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THE BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to this extended edition of your Journal. You are the first to read Professor Daum's new and important analysis of pre-Islamic calendars and the shift to the Islamic calendar as we know it. It is hoped that this will initiate a debate and additional information on calendars and in particular of the role of Yemenis in their emergence. Of particular interest is Professor Daum's use of contemporary anthropological data from Yemen to strengthen his argument. The article by Michael Fradley and Robert Bewley not only discusses the destruction of Yemen's archaeological heritage but also points to some new discoveries which will hopefully further demonstrate Yemen's archaeological wealth.

In addition to the political analysis in the Chairman's report, the current political situation is addressed in Marieke Brandt's illuminating article on the Huthi movement, which has now become the single dominant Yemeni political grouping on one side of the war. Kilgariff's discussion of the 1920s Aden Censuses is highly relevant to another current political debate, that concerning southern separatism. This year, the B-YS grantee David Harrison writes about the Yemeni community in Liverpool, and we look forward to articles about other Yemeni communities in the UK.

The Journal has, over the years, published recollections during the British colonial period. This year, we publish the fascinating insights and memories of Winkie Allen who accompanied her husband in the WAP between 1948 and 1952. We would like to publish memoirs of Yemenis and encourage readers to direct us towards any they might know of.

The book review section discusses six very important books which provide useful background, avoiding the narrow simplistic and misleading analyses all too often found in the other media you read. Unfortunately, our obituaries section is rather long, however it is worth noting that all those whom we remember this year died of (at least relatively) old age. Given the war situation, this is something for which to be grateful.

Although apparently an eclectic collection, readers will note some interesting connections reflecting historical and sociological continuity over the centuries and the value of multi-disciplinary approaches. We welcome comments and suggestions for future articles.

We are both sad and proud to remind readers and members of the B-YS appeal for assistance for Yemenis; sad because humanitarian help is still so desperately needed, but proud because the B-YS appeal has already raised more than £30 000. Yet again we ask you all to be generous.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND POLITICAL UPDATE

(Twenty-sixth Annual General Meeting, 20 June 2019)

Introduction

It has been yet another difficult year for Yemen as the summary of the current situation at the end of this report shows. A recent report commissioned by the UNDP estimates that over 233,000 people have died as a result of the war, 102,000 of them in combat and the rest from the impact of the war on "lack of food, healthcare and infrastructure". The prospects of it ending soon are not good. We do what we can to relieve the situation. Our appeal for funds has enabled us to donate just over £30,000 to MSF and the Yemen Red Crescent, £15,000 each and in the last year we have also given another £3,200 the Ras Morbat Eye Clinic. The fund-raising event this evening will raise more money. As noted below there has been a considerable upsurge in media coverage on Yemen and a consequent increase in the number of events looking at what is going on and what can be done to end the war and bring humanitarian relief. We contribute to this by our own lectures, the journal and by the writings and comments of members of the B-YS; our editor Helen Lackner is particularly active.

The committee

I am standing down as Chair having returned to the position last year until we could identify a longer-term candidate for the position. I am delighted that Noel Guckian has agreed to stand. He brings a wealth of experience and has been a member of the committee for the last year to familiarise himself with the B-YS and its activities. Our long serving secretary, Audrey Allfree is also standing down as foreshadowed in the last report. She thoroughly deserves the thanks of all B-YS members and the many others that interact with the society for her efficiency, calmness and charm. Ibrahim Zanta, who has been our Events Secretary for the last few months, has agreed to stand as her successor. Ibrahim has been a key figure in organising the fundraising event that will follow the AGM. Robert Wilson, our previous chairman, has agreed to remain as membership secretary. I would like to thank Boris Kilgarriff who has acted as the committee secretary for the last few months. We have an excellent treasurer in John Huggins, who also ensures that our procedures and actions are in line with our obligations to the Charity Commission.

Last August the committee had a strategy meeting to take a longer term look at the B-YS. We agreed that we want to attract more members, especially younger ones, to carry out more activities and reach out more to the British Yemeni community outside London. As part of that process we are nominating as members of the committee Awssan Kamal from Oxfam, Marwa Baabbad from the Oxford Research Group and Dr Hamdan Dammag, a poet, author and activist based in Sheffield. Audrey has agreed to stay on to help with continuity and Sarah Clowry, a PhD student at Durham is proposed as a student member. Two or our most active members, Muhammad bin Dohry and Adel Aulaqi, are retiring from the committee. I would like to thank them both for all their untiring efforts for the B-YS. I would like to thank all members of the committee for their support over the last year.

B-YS activities

Events organised by B-YS included:
Diane Robertson-Bell (MSF) – talk on her work as an MSF nurse in Yemen.
Dr Marieke Brandt (Austrian Academy of Sciences) – talk on the History of the Huthi Conflict.
Luca Nevola (VERSUS) – talk on his research into a village taken over by the Huthis.
Ella Al-Shamahi (National Geographic) – talk on Socotra.
Carl Phillips – talk on The Periplus, South Arabia and the Far-side Ports
Joe Higgins (B-YS student award) – talk on the Federation of South Arabia.
Robert Bewley and Michael Fradley – lecture on Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East.
Three speakers from Yemeni relief organisations on the situation in Yemen (organised with Oxfam).
We also sponsored an event that saw young British Yemenis from Liverpool making a film about their interviews with former soldiers and others who had lived in Aden in the 1960s.

