



The British-Yemeni Society
Journal

2017

THE BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY

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BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY JOURNAL

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FROM THE EDITOR

Although the B-YS is an apolitical organisation, in the current circumstances prevailing in Yemen it is hard to avoid politics, particularly when it impacts so directly on all aspects of life, including the country's culture and heritage. This is clearly illustrated in our main cultural article this year, on Yemeni architecture by Professor Trevor Marchand. His photographic exhibition will hopefully travel and be available to members outside London in coming months. For those who do not get the opportunity to see it, the accompanying book should be a suitable substitute and, as £5 for the sale of each book is donated to UNHCR for their Yemen appeal, provides a further opportunity for members to help Yemen in a practical way.

Other items in this year's Journal also reflect the war situation, be it Archdeacon Bill Schwartz's piece on the important work of the Ras Morbat clinic in Aden (supported by the B-YS), or the article by this year's winner of the B-YS grant, Ashwaq Shuja Addeen, whose interpretation of the role of the USA in Yemeni politics challenges more widespread understandings, but also reminds us that in a complex world events can be seen from very different perspectives. Our tribute to Abdul Qadir Hilal is a reminder that some Yemeni politicians are honourable people concerned with people's fate, while Andrew Mitchell's annual lecture addresses the ambiguities of British policy, in addition to bringing us a first-hand view of living conditions in the northern areas controlled by the Huthis and Saleh's forces as well as the political perspectives of that faction in the current struggle.

In my last editor's note I was taking over responsibility for the Journal from John Shipman; this year I am sad to present his obituary as ill-health finally took him from us. We also pay tribute to our longest-serving chairman, Douglas Gordon, who has left fond memories among our members for his humour and good spirit as well as active management of the B-YS.

Thank you.

HELEN LACKNER

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(Twenty-fourth Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 24 May 2017)

The situation in Yemen

It has been a dispiriting year, for Yemen and its people, and for those of us who know the country and follow events there. If my report last year was influenced by pictures of bombed hospitals, reports of increasing food insecurity and starvation, children going without education and inadequate funding from outside, this year it has been touched by pictures of small children who have lost limbs, women and children searching for scraps in rubbish bins and garbage heaps, and footage of the unspeakable atrocity of the double-tap missile attack on the funeral assembly at a meeting hall in Sana'a last October in which hundreds of civilians were killed or wounded.

The ongoing civil war in Yemen continues to be described by many as the "Forgotten War". It is true that it has to a large degree been eclipsed by events in Syria and the struggle to defeat ISIS in Iraq. It evades widespread attention in the UK because we do not have boatloads of Yemenis arriving on European or British shores. But in fact there has been a substantial amount of high quality reporting from some parts of Yemen, and there are regular workshops and seminars here and elsewhere in Europe and America considering the desperate humanitarian situation, and how best to address it. There has been less detailed examination of the political situation and ways in which a political solution to the conflict might be reached, though it has become increasingly clear that the present strategy, of military force in support of UN resolutions, is not the path to a rapid resolution of the conflict. The apparent paralysis of the UK in the UN Security Council has been a great disappointment to us all.

In Yemen, the past twelve months have witnessed a military standoff around Sana'a, continuing insecurity in Aden and ongoing conflict in Taizz. At the time of writing this, a major concern has been the prospect of an attempt by coalition forces – that is, the Saudi-led coalition trying to return Hadi as president to Sana'a – to take control of the city and port of Hodeidah. Most aid and humanitarian organisations fear that this could trigger a devastating famine in the country if the already meagre flow of food supplies to the northern part of the country is disrupted, and significant bloodshed in the city itself.

Despite all of this there is also a steady trickle of less gloomy news – local initiatives to alleviate hardship, or to create development opportunities,

and to look beyond the current disastrous situation. Young Yemeni activists both inside and outside the country still believe that their country can have a better future. Sadly, though, it is difficult if not impossible for international governments and aid organisations to find ways to develop and work with what are often young and untried organisations, a point that comes up regularly in the workshops and discussions I mentioned earlier. Beyond all this is the damage to Yemen's heritage and culture, not least its traditional culture of tolerance and coexistence. Can this be restored? We must hope so.

Updates reported at the AGM

In my report I mentioned that there was widespread concern that coalition forces might start an offensive to secure control of Hodeidah. This doesn't seem to have happened yet, and indeed there are reports that Mokha, to the south and the main port for Taizz and its region which was supposedly secured by the coalition six months ago is still coming under attack from forces aligned with Salih and the Huthis. There have been reports of an upsurge of violence in Taizz, with over 60 dead and injured, mostly women and children. While all this happens – or doesn't happen – there is ever growing food insecurity and a developing famine. There are reports, though, that supplies do get through, even to Sana'a. But many simply cannot afford to buy the food and goods that are apparently available. And added to this, a growing cholera epidemic spreading throughout the country, though medical supplies are getting in, and excellent work continues to be done by MSF and UNICEF.

Another recent development, the implications of which are not clear, is that the former governor of Aden sacked by Hadi in May and other southern leaders have declared the setting up of a transitional political council to govern the south. This looks like a further challenge to President Hadi's attempts to assert leadership, even in areas not under the control of Saleh and the Huthis.

I ended the report that was circulated that we must hope that Yemen will be able to return to its former culture of tolerance and coexistence. Ambassador Simon Shercliff, our Honorary co-President, has sent a message ending by saying that we must remain hopeful. Sadly, though, no-one speaks or writes that they are optimistic. Just hopeful.

There are just a few other things that I should add. After our founding member John Shipman passed away last year the committee and a number of our members said that it would be fitting to have some memorial of him. Two proposals have come to the fore – one is that our existing scholarship scheme should be named for him. The other was to raise funds for new equipment for the Ras Morbat eye clinic in Aden, which we have supported in the past, and heard talks on, in 2009 and last year. At the moment they don't seem to have any pressing requests, and seem to be getting as much support as they can use from their regular sources. However, it is something we are continuing to investigate.

The next thing I must mention – perhaps the most important thing – is my thanks to our committee members, and very particularly to Audrey Allfree once again, our invaluable secretary who does so much to keep the society in order and make arrangements for our committee and public meetings. And thanks again to John Huggins for taking on the role of Treasurer last year and keeping us in good order financially. And I should mention also Helen Lackner who has stood down from the committee, but agreed to stay on as editor of our excellent Journal. Thanos Petouris, another former member of the committee, continues to lead on the upkeep of our web site and Facebook page, two of our most accessible “shop windows”.

B-YS Activities

B-YS Events and meetings

- 6 July 2016: Chairman's Update on Yemen
- 8 September 2016: Special General Meeting to approve amendments to the Constitution and Chairman's Update on Yemen
- 19 September 2016: Chairman's Update in support of Nawal Al Maghafi's film 'Starving Yemen' at Frontline Club on 26 September 2016
- 17 November 2016: Call for Peace Mailing to B-YS members with pro forma letter circulated
- 17 November 2016: Martin Jerrett: Talk “Difficult Diplomacy: The challenges of Speaking to the South” Co-hosted with MBI Al Jaber
- 7 December 2016: Joshua Rogers, recipient of B-YS research grant, talk: “Yemen's other Civil War: Tribes, Technocrats and Revolutionaries 1962-70”
- 23 December 2016: Christmas Message by Chairman

- 7 February 2017: Noel Brehony's talk at the Royal Society for Asian Affairs: "NLF's successful campaign for power in South Arabia 1963-67"
- 26 January 2017: Yemen Civil Society event Panel Discussion , including speeches by B-YS members at Institute of Engineers
- 28 February 2017: Annual Lecture at the House of Commons given by Andrew Mitchell MP
- 26 March 2017: Nawal al Maghafi's film showing of 'Starving Yemen' and 'Funeral Bombing'
- 25 April 2017: Hadhramaut Research Centre book launch with LMEI, SOAS, panel discussion with authors.

New Books on Yemen

Hadhramaut and its Diaspora , edited by Noel Brehony, IB Tauris, London

Yemen Endures, by Ginny Hill, Hurst, London, May 2017

From Aden to Abu Dhabi: Britain and State Formation in Arabia 1962-71,
Special edition of Middle East Studies, Vol 53.1, January 2017

The Price of a Vote in the Middle East: Clientelism and Communal Politics in Lebanon and Yemen, by Daniel Corstange, Cambridge, 2016

The Maritime Traditions of the Fishermen of Socotra, by Julian Jansen van Rensburg, Archaeopress, 2016

Forthcoming publications

Yemen in Crisis: Autocracy, Neo-liberalism and the Disintegration of a State, by Helen Lackner, (October 2017)

Tribes and Politics in Yemen: A History of the Houthi Conflict, by Marieke Brandt, (October 2017)

Yemen and the Path to War: Power, Politics and Society in the Twenty-First Century, edited by Marie-Christine Heinze (I B Tauris)

B-YS Grant

Ashwaq Abdulsalam Shujaa Adeen, a student at the University of Sana'a, researching "United States Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion after 2011 in Yemen".

Members deceased since last AGM

Mr John Shipman

Mrs Marilyn Hywell-Jones

Yemen-related events

Friends of Hadhramaut Garden Party, hosted by Yousif al-Nassar at Torquay



Aden beach at Eid a decade ago

YEMEN: POLICY DILEMMAS FOR BRITAIN

Third Annual Lecture to the British-Yemeni Society, 28 February 2017

ANDREW MITCHELL, MP

Andrew Mitchell MP gave the B-YS annual lecture in the House of Commons on 28 February 2017 following his brief visit to the country in January, during which he travelled in areas under the control of the Huthi-Saleh alliance. This clearly coloured his perspective and understanding of the situation, which is presented in the text below and which represents his views. The British-Yemeni Society is non-political and does not take a position in the current conflict, other than calling for its end and a return to peaceful debate.

Invited to respond at the end of Mr Mitchell's presentation, our co-President, the Yemeni Ambassador Dr Yassin Saeed Noman, emphasised the following points: first that Mr Mitchell had only visited areas under the control of the warring party that had overrun the country by force. He insisted that, for the UK to play a positive role, it would have been preferable if the MP had also visited Aden and had an opportunity to listen to others, and discuss how this war might be ended, and also to understand how the conflict had started and who was responsible for its initiation. His second main point was that Mr Mitchell and others tend to portray this as a conflict between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. This is not the case – it is a Yemeni-Yemeni conflict, sparked off by the Huthis and forces loyal to Ali Abdullah Saleh who overran the country by force, supported by Iran. They replaced the state system with their militias. He also reminded the audience that Iran is the key factor in what is happening. Its long-standing scheme is to dismantle the states in the region, and this is what is happening in Yemen. The Iranian government is trying to establish a state in Yemen on a sectarian basis. This represents a danger to the whole region.

I am not an Yemen expert but I speak out on humanitarian issues, and I have spoken out a great deal including two emergency debates [in the House of Commons] on what is happening in Syria and particularly the destruction of Aleppo where I believe Russia is committing war crimes and grotesque international humanitarian law breaches. I focus on these issues above all as a humanitarian, not in any sense suggesting that I have a solution to the politics on the ground. I hope that I am able to speak out when

innocent people, through no fault of their own, are attacked and brutalised. The reason I first went to the Yemen was to express my humanitarian concern and because I thought it had been some time since a British politician had been there and, since we are part of a coalition that is heavily engaged in Yemen and its future, that it was right that someone from the House of Commons should go.

I should explain that, while I was in government, I let my junior minister address issues of Yemen, Sir Alan Duncan, who is now a distinguished Minister in the Foreign Office. When he was with me at DFID, he looked after Yemen, a country he knew well and indeed he knew the then president, former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, well too. I watched over the security position as far as it relates to British officials and also over the money because Britain, through its development policy is heavily engaged in trying to help the people of Yemen, a country with which we have deep historic links and where Britain is still, in my judgement, well respected in spite of the current position. But I watched over the money as a great deal of British tax payers' money had been spent trying to relieve humanitarian stress in that country. In the end it became too dangerous for our staff to be deployed there. In particular a rocket-propelled grenade went through the back windows of a British vehicle; fortunately none of the officials who were in the car at the time were killed and the weapon went into the brush land on the side of the road and did not explode. But it was a clear warning to us that the position of British officials in the Yemen was not an easy one and therefore they were withdrawn as were most of the officials of other European countries who were then based there.

So that was the position when I was in Government. But during my visit I was able to go to Sana'a by courtesy of the United Nations and to visit with Oxfam who, in my experience, are doing very considerable work of great value in the country. I put myself into the hands of the UN and Oxfam. When I was in Sana'a, I was able to meet with the Huthi leadership, in particular the Huthi president and the extremely able Huthi Foreign Minister who, I think, has a real part to play in the future of Yemen. While I was in Sana'a, there were six bombing runs, I think, on both nights, by the Saudis and I was very conscious of the extent of activity that is taking place.

I went from Sana'a up to Sa'ada and during the course of my journey, there was a Saudi attack on a petrol station 28 km to the west of where I was travelling. The petrol station was next to a school and unfortunately

some children and also some teachers at the school lost their lives in that run. In Sa'ada, I visited a number of locations: I was very struck by the destruction. I visited a school and here I got the first indication of the confusion that exists in British policy towards the Yemen. The school had been largely destroyed. I was shown munitions which had British markings on them although obviously that is not proof that British munitions have been used in the destruction of the school. But I went into a tent where children were being taught: in the tent, largely paid for by the British taxpayer, the children were using school books which were being largely paid by the British tax payer. You will recognise that when you go into a school quite often the children may be a bit listless, but they will tend to enliven when they are chanting a nursery rhyme or some such activity. And the children did suddenly become alive and started chanting and punching the air. And I asked the translator what they were saying and the translator said "they are saying Death to the Saudis, Death to the Americans and, by dint of your appearance today, they have cut out the third stanza."

