had survived, Yemen would probably look different today.

Abdulkarim al-Khaywani was shot in front of his home by unknown assailants on a motorcycle; al-Qaeda has claimed responsibility. He remains in my memory as a dear friend who, as a true *sayyid*, generously shared with his friends his encyclopaedic knowledge. I was fortunate to experience a friendship which is only seldom found today, and the death of this remarkable man fills me with great sadness.

MARIEKE BRANDT

### HUGH LEACH OBE MBE (MIL)

1934–2015



Photo courtesy of Anna Katz

Hugh Leach, who died last November after a long illness, has already and deservedly received several warm memorial tributes, notably in *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Asian Affairs*. These all extolled Hugh's extraordinary life, his eclectic enthusiasms and his unabashed romanticism.

His career began with 12 years in the army, commissioned in 1955 into the Royal Tank Regiment. He was the first tank ashore in the Suez operation in 1956. His tours in Egypt, Cyprus and Libya may have inspired an interest and attachment to the Arab world and led him to volunteer to learn Arabic at MECAS where he had two spells. After the first, in 1959, he became a Desert Intelligence Officer on Masirah Island and in Nizwa in Oman, rewarded by a MBE. Amongst the Omanis he acquired his deep affection for Arabia, later describing this time as "the best years of my life." Following a second spell of Arabic at MECAS in 1961/2, he was seconded to military intelligence in the Western Aden Protectorate, becoming involved in special operations against the Egyptians and their republican Yemeni allies. He took time for a brief visit to the Hadhramaut. Here began his affection for southern Yemen and also

familiarity with the works of Freya Stark who had travelled there extensively in the 1930s.

He made a career change in 1966/7, switching from the army to the Foreign Service, in the intelligence wing. After a posting in Saudi Arabia, he took a break from the Service in 1972 to indulge his romantic versatility in the circus, acquiring a part-share in the Circus Americano with which he toured and performed. Back with the FO again, Hugh was posted to Cairo but managed to maintain this enthusiasm by setting up the Circus Britannia, in collaboration with the Egyptian State Circus. His ambassador, Sir Philip Adams, approved of this cultural adventure as it toured the Nile Valley. On departure from Egypt in 1976, he was appointed OBE.

Hugh seems to have been inseparable from his Series IIA Landrover, named Martha; they clocked up a prodigious mileage. It was in Martha, returning from Egypt through Italy in 1975, that he decided on a whim to call unannounced on Freya Stark at her house in Asolo. He knew her only through her writings of her time spent in South Arabia in the 1930s, principally through *Seen in the Hadramaut* of 1938. The surprise encounter was an immediate mutual success, both recognising their shared fascination with Arabia and its people and their common attitude to travel and photography, despite her being precisely twice his age – she 82 and he 41. They were likewise equally passionate about screw-thread Leica cameras.

Hugh was then posted (1976) to Sana‘a in North Yemen. Soon he received the famously succinct telegram “Arriving Wednesday, Freya”. Thus began their extensive joint journeys – she came twice – around the country, pursuing every interest on offer, each with their Leica. Freya Stark had only once previously been to North Yemen, during WWII in 1940, despatched from Aden in order to show British propaganda films to woo the Yemen away from harbouring enemy Italians. She had some success with the wives of Yemeni officials, in particular with a wife of the Imam. Her joint trips with Hugh in 1976/7 enabled her to explore parts of northern Yemen she had never seen while Hugh pursued his intelligence work, getting to know the country.

They made a first trip to Ta‘izz before returning to Sana‘a, then trips to Hajjah and to the Tihama with its highlight, Zabid, on which John Shipman joined. They shot photographs all the time, in black and white, regarded by both as the superior medium. A joint book project with John Murray as publisher came to nothing due to complications over photo-reproduction techniques. It was not till many years after Freya’s death in



1993 at the age of 100 that Hugh resuscitated the book project with the publication of his own pictures in a volume dedicated to Freya Stark; Will Facey of Arabian Publishing undertook its publication in 2011. Thus emerged *Seen in the Yemen: travelling with Freya Stark and others*. This volume starts with a Prologue describing Hugh's and Freya's joint travels in north Yemen followed by a brief survey of Yemen's historical and cultural background including an ample account of the Yemeni Jewish communities based on his own encounters. Then follows the bulk of the book – an assembly of some 200 of Hugh's own magnificent photographs recording the places and people he saw in Yemen in the mid-1970s, each with an ample caption.