New books on Yemen.
Laurent Bonnefoy, *Yemen and the World, Beyond Insecurity* (Hurst)
Gabriele Vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss: A Yemeni Woman's Life Story* (Hurst)
Nathalie Peutz, *Islands of Heritage: Conservation and Transformation in Yemen* (Stanford University Press)
David Nott, *War Doctor: Surgery on the Front Line* (Picador)

Tim Mackintosh–Smith, *Arabs: A 3,000 Year History of Peoples, Tribes and Empires* (Yale University Press)

Helen Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis, the Road to War* (Verso), US paperback updated version of *Yemen in Crisis: Autocracy, Neo-Liberalism and the Disintegration of a State* (Saqi, London, 2017) for which she won the 2018 'Grand Prix de la Recherche' section of the 'Grand Prix of Literary Associations'

There have been fewer books this year but an abundance of shorter articles and reports on Yemen, many now being written not by foreign researchers but by the growing number of Yemenis in Yemen and abroad now analysing their country, its problems and suggesting solutions ahead. The Sana'a Centre produces a stream of reports and its monthly Yemen Review gives comprehensive account of current events:
(http://sanaacenter.org/publications/the-yemen-review/).

B-YS Grant

We had a late application from Sarah Clowry and the committee agreed to grant her the 2019 Research Award for her PhD to enable her to travel to conduct interviews, especially in the US, for her research into peace-making in Yemen. The award scheme is open to anyone studying an aspect of Yemen in any British or Yemeni institution. We would encourage all members to spread the word about the award.

Website and Facebook Page

We continue to attract new members on the Facebook page but would like to see many more of these joining the society. However, Facebook is a good way of communicating with the wider community and with Yemenis in Yemen and the diaspora. It receives a spike in visits when events information is published. Twitter lags behind. Twitter automatically tweets Facebook posts to B-YS page, but we need to have a permanent volunteer focusing on Twitter. Google Analytics shows that most visits to website come from London.

The B-YS Journal

This is a jewel in our crown. The 2019 edition will be published in the autumn. I want to thank Helen Lackner, our distinguished editor, for all the time and energy she devotes to the journal.

Membership

There have been 21 new members since the last AGM. The committee is looking at ways of involving more people outside London. I am delighted that Hamdan Dammag is joining the committee and will join Taher Qassim in helping to extend our reach within the wider British Yemeni community.

Yemen related events

We previously listed these but there have been so many in the past year that we will not be listing them. A number have taken place outside London, notably in Sheffield, Leeds, Durham, Birmingham and Exeter.

Update on the political situation in Yemen as of 10 June 2019

External pressure to find a negotiated solution to the conflict for Hodeida (and Salif and Ras Isa ports) led to the Stockholm Agreement in December 2018, which focused on negotiations that would ease the humanitarian situation through troop withdrawals by both sides and confidence building measures such as an exchange of prisoners. There was a vague commitment to start discussions to relieve the situation in Taiz and there were plans later that might lead to solving the problems related to the Central Bank.

Progress in implementation has been very slow in part because of its ambiguous wording and the way that each side has interpreted it. The scale of distrust between them is high: it took nearly four months of effort by the UN Secretary General's envoy Martin Griffiths and his team, and a lot of pressure from the international community, including the UK (foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt urged the parties to find a way out "from the last chance saloon") before the force withdrawals began. Even then a dispute over which "local authority" would take over the running of the port threatened to derail the agreement. The indefatigable envoy has started to encounter criticism over alleged bias – which has been firmly rejected by the UN Secretary General and the UK. An attack on Hodeida is still an option for the coalition even though as a result of Huthi reinforcements the scale, longevity, destruction and casualties would be so great that it would face the strongest protest from the international community.

Militarily, the situation remains in stalemate. Coalition forces led by Saudi Arabia have made some progress in Sa'da province, the Huthi heartland, but the kingdom has faced attacks over the border in Najran and

Jizan; drones were used to attack pumping stations on the East-West oil pipeline. The Huthis launched in May a new offensive on a key route on the old PDRY-YAR border – in an area from which some of the militias fighting for the coalition near Hodeida are drawn – possibly in a move to force them back to defend their home areas. Elsewhere the frontlines are static.

Victory for either side will remain elusive. Meanwhile ordinary Yemenis will continue to suffer the already dire consequences. Those running the war seem indifferent to this suffering. International pressure will thus have to be maintained even if the Khashoqji killing, which helped change the dynamics, is now being overlooked (if not forgotten), as the Trump administration increases pressure on Iran over its policies in the region.

The Huthis main international supporter, Iran, does not apply any countervailing pressure. The latest UN Panel of Experts report assessed that the Huthis have been using sophisticated weapons systems but that these are now "increasingly relying on the import of high-value components, which are then integrated into locally assembled systems." The drones, such as the one used in an attack on a military parade that killed some senior Yemeni military officers, are an example. Reliable evidence – some cited in the UN Panel of Experts reports – shows that fuel originating from Iran is being imported to Yemen via third party businessmen – some based in the GCC. This, of course, enables the Huthis to make money from its redistribution and sale. The regrettable facts are that people on both sides of this conflict benefit from smuggling and other aspects of the war economy and this created vested interests in the continuation of the fighting.