I then moved on to a hospital from which Médecins Sans Frontières have pulled out because they've decided it was too dangerous. I was shown round the hospital and in particular to a malnutrition ward: many of you will know that one of the most upsetting things to see in a hospital is a malnutrition ward. And of course the Yemen is now threatened with one of the four famines that we face in 2017. Many of us had thought that the ghastly circumstances which would see tens of thousands of children starve would never be repeated again, let alone in 2017. In a malnutrition ward you see children who have gone over the tipping point. Up until a certain point, children who are listless and suffering from starvation or malnutrition can be revived with a biscuit substance which Britain deploys heavily around the world, and within twenty minutes they will be up and running around. But if you go over that tipping point, they have to be hospitalised, they have to have a drip and, on average, they will need to be in medical care for about 10 days and the cost, instead of being a few pence which is the price of the biscuit, tips over and becomes something like £280 per child. In this hospital, in this ward, in these very sad circumstances which I saw in Sa'ada, one of the doctors whispered in my ear "you realise that your taxpayers are largely supporting the work that the doctors are doing in this ward, in this hospital".

And then thirdly I went to the demining group with the governor of Sa'ada, which is defusing ordnance that has landed and not exploded. I met

some of the very brave people who were carrying out this work and discovered that the work of demining was largely funded by the British taxpayer and of course the person leading this effort was a distinguished former retired British army officer who was in charge of the demining team.

So you can begin to see the contradictions that there are in British policy. On the one hand one limb of the government is supporting the coalition and the blockade of this country, a country which is not starving but is gradually being starved by that blockade by a coalition in which we are complicit. So that is the reality on the ground. I then returned to Sana'a. I was able to have further meetings with the United Nations, with Oxfam, and with the Huthi leadership in Sana'a, and I also met former president Ali Abdullah Saleh in one of his homes. Three of his homes have been targeted and destroyed by Saudi air action. He has a lot of homes, so there wasn't a problem in going to see him.

Now one final point, I would wish to make before I come to what now in my view needs to be done. And that is this: as I was coming back from Sa'ada, I visited two refugee camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), which are being run by Oxfam, again paid for through the work of the British taxpayer, and by British donations. These two camps looked after some 5000 people who were, as it were, the bottom caste of society in the Yemen. People of the neighbouring town did not want them there, but Oxfam had very cleverly been able to woo the town's people by saying that in return for allowing the refugees and IDPs to settle there in very arid ground, they would restore the water supply to the town. That deal meant that the 5000 people in these two camps who were being looked after by Oxfam were able to eke out an existence there.

Now the question is, where do we go from here? First of all Britain, as I have described, is in a parlous position. On the one hand, we are supporting the coalition, a coalition which has destroyed the cranes in Hodeida port, where 80% of the food and medicines which are brought in comes. But another limb of the British Government is trying, through that port, to bring in vital supplies of food and medicines, and the unloading of the ships requires the same cranes which another limb of government is complicit in destroying. You see the confusion: and it is an extraordinary confusion because this is a part of the world where Britain remains very much respected. I was very struck by that during the course of my visit.

I have never called for an arms embargo against Saudi Arabia. That is because I have a distaste for Westminster politicians who wave their moral

consciences at the expense of possibly thousands of jobs in the north-west of England, but it is also because I believe it is an attack on the symptoms and not the causes of this problem. The Saudis will undoubtedly be able to purchase the weapons that they require elsewhere. As the primary sales person of those weapons, Britain has some influence to ensure that they are used in accordance with the international rules of warfare and also in accordance with the International Arms Trade Treaty of which Britain was core primary signatory. And, indeed, we have persuaded the Saudis to stop using cluster bombs which were sold by Britain in 1986 to Saudi Arabia, at a very different time. These are now used as anti-personnel weapons; at the time when they were sold they were a product of the cold war designed to enable retreating armies to buy themselves some time, in central Europe, so for a very different purpose. I have never called for an arms embargo and I don't call for an arms embargo today. But I do point out the internal inconsistency in British policy. I also emphasise that with these four famines that are looming in north Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and in Yemen, a country that is blockaded by the Saudis by air, land and sea, we face an appalling position if as a part of that complicit action we are propagating a famine in a country where, as I say, people are not starving, but are being starved.

Now moving on to the politics of all of this, it seems to me that the Saudis are on a hiding to nothing and that Britain should use its good offices to promote a cease fire. I was really staggered by the fact that the Huthi leadership made clear to me that, in spite of Britain being part of the coalition, they would accept British mediation under the United Nations as a way of creating that cease-fire with the Saudis. And the Huthis made clear that if there was the possibility of a cease fire they would place on the table the withdrawal of all their troops and ordinance that are inside the Saudi border at the moment and that they would agree to a 20km demilitarized zone on the border with Saudi Arabia. But the point is that they made clear that Britain, in spite of our position, because of our deep historical links with this part of the world and with Yemen in particular, they would agree to our being the mediator under the United Nations in securing that cease fire. And it seems to me that this is an extremely good offer which should be explored vigorously by all parties involved. And if you consider the position at the moment of the regime which we and the Saudis are supporting, the Hadi regime, quite apart from the fact that he won an election in which he was the only person who was standing; quite apart from the fact that his

legitimacy, such as it was, was defined in a two year period which has now long been exceeded, he is the only president I have ever come across in the world who has to make an official visit to his own country. He is either in a hotel in Riyadh, or moored off the coast in an Emirati naval vessel, and this is the regime which we are involved in supporting.

It seems to me that if you look at what is happening on the ground now, if you see the way, for example in Sana'a, that the Huthis have established control, there are many people who say that the levels of corruption are declining as a result of Huthi control. There are many others who make clear that the extent of Huthi involvement with Iran is greatly overblown. The Huthis are neither Sunni nor Shi'a but Zaydi and they have gone on the record as having said disobliging things about Iran. The suggestion that Iran is able to get weapons in to a country that is blockaded, as I say, by air, sea and land is, in my view, fanciful. I am not saying that there may not have been isolated incidents where some minor amounts of weaponry may have got through. But it is clear that the blockade effectively dismantles that argument.

Now, the other point I wish to make is that the GPC, Ali Abdullah Saleh's party and the Huthis are not of course natural friends. There have been six wars where the GPC and ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh's party have attacked Sa'ada. This is a part of the world where the 'enemy of my enemy is my friend' is not a cliché but an ingrained part of the culture. In my view, the fact that there is a GPC-Huthi alliance at the moment gives negotiators something to negotiate with and, above all, gives the chance for the Saudis to get off the hook because there is no way that the Saudis are going to win this battle. The appetite of the Saudis and the Emiratis and others to maintain foreign troops in the Yemen will long, long be exceeded by the staying power of the indigenous Yemeni forces. And so having a negotiation, trying to ensure that we can get the Saudis off this hook, seems to me to be at the heart of what should now happen. The Saudis are on a hiding to nothing. They are not going to win this battle. The sooner a cease-fire comes, the better. Britain has a part to play in achieving that.

And back to the humanitarian point where I started. This is a country where the United Nations say that a child is dying through starvation every 10 minutes. The position, as I saw for myself, of food availability, of the people you see walking around the streets in Sana'a, let alone up-country from Sana'a, where food is even scarcer, is truly terrifying. We cannot allow these circumstances to persist in 2017.

So my offering, Mr Chairman, tonight, is above all a humanitarian perspective. I don't know what the solution to the political negotiations, which must now take place, will be. I know that there must be credible Saudi-Yemen negotiations and, following the success of those negotiations, Yemeni-Yemeni negotiations which will of course be extremely difficult. But there is a basis upon which to build and perhaps now a greater recognition of the importance of building on the bases that were agreed before but which then collapsed. So I don't have a solution for what those negotiations should usher in and bring about, but I do say that there will at some point be a cease-fire, and Yemen-Saudi negotiations. In a country of 27 million people, for the sake of the vast majority of them who have no interest in politics, and no interest in fighting, but an interest in survival, I hope the time of that cease-fire will come as rapidly as possible. Thank you.



THE RAS MORBAT CLINIC, ADEN

THE VENERABLE DR BILL SCHWARTZ, OBE¹

Most members of the British Yemen Society know of the Ras Morbat clinic, which was established in the compound of the old Victorian Anglican Christ Church in Aden in 1996 to provide primary health care for mothers and babies. From the very beginning the partnership between the Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf and the Ministry of Health in Aden has been a good example of compassion and care for people in need without regard to religious or tribal identities. Over the years the work expanded to include an emphasis on eye care, and in 2014 when the Yemeni government opened a small hospital about a half kilometer from Christ Church it was decided that the Ras Morbat Clinic should focus primarily on eye care, which was not offered in the local government health clinic.

The clinic is staffed entirely by Yemeni Muslims. Interestingly, the doctors are all female. They provide a large spectrum of care, from general vision exams and prescriptions for lenses to surgery for cataracts and other corrective procedures. Patients mostly come from the Tawahi area, and are mainly older people. However, there is also a steady stream of patients who come from the Aden area in general, and even from villages far away. In the past, the staff used to visit schools to offer vision exams and recommend prescriptions for spectacles if needed. For many years the staff has held outside 'clinics', offering treatment and surgery in areas quite remote from Aden, including Socotra, Mokha and the Kharaz UNHCR camp for Somali refugees 200 km west of Aden. However, since the troubles began a couple of years ago it has not been safe to travel out of Aden, especially with expensive medical equipment.

The staff are very dedicated, and proud of their heritage of service to the people of Tawahi and Aden in general. The financial support from Christians around the world that enables them to serve their fellow Muslims in Aden and the fact that the clinic is located in the church compound gives them a sense of God's blessing on their work. Indeed,

¹ Bill Schwartz has lived in the Middle East for 45 years, including many visits to Aden. He was involved in the construction and initial setup of the Ras Morbat clinic and, as one of the archdeacons in the Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, Bill is responsible for oversight of the clinic on behalf of the Church.



The Ras Morbat Clinic waiting room

during the worst of the recent violence in Aden there were many ‘gangs’ roaming the streets in the absence of civil authority. Some were simply interested in looting and others, more radicalized, took the opportunity to vandalize the three Catholic churches in Aden. It was the people living in the area near Christ Church who protected the compound from vandals and radicals who repeatedly tried to attack it, proclaiming not only that the church represents a place of prayer, but also there is a very strong sense of respect toward the staff of the clinic among the people and the authorities in Aden. One good example of this is the annual assignment of medical students from Aden University to serve internships at Ras Morbat under the guidance of the clinic staff.

In addition to simple vision exams, an average of 450 patients are treated for more serious conditions each month at the Ras Morbat Clinic. Costs are kept as low as possible; cataract surgery is priced at US\$75 to cover the provision of the consumables and cornea implants. Special financial help is found for patients who cannot afford the treatment they need. The staff often voluntarily work on Fridays, their day off, to keep up with the patient load and offer treatment to those who travel great distances in the hope of regaining their sight. Because of the threat of kidnapping, it is currently quite dangerous for non-Yemeni specialists to visit and offer



Cataract surgery taking place

different kinds of specialist training in specific surgical techniques, but we are grateful for the cooperation with the personnel of NGOs who are working in Aden these days. For their safety, most of the foreigners working in Aden actually live off-shore in the harbour and travel to and from their workplace under guard each day.

During the worst of the fighting in 2015 the clinic was closed for three months, mostly to avoid the possibility that a large gathering of people in one place might constitute a target for one of the fighting groups. Rather extensive damage to the building from nearby bombing was repaired as quickly as possible and in late August of 2015 the clinic was reopened. Immediately there was a daily additional intake of patients with war injuries to their eyes and heads in addition to the routine patients visits coming for normal eye treatment. The Ras Morbat Clinic was one of the very few functioning medical facilities in Aden at the time, and very quickly a partnership with Médecins Sans Frontières was developed where their field hospital took in injured from all over the area but referred all head wounds to the Ras Morbat staff. This partnership continues today with very satisfactory results. Even now patients with injuries from the fighting and unexploded munitions are coming to the clinic for treatment every week. These injuries have been quite challenging for the staff,

because of the great variety of treatment needed, and the emotional stress because of the significant numbers of children who were injured by mines.

Today there is a relative level of civil order in the city of Aden. Basic infrastructure for water and electricity, roads and public transport (Adeni style) are more or less back to the standard before the recent fighting. While the importation/supply of food is a major concern with the disrupted shipping networks, medicines and surgical implements are also in short supply. Water is now relatively continuous. Electricity is available 2 hours on – 4 hours off, but the clinic has a generator to supply electricity when power is lost, especially during surgical sessions. Thankfully, the supply of diesel in Aden is restored and it is no longer necessary to struggle with the black market to keep the generator going. All of these factors are essential for the smooth running of the clinic, but in the larger context, these concerns recall the urgent need for peace, resolution of the conflict, and the restoration of normality throughout Yemen. We are very proud that Ras Morbat has continued to function normally in spite of all of the difficulties and we are anxious for the dismantled government health services of Yemen to be restored to meet the medical needs of thousands and thousands of Yemeni people.



Tihama souq

UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ISLAMIC AWAKENING IN YEMEN SINCE 2011

ASHWAQ SHUJAA ADEEN¹

This article investigates the role of the USA during the transition period in Yemen to explore the main reason behind the collapse of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen – the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, known as Islah. It starts with a brief recapitulation about US policy toward Islam, which is influenced by the interpretations of prominent scholars such as Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington. This influence explains the reasons behind the USA's behaviour toward Islamic power. I then look at the 2012-2014 transition in Yemen and the role played by the USA and the international community as well as that of Islah which had considerable power and influence during that phase. I conclude with an examination of the role of US policy in the downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen and identify the tools which were used to achieve this goal.

The year 2011 was the year of revolutions for many Arab nations. The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab spring countries was a problem for the USA. US policy makers had to address this situation and they were forced to re-assess their country's policies and strategies in the region as a result of the new developments which were perceived as a threat to its hegemony in the region. Yemen was part of this problem – as the Muslim Brother element of the Islah party was also in the forefront of the 2011 uprisings. The uprising in Yemen was inspired by the revolutionary atmosphere which had overtaken Egypt and Tunisia. Events in Egypt laid their shadow on the changes in Yemen because of the ideological links between the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Islah in Yemen which was considered a branch of the wider Islamic association. The Muslim Brotherhood was originally established in Ismailia, Egypt, by Hassan al-Banna in March 1928 as an Islamist religious, political, and social development organisation. The US was not convinced of the peaceful nature of the changed organization and considered it the second threatening entity after communism. Therefore it worked hard with its clients in the region to undermine and dismantle this power as it had done against communism. The Muslim

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Brotherhood in Egypt was undermined once it took power, with a considerable role being played by Saudi Arabia, and in other countries the movement collapsed before achieving power, as in the case of Yemen. These significant changes raised many questions about the role of US policy in their unfolding.