Another of Hugh's visitors in Sana'a was Wilfred Thesiger, forming a friendship continued later in England. Hugh Leach continued his diplomatic career with a tour in Khartoum, Sudan before taking a sabbatical to investigate and then write an account of Islamic fundamentalism as seen in the mid-1980s. He made an expedition to investigate sources of the Oxus River before retiring in 1989. He then expanded his range of activities and travel, making several extensive trips to Central Asia encouraging youth enterprise, under the aegis of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, with which he had a long and close association. He was awarded the RSAA's Lawrence of Arabia Memorial Medal. Hugh wrote the history of the RSAA in *Strolling around on the Roof of the World* in 2003.

A many-faceted, egregious enthusiast, he is sorely missed in the many circles to which he devoted so much of his time and energy.

JULIAN LUSH

### JOHN IRELAND OBE (MIL)

1922–2015



John Ireland, who has died at the age of 93, joined the Society at its inception in 1993, and regularly attended its events while his health permitted the journey from Letchworth where he lived. His interest in Yemen arose from his posting to Aden in 1965. This was on secondment from the Bank of England to the ill-fated Federation of South Arabia to oversee the introduction of a change of currency from the East African shilling to the South Arabian dinar. All the first issue dinar

notes were engraved with John's signature. After British withdrawal in 1967 South Arabia became the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in 1970, but the dinar remained its currency until unification with North Yemen in 1990.

Within two years of joining the Bank of England, after schooling at Tonbridge, John was released for military service and trained as a navigator in the RAF. Following the war he served in the Air Training Corps and was promoted to the rank of Wing Commander. He then returned to the Bank of England where he continued to serve until his retirement in 1979. In Aden he acquired a personal servant, Abdo Nagi, who was to become a life-long friend. Originally from Ibb province in North Yemen and the son of a goatherd, Abdo migrated to Aden at the age of 12 in search of education and employment. He insisted on following John back to the UK, and under the latter's wing revealed an exceptional talent as a ceramic artist, bringing him fame and modest fortune. In retirement John was more than happy to act as Abdo's business manager and to promote his work. In the late 1990s, accompanied by Abdo, he had the satisfaction of revisiting Aden with a British-Yemeni Society tour. Sadly Abdo died in 2001 and John's eloquent obituary published in the BYS journal later that year is indicative of his affectionate interest in the Nagi family. Nadia, Abdo's wife, remained very close to John to the end of his life.

JOHN SHIPMAN





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Designed and produced by Elspeth McPherson  
(Strathmore Publishing, London)  
Printed by Portland Print, Kettering, England

## YEMENIS NEED YOUR HELP MORE THAN EVER



Yemen is now well into the second year of a bitter war which is causing massive suffering and poverty. In addition to the UN's record of over 10,000 dead, which only includes those who died in the remaining functioning medical facilities, there are thousands more unrecorded deaths. These include those killed in military action as well as the thousands dying through lack of medication, or because they can't afford to pay the vastly increased prices of the few available medicines.

The BYS appeal for funding of MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières)

and the Yemeni Red Crescent remains open and Yemenis' need for assistance increases every day. We have sent £3,422 each to MSF and the Yemeni Red Crescent on 23rd December 2015. We now have a further £1,600 which we will send shortly, though it would be excellent if our members could help us reach a much higher figure. MSF recently reminded us that it "has increased substantially the volume of its operations in Yemen immediately following the internationalisation of the conflict in March 2015. MSF works on all sides of the conflict, conducting operations in eight Yemeni governorates. Since March 2015, we have sent more than 1,400 tonnes of medical supplies and treated more than 41,000 war wounded patients".

Please be as generous as earlier and send whatever you can afford to our appeal whose funds are shared equally by the two organisations. Cheques should be sent to the Hon Secretary, Audrey Allfree, 210 Stephendale Road, London SW6 2PP. In case you have not already done so, please sign the Gift Aid form which Audrey can provide and which is also on our website, as this will automatically increase your contribution by 25%.

*Image: An MSF member of staff stands in the rubble of Haydan hospital (courtesy of Atsuhiko Ochiai and MSF)*