The term two sides needs qualifying: there is a growing number of local groups of various strengths that are mostly ostensibly loyal to President Hadi. The Huthis seem to be able to exercise much tighter control of the area they control and deal with opposition ruthlessly. An example of this was the well documented attack on tribes in the Hajour area of Hajja that were neutral but might have been in the process of transferring their loyalty to the coalition.

In the liberated areas, the government of President Hadi struggles to impose its authority in the face of these local groups. The most powerful is the Southern Transitional Council (STC) which has grown in strength and confidence and seeks to present itself as a southern regime-in-waiting. Its leader Aydaroos al-Zubaidi visited London to mobilise support for a demand that the STC is included in the next stage of the UN-led peace process. Martin Griffiths is aware of this but will need to find a mechanism that includes all southern voices and takes account of President Hadi's concerns. Not all southerners support the STC – there are at least seven other southern organisations – whilst in Shabwa, Hadhramaut and Al Mahra local leaders want above all else a high degree of decentralisation in any new political entity based in Sana'a or Aden.

The STC clearly enjoys support from the UAE, which has followed a policy of working through local groups and militias that it identifies, recruits, trains, equips and pays. Relations between the UAE and the Hadi government are often strained. Islah remains anathema to the UAE which will not work with this party in the south or in Taiz – despite the fact that Saudi Arabia needs Islah for its war in the north. This and other differences in local tactics lead some analysts to suggest that this could lead to problems between the Saudi and UAE leaders.

Al Mahra may be one the least populated and most remote part of Yemen but the arrival of Saudi forces in the governorate in late 2017 ostensibly to prevent smuggling of Iranian weapons across its land and sea borders has created tensions both with some Al Mahra tribes and Oman, which has long seen the region as an important buffer on its western border. Tensions are also visible on Socotra.

Economic difficulties.

There are several economies in Yemen: national, Hadi, Huthi and many local, most notably in Mareb. Mixed within these are the war economies often involving people from different sides benefiting from the fighting – and thus having a vested interest in its continuation. GDP is probably less than half of what it was at the start of the crisis. The weakness and volatility of the Yemeni riyal have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and pushed the cost of food and other basic goods out of reach of rapidly growing numbers of ordinary Yemenis. The situation has eased somewhat in 2019 – one factor being the $2 billion deposit by Saudi Arabia and the $570 million contribution paid by Saudi Arabia and the UAE to tackle food security and pay teachers' salaries. The fundamental problem is the fight over the Central Bank of Yemen between the two rival governing authorities that prompts each to attempt to exert control and undermine the policies of the other. Importers of vital food and commodities complain that they are caught in the tug-of-war between the two sides.

The Hadi government will earn more in 2019 from oil and gas exports and savings made on fuel imports; it hopes to produce 110,000 barrels of oil a day in 2019 and export 75,000 barrels a day, which could bring in about $1.7 billion in export earnings. One positive development is spending by the Saudi Arabia and the UAE on development projects which create jobs and income through there needs to be less emphasis on publicising the assistance and more on the detail of getting projects delivered. It seems that most government staff in the Hadi area are being paid but the International Crisis Group pointed out that “the government is prioritising salary payments to the military and security services, which have been the only employers creating new jobs since the war began.”

The Huthis have improved their ability to make money by acquiring a near monopoly over fuel distribution in northern Yemen. They apply pressure for the payment of their taxes, squeezed the mobile phone operators and seized some of the assets of ex-President Saleh. Whilst they can raise money to pay for the war, they are unable to pay civil servants (most do get occasional payments but well below their nominal salaries) and to provide good government services. Increasing military pressure on the Huthis from the coalition could put much greater strains on their ability to manage the economy.

AQAP and Daesh.

Estimates of the number of AQAP fighters run between 5,000 and 10,000 but few of these are active at any particular time and the lines are blurred between hard core AQAP and some local militias. AQAP may still have substantial financial resources acquired during its period of partial control of Mukalla in 2015-2016. However, the number of terrorist attacks fell in 2018 thanks to the actions of coalition-trained counter terrorist forces and other measures that have had the effect of detaching the less ideologically committed elements of AQAP into militias paid to fight for President Hadi and the UAE. Such moves are seen as controversial in the US and UK but seem the right tactics to use – pragmatically as a means of weakening AQAP – as long as steps are taken to prevent these groups returning to AQAP later on. The AQAP leadership retains the ambition but lacks the capacity to launch operations outside Yemen apart from using the internet to urge lone wolves to attack local targets in their home areas. There were 36 drone strikes launched in 2018 against AQAP and Daesh.

Humanitarian relief.

The scale of the humanitarian disaster in Yemen is now well known – the UK media has finally started to notice it. International demands that the coalition takes more effective steps to end it are increasing. UN officials said that the situation in 2019 was worse than 2018 "with about 24 million people, or approximately 80 per cent of the population, are now in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, with some 20 million people – half of them a step away from famine – requiring help to secure food. Almost 20 million people have no access to adequate health care, nearly 18 million lack sufficient clean water or access to adequate sanitation, and more than 3 million – including 2 million children – are acutely malnourished." The scale of coalition support to the humanitarian relief programmes is high and is acknowledged by Western governments and international agencies. All must now focus on ending this conflict.