The US perspective toward Islam

Like that of other states, US policy is influenced by what is going on in the realm of world politics: its approaches are affected by events. When planning its policy toward the Middle East region in 2011, the US focused on the new variables which might have an impact on its hegemony: the emergence of Islamism as a new force induced US policy makers to think twice when dealing with it. Undoubtedly, US policy makers sought the perspectives and visions of many prominent scholars with expertise in the Islamic world and its relations with the West. Those scholars have influenced US policy formulation and their views are visible in US attitudes toward the Muslim world and the Middle East region.

An issue which has gained considerable attention in US foreign policy debate is that of political Islam. The US has drawn much of its policy from the vision of some of the think-tanks in the United States. In 1993, the journal *Foreign Affairs* published “The Clash of Civilizations,” by Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, which turned out to be a fundamental contribution to the debate surrounding American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Huntington predicted that the future course of world politics would be dominated by conflicts between civilizations along cultural fault-lines. Since September 11, 2001, studies by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Heritage, and Brookings have all contributed to discussions within the US government over the most appropriate strategies and organisations needed to confront the terrorist threat at home and abroad.²

Huntington’s aim was to define a new international politics but he was unrealistic in his approach to world power politics. The perspective of Huntington has become the standard paradigm discourse adopted in dealing with the Middle East and Muslim world. The clash of civilization approach is one which simply emphasizes the clash of interests and

2 Richard N. Haass, *U.S. Foreign Policy: A Policy-maker's Perspective*, Donald E. Abelson, *U.S. Foreign Policy: an Historical Perspective*

supports the superiority and sovereignty of one of its poles. It is used as a pretext to justify the US war against terrorist “Islam” and its illegal intervention in many countries in the region.

Huntington's definition of ‘human civilization’ itself has impacted and been used to define the rhetoric of the ‘war on terror’. In his book “The Crisis of Islam,” (2003) Bernard Lewis adopts a similar vision toward Islam; he contends that the inability to modernize is the reason why such a large number of Middle Eastern radicals have turned to Islamic fundamentalism. If modernization and change can't work, their option is to return to ‘traditional’ Islamic ways. He considers that Islam is the cause of the stagnation of the Middle East. In this way, Lewis understands the nature of the support for a specific variation of Islamic fundamentalism, which is only one of a number of different and frequently conflicting developments which have misleadingly been given this name. As such, Lewis sees such an assortment of fundamentalisms as a battering-ram used against the state structure.

The United States will undoubtedly seek to remain the dominant outside power in the Middle East, however, the operative word is “outside.” Instead, according to Lewis (writing in 1992), U.S. strategy is one focusing on the “balance of power” following Kissinger. The American approach, he says “is to prevent the emergence of a regional hegemony – of a single regional power that could dominate the area and thus establish monopolistic control of Middle Eastern oil³.”

The transition period in Yemen and the role of Islah

On November 23, 2011, following 11 months of uprising and violence that claimed over 2,000 lives, Saleh signed a US-supported, and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-facilitated transitional agreement. Part of the agreement granted Saleh and his family immunity from prosecution and he was therefore able to keep his position as leader of the General People’s Congress (GPC), the former ruling party. After a 90-day transition period, Yemen held a presidential “election” in February 2012 with one consensus candidate on the ballot – former Vice President Abdu Rabbuh Mansour Hadi. The uniting factor for the GCC, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and other concerned external parties was to prevent

3 Joseph Brewda, *New Bernard Lewis Plan Will Carve Up Middle East*, Executive Intelligence Review, Volume 19, Number 43, October 30, 1992, p 29.

the Yemeni state from completely collapsing. The documents agreed on 23 November laid out the framework for what many hoped would be Yemen's transition towards a peaceful and democratic future. The agreement included the following elements:

- formation of a government of national unity, which should take its decisions by consensus;
- the creation of a committee on Military Affairs which would work to restructure the Yemeni Army and maintain security and stability in the country;
- the convening and holding of a National Dialogue Conference (NDC). The NDC was due to discuss the process of drafting a new constitution, issues of the South as well as Sa'ada, steps towards building a comprehensive democratic system, national reconciliation and transitional justice, and other important issues.

The GCC and the collapse of the transition period

The USA usually has the strongest voice in managing the Middle East files as a result of its wide and trusted ties with its GCC clients. Their interpretations of Islam and Islamic power have coloured US policy toward the Muslim Brotherhood in the region as well as Yemen. Decision makers in the United States do not distinguish between political Islamist organisations and jihadi groups; they are all put in one basket. This vision gives a clue suggesting that the US wouldn't accept any other ideological powers to influence the government in Yemen and that any dissident approach would face the same fate as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and that it would use similar regional and local tools to achieve this goal.

Nevertheless, many other internal and external circumstances also affected the likely success of the transition period with its government dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood/Islah party. US involvement in Yemen used different channels that enabled it to achieve its aims with a minimum of effort or money. It used the strategy of "leading from behind" by sharing the leadership with its regional allies (Saudi Arabia and Iran) as regional actors with the support of internal partners whose role was to make military coups, like Al-Sisi in Egypt and Saleh with his Huthi allies in Yemen. They formed a political web, consisting of many internal and external interlinked factors and actors sharing similar concerns and agendas addressing the Muslim Brotherhood in the region as well as Yemen. Each one played a direct or indirect part to ensure the failure of the

transition in Yemen, the downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood represented by Islah, and the collapse of the transition was the result of a deliberate plan. The GCC deal was simply a tool for the pursuance of interlinked interests. It included major gaps which later became time bombs and destroyed everything.

After 2011, while the Islah was organizing its position in the government and public institutions, Salih and his new Huthi allies were expanding their power on the ground and preparing for armed confrontation in order to take over Sana'a. The national dialogue was considered a good opportunity for these actors to re-order their positions on the ground, specially the Huthis and Saleh. In meetings I held with many participants in the NDC about the reasons for its failure, they assured me that many deals and alliances were done under the table between different actors, and the NDC was merely a performance to draw people's attention away from what was really going on underground. These were signs that the situation in the country was likely to experience a new thorny phase.

Consequently, US intervention took place through the GCC Agreement. It was an effective catalyst to accelerate the maturing of domestic issues into conflict. Legal president Hadi and former president Saleh were, and still are, operating within the USA's scheme of things: it intends to keep them competing for supremacy on the ground while it has not yet found the new leadership it intends to install. Both presidents were willing to implement the Obama administration's agenda in order to prove their loyalty and maintain their interest regardless to the serious consequences of this adventure. "As such, these policies and actions have a profound impact on the situation in Yemen. Hence the approach of the United States throughout the Hadi era has been defined by checklist diplomacy, whereby the US has continuously pushed for the steps laid out in the GCC Initiative to be completed as written, despite the ever-widening gulf between that text and the realities of Yemeni politics."⁴ President Hadi was focusing on implementing US discourse by fighting terrorism. To this end, he repeatedly employed irregular, non-state fighting forces – referred to as Popular Committees – to combat militants affiliated with AQAP, due to the unreliability of the state's US-supported counterterrorism forces. Following the Huthi takeover of Sana'a and the complete disintegration of Yemen's

4 Farea Al-Muslimi, *United States policy and Yemen's armed conflict* The Yemen Peace Project-Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015

armed forces, Huthi forces have also been engaged in combat against AQAP affiliates, raising the possibility of cooperation between the US and Ansar Allah (the Huthis). US support for non-state military forces risks further inflaming local conflicts and undermines the institutions of the state.

The balance of power strategy adopted by the US in dealing with the issues in the Middle East has been part of the GCC deal in the form of the immunity from prosecution made to Saleh. Thus he remained head of the General People's Congress (GPC), the former ruling party; this hindered the transition and led to continuous wrangling and conflicts between competing forces. Leaving Saleh with unconditional immunity enabled him to toy with the political situation and to be one of the main spoilers of the new government of the Arab spring. At the same time, he controlled the real power and authority on the ground which was a main cause for the failure in the restructuring of the army and security sectors. It also enabled him to build his alliances with Islah's enemy, the Huthi Ansar Allah. Both Saleh and Ansar Allah played a major role in creating obstacles during the transition period, including attacks on the Islah party leadership and offices later in 2014.

The GCC Agreement also included the presidential election for a sole consensual candidate Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi; this candidacy hijacked the historical momentum from Islah and deprived it of certain victory in the election. What is clear is that the Islah Party, which had been poised to take a commanding electoral victory in Yemen's post-transition elections, is now struggling to survive. Both the United States and Saudi Arabia broadly agree on the main problems: the lack of a political transition, the danger of AQAP, and the simmering threat of Yemen's fragile economy. Neither of these states prevented the country's downward descent as they could have done by ensuring that the pledges of the US and Friends of Yemen for economic support during the transition period were fulfilled. Furthermore, the participation of the US in the committee to reform the military/security sector ensured that there was no real intention to restructure the Yemeni armed forces. The overall power relations and context which could have led to a change in the balance of power were not well studied.

The regional and international actors, especially the USA, saw the Middle East as an area where the domino theory might apply. They shared common interest with Saleh, the Huthis and Hadi in getting rid of Islah

which they saw as an element of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region. The Gulf Initiative that allowed Yemen's elites to back away from civil war in 2011 was in many ways an elite pact that allowed many countries to put poison in the honey.

In conclusion, the US would never accept any other hegemony in the Arab region, especially one which had a different competing ideology as US experts believe. This reflects the theory according to which the US must impose its sole hegemony on the Middle East. The war on terrorism, which is really a war against Islam, was only a cover for the US real agenda in the region, which doesn't differentiate between political Islamism and jihadist forces. This war has taken multiple faces: direct confrontation in Afghanistan and Iraq, elsewhere a smarter strategy based on using regional and local tools to achieve the mission while the US played the role of the monitor which can be called proxy war.

Therefore the theory of conflict of civilization which is now the main propaganda of the US in dealing with the Muslim world is merely the new tool it uses to fragment Middle Eastern societies and states. It also demonstrates another face of imperialism and conflict of interests: the Arab spring uprisings were a historical opportunity for the US to re-invent its project in the Middle East into one called creative chaos. This project aims to divide the Arab countries into bloody areas governed by ethnic groups and fractions which will, in the end, disintegrate the state into many districts. This plan uses as bases the historical disputes and gaps between sects within Islam as well as the fragility of the social structures in Arab countries. All these actions aim to breakdown traditional structures and norms and ultimately create new generations lacking clear identity which can then easily be shaped according to US vision.



YEMEN'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE UNDER THREAT

TREVOR H.J. MARCHAND¹

This article is linked to the photographic exhibition at the SOAS Brunei Gallery, London, from 12 July until 23 September 2017. The exhibition was curated by the author and generously sponsored by the MBI Al Jaber Foundation with additional support from Gingko Library and the British-Yemeni Society.

It is accompanied by Professor Marchand's edited book, Architectural Heritage of Yemen: Buildings that Fill My Eye. Illustrated throughout with maps and colour photographs, the book's 21 chapters explore the astonishing variety of building styles and traditions that have evolved over millennia in this country of diverse and extraordinary terrains. For every copy sold, £5 is being donated directly to the UNHCR Yemen Emergency Appeal.

Readers need no reminder that Yemen possesses one of the world's finest treasure-troves of architecture. An extraordinary variety of building styles and traditions have evolved over millennia in this region of dramatic terrains, extreme climates and complex local histories. Generations of skilled craftspeople have deftly employed home-grown technologies and the natural materials-to-hand to create buildings, urban assemblages, gardens and landscapes that meld harmoniously with the contours and conditions of southern Arabia. In this way, each location has come to possess a distinct sense of place.

Three of Yemen's ancient cities – Shibam, Sana'a and Zabid – enjoy UNESCO World Heritage status, but each has been demoted in recent years to the 'in danger' list.² A number of other towns and building complexes around the country are on UNESCO's tentative list, including the archaeological site of Marib, the historic towns of Thula and Sa'ada, the Tahirid Amiriyya complex in Rada', and the town of Jibla with its fine Sulayhid structures and sturdy stone tower houses. Any progression of their applications for World Heritage status depends first and foremost on

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2 Zabid was put on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites in Danger in 2009 and the architectural heritage of both Sanaa and Shibam were classified as 'in danger' in 2015.

the return of political stability and security to the country. Prospects for peace appear to be a long way off.³

Like architecture everywhere, Yemen's unique settlements and historic structures are subject to neglect, erosion, natural disaster and dismantling. For centuries, perhaps millennia, dressed stone blocks and the carved architectural elements of ancient structures have been recycled in the erection of new ones. This is exemplified by the reuse of pre-Islamic pillars in the prayer halls of early Islamic mosque or of carved or inscribed stones set in walls and lintels of later houses (see Figure 1). The pillaging of archaeological sites accelerated sharply, however, with the introduction of pick-up trucks and the ever-expanding network of roadways that link once-remote sites to illegal markets for southern Arabian antiquities.

Architecture has always been



Figure 1. One of Thula's fortified gateways. An application for the town's inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List was submitted by the General Organisation for the Preservation of Historic Cities in 2002. (Photograph by T. H. J. Marchand.)

3 For detailed reports on the political and economic situation in Yemen, see Brehony, N. 2016. 'The Year in Yemen', in *The British-Yemeni Society Journal*, Vol. 24, pp. 7–11; and see *Yemen at the UN*, February and March 2017 Reviews, published by the Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies: <http://sanaacenter.org/publications/item/78-yemen-at-the-un.html> and <http://sanaacenter.org/publications/item/90-yemen-at-the-un-march-2017-review.html>



Figure 2. Fragments of a Himyarite carved stone incorporated in the wall of a contemporary dwelling in Dhafar. (Photograph by T. H. J. Marchand.)

prey, too, to the natural elements and tectonic forces. Yemen lies in a seismically active zone, and as recently as 1982 an earthquake measuring 6 on the Richter scale destroyed ancient adobe and stone buildings in the city of Dhamar and surrounding villages, causing considerable loss of life and injury. Less dramatically, wind and rain continually erode and gradually destabilize buildings, having their greatest impact on the various styles of earthen architecture that have evolved in Yemen. Mud construction is also affected by intense sunshine, which deteriorates the chopped straw and other organic matter that act as binders and reinforcing elements in mud-brick and puddled mud structures.