Dhamar: a bullock ploughing

THE WAR IN YEMEN, BOTTOM-UP: TRIBAL POLITICS IN DEPTH AND IN MOTION

MARIEKE BRANDT[1]

Yemen’s current crisis can, and should, be explained from different angles. Therefore, we cannot but note with regret that the war in Yemen is nearly always framed in an overtly simplistic manner as a Sunni-Shi‘i conflict. The binary juxtaposition of (manifest) Saudi and (mostly obscure) Iranian interests in Yemen, and the evocation of a Manichean struggle between “good” and “evil” (often drifting away into warmongering for the Saudi cause) are unable to explain the deep historical roots of the conflict and its abundance of social, political, economic, developmental, tribal and sectarian driving forces.

A little noticed and often misunderstood factor of the Yemen war is the tribal dynamic of the battlespace in the northern highlands which this article sets out to introduce. Its significance stems from the fact that the highland tribes – albeit not actively contributing to the debates and rarely appearing in the media – formulate the local agendas, shape the reality of political, sectarian and war-related practices and implement them on the ground. Tribal dynamics have strongly influenced the course of the conflict since its eruption in 2004 and will, in all likelihood, decide its ultimate outcome.[2]

The tribes of the northern highlands

The area of origin of the Huthi conflict is the north of Yemen, more precisely the province of Sa‘da on the border with Saudi Arabia. Over the course of the war, the conflict has spread to other areas, such as Amran and al-Jawf. Later, during the major Huthi expansions starting in 2012, it began to affect much of highland Yemen and parts of lower Yemen.

When talking about tribes, we must always bear in mind that elsewhere in the country tribalism is not as strong as in the northern highlands, and that – even in Yemen's "tribal" north – there are numerous groups that do not consider themselves tribal. These non-tribal groups include, among others, the social stratum of the *sadah* (sing. *sayyid*), who claim descent from the Prophet, and to whom Zaydi doctrine ascribes a leadership role in both religious and secular affairs. During the Imamate, the *sadah* occupied the position of the Imam (the spiritual and secular leader of the Zaydi community) as well as leadership positions in government administration and the military apparatus. The al-Huthi family, the leaders of the homonymous Huthi movement, belongs to the social stratum of the *sadah*.

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[1] Marieke Brandt is a post-doc researcher at the Institute for Social Anthropology (ISA) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna specialised in tribalism in Yemen. She is the author of the award-winning monograph ‘*Tribes and Politics in Yemen: A History of the Houthi Conflict*’ (Hurst/OUP 2017)

[2] This article is based on my book and a lecture to the BYS on January 22, 2019.

Most tribes of northern highland Yemen belong to the confederations of Khawlan b. ʻAmir, Hashed and Bakil. The tribes of Hashed and Bakil inhabit central areas of northern Yemen and have historically often played a pivotal role in the support or overthrow of Yemen's rulers. The tribes of Khawlan b. ʻAmir – not to be confused with the Khawlan al-Tiyal tribe east of Sanaʻa – live in the west of the province of Saʻda. Historically they were rather marginal to Yemeni national politics, but since the Huthi conflict erupted on their territory, they play today an important, albeit not very visible, role. Many representatives of the Huthis come from the territory of the Khawlan bin ʻAmir tribes, either as tribal members or as *sadah* with their ancestral home base in Khawlan b. ʻAmir. Recently a shaykh from that area told me, only a bit mockingly, that now "Khawlan is ruling Yemen".

The evolution of the conflict

We need to look back at the history of Yemen to understand how the Huthi movement came into being and why a considerable part of the northern tribes sooner or later sided with the Huthis. In my book, I go back to the Saudi-Yemeni War of 1934, but here the September Revolution of 1962 will serve as a good starting point.

The September Revolution led to the overthrow of the last Imam and pledged the abolition of social inequality and birth right privilege, and a more equitable distribution of political participation, economic resources and development. We recall that before 1962 political power and leadership were mainly ascribed to the social stratum of the *sadah*. Yet in the decades after the revolution, the Republic was not able to keep many of these promises. In many areas of northern Yemen *sadah* hegemony was more or less substituted by a hegemony of the shaykhs, the tribal leaders. The shaykhs had shaken off their former *sadah* overlords, and for the first time in Yemen's history, they became part of the government itself. Throughout history, tribal elites have always been important for any government in northern Yemen. The tribes of the northern highlands have always lived together with states, and tribal elites have always benefited from acting as the interface between tribe and state. Nevertheless, the shaykhs, and particularly those who had backed the Republic during the civil war in the 1960s, have never been more powerful in national politics than in the republican period. In conjunction with the weakness or even absence of state institutions in many rural areas, and particularly after Yemeni unification in 1990, a patrimonial structure emerged in which political power was bound to persons, rather than to institutions.

At this point, we have to understand that the rise of tribal leaders in national politics cannot be equated with the empowerment of their tribes. Some argue that the tribes as a whole have benefited from the enrichment and empowerment of their shaykhs. That is simply not true. The few thousands who have been included via their shaykhs in the state's military or administration were (and are) by far outnumbered by millions of simple people whose economic situation and living conditions were and remained dire. Rather than "nurturing" the tribal system, governmental patronage has driven a wedge between shaykhs and their tribes, and has generated discontent and grievances among ordinary tribespeople.

In the long term, the alienation between tribes and many shaykhs, as well as the underdevelopment of vast areas of rural northern Yemen, was a particularly dangerous development, because shaykhs were the point of co-optation and the major interface that was meant to allow the Yemeni state to push its agenda in rural and peripheral areas without carrying out much (if any) effort at state-building. The alienation between many shaykhs and their tribes left parts of the population virtually detached from state influence. As a rule of thumb, it can be observed that wherever shaykhs relocated to Sana‘a and began to neglect their tribal duties, or a tribe did not benefit economically from the empowerment of its shaykh, or government patronage favoured one tribal group or shaykh at the expense of another rival tribe, the Huthi movement found particularly favourable conditions to grow and flourish.

So please, always "mind the gap" – the gap between shaykhs and their "ordinary" tribesmen. Tribes are not political entities, and shaykhs do not "govern" their tribes, and many times shaykhs and their tribes took (and take) antagonistic positions in the Huthi conflict. One can see that by the fact that some of the major shaykhs of northernmost Yemen are today ministers or military officials in Hadi's government in exile in Riyadh, while "their" tribes on Yemeni soil are fighting vigorously against them on the Huthi side. This rift is the result of a decades-long process of alienation between state-sponsored shaykhs and their ordinary tribesmen: simple people who did not experience anything except underdevelopment, marginalization, and neglect.

Prevailing social and economic grievances among citizens were accompanied by the marginalization of the locally prevalent Shiʿi Zaydi doctrine and the spread of radical Sunnism, sponsored by Saudi Arabia and, at times, the government in Sanaʿa. From the early 1980s, a specifically Zaydi response to the influx of radical Sunnism emerged. This Zaydi revivalism began as a defensive movement to counter the radical Sunni and Salafi onslaught and the government's policy of neglect. From the turn of the millennium, the Zaydi revival movement was significantly influenced by Husayn al-Huthi, a Zaydi cleric of *sayyid* pedigree from the Marran mountains in Khawlan. The local reputation of the al-Huthi family was based on their proven services to the community, their personal merits, and on the fact that they maintained a modest lifestyle that contrasted sharply from that of some senior shaykhs.

In his lectures, Husayn al-Huthi not only addressed the marginalization of the Zaydi community, but also articulated political and economic issues such as the economic neglect and underdevelopment of the area, the Republic's class-ridden system, and thus the local population's dissatisfaction with the state as embodied by the government of ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Under Husayn al-Huthi's direction the Zaydi revival was far more than a sectarian movement, as it began to embrace powerful social-revolutionary and political components. In the early 2000s, the Huthi movement evolved into a rallying point that united the interests of those in northern Yemen who felt economically neglected, politically sidelined and religiously marginalized. This was the time when, from the vantage point of the government in Sanaʿa, the Huthi movement began to develop into a serious threat.

The Saʿda wars

This was the situation at the beginning of the first round of fighting between the government and the Huthis, which took place in summer 2004. The first Huthi war led to the death of Husayn al-Huthi and thus produced a "martyr," a fact that reinforced the Huthi movement's capacity for revolutionary mobilization. In the five other rounds of war to follow, the government's military campaigns proved unable to put down the rebellion but rather triggered cycles of violence and counter-violence in northern Yemen's tribal environment that led to a worsening of the crisis rather than to its solution and that continuously expanded the Huthi rebellion.

During the war, it became evident that a significant number of people joining Huthi ranks were not religiously motivated, but were drawn into the conflict for other reasons. The Huthi warriors of the first hour had consisted of supporters, relatives, friends, and students of Husayn al-Huthi. The second, growing group of Huthi supporters consisted of tribesmen who did not always join the movement for ideological or sectarian reasons. Many had been drawn into the conflict after members of their family or tribe had been killed by the armed forces. Others had lost their homes or farms. As early as 2006, thousands of men were fighting for the Huthis, but not all of them shared the Huthi ideology.

Another factor led to the expansion of the conflict: during the wars, both the Huthis and the government deliberately worked at recruiting local tribes to capitalize on their combat experience, local knowledge and manpower. Ever since the outbreak of the first round of war in 2004, the government deployed mercenaries of the Hashed tribes (rallied by General Ali Muhsin and Husayn al-Ahmar) to the Sa'da region to fight alongside the regular troops. In Sa'da's tribal environment, dominated by the tribes of Khawlan b. 'Amir and Bakil, the incursion of armed Hashed warriors was a particularly sensitive and momentous issue. Many tribes from the conflict area were furious at the deployment of Hashed irregulars into their tribal regions. They considered these armed incursions as an infringement of their tribal sovereignty and their territorial integrity – tribes consider their territories as sacrosanct – and defended themselves against the presence of these Hashed intruders. In the overheated context of the war, however, taking up arms against the Hashed irregulars was tantamount to joining the Huthis.

By the outbreak of the sixth and last "official" round of war between the Huthis and the Saleh government in 2009, called Operation Scorched Earth, the Huthis had become so strong that the Yemeni army averted its final defeat only thanks to Saudi intervention. The Huthis used the phase between the end of the sixth war and the beginning of Yemen's "Change

Revolution" in spring 2011 to consolidate their power and to suppress or eliminate their last adversaries among the local population. Since the beginning of the Change Revolution in 2011, they embarked on a dual strategy of both political participation in Yemen's transition process and further military expansion: in spring 2011, they seized Sa'da city and three years later, in September 2014, Yemen's capital. The conquest of Sana'a in 2014 was far from the end of the story, but rather the beginning of a new, even more prominent chain of events: Huthi expulsion of the Hadi government into exile and, finally, in 2015 the beginning of Operation Decisive Storm (the military intervention led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE), and the havoc and destruction which this intervention has caused in Yemen.