With the substitution of hand-drawn wells for motorised pumps that access far deeper reserves, water has come to play an especially destructive role in ancient cityscapes. Poorly installed supply and evacuation pipes and drainage and sewerage systems, for example, contribute significantly to damp rise in foundations and masonry walls and to the formation of rot and unhealthy fungi in mud structures and timber components. By contrast, a lack of water in a growing number of places throughout Yemen is having equally, if not more devastating impact on the sustainability of historic settlements. The trend of diminishing rainfall is exacerbated by the

inattention to irrigation channels, water tanks and cisterns and by the exhaustion of existing ground-water sources through over-extraction through mechanised means. This has resulted in the desertion of towns and villages, and water experts have long been warning that Yemen's major cities face imminent threat of desiccation, including Sana'a.⁴

From the early 1970s onward, the historic cores of towns and cities witnessed considerable out-migration of their wealthy and middle-class families to new modern suburbs.⁵ Ancestral homes were abandoned or, as in the case of Old Sana'a, houses were partitioned and rented to newcomers who lacked the means (and incentive) to carry out necessary repairs and maintenance. In parallel with the departure of established families was a lasting wave of mass urban migration across the country. Population explosion in cities was accompanied by rampant, often unregulated construction, and within a short period many of Yemen's small towns and cities were transformed



Figure 3. A village in the Western Highlands with terraced agricultural fields and a step-cistern below. (Photograph by T. H. J. Marchand.)

4 Zeitoun, M., T. Allan, N. Al Aulqi, A. Jabarin and H. Laamrani 2012. 'Water Demand Management in Yemen and Jordan: addressing power and interests', in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 178, No. 1, March 2012, pp. 54–66.

5 The exodus of established families from the Old City of Sana'a to the surrounding suburbs (and of village populations moving into to urban centres) commenced after North Yemen Civil War (1962–1970) and accelerated during the following decades.

into urban sprawl. This phenomenon has exerted enormous pressure on frail, typically antiquated infrastructures. As a result, modern neighbourhoods and business districts have engulfed historic cores or obliterated them altogether. Automobile traffic congests and pollutes the narrow streets of old quarters and rumbling trucks and heavy vehicles emit ground-borne vibrations that destabilise ancient structures.

For the most part, new homes, apartment blocks, office buildings, government ministries, schools, shops and mosques are constructed with steel, reinforced concrete and breezeblock. In a facile gesture to tradition, exteriors may be faced with a patterned veneer of stone or brick and punctuated with monotonous rows of garish-coloured *takhrim* fanlights set above uniform casement windows. The handcrafting of timber doors, window screens, fine *takhrim* and *qamariya* windows, architectural joinery and decorative features has been largely supplanted by mass-produced (often imported) fittings. Within the building sector, schooled architects and engineers have encroached upon the once-uncontested authority of traditional, site-trained master masons;⁶ and declining numbers of youth (especially in cities) take up apprenticeships in the trades, aspiring instead to become commercial traders or white-collar workers.⁷

Following the worldwide trend that began in Western nations during the nineteenth century, Yemen's workforce of skilled craftspeople is shrinking, and with them their hard-earned, hands-on knowledge of the properties and performance of traditional building materials also disappears. This poses a formidable threat to Yemen's long-term capacity for preserving and correctly conserving its historic structures and traditional ways of building and making. The situation is further aggravated by a severe shortage of available funding to carry out conservation work. The escalation in militarised conflict during the past two years has put a halt to most

6 See Marchand, T. H. J. 2001, *Minaret Building and Apprenticeship in Yemen*, Richmond, Surrey: Routledge-Curzon, pp. 237–8. When I worked as a labourer for the brothers Muhammad and Ahmad al-Maswari (Sana'a's renowned traditional minaret builders) in the late 1990s, they were confident of winning the commission to erect the minaret(s) for Sana'a's new great mosque, rumoured to be built in the near future. Instead, the Saleh Mosque, inaugurated in 2008, was built entirely of cast-in-place reinforced concrete, including its six 100-metre high minarets (see Qaed, S., 'Yemeni Landmarks: The Saleh Mosque', in *The Yemen Times*, published on 6 February 2014, <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1753/report/3450/Yemeni-Landmarks-The-Saleh-Mosque.html>)

7 Marchand, T. H. J. 2001, p. 84.

externally financed projects; and because of Yemen's economic collapse, the majority of civil servants (roughly 25% of the country's workforce), including those employed in the heritage sector, have not received pay since August 2016.⁸

Indeed, the violent, hydra-headed conflict gripping the country menaces the very existence of Yemen's architectural heritage – as well as the lives, livelihoods and cultural traditions of its people. Since its start in March 2015, the Civil War has left many thousands of civilians dead and millions more displaced and on the brink of starvation,⁹ effectively turning Yemen into a failed nation state. The scale of destruction and human suffering has been exacerbated by the intervention of regional and international powers, most notably Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the US and the United Kingdom.¹⁰ Alongside the increase in the number of human casualties, the list of damaged and destroyed heritage sites grows.¹¹

While conflict and defence have contributed significantly to the history of design, town planning, and civil engineering throughout the region,¹² contemporary forms of warfare using high-powered weaponry have the capacity to reduce Yemen's precious architectural heritage to piles of rubble. Yemen's northern province of Sa'ada has been one of the worst hit regions, including its ancient provincial capital and surrounding villages of

8 *Yemen at the UN*, March 2017 Review, p. 10.

9 In February 2017, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations declared that 'Yemen is facing the largest food security emergency in the world'. See *Yemen at the UN* – February 2017 Review.

10 Since the start of the war in 2015, Britain has 'sold millions of pounds in defense equipment including planes to the Saudi military' and has been training Saudi forces. Mason, R. 'UK cluster bombs used in Yemen by Saudi Arabia, finds research', in *The Guardian*, 19 December 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/dec/18/uk-cluster-bombs-used-in-yemen-by-saudi-arabia-finds-research>

11 See Khalidi, L. 'Yemeni Heritage, Saudi Vandalism', in *The New York Times* on-line, 26 June 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/27/opinion/yemeni-heritage-saudi-vandalism.html?_r=0; Craig, I. 'The Agony of Saada: U.S and Saudi bombs target Yemen's ancient heritage', in *The Intercept*, posted 16 November 2015, <https://theintercept.com/2015/11/16/u-s-and-saudi-bombs-target-yemens-ancient-heritage>; Simpson, St J., 2015. 'Destructions Now and Then: causes and effects', in *Mesopotamia: revista di archeologia, epigrafia e storia orientale antica*, L 2015, pp. 1–21, p. 2; Simpson, St J. 'The War In Yemen: World Heritage Under Assault', Special Report for *Unite4Heritage*; Alwly, A. 'How Much More Can Yemen's Heritage Sites Take', in *Al-Monitor: the pulse of the Middle East*, posted 6 March 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2016/03/yemen-civil-war-saudi-strikes-destroy-historical-buildings.html>.

12 Warburton, D. 1993. 'Defensive Architecture in Yemen', in *Yemen Update*, 33 (1993): 20–21.



Figure 4. Kawkaban city gates, destroyed by aerial bombardment carried out by the Saudi-led coalition. (Photograph by Sarah Rijziger, 2017.)

multi-storied *zabur*-style houses of rammed earth. Airstrikes on Sana‘a have destroyed numerous buildings, including a terrace of medieval tower houses in the old city’s al-Qasimi neighbourhood, killing residents. Highland mountain villages, including the fortified stone town of Kawkaban, were bombed, as were the Dhamar Regional Museum and the National Museum and pre-Islamic citadel in Ta‘izz. Archaeological sites, including Marib, Sirwah and Baraqish have been damaged by airstrikes and gunfire.

Southern cities and villages, too, have been scarred by intense conflict. The battle of Aden in 2015 embroiled that city in fierce fighting between Huthi troops and those loyal to the incumbent President, leaving large parts of Aden in ruins. In the Hadhramaut, Islamic State claimed responsibility for a blast targeting government military troops stationed near the



Figure 5. The aftermath of aerial bombardments in the city of Sa'ada carried out by the Saudi-led coalition forces. In the background are the green and white domes of the twelfth-century al-Hadi Mosque, which suffered structural damage. (Photograph by Iona Craig, 2015.)

World Heritage City of Shibam, and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) demolished Sufi shrines in the coastal city of Mukalla, which they held hostage for more than a year.¹³ Along the Red Sea, Mokha was the scene of intense fighting earlier this year between forces fighting on behalf of the internationally recognised government and the allied Huthi and pro-Saleh forces.

The above is a short list of sites and settlements afflicted by the conflict. Distressingly, news of the humanitarian disaster and of the tragic loss of material culture is failing to reach Western ears. For this reason I staged an exhibition aimed to raise awareness of Yemen's truly remarkable architectural heritage. The health and safety of Yemeni people needs to be the

13 AQAP controlled al-Mukalla from April 2015 to April 2016.

priority of aid and development efforts,¹⁴ but protection of the country's built environment from the ravages of war is also essential for the eventual rebuilding of the economy and, more essentially, for preserving the spiritual and cultural identity of Yemenis. The identity of a people is inextricably entwined with their history and place.¹⁵

For further details about the exhibition, visit <http://www.mbifoundation.com/events.asp>

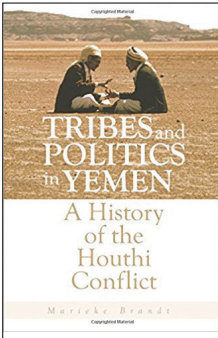


14 According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in February 2017, 'the conflict has left 18.8 million people – more than two thirds of the population – in need of humanitarian assistance. See *Yemen at the UN – February 2017 Review*.

15 See Al-Makaleh, N. and F. Al-Quraishi, 2017. 'Preservation of Cultural Heritage is the Preservation of Cultural Identity and Belonging', in T. Marchand (ed.) *Architectural Heritage of Yemen: Buildings that Fill My Eye*, London: Ginkgo Library, 2017, pp. 215–221.

BOOK REVIEWS

Tribes and Politics in Yemen: A History of the Houthi Conflict by Marieke Brandt. London: Hurst, 2017, pp 438, ISBN 978-1-84904-646-6 Hb £30.



Prior to the launching of ‘Operation Decisive Storm’ by Saudi Arabia and its allies in 2015, the term Huthi (or Houthi as the popular press has chosen to spell it, and as it is used in this book) was virtually unknown to anyone outside Yemen and the circle of those who follow events closely in that country. This was in spite of the unfolding of six full-scale wars between the Huthis and their allies on the one hand and the Yemen government and its allies on the other. But belatedly realizing that a Huthi phenomenon exists does not equate to understanding it. Simply put, the

portrayal of the war in Yemen as a conflict between central government and ‘rebels’, as well as the perpetuation of the notion of a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, between the forces of Sunni and Shi‘i Islam, is a tragic simplification of a deeper and more complex catastrophe enveloping Yemen.

Marieke Brandt, a researcher at the Institute for Social Anthropology of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, has delved deeply into the emergence and evolution of the Huthi phenomenon and explains in extensive detail the entangled and incredibly complex roots of the conflict that has embroiled Yemen’s far north for more than a decade. She has done so thoroughly, convincingly, and admirably. She is able to do so because she has studied and absorbed the minute details of the social and political environment in Sa‘dah and al-Jawf, relying on extensive field work, and after being forced by the deteriorating situation continued her research through ‘digital fieldwork’.

As she demonstrates, the wars in the north resulted from a complex mix of contributing factors. Since the civil war of the 1960s, animosity toward the *sada*¹ became a constant for many while the role and power of tribal shaykhs expanded. Tribal disputes and rivalries remained problematic and

1 *Sada* [sg *sayyed*] is the term used in Yemen for the group claiming descent from Prophet Mohammed

grew more exacerbated. The central government's neglect and the patronage politics of the Ali Abdullah Saleh regime stoked economic grievances. Differences between Saleh and his kinsman Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar laid the groundwork for military conflict with the Huthis who, at least in part, were transformed from a Zaydi revival movement to an expanding vehicle useful for pursuing tribal vendettas and opposing a corrupt government. The penetration of Salafi proselytizing, in combination with Saudi Arabian machinations along the border, raised the spectre of sectarian hostility.

Brandt begins by outlining the impact of the 1960s civil war in weakening the *sada* and strengthening the elite role of the shaykhs at the expense of the average tribesman, particularly those shaykhs who had allied with the republican cause. Their economic and political empowerment also benefited from Saleh's patronage politics, although the shaykhs in the north tended not to follow a broader trend of gravitating to the capital. Underlying the shaykhs' personal behaviour were an intricate myriad of competing and conflicting tribal interests, many of great antiquity. The memory of republicans versus royalists in the 1960s was grafted onto older grievances and exacerbated by Sunni-Zaydi differences and cleavages between those shaykhs who ate from Saleh's trough and those who remained defiant of Sana'a's blandishments and pressures.

The situation was additionally complicated by the problematic border with Saudi Arabia, imprecisely determined as a result of the Saudi-Yemeni War of 1934. The Treaty of al-Taif border zigzagged its way through rugged mountainous terrain on the west and meandered out onto desert plateau on the east, thereby dividing tribes and interfering with ancient trade routes. Because there was no permanent border treaty until 2000, nebulous arrangements developed for tribes to maintain cross-border links, the Wa'ilah and Dahm tribes to maintain their 'independent' status amid highly developed smuggling operations, and the Saudis to maintain influence across the border by subsidizing compliant shaykhs. The subsequent spectre of a Saudi border fence, prompted by the increasing threat of Islamist extremists, impaired the existing situation.

The Saudi presence next door also contributed to the growing radicalization of Sunni elements and the pressure of Salafism, encouraged by the government, provoked a Zaydi revival. As Brandt points out, the Zaydi response, while not monolithic, tended in the far north to focus on resisting the post-revolutionary elite and the marginalisation of the local Zaydi

community. To its opponents, Zaydi revivalism played into fears of a return to *sayyed* primacy and it raised questions of Zaydi allegiance to the republican state. Consequently, because of these contributing factors, ‘social, political, sectarian, economic, tribal and personal interests began to merge’ and stoked the Sa‘ada wars of 2004 to 2010 (p. 37).

Was Yemeni government suspicion of the Believing Youth organization (the progenitor of the Huthi movement), justified? Or was the initiation of hostilities against the group in 2004 opportunistic and driven by incompetent policy and clashes within the regime’s leadership? Whichever the case, the brutal killing of Husayn al-Huthi and the eventual succession of his brother Abd al-Malik as Huthi leader transformed the group’s focus from largely religious concerns to a social revolutionary movement attracting ideological and non-ideological adherents based on either grievances against the state or an opportunity to settle scores with other tribes or both.

As the government, and particularly the forces of Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, intensified the conflict, the geographical and tribal scope of involvement widened. It is illustrative that the family of Abdullah al-Ahmar, the most prominent tribal personality in Yemen since the 1960s and a key player in national politics, took up arms against the Huthis partly to pursue a tribal vendetta and ended up seeing their ancestral home razed and the sons forced into exile. Their demise of fortune were a presage of the even greater changes still to come.

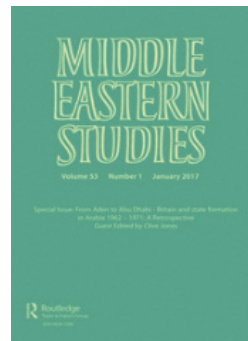
With each war, the Huthis grew stronger and militarily more capable, their appeal widened, and the government was shown to be less effective. Even direct Saudi involvement in the conflict in 2009 failed to rein in the movement. Evolving Huthi ambitions, including their participation in the National Dialogue Conference as an indicator of their increasingly visible role on the national stage, turned to efforts to deepen their influence in Sana‘a. Their tentative alliance with deposed president and old enemy Ali Abdullah Saleh was formed and paved the way for the Huthi *coup de main* securing Sana‘a in 2014.

To many close observers, the Huthi expansion through the north, and especially when it moved southward and eventually encompassed Sana‘a and most of the old North Yemen, was puzzling. But Brandt’s work thoroughly demonstrates how local concerns and rivalries, even at a personal level, played a key role in the explosion of developments that eventually came to encompass the entire country.

The proliferation of tribal and personal names throughout her narrative is mind-boggling. But this level of detail is absolutely necessary to unravel the complex underlying patterns that explain the Huthi rise. Without the full detail, the narrative remains generalized, overly simplified, and speculative. Towards the end of this fascinating and valuable book, Brandt quotes Clifford Geertz asking, ‘are the petty squabbles of barnyard notables really what we mean by politics? Are mud huts and goat-skin tents really where the action is?’ And she answers with a definite yes: ‘It was my aim here to widen the scope of interpretation of the Houthi conflict by giving fuller play to the complexities of local politics. ... Rather than adopting a more centralized view and concentrating on authorities such as states, political parties, religious scholars, and so on, this analysis focused on the role of the region’s people in the implementation of policies, ideologies, and religious hermeneutics. These people did not lead the overarching debates, but it was they who formulated the local agendas, shaped the reality of tribal, political and sectarian practice and implemented those policies on the ground’ (p. 344). Her portrayal of the background to and salient factors in the emergence and evolution of the Huthi conflict, the background to the Huthi movement’s assumption of its dominant role nationally since 2014, fully justifies her convincing ‘local’ approach and provides an invaluable glimpse into the complexity of Yemeni society and politics.

J.E. PETERSON²

From Aden to Abu Dhabi – Britain and State Formation in Arabia 1962-1971: A Retrospective Special Issue *Middle Eastern Studies*, volume 53 number 1, January 2017, ISSN 0026-3206. Also in book form from late 2017, ISBN 9781138556751.



The nine essays which make up this Special Issue are introduced by Clive Jones in a short preface. The essays reflect much detailed study of the history and sources on different aspects of the topic, and are fully annotated. Although it is inevitable that historians will wish to compare and contrast the Federation of South

2 Dr. J.E. Peterson is a historian and political analyst specializing in the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf.

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the differences in the origins, histories and characteristics of the two states are in many ways much greater than the similarities.

I was surprised that the preface does not make reference to the role of Sir William Luce, governor of Aden from 1956 to 1960, who also played an important, perhaps critical, role in negotiating the terms by which the United Arab Emirates came into existence in 1971. The exchange between Luce and HMG in 1958/9 is central to understanding Britain's policies in Aden, which determined the nature of the Federation, and why Britain's last few years in Aden were so disastrous. As a junior officer in Aden and the Eastern Aden Protectorate in the early 1960s I had no idea that this debate had taken place; it was a revelation to me when I came across the correspondence in the National Archives about fifteen years ago.

Luce wrote four letters in two days to the Colonial Office (27th and 28th March 1958), one to Secretary of State Lennox Boyd and three to his Under-secretary, Gorell Barnes, who passed on these three “rather shattering letters” to Lennox Boyd. In one paragraph, Luce wrote “To sum up....Aden is in the grip of four powerful currents in the tide of world affairs. One is the evolution of the Colonial Empire from dependence to independence, either within or outside the Commonwealth, the second is Arab nationalism, the third is the decline of British power and the fourth is Russian expansionism. All these currents flow to the same point, that is to say, the termination of British control in Aden. To swim against one of these would be hard enough; to swim against all four is, I firmly believe, beyond our strength.” Luce concluded that Britain should eliminate its last positions in the Middle East, attempt to align itself with Arab nationalism and thus provide the basis for a longer-term favourable relationship with Arab countries. He argued that a policy of hanging on to Aden Colony was 'utterly bankrupt'. An attempt to hold on to the military base would soon create the need for force. Early withdrawal would be unthinkable and would imply a breach of faith. The third option which he favoured was a gradual disengagement from our position in South West Arabia “creating a new relationship more in keeping with modern trends and the realities of the situation”. Separately but at the same time, the Air Officer Commanding in Aden at the time, the senior service officer, wrote that despite opposition in the Chiefs of Staff Committee in London, he considered, in light of experience in Cyprus and elsewhere, the only way to have a military base was for it to have local political acceptability.

Luce was conscious that in writing these letters he was ultra vires; his arguments were straying outside his terms of reference. However, HMG took them seriously and spent the next fifteen months debating the matter; the Ministry of Defence was required to examine possible alternatives to the Aden base. In August 1959, the Colonial Policy Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, accepted the potential need to merge the Colony and the nascent Federation of South Arabia, but decided to play for time and avoid defining HMG's policy too clearly. In a letter to Luce of September 1959, Lennox Boyd stated that the first object of HMG's policy in Aden must be to secure the use of Aden Colony as a military base "for as long as possible". He foresaw difficulties in creating a merger of the Colony, which was advancing like other colonies in the direction of internal self-government on democratic lines (including a legislature with an elected majority) with the Federation which remained a traditional feudal oligarchy showing no signs of departure from its traditional social and political structure. He stated "we cannot at present meet the moderate politicians in the Colony or the Protectorate Rulers by making an announcement in favour of a merger of the Colony and the Federation. The risks to HMG's defence interest appear to be too great."

This was, in effect, the last opportunity for HMG to take the initiative in South Arabia before the revolution occurred in Yemen in 1962, with the concomitant arrival in that country of Egyptian forces. The Colonial Office encouraged the Colony's rapid economic advance, with some success, and also had programmes of development in the Protectorates. These advances were constrained by HMG's other policy considerations, including a parsimonious civil development programme not commensurate with the ambition of its defence policy. Most other colonies did not face these diverging interests and could work out their future on the basis of local conditions alone.

Turning to Aaron Edwards' essay, it is difficult for anyone who was involved in Aden at the time to accept the outcome as a "triumph of realism;" or indeed a triumph of anything. Ministers, both Conservative and Labour, twisted and turned in handling day-to-day events, in the face of criticism from various sources. They repudiated anyone, such as Ali Abdul Karim, Sultan of Lahej, or any party such as the South Arabian League, or even the Aden Trade Union Congress, who wished to see constitutional advance for the country as a whole. Conservative governments saw the Federation as the only possible future; Labour would hardly talk

to its ministers. This had the effect of forcing many local actors into closer relations with Egypt and such extreme organisations as the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN) and Egyptian Intelligence Service (EIS). In the end, when the cost became too high, HMG abandoned the notion of Aden as a prime defence asset and betrayed all those who had been seeking a future of the country through negotiation.

James Worrall's essay on the centrality of the police in state-building is an interesting, if controversial one, since state-building mainly requires legitimacy in the eyes of the inhabitants. It describes well the various, though belated, measures implemented to strengthen Federal institutions. The Colonial Office sought in all colonies to strengthen the institutions required to maintain law and order, as they did with success in Aden Colony. But all tribesmen in the Protectorates held rifles and could only be controlled by equally well-armed and disciplined police forces, supported by military units. Here, a political process was required, as occurred in the Eastern Protectorate under Sultan Saleh al Qu'ayti, Saiyid Bubakr AlKaf and Harold Ingrams in the late 1930s to put an end to tribal strife and provide space for the state to expand its capabilities. This was only locally achieved in the Western Protectorate due to the multiple and tiny local states and the weakly-controlled border with Yemen. After the entry of the Colony into the Federation, attempts were made to strengthen federal institutions and some success was achieved with the Federal Regular Army. But none of these institutions had the capacity to survive the blast of extreme nationalism emanating from other parts of the Middle East, supported by subversive agencies.

Noel Brehony's essay on the National Liberation Front (NLF) provides a comprehensive picture of this party and its capabilities, its domestic South Arabian actors and their sponsors outside the country, which had largely eluded the security agencies prior to Aden's independence. In retrospect, the large influx of Yemenis into Aden between the 1930s and the 1950s, escaping from uncongenial social and political constraints under the Yemeni Imams and seeking a better life, was probably fundamental in destabilising Aden and the Western Protectorate. In 1962 many of them returned to Yemen to support the revolution there. Some also joined the NLF as it grew within Aden and the protectorates, until it emerged as the only local party with the capacity and cohesion to take over government, a lamentable outcome for the people of South Arabia in view of its totalitarian policies.

Robert MacNamara's essay draws out the relationship between Egypt and Britain as Gamal Abdul Nasser pursued pan-Arabism, a relationship which fluctuated between the late 1950s and the mid-1960s, but which also had some constants for Britain – a policy of non-interference and non-involvement in Arab quarrels and a British determination to protect its access to Middle Eastern oil. It was not considered sufficient to be able to buy the oil which the producing countries would wish to sell; physical control was considered essential. With the death of Imam Ahmad in September 1962 and the flight of his heir Imam Badr, the Yemen Arab Republic was created and received assistance from Nasser's Egypt, whose forces rose at their peak to about 70,000 men. This stimulated a royalist movement supported principally by Saudi Arabia. Britain both declined to recognise the republican government and allowed some support for the Royalists to be trafficked into Yemen – in the process departing from the policy of non-intervention. From its Yemeni base, the EIS was able to support the NLF and other organisations in South Arabia. MacNamara quotes a British Secret Intelligence Service (commonly known as MI6) assessment of mid-1964 - "Nasser has succeeded in stirring up the uneasy situation in Aden and the Federation to a point at which our position may soon become untenable". The Labour government which came to power in 1964, perhaps influenced by this conclusion, thought it might be able to negotiate with both the nationalists and Nasser. This proved to be an illusion.

Asher Orkaby's essay on the impact of the Yemeni civil war on the timing of British departure from Aden is a helpful historical presentation. The first phase began in the 1930s when large numbers of Yemenis moved to Aden where they experienced a different, more modern lifestyle and their children received a better education. A number of the latter became prominent Yemeni leaders, including Ahmad Nu'man and Muhammad Zubayri. The latter two met again in Aden when they fled Yemen in the mid-1940s, where they founded the Free Yemen Movement and the Grand Yemeni Association, which had a role in the assassination of Imam Yahya in 1948. The notion of the larger Yemen, incorporating South Arabia, emerged from this group, however contentious it may be historically. Yemen was also exposed to outside influences as Aden grew into one of the world's greatest ports, and a regional transit and transportation hub. Orkaby considers that the Yemeni workers in Aden became in effect 'the Nasserite vanguard in Aden', willing supporters of the anti-colonial movement in the South and the republican movement in the North.

Simon Smith's essay on failure and success in state formation perpetuates the view that the federations created in the process of decolonisation by Britain were a mistake. However, the West Indies Federation was a good attempt to solve the problem of small island states; it was the decision of the islanders themselves amicably to disband the federation when faced with the practical problems of making it work, and in light of the acceptance by the United Nations of such very small states as the Gambia and the Seychelles. The federation of Malaysia was a qualified success, though in due course Singapore's unique situation led it to leave. Nigeria remains a federation today, though it had to amend the constitution and create more states after the Biafra war. The Federation of Central Africa was created against the advice of two of the Governors of the three member states (Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland); and the third state (Southern Rhodesia) failed to adapt itself to the needs of the federation. There is nothing wrong in principle with the federal concept, provided the member states work hard to make it work. Many of them have done so, including the United Arab Emirates. The essays in this volume describe the many factors contributing to the failure of the Federation of South Arabia - not the federal concept per se.

The creation and success of the United Arab Emirates reflects the relationship developed between especially Shaikh Zaid of Abu Dhabi and Shaikh Rashed of Dubai – during months and years of negotiations; but also owes much to Sir William Luce's personal relationship with several rulers, his pragmatism, sagacity, determination and the experience he gained in Sudan and Aden, which it seems to me does not get adequate recognition in Brandon Friedman's essay. The UAE was fortunate to have not only growing mineral wealth itself, but a stable and wealthy neighbour in Saudi Arabia, so dissimilar from the fractious, poverty-stricken Yemen, supported as it was by Egypt, which had such a large and de-stabilising role in South Arabia and the Federation.

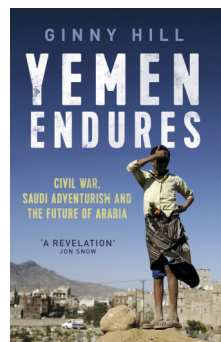
Stephen Day's reflections and memories in his essay illustrate graphically many of the well-intended, but sometimes mis-directed initiatives taken by officials, ministers and people, both British and Arab, in the search for advancement and a satisfactory independence for South Arabia; and some of the many absurdities which arose.

JOHN DUCKER³

3 John Ducker is a former member of the Aden Administration. He later was on the staff of the World Bank and is now retired.