Once again, it is clear that the aerial war and the territorial advances of the Coalition – as the forces led by Saudi Arabia and the Emirates are called – are incapable of bringing northern Yemen under foreign control. As far as the Huthi heartland in northern highland Yemen is concerned, the Coalition has failed on all fronts. The Coalition has found allies in parts of the population in the Sunni-dominated southern and eastern Yemen who see the expansion of the Huthis as a threat. Without these local allies, the Coalition would not have achieved anything on the ground. Their approaches have clearly failed to achieve their objectives, succeeding only in destroying Yemen's infrastructure and starving the Yemeni people. But even together with its southern and eastern allies, the Coalition is not strong or effective enough to defeat the northern highlands tribes who are aligned with the Huthis, and to take full control of key strategic cities such as Taiz and Hodeida. Also, the territorial advances of the Coalition in central highland Yemen, specifically on the fronts in Sa'da (al-Buq', Baqim, al-Malahit), al-Jawf and Nihm, have long stalled and stagnated. Progress on these fronts is still measured in inches.

What ultimately counts for all rulers and would-be rulers in northern Yemen, be it a millennium ago or today, is the military support of the local tribes. The connection between the Huthi leadership and the military strength of many tribes in the north, especially the Zaydi parts of Bakil, is still close due to the external aggression by the Coalition. The humanitarian crisis and the famine, the result of the Saudi embargo policy, have not been able to break their resistance, but rather strengthened it and driven ever more tribes into the arms of the Huthis. As long as there is cooperation between the Huthis and the core of the northern tribes, no one will be able to conquer their territories on the ground.

The Huthi movement and Zaydi tribes will cooperate as long as they share a common external enemy. The common enemy welds them together. That does not mean that there are no differences between the Huthi leaders and their tribal allies. Quite the contrary, the frustration on the tribal side with the Huthi leadership is high. Despite the ordeals and distractions of the war, the northern tribes have begun to realize that the Huthi leaders have long abandoned their political agenda of anti-corruption and social equality – the agenda formulated and promoted by Husayn al-Huthi in the in the early 2000s that had attracted so many people frustrated with the status quo in Yemen. Yet the settlement of these differences is postponed to the day when the external threat has vanished and the common enemy has withdrawn from Yemeni soil. After the end of the war, Huthi-aligned tribes will begin to sort out their internal problems and their issues with the Huthi leaders, and this will be a difficult, presumably violent process.

Lessons from the past

What will Yemen's tribes do? A glance at the past may allow a glimpse into the future. We recall, in the early 20th century, the then Imam of Yemen, Yahya Hamid al-Din, managed to unite the Zaydi tribes in order to contain the influence of the Ottomans, who had occupied large swathes of Yemen. To this end, Imam Yahya and the northern tribes, especially the Hashed, formed a powerful alliance against the common foreign enemy. With the Treaty of Da'an in 1911 between Imam Yahya and the Ottomans, Yahya managed to regain a large degree of independence.

After the withdrawal of the Ottomans, the problems between Imam Yahya and the tribes started. The war against the Ottomans had left the country in a sorry state and economically devastated. The Imam's treasury was depleted, not least because of the interruption of the sea trade and the naval blockade of the British fleets on all northern ports. For this reason, Imam Yahya insisted on the collection of customs and duties from the tribes. The tribes fiercely resisted Yahya's attempts at collecting taxes and at expanding his influence. From their point of view, they had made enough sacrifices for the Imam in the war against the Ottomans. The tribes also wanted to keep the heavy weapons they had captured from the Ottomans and regarded them their own property. Yet Yahya considered these heavy weapons in tribal hands as a personal threat and demanded that the tribes hand them over. But worst of all, from the vantage point of the tribes, was the Imam’s new policy of centralism, and his determined attempts at interference in the internal affairs of the tribes.

We know what happened. Out of dissatisfaction with the Imam’s centralism, the Hashed temporarily allied themselves with the Idrisi in the Tihama, the arch-rival of Imam Yahya. Internal conflict and rebellions against Imamic rule multiplied and were cruelly suppressed by Yahya and his son Ahmad. The violence between Imam Yahya and Ahmad and certain tribes unleashed a series of tribal insurrections throughout highland Yemen, that later on fused with the nationalist Free Yemeni Movement and ushered the September Revolution 1962 which overthrew the Imamate. The September Revolution was supported by and ultimately fought out by those tribes who had been Imam Yahya’s strongest allies in his fight against the Ottomans in Yemen.

This example from Yemeni history can tell us a lot about the future of the Huthis. After the war, the tribes will demand their rights. After 50 years of republicanism, certainly no one wants to be ruled again by a distinctive, quasi-aristocratic class of *sadah*. The rift between the Huthi leaders and their tribal supporters will not open up tomorrow, or next year, but this may be the direction domestic conflict will take in the medium term, as the Coalition is unlikely to defeat the Huthis militarily. History has shown that Yemen is a country of swiftly shifting, creative, at times bizarre, political coalitions and alliances. Throughout Yemen’s recent history we have seen numerous dramatic shifts and turns, both on the domestic and the regional level, and Yemen and its people will certainly continue to surprise us in the future.