Yemen Endures, Civil war, Saudi Adventurism and the Future of Arabia, by Ginny Hill, London, Hurst and Co, 2017, pp 391 ISBN 978-1-84904-805-7 Hb £25

Ginny Hill's *Yemen Endures* tells the story of state formation, fragmentation and the tangles of political power in Yemen. Taking her starting point as the 1962 revolution, Hill follows the rise to power of President Ali Abdullah Saleh through to the youth-led uprising in 2011 and the following transition attempts – and failures – to broker new power-sharing agreements, taking in the struggles in the South and the conflicts in Sa'ada along the way. Hill deftly navigates Yemen's intricately structured, highly personalized power networks, pulling them apart to show the reader how they work and who is populating and manipulating them.



Combining interview material from her own time living and working in Yemen with the stories of some incredible individuals she's found in the annals of history, *Yemen Endures* is told through the eyes of characters Hill is drawn to, but also many people who are clearly drawn to Hill. It should be noted that I am one of the latter – a keen reader will observe that my name appears a couple of times in the book. Inspired by her enthusiasm for the country, I helped set up the Yemen Forum policy network with Ginny at Chatham House in 2009, and the two of us have worked together and formed a strong friendship ever since. For me, reading *Yemen Endures* is like sitting with Ginny at a dinner table, soaking up her analysis of Yemen's complex and layered politics over some *salta* or *shafout*, with our Yemeni friends and colleagues chipping in with anecdotes tinged with black humour. Obviously, my review should be read taking into consideration all the bias that this entails.

Hill's analysis is sharp and detailed, but her prose is clear, engaging and at times quite lyrical, making *Yemen Endures* a good read for both Yemen connoisseurs and Yemen novices. Her character portrayals are laced with comic touches – from fat Imams and shoeless presidents, to a British intelligence officer who peppered her Arabic radio broadcasts with flourishes of Wordsworth, a Yemeni Minister resembling the caterpillar from *Alice in Wonderland* and some village elders who handle Ginny 'like an expensive

contraband product that could get everyone into trouble if something went wrong' – that display a warmth for the country and its people. At the same time, underlying the detailed analysis of *Yemen Endures* is also a sense of collective trauma and a narrative of deep connections and loss, as things continue to worsen for the people she cares about.

Hill gives equal weight in the book to her time spent with President Saleh as to her time spent with revolutionaries from Yemen's Change Square, journalists jailed for their reporting, or exiled leaders from the south. These multiple, nuanced perspectives from players both inside and outside of Yemen's networks of power are not only what makes this book come alive, but also betray the importance of relationship politics in Yemen.

"This is how it is with the truth in Yemen," she explains at the beginning of the book, "there are many versions of the same moment, and each of them is somehow valid. Eyewitnesses are universally inconsistent, but in Yemen truth is especially fluid. Yemen is a world of relationships, not institutions, and each version of events that is revealed to you depends on the speaker's assessment of your connections and suspected affiliations. People may take weeks, or months, to allow their deeper truths to emerge."

Ginny also positions herself as 'the unreliable narrator' pushing the reader to explore rather than accept her own written word: "I cannot be certain that I have eliminated all errors of perception on my part, nor on theirs [interviewees]. As a result, what follows should be treated as informed comment; at the very least, it reveals my sources perceptions of the chief protagonists, of each other, and themselves at the time at which we spoke."

Another element that stands out from other non-fiction on Yemen is Hill's insights into the internal politics of Saudi Arabia, the US and the UN, and the impact they have had on Yemen. She makes some fairly hefty criticisms of international involvement in Yemen over the years, at times in her own narrative voice, at others giving platform to Yemenis expressing their concerns and also, at times, extremely prescient analysis.

"I repeatedly raised questions about 'risk mitigation' and 'contingency planning'," says Ginny of her time spent with decision-makers in the international community ahead of the current conflict in Yemen, "but it seemed there was no Plan B. The arrogance and apparent lack of foresight among some senior decision-makers, still riding on the success of negotiating the transition agreements and the completion of the National Dialogue, was staggering". Hill appears saddened by how little Yemenis outside of Saleh's

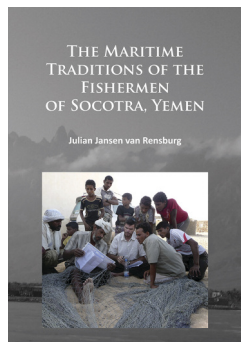
networks have been listened to over the years, and how much might have been achieved, or at least avoided, if this had been different.

KATE NEVENS⁴

The Maritime Traditions of the Fishermen of Socotra, Yemen, by Julian Jansen van Rensburg, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2016, pp 186, illustrated, 91 figures, ISBN 978-1-78491-482-0 Pb £ 33

Its systematic reference to archaeological and historical information on each aspect of Socotra's fisheries explains this book's publication by a specialist archaeological publisher, although it also includes considerable material on contemporary fishing practices collected during the author's field visits in the first decade of this century.

The book starts with a helpful general literature review covering most aspects of Socotran life going back to publications starting in antiquity and up to the current period. Presenting the population with a focus on Socotra's ethnic groups, Rensburg goes into details of their origins outside Socotra in south Asia, Africa, as well as the Arabian Peninsula and suggests that the people of Socotra's interior as well as those of the coastal areas are all mostly of immigrant origin. Focusing on the fishers, he mentions as specifically local characteristics aspects of their situation which are, in fact, shared with other parts of Yemen, something which would have been worth mentioning: for example that fisher communities are generally poor and seen as having low status, despite the fact that in recent decades their economic circumstances have changed significantly. Prior to the current war, they became significantly wealthier than farming communities throughout Yemen. He also notes (p 43) that in recent decades inland herders have taken up fishing to complement their income, a characteristic shared with some Mahri herding communities which have, for some time, been part-time herders and part-time fishers, again something which he fails to mention despite the close relationship between al Mahra and Socotra.



4 Kate Nevens was the Head of the MENA Programme at Saferworld, an international conflict prevention organisation.

Among the author's more questionable statements is the assertion that black fishermen are *muwalladeen* (p 42); this term is the standard one used throughout Yemen to describe individuals of mixed parentage, rather than an issue of race. Alongside other parts of Yemen and indeed, well beyond, women do not go to sea, but the author usefully mentions that some women fish from the beach (again as is the case in Hadramaut and Mahra).

Discussing regulations to avoid over-fishing, he mentions a community based system but also raises the issue of the non-respect of regulations both by local fishers as well as others coming from the mainland. Alongside all artisanal fishers throughout Yemen, the main problem for Socotra fishers is the competition from large vessels fishing illegally within the country's coastal waters; in the case of Socotra, the author's informants were particularly critical of Indian vessels (p 49) and, in this respect they differ from other Yemeni fishers who generally blame both national and Russians as the main culprits.

The third part of the book focuses on the climatic and seafaring conditions which affect Socotran fisheries, discussing each coastal village separately including the mechanisms used by the fishers to identify their favourite fishing grounds and the technical sea-faring aspects of their activity, such as landmarks, sea colour, and swell direction. The chapters on the equipment used provide both historic details on the types of craft and gear, as well as the current situation, with an overview of the different types of boats used and the reasons why they were replaced by more modern ones as technology improved. Fishing gear used differs according to 'social and environmental constraints and the range of species' sought (p 124). He describes the construction methods of traditional traps using local materials, as well as modern wire lobster traps, types of fishing nets and lines.

The final chapter on the fishery economy is primarily historical, indicating which types of fish were sold at different times and to which types of buyers, ranging from larger vessels waiting in the high sea, the contemporary main marketing mechanism, to local buyers for species valued by tourists, as well as some illegal sales (for example of turtles). While he addresses the constraints imposed by the climate and the timing of visiting trading ships, he gives no indication either of quantities, prices or economic value of the fishery for villages, individual fishers, or indeed the overall Socotran economy. While he describes the visiting vessels as operating to address overseas demand (p 150), he provides no information to

support his assertion that all these ships are foreign, rather than owned by Yemeni mainlanders, which was the experience of this reviewer working in Socotra at much the same time as the author's field work.

The book's conclusion situates the study within the context of historical Indian Ocean studies focusing on the Indo-Roman trade from archaeological data and going through a list of major ports in Arabia and western India until Portuguese involvement in the 16th Century; analysis of more recent interaction is largely absent and he concludes that the development of fisheries in Socotra cannot be understood outside the context of migration and trade in the region in the past millennium. A deeper emphasis on the contemporary relationship between Socotran fisheries and those of the mainland and Oman would have been welcome. Maybe the fact that he describes the PDRY period of Socotran history as an 'occupation' (p 43 *et al*) hints at the author's reluctance to consider Socotra as part of Yemen.

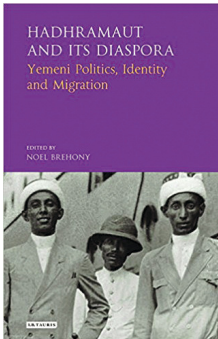
In conclusion, the book provides very detailed information on certain historical and contemporary aspects of Socotran fisheries, which should be of use to people involved in the future development of the sector. Its historical approach to each of the aspects covered provides an indication of changes over the centuries, though the limitations of the earlier accounts quoted raise the question of the validity of any definitive historical comparisons or analysis of change. The anthropological approach, including details of materials, tools and equipment over time, adds to the book's value. One of its main weaknesses is the absence of comparison and discussion of living and working conditions of Socotran communities with those in the rest of Yemen, thus he misses out on a number of features and problems which are shared by all coastal communities throughout Yemen.

HELEN LACKNER



BOOK NOTES

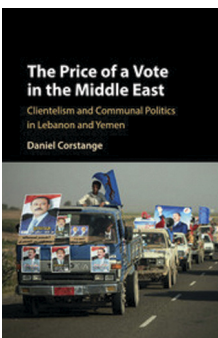
Hadhramaut and its Diaspora, Yemeni Politics, Identity and Migration edited by Noel Brehony, London, IB Tauris, 2017, pp 250, ISBN 978-1-78453-868-2 Hb £62



This is the first major publication of the Hadhramaut Research Centre which was recently established in Mukalla. Resulting from a conference held at SOAS, London, in 2015, it consists of 10 chapters, most of them by scholars who have specialised in research on Hadhramaut in recent decades and covers a wide range of subjects. Its approaches includes history, sociology and politics addressing aspects of Hadhramaut's contemporary and earlier periods. The editor apologises as the full review of the book which had been commissioned did not arrive on time,

but the B-YS considers it important to alert readers to the existence and availability of the book, even in such a truncated notice. A full review is again planned for next year's journal.

The Price of a Vote in the Middle East, Clientelism and Communal Politics in Lebanon and Yemen by Daniel Corstange, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp 256, ISBN 978-1-107-10667-3 Hb £ 64.99



Clientelism and ethnic favouritism largely fail to provide the benefits expected by many in the participating electorate. The author's explanation is that this is due to "ethnic monopsony, a political constituency defined along communal lines that is dominated by a single, vote-buying patron or party" (p1). The book is devoted to demonstrating this theory through the examples of elections in Lebanon and Yemen. This note focuses on some points made about Yemen. Corstange bases his discussion on the differences in support of the political parties, mainly

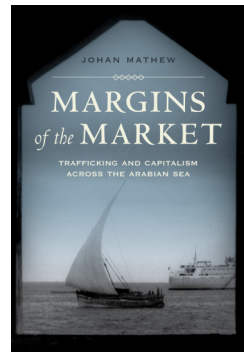
Islah and the General People's Congress (GPC), correctly noting that programmes and differences between left, centre and right are largely irrel-

evant. To provide evidence for his analysis, he uses the provision of electricity and domestic water as the issues to compare political support for the GPC and Islah, an approach which may be suitable for Lebanon, but not for Yemen as it neglects the fact that provision of both these services is largely determined by the country's topography and relative population density rather than merely issues of clientelism or community support for one party or another. Although he very correctly points out the role of tribes and community allegiances in organising votes, these are not as determining as he suggests: everyone has experience of many families and ethnic groups which are internally divided and where political allegiances and voting patterns vary widely and can be in serious conflict. His discussion of self-identification providing the contrast between tribe and profession ignores the issue of ascribed social statuses, which are major forms of self-identification in Yemen and clearly overlap as well as playing major roles in political allegiances. In brief, the exclusive focus on the electoral process is a limitation to the overall analysis due to some significant misinterpretations of the role and outcome of favouritism in Yemeni politics under Saleh. This raises questions about his overall theory.

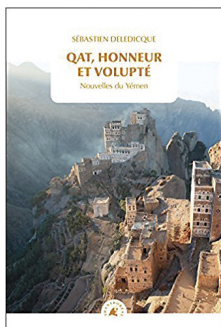
Margins of the Market, Trafficking and Capitalism Across the Arabian Sea by Johan Mathew, Oakland, University of California Press, 2016, pp 272 ISBN: 978-0-52028-855-3 Pb, \$29.95, £24.95

Arising from the author's doctorate thesis, the book is a readable account of trade based on the Arabian sea, focusing on the relationship between the traders and the rising state authorities, particularly the British empire and its various local administrations in the 19th Century. Examining in particular the various mechanisms used by local traders and naval captains to evade the increasing set of regulations focused either on constraints of merchandise, including slaves, or on increasing revenue through customs duties, the author demonstrates that the

conflicting ideological views of the different participants led to endless misunderstandings. In particular he emphasises the lack of success of the British authorities in enforcing its regulations and the cooperation between traders and others, including rival European states, to by-pass these



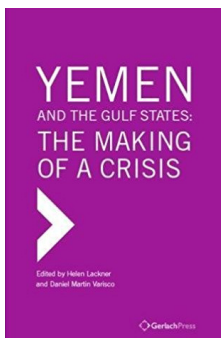
intrusions in their marketing mechanisms. The focus on the Arabian Sea allows readers to increase their awareness of the cohesion which existed between traders and sea farers across the many countries concerned. Thus the book is an important contribution to reminding scholars of the close interaction which has prevailed between the many countries with different languages and cultures in the past two centuries.



Qat, Honneur et Volupté by Sébastien Deledicque, Paris, Transboréal, 2016, pp 209 ISBN 978-2-36157-190-0 Euro 10.90

This small format travel account by a Frenchman working for the French cultural centre and other institutions presents a series of short sketches of Yemeni life, based on personal stories and events involving the author during his many years of working and travelling throughout the country. A refreshing and positive view of Yemen when most of what we read about the country is so depressing.