THE LIVERPOOL-YEMENI COMMUNITY: PAST AND PRESENT

DAVID HARRISON[1]

Liverpool-Yemenis: A Brief History

Despite Yemenis being present in Liverpool since the late 19th century, the community has received little public or scholarly attention. Halliday (2010)[2], Lawless (1995) [3], Seddon (2014)[4] and Searle (2010)[5] have published books broadly outlining the history of Yemenis in the UK, but with little focus on the Liverpool community. Liverpool is often perceived as an 'outlier' within the UK, perhaps due to its rapid growth during the 19th century as an important port city which historically witnessed periods of high levels of immigration, particularly from Ireland during the years of the Great Famine, as well as sizable Afro-Caribbean, Chinese, and Yemeni communities which now form part of the fabric of the city. To highlight the context in which the first Yemenis arrived in Liverpool, Belchem (2007: 1)[6] notes that: 'By the early years of the twentieth century, Liverpool's climacteric, the numbers of Irish and Catholics, regarded as synonymous terms at the time, was calculated at up to 200,000: roughly one third of the population', describing the Liverpool-Irish as 'the most significant "minority" community in pre-multi-cultural Britain'.

The first wave of Yemeni migration to Britain is characterised by Yemeni men being employed aboard ships leaving from Aden to the UK, and subsequently settling in port towns. Migration to the UK began in the late nineteenth century, when 'many Arabs took up employment as stokers

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[1] David Harrison is completing his PhD thesis at the University of Leeds, and received the 2018 BYS academic grant. He thanks the many members of the Liverpool-Yemeni community, the Liverpool Arabic Centre and the Liverpool Arab Arts Festival for their continued support and their exceptional generosity and hospitality towards him and this research.

[2] Halliday, F. (2010). *Britain's First Muslims: Portrait of an Arab Community*, London: I. B. Tauris

[3] Lawless, R. I. (1995). *From Ta'izz to Tyneside* Exeter: University of Exeter Press

[4] Seddon, M. S. (2014). *The Last of the Lascars: Yemeni Muslims in Britain 1836–2012* Leicestershire: Kube Publishing

[5] Searle, K. (2010). *From Farms to Foundries: An Arab Community in Industrial Britain* Bern: Peter Lang AG

[6] Belchem, J. (2007). *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: the History of the Liverpool Irish 1800–1939* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

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The Al-Ghazali Centre is a community centre that responds to the need of the diverse local community through the delivery and provision of social, educational and health programmes and activities (David Harrison)

and donkeymen on British vessels...and formed communities at places like Liverpool, Manchester, South Shields, Hull, Cardiff and London' (Dahya, 1965: 180)[7]. It has been widely noted that the initial wave of migration comprised exclusively of Yemeni men; Halliday (2010:73) exemplifies the extent of this emigration when he writes that there were villages in North Yemen whose remaining male population was only elders and children. The second wave of migration was the result of a strong 'pull' factor: in 1948 Britain began to allow British subjects to enter and settle, motivated by the high demand for labour, with Yemenis largely settling in towns with large industrial bases, such as Sheffield. This post-war migration also saw a larger number of women and dependents arriving. However, at this point Liverpool is barely mentioned in the earlier works, and it is only post-1970 that the community began to grow.

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[7] Dahya, B. U. (1965). 'Yemenis in Britain: An Arab Migrant Community': *Race* 3, pp. 177-189

The closure of steelworks and a sharp rise in unemployment of Yemenis in cities such as Sheffield correlates with an influx of Yemenis to Liverpool. Unlike other UK cities in the north-west where small independent newsagents and grocers were dominated by South-Asian families, this niche had not yet been occupied in Liverpool, and provided a timely opening for Yemenis wishing to relocate and establish businesses after the decline of heavy industry in the north. To illustrate the point, *The Liverpool Echo*[8] reported in 2008 that there were around 400 Yemeni owned businesses across the city and Halliday (2010: 55) reports that in 1992 there were an estimated 3200 Yemenis in Liverpool.

Halliday (2010: 55) observed that although the initial shops were concentrated in and around Granby Street in Toxteth, by the nineties, they had spread throughout the city and only four were remaining in Granby. Although Halliday notes this dispersal of Yemenis throughout the city, my observation growing up in Liverpool is that several areas, notably the areas around Granby Street, Princes Avenue and Lodge Lane within the Toxteth area still have a sizeable and tight-knit Yemeni community. Shop owners in other areas of the city are likely to still maintain connections with this 'central hub'. With the increase in numbers came an increase in organizations that catered to the community such as a Yemeni school funded by the council (Halliday, 2010: 56), and community associations. Due to the high number of Irish, Chinese and West Indians living in proximity to the Yemeni community, there was a growing awareness among Liverpool-Yemenis of the importance in gaining support from the local council and official organizations (Halliday: ibid.).

The Liverpool-Yemeni community in its current state is in many ways a result of fortunate circumstances allowing the community to settle and flourish. Employment, immigration rights and confidence in dealing with official channels of support from the seventies onwards provided a solid base for the Liverpool community. The following ethnographic vignette will highlight a section of the community's lived experienced in Liverpool

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[8] *The Liverpool Echo*, 02/07/2008

HALAL
MIDDLE EASTERN BAZAAR
حلال سوق الشرق الأوسط
بازار خاورمیانه
بازاری رۆژهەلاتی ناوەراست
FOR HALAL MEAT, CHICKEN, FISH, FROZEN FOOD, SPICES & FRUITS & VEGETABLES

A shop on Lodge Lane, Liverpool (David Harrison)

which demonstrates the transnational and translocal character of the community, still deeply embedded in the diasporic experience but continuously adapting and re-adapting to the local Liverpool context.