Yemen and the Gulf States: the Making of a Crisis, edited by Helen Lackner and Daniel Varisco, Berlin, Gerlach, 2017, pp 150, ISBN 978-3-95994-030-6 Hb £80, Euro 85



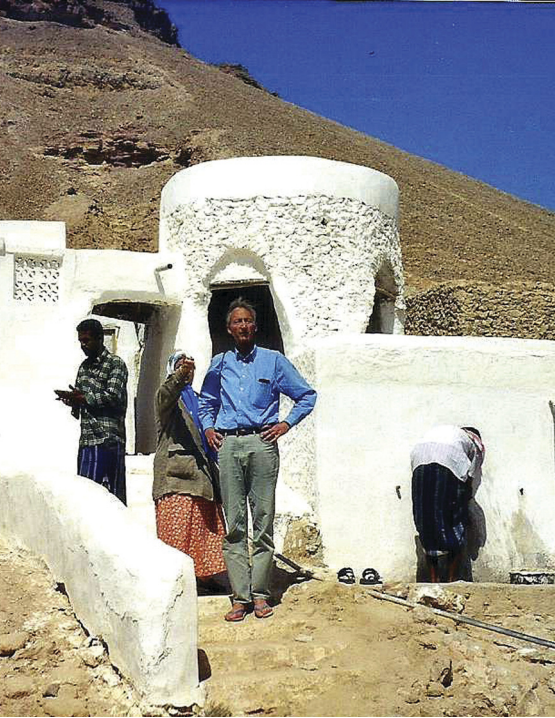
Comprising of re-drafted papers from the Cambridge Gulf Research Meeting in 2016, this book has six chapters on different aspects of Yemen's relations with the Gulf states. Starting with an overview by Lackner, Ash Rossiter then provides a detailed historical analysis of the Yemeni-Saudi Arabian border. Sterling Jensen examines the economic and security roles of the GCC states with respect to Yemen, while Mahjoob Zweiri looks at Yemen's role in the context of Iran-Gulf relations. The unique and complex case of the Omani-Yemeni relationship over the past half

century is discussed by Ahmed Baabood and its connection to other GCC states, while Varisco's conclusion addresses the possible scenarios which might be seen in coming years.

OBITUARIES

JOHN SHIPMAN

1939–2016



John Shipman in Qabr Saleh,
Hadramaut, in 2000

John Shipman was a founder member of the British-Yemeni Society and creator and editor of this Journal from 1993 to 2012. He was the embodiment of the society and the focal point for members and friends of Yemen to whom he gave his time generously and selflessly. The many tributes and remembrances sent to the B-YS following the announcement of his death on 3 November, 2016 show the esteem, respect and love in which he was held.

John Gervase Trafford Shipman was born in Twickenham on 7 July 1939, the son of Brigadier Trafford Shipman, a military medical doctor, and Elizabeth Smith. They had been married in India – one of his grandfathers had been a District Commissioner in the Raj. John, his sister Susan and brother Robert had a peripatetic childhood as his father moved from country to country on military postings. He won a scholarship to Cheltenham College and another to Trinity College Dublin where he studied History and Politics. John joined the HM Overseas Civil Service on contract in 1962 and he began his love affair with Yemen and Arabia when appointed in January 1963 Assistant Adviser Seiyun working for Jim Ellis and then Philip Allfree, the Adviser to the Northern Areas, before becoming in 1967 Assistant Adviser (Development and Finance) in Mukalla. He worked closely with the Sultans of Qu'aiti and Kathiri but soon after his arrival the National Liberation Front (NLF) was founded,

marking the tumultuous and violent period that led to the independence of South Yemen in 1967.

John befriended ‘Ashur (Ashoor) al-Mahri, the Adviser to the Resident, who was murdered by the NLF in 1967. ‘Ashur’s son Ghazi was pulled out of Mukalla by John on one of the last helicopters to leave as the British withdrew in 1967. John put Ghazi into school in Bahrain and he is today the UAE’s ambassador at Addis Ababa. Another of ‘Ashur’s sons, Salim, was at John’s funeral. When Noel was in Aden in 1971 he met Mahmoud Saeed Madhi, who had also been one of John’s assistants in Hadhramaut but was also secretly working with the NLF in a political role. This LSE graduate spoke with great warmth of John, a man he admired for his many virtues and the selfless way in which he had helped Mahmoud to learn the administrative skills he later used in Aden. Like Salim, Ghazi and their sister, he remained grateful to John to the end. John’s gift for friendship crossed all divides and touched all.

After South Arabia, John joined the FCO and was sent to the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies (MECAS) at Shamlan in Lebanon to perfect his Arabic, recording the best result to that date for any student. Thereafter he had postings to Oman (1970–73), Jeddah (1977–81) and Abu Dhabi (1985–1991, where he was promoted to Counsellor in 1988) interspersed with desk jobs at the FCO dealing with the Arab world. In 1991 he was seconded to the Cabinet Office before spending his last few years in government service working on Islamic affairs for the FCO’s Research Department.

A certain chameleon quality, made this shy and reserved man lively, engaging, even quite noisy when he slipped into Arabic. And his Arabic was a delight, deep, guttural and vivid, far from the insipid dialects of the Levant or Khan al-Khalili taught at MECAS. His vocabulary and idiom were astonishing. The best of his generation, he was asked to interpret for Margaret Thatcher. In 1988, John was present at a meeting with King Husain of Jordan at which Mrs Thatcher flew at the king for his decision to withdraw from administrative responsibility for the West Bank. Mrs Thatcher seemed to take no account of the fact that the king was accompanied and that, therefore, as John perceived, the humiliation of her attack would be all the greater. John said the effect was traumatic and later advised a friend when he had to deal with King Husain, to look-out if there was anybody else present. No matter how rocky the ground, John was always sure-footed.



John Shipman (right) with Douglas Gordon

John also interpreted for HM The Queen Mother. King ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al- ‘Aziz of Saudi Arabia had a long affection for HM The Queen Mother. He often recalled how impressed he was that the Queen would pour her guest’s tea herself. One day when John was interpreting, the Queen asked the then Crown Prince how much he liked dogs. With dogs being unclean in Islamic observance, as a conversational gambit this was going nowhere. But ever the master of tact, John unblinkingly turned to the Crown Prince and asked him how much he liked horses. The exchange continued along these lines, at happy and unrevealed cross purposes, for ten or more minutes. The miracle was that John didn’t get giggles. He had a weakness for giggles, but manners and discretion won out. What an attractive person he was.

In London, when he retired, he was busy. Editing for the Royal Society for Asian Affairs and the journal of the British-Yemeni Society were not

only labours which took up a lot of his time, but also occasions for pleasure. He immersed himself in the places where some of his happiest experiences had been. His knowledge was also a gift to his friends. Listening to John and Wilfred (Thesiger) exchanging memories of people and places from the Hadhramaut to the Hindu Kush was a readmission into what otherwise was a vanished world. And for Wilfred these were moments of depth, of re-encounter and acknowledgement, rare at that time, late in his life. John's kindness however, to Wilfred in his remote old age, to Maggie and Mark Allen throughout their marriage, to Thanos and many younger people, to his enormous circle of friends, lives as a generosity of spirit which still moves us. Salma Samar al-Damluji once told how John had walked across a snow bound London to deliver a book she desperately needed to borrow. Tellingly, she recalls how John didn't ring the bell and bring the book up, but left it in the hall so that he shouldn't disturb her research crisis. How eloquent is that self-disclosing quality of truth and virtue, as clear as though shouted from the roof tops, but without a word being said. John's goodness was such an immediate and noticeable characteristic.

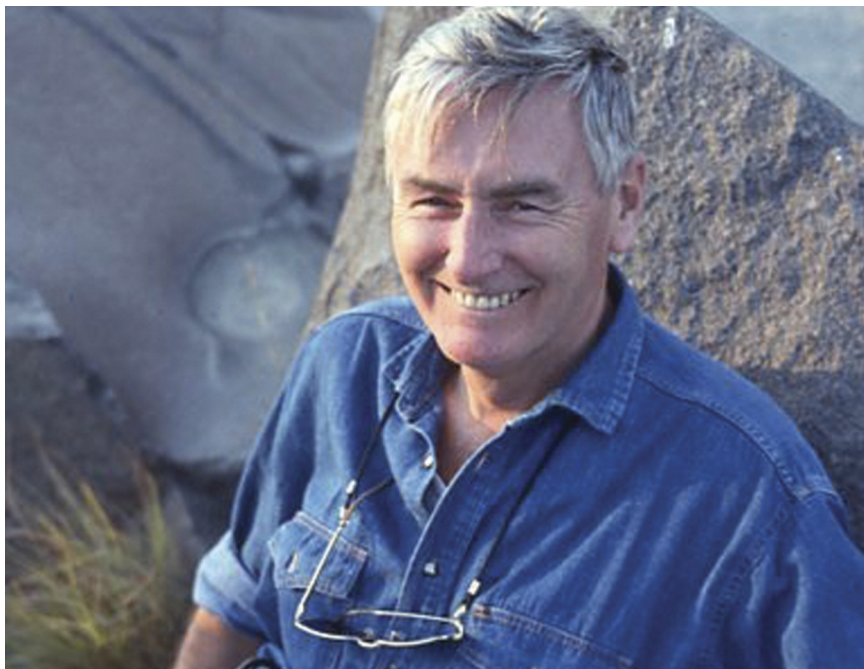
To be frank just for a moment, it's true John was host to a number of human paradoxes: he read the *Guardian*; he was angered by so much of American policy, yet he very nearly married an American. As a lover of fairness and a seeker after justice he was radical, but so very conservative in dress, never seen without a blue shirt. Open handed in entertaining, notably at the Travellers' Club, he was happiest for himself just with a book and a bag of duty-free dates, supplied by Sara, another 'Ashur granddaughter at the UAE embassy in London.

John's first and enduring love was for South Arabia and throughout his diplomatic career he was surrounded by Yemeni friends no matter where he was living. He wrote articles and book chapters on Yemen but avoided writing about himself. Fortunately, the many letters he wrote to friends and family, the notes he made of his encounters and travels have now been placed in the archives of St Antony's College, Oxford and will provide a rich source on Arabia to future scholars.

By being austere himself, crossing cultures but always himself, he gave us the gift of seeing another way of living. John questioned conventional thinking and offered us a wisdom rooted in the tolerance of experience and a benevolence of outlook which made us feel included in it together. If humility is a sign of interior depth, John was the soul of it.

MARK ALLEN & NOEL BREHONY

DOUGLAS GORDON
1936–2017



Douglas Gordon near Chilas in Pakistan in 1993. (Photo courtesy of Caroline Gordon.)

Douglas Gordon joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1954. During his National Service with the Royal Marines he had his first experience of the Arab World when he drove a landing craft ashore during the Suez Operation in 1956. He resumed his career with the FCO and after a short posting to Amman was sent to MECAS to learn Arabic. There followed assignments in the Gulf States. He was political agent in Abu Dhabi for two years.

It was on his return home in 1963 on the P & O liner *Arcadia* that he first visited Yemen if only briefly. He recalled looking up at the rugged beauty of Jebel Shamsan dominating Aden, little thinking that he would climb the mountain 25 years later. During his time in the British Embassy in Kuwait from 1966–1969, he had to deal with rapidly changing British policy towards the region, as well as anti-British demonstrations following the

1967 six-day Arab-Israeli war. After Kuwait he was back in London for a short time before being appointed Head of Chancery in Doha.

There was a six week interlude in Sana'a in 1972 shortly after Britain and the Yemen Arab Republic re-established diplomatic relations, but his career after the posting to Qatar took him further afield to Gibraltar, Washington and later Cleveland, with an interim period in London as Assistant Marshal to the Diplomatic Corps, an appointment which made him a Member of the Royal Household. In 1984, he was honored with the Freedom as a Citizen of London which gave him the right to drive sheep and cattle across London Bridge; although he failed to put this privilege into practice, planning it gave him considerable entertainment over the years.

It was not until 1989 that he returned to the Arab World being appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. With the reunification of the two Yemens, he had to leave after a year thus becoming the last British Ambassador to reside in Aden. From 1990-1993 he was High Commissioner in Guyana and Ambassador to Suriname, before being accredited as Ambassador to the Republic of Yemen.

His appreciation of Yemen included both a great liking for its people and happy moments enjoying the country's scenery: in 1992, he and Caroline spent Christmas picnicking near Ataq where his red socks, serving as Christmas stockings filled with fruit and nuts, were hung from the car mirrors. Their intended quiet lunch was interrupted and fully transformed into a memorable occasion by the arrival of a herd of goats who decided to share their lunch, consuming everything from the socks to the champagne and settled inside their vehicle, while their herders sat some distance away enjoying the entertainment. His passion for collecting sea shells was also easy to indulge on long walks along the beach, including one occasion when the couple found the jawbone of a whale which they used to decorate the Residence garden.

He was well-known for his ability to play the bagpipes, an instrument much appreciated in Yemen. Faced with a cat refusing to leave the roof of the Residence in Sana'a, he persuaded the animal to desist by playing it loud bagpipe tunes. His strong lungs also helped him in a Dayak village in Kalimantan, Indonesia when he hit a bull's eye with a blow pipe, impressing the villagers so much that they appointed him an honorary villager which meant being fully initiated in a ceremony which included being covered in soot and other body decorations made from rice flour.

More seriously, he watched with great sadness as British citizens were evacuated by air from Sana'a in the 1994 civil war, a tragedy which, in his view, should never have happened. After his retirement in 1995, he continued to be deeply involved with Yemen, through taking on the Chairmanship of the B-YS in 1999, a position he held until 2005 when he was made an Honorary Vice-President of the Society. So far he holds the record for being our longest serving chairman. During his six years as chairman he was also working as the Diplomatic Consultant at the Royal Garden Hotel where he was able to arrange meetings and events for the Society. In spite of the onset of Parkinson's he devoted himself to the affairs of the Society and participated in all its activities as long as he was able to do so. Eventually he was looked after in a care home where he died on 28th June.

Douglas gained the friendship and respect of many Yemenis who appreciated his commitment to their country which persisted well beyond his involvement as Ambassador or even with the B-YS. In his last years, he was further saddened by the recent disintegration of a country which had been his favourite posting.

JULIAN PAXTON

ABDUL QADIR ALI HILAL
1962–2016



On 8 October 2016 the Saudi Arabian air force launched the largest of its regrettable (some would argue criminal – Saudi Arabia claims that it was a mistake) attacks on civilian targets in Yemen, targeting a gathering hall in Sana'a where a large crowd of mourners and relatives had come to pay their respects to the family of Ali al-Ruwayshan, a leading Yemeni personality. Among the 140 killed in the double-tap attack was the mayor of Sana'a, Abdul Qadir Ali Hilal, who had held that post since July 2012.

Abdul Qadir was born in 1962 in one of the small villages of Sanhan district, a short distance south-east of Sana'a. He completed his studies at Sana'a University in Shari'ah and law in 1984 and commenced a career of

largely civil administrative positions starting as general director of the Mawiyah district of Ta'izz in 1986 and the following year was appointed, in the same position, to Damt in Ibb. In 1994, after unification, he was appointed deputy governor of Ibb and later the same year – after the brief war of secession that summer – governor. From 2001 to 2007 he served as governor of Hadhramaut, where through his efforts to develop the infrastructure and attract investment, he remained popular and respected despite the growing influence of the opposition Islah party in that area. After his term as Governor of Hadhramaut he served briefly as Minister of Local Government, later being appointed as Minister of State without portfolio and member of the cabinet. In 2008 and 2009 he led efforts to broker peace between the Saleh government and the Huthi movement in the 6th war which opposed them.

As Mayor of Sana'a, Hilal showed himself to be conscientious and committed, keen to tackle the many challenges of administering a large and complex city and its increasingly sprawling suburbs whilst at the same time having rather limited powers to do so, as local politics, the various security forces and different government departments all had their own separate agendas. He remained aloof from the political rivalries that became increasingly intrusive – between Ali Mohsen (who had appointed him as director in Damt early in his career) and Ali Abdullah Saleh, or between the Islah party and the Huthis. He was a member of Saleh's General People's Congress party but was not part of the innermost circle of its leadership. In fact, on more than one occasion, his refusal to follow the dictates of the party or of Saleh himself led to tension – his resignation as Minister of Local Government was the result of one such confrontation. He was invited to the UK in 2013 on a fact-finding visit to learn about the management of large cities in the UK, and particularly the improvement of deprived areas.

Throughout his career he worked as a conciliator and peacemaker, focused on national rather than partisan interests, and on ensuring that local administrations were given the support and resources they needed by an increasingly centralised state. As mayor of Sana'a he successfully negotiated the end of strikes by refuse workers and, later, after the Huthi takeover of the capital, water authority workers. He would also personally lead the periodic clean-up campaigns in the capital. He worked tirelessly in 2014 to prevent fighting between Huthis and various rival factions from escalating and entering the capital. When these efforts failed and Yemen's

civil war became regionalized, he supported both UN and local mediation efforts to find a compromise. His strict and conscientious impartiality, which brought him grass-roots popularity and credibility as a mediator, meant that he did not always enjoy high level support from politicians and government, and he often found himself under attack from the opponents he was trying to bring together.

Hilal held the military rank of Staff General, possibly as a result of his spending a short time at the Police College following his graduation from university. His official roles, though, were essentially civilian. He was married with ten children.

ROBERT WILSON

**AHMAD BIN FARID BIN MUHAMMAD
AL-SURAIMAH AL-AULAQI
1946–2017**



Shaykh Ahmad bin Farid¹ was born in al-Mahfad (Upper Aulaqi) on 10 September 1946, into the al-Suraimah family, one of the leading families of the al-Aulaqi confederation: his uncle was the Foreign Minister of the Federation of South Arabia Government. Ahmad began his formal education in Aden in 1955, before reading International Law at London University. As an undergraduate, he was accompanied by retired SAS bodyguards. He also developed a taste for Ernest Hemingway, boasting that he had read everything Hemingway had written in English, and all that

was available in Arabic. (He was touched and delighted to be presented later with a fine collection of Hemingway's books.)

1 The author thanks the following for help and recollections: Dr Adel al-Aulaqi, Shaikh Mohammed Farid Al Aulaki, Shaikh Saleh bin Farid al-Aulaqi, Mr John Beasant, Dr Noel Brehony, Mr Bruce Carswell, Ambassador Frances Cook, Mr Muhammad bin Dohry, Dr Noel Guckian, Col and Mrs Brian Lees, Mr Pat Shaughnessy, and Brig Aldwin Wight.

On his return to South Arabia in 1965, he led a group working with the British against the Marxist NLF and the Nasserite FLOSY, as part of the *keenie-meenie*² operations. Later, he was heavily involved in the al-Aulaqis struggle against the NLF, eventually being forced to withdraw into Saudi Arabia, himself driving a Land Rover which was shot in the process. After the British withdrawal from South Arabia, Shaikh Ahmad led his band of guerrilla fighters in raids against the PDRY from Saudi Arabia. When Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id came to power in 1970 in Oman, he and his group moved to Oman where from they fought on the northern sector of Oman's border with PDRY. He then developed a close friendship with the Sultan and some of his closest advisers, in particular Shaikh Ali Majid, Tim Landon and Erik Bennett.

After the Dhofar conflict ended in December 1975, Ahmad became an Omani citizen, although he never pretended to be Omani – he was proud of his heritage, and grateful that he could live comfortably near 'home'. (By contrast, most of his followers moved to the UAE and became Emiratis.) After 1975, he became a very successful entrepreneur and businessman, while remaining an informal member of the Sultan's court. He was also one of the rare 'business' shaikhs who still enjoyed riding camels.

In business as in politics, Ahmad always dreamed big: in August 1991, he purchased a huge hotel, the Montfleury in Cannes in France, and an adjoining apartment complex in which many Omanis bought flats. His European offices were in that hotel, with a permanent staff, although Ahmad also had a lovely apartment in Knightsbridge, along with a portfolio of half a dozen flats in the best areas of London. One of his signature projects was the Grand Hyatt hotel in Muscat, "which was a vibrant tribute to his culture and to his adopted country – the slowly rotating statue in the lobby (a cast bronze of a life size falconer) was part of that tribute – so were the window designs and wide-scale use of Gulf art throughout: chests, paintings, and photographs." Shaikh Ahmad patronised it frequently himself and was to be found either in the 'Tuscany' Italian restaurant where he always had Table 13 (in a corner to the left of the entrance with commanding views to the front) or upstairs, in a rooftop bar which reflected Oman's African history – with stuffed elephant heads, and a big safari jeep parked out front, reputedly the Land Rover in which

2 A Swahili term for the movement of a snake through grass, but used to describe undercover security operations by the Special Forces.

he escaped in 1967, complete with bullet holes. He habitually had a Havana cigar in one hand, a gold Rolex watch on his wrist, and usually a large gold ring on his finger.

He was constantly thinking of Yemen as well, bringing major US companies to Oman where he'd try to interest them in investing in Yemen, generally in the oil and gas sector. He owned a construction company – Desert Line Projects Oman – which operated throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and built roads in Yemen (including Shehen to Thamud and Tarim, the Shehen–al-Ghayda road, the Aroom–Fougait road, Fatq-Hawf road, al-Ghaydha internal roads, Harad–Sa'ada road, al-Mahweet–al-Qanawis road,) starting in 1997. Shaikh Ahmad's animosity towards Ali Abdullah Saleh probably led to a major dispute over the completion of the al-Mahweet-al-Qanawis and the Sa'ada–Haradh roads in 2006: Saleh tried the Imam's method of not paying for the road which had been built and, when that did not work, of using tribal militias (and later the Yemeni armed forces) to intimidate the builders. The issue was brought to an international tribunal which broadly agreed with Shaikh Ahmad's interpretation of the agreement.

During the 1994 Civil War, Ahmad deployed his assets in the quest for Southern independence. Not only did he provide transport to move YSP tanks and armoured equipment to the Shabwa oil fields, but he was appointed military governor of Shabwa at the urging of Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia. In late January 1994 – long before the fighting started – Bruce Carswell (a senior member of Ahmad's European staff) was told to travel to Aden at short notice. He waited in the Mövenpick for weeks on end, until the call suddenly came for a meeting the following morning.

The following afternoon, “there was a cacophony of beeping as a crowd of well-armed Yemenis walked into the lobby, clearly escorting a VIP who had a cigar in hand and a silver revolver at his waist. It took a moment to recognize Ahmad Farid through the very different headgear and sartorially impeccable Yemeni costume.” They left the hotel, with Ahmad driving at the head of a five vehicle convoy of about 100 armed tribesmen. In the passenger foot-well was an AK-47, spare magazines and on the shelf below the radio were three hand grenades, which rolled from side to side during the journey ... Enthusiastically, Ahmad pointed out the location of their future HQ, and the beach where the first resort would be built etc. It was not to be. For the second time in his life Ahmad had to fight a rear-guard

action retreat into Oman as northern forces took control of his beloved South.

From his earliest years, Ahmad had collected information on Yemen: for his family interests, for the British, then later for the Omanis during the Dhofar conflict involving the PDRY. He never lost his interest in Yemeni current affairs, and had many interlocutors and informants, so he could give up-to-the-minute briefings on the situation in Yemen. He remained on the margins of Yemeni politics, although – like many Southern patriots – he had a particular distaste for Saleh. Thanks to his long involvement at the highest levels, Ahmad was also a shrewd, but discreet, commentator on Omani affairs. In 2013, Sultan Qaboos awarded him the Omani Medal of Honour and Excellence for his lifetime’s achievement.

When the 2011 uprisings broke out in Yemen, Ahmad was ready to nurture it. In 2012, he set up the al-Nur al-Farid foundation (named after his mother) in Aden, which provided extensive medical assistance, and donated YR215 million to help deal with an outbreak of dengue fever in the city in 2015. In 2012, his company was also contracted to build a 60 MW electricity station for Aden, Lahej and Abyan.

Ahmad supported the southern separatist cause and followed Muhammad Ali Ahmad. Ahmad bin Farid was a member of the National Dialogue Conference where he chaired the Southern Issue Working Group, and was thus a member of the Presidium. He withdrew, ostensibly, because it “avoid[ed] tackling the rights of southerners to self-determination.” Others believed that his withdrawal was due to the conflict of interest between his Omani nationality³ and involvement in Yemeni politics. He returned to Oman, and was replaced by Yassin Omar Makkawi in May 2013. After 2015 he brought Yemenis to Muscat at the start of the present civil war, hoping to broker a settlement, but alas to no avail.

Shaikh Ahmad had two wives: one a Saudi who lived in Saudi Arabia; his second wife was from the Yafa’i family of al-Bakri, although she was technically an Omani citizen, born in Zanzibar and living in Muscat. He had two sons and two daughters with his first wife, and a son and a daughter with his second wife. He was diagnosed with cancer in 2013 and underwent treatment in the UK and US. In April 2017, he returned to

3 While generous with handing out Omani nationality to senior Yemeni exiles, the Omani authorities usually insist that beneficiaries of this policy refrain from involvement in Yemeni politics

London where he died, surrounded by his families, at home in Knightsbridge on 27th May. He was buried in the Gardens of Peace Muslim Cemetery, Hainault. Many South Yemenis, including Dr Yassin Saeed Noman (Yemeni Ambassador to the UK) and some of his staff, opposition Southerners like Mohammed Ali Ahmed and Lutfi Shatara, as well as many other friends and admirers attended the funeral and burial.

In the words of Bruce Carswell, a friend and colleague for forty years, he “wanted so much to lead the development of his birth country, but was never to have the chance to do so. He was a leader of men, an entrepreneur, adventurer and perfectionist. He inspired loyalty and many of my colleagues were with him for decades. Up until the last stages of his recent illness, he would talk of plans for future projects.” Ahmad bin Farid bin Muhammad al-Suraimah al-Aulaqi certainly filled Kipling’s “unforgiving minute with 60 seconds worth of distance run”: he beat the clock.

JAMES SPENCER



A girl in the mountains

THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION: AS DESPERATE AS EVER

Now far into the third year of the war, the humanitarian situation in Yemen has worsened dramatically. Not only have there been more deaths and injuries caused by the war, but living conditions for the people have now deteriorated to an unprecedented extent, leading Stephen O'Brien, UN Undersecretary General for Humanitarian affairs to describe the situation as “the largest humanitarian crisis in the world” after a visit early in the year there and to the other countries threatened with famine. That was in March, before the expanded outbreak of cholera which between April and early September led to more than 2000 deaths, with more than 620 000 cases reported, in all but one of the country's governorates.

Other features of the emergency led O'Brien to make increasingly desperate and frustrated statements to the UN: in late August he stated that ‘17 million Yemenis do not know if or where they will get their next meal; nearly 7 million are facing the threat of famine; nearly 16 million lack access to water or sanitation.’ Many members will have seen the harrowing films of the situation which now appear more frequently on our news bulletins. O'Brien reminded the world that ‘we must remember that Yemen's catastrophe is entirely man-made. It is a direct result of the deliberate policies, tactics and actions of the parties to the conflict.’ While, as B-YS members we have no means to bring the war to an end, we can all try and help reduce the suffering.



*Photograph by Iona
Craig, 2015*



BY-S APPEAL

The B-YS appeal is still open. Since it started, it has raised and sent £12,618 (including £1,224 from HMRC through Gift Aid) to our two partners, MSF and the Yemeni Red Crescent. We have just over £700 ready to be sent when we have further substantial donations. Both our partners are particularly active in trying to control the cholera epidemic by providing clean water and improving sanitation, as well as treating patients. This is an impressive amount for a small charity such as ours, and I am sure all members will take pride in their contribution.

However the need remains extreme, indeed, it increases daily, so the committee urges all our members to dig deep yet again, and remember that everything that is donated through our appeal is increased by 25% through the Gift Aid mechanism, provided you have signed up for it. The form is available on the website or from our Secretary at 210 Stophendale road, London SW6 2PP.

Please be generous, try and imagine the despair of millions of people in the country we all care for. Do send more and larger cheques to the Treasurer, John Huggins 44 Constitution Hill, Norwich NR3 4BT.