Vignette of a Liverpool-Yemeni Wedding

The wedding venue was located amidst tightly packed terraced houses in a densely populated suburb of Liverpool. The real celebrations had not yet begun, and groups of men were milling around outside. The majority were in traditional dress – a white or cream *ma'waz*, some with darker western style jackets over the top. The groom was dressed in the most elaborate style complete with a Yemeni *janbiyya* (ceremonial dagger) and sash with the red, white and black of the Yemeni flag. The hall floor had been spread with some plastic sheets, on top of which were plates, cutlery, water, etc. There was a large banner on the wall in the centre of the hall with the groom's picture, the Yemeni flag, and *Mā Shā' Allāh A Thousand, Thousand Congratulations to the Groom* written in calligraphic writing. Shortly after, plates of *mandi* (rice and lamb) were handed down along the rows of men sitting on the floor with little formality, and the atmosphere was that of friends and extended family enjoying a meal. As per custom, only the right hand was used to eat the food and pass objects. After we had cleared our plates, a young Yemeni man approached me, and asked in a strong scouse accent: ‘Ey, lad, do you want this?’ quickly placing another huge plate of lamb down before waiting for a reply. At this point I estimated around 80 men were present, with more continuously arriving.

At one point, my ears piqued when I heard the word *ayshu* (what?) – which according to the *Dialect Atlas of North Yemen*[9], is particular to the Rada‘ region where the majority of the Liverpool-Yemeni population trace their origins. Many of the men had limited English ability, confirming the community is still characterised by a constant influx directly from Yemen, although this has naturally declined in the past several years given the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

After a while, a band began to play the *oud* and drums which quickly led to a more lively atmosphere. Several men in Yemeni dress with the *janbiyya* got up and began a traditional dance in the middle of the room. This dance appears to have been well known by many of the men in attendance. Although the steps did not appear overly complex, it is a highly ritualized form of dance which appears to be learnt through socialization in events such as these, as many of the children and younger men would join in, trying to learn the steps as they went along. I was also asked to join several of the easier dances, many of which consist of walking back and forward rhythmically with a certain movement of the feet. I was impressed by the familiarity which most of the men had with the dance steps, including the groom who is in his early twenties. A participant informed me that the dances were called: *al-rags al-bara’*, *al-rags al-thulāthī*, and *rags al-nafarayn*. The performance of particular Yemeni customs by these young men who spoke with marked scouse accents highlighted the hybrid nature of diasporic identities which continually negotiate the ‘here’ and ‘there’.

Towards the end of the evening, it was announced the groom would receive the henna on his hand. I was informed that this was an ancient and unique Yemeni practice, as elsewhere the henna is usually reserved for women. In this case, the men received a small amount of henna on the palm of the hand and the fingers while surrounded by close family and the local imam. An acquaintance was keen to assert that this tradition has pre-Islamic origins, and as the group chanted an old melody, I was eerily reminded of the Jewish-Yemeni chants which can still be heard in Israel today. After the conclusion of the henna painting, the wedding party came to an end and people filtered out. As I was leaving, I was told that there would be a *zaffa* or a 'seeing off'[10] of the groom in a procession of about 10-15 cars to his home and I was quickly offered to join the ride. This was a quick car ride with loud wedding music being played from the procession, thus concluding the night of celebration.

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[9] Behnstedt, P. (2016). *Dialect Atlas of North Yemen*. Leiden: Brill

Maintaining 'Yemeni-ness' in a Diaspora Community

As the above vignette illustrates, Yemeni ethnicity as expressed in this section of the Liverpool community still remains strongly rooted in the local context of Yemen, Rada' in particular, with the wedding following a structure remarkably similar to that given by Caton (1993: 363)[11] who describes a tribal wedding in north-eastern Yemen as consisting of the following parts:

- Luncheon
- Groom's *zaffah*
- *Qat* chew
- Dinner
- *Samrah*, or evening entertainment
- *Rifd*, or gift-giving
- Bride's *zaffah*
- Consummation of marriage
- Morning shooting match

Excluding steps 7–9 which I was either not permitted to attend due to gender restrictions or did not take place in public for obvious practical reasons, the Liverpool wedding followed steps 1–6 rather closely. Despite the Liverpool diasporic context, this section of the Liverpool-Yemeni community maintains its traditions through the tightly encapsulated network of the community. The question arises as to how and why such an 'authentic' expression of Yemeni-ness is able to survive in the Liverpool diaspora. Would it be possible for such a wedding to take place if it had been attended and organised by an all second (or later) generation community?

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[10] The *zaffah* can also refer to the entire processional march of the groom surrounded by drums and music, however during the wedding I only heard the word used in reference to the car parade at the end of the evening.

[11] Caton, S. C. (1993) *Peaks of Yemen I Summon.* Berkeley, University of California Press

This question of 'generational identity' in the Liverpool-Yemeni community causes some confusion, as the community has not moved linearly from a first generation of immigrants who settled and produced a locally-born second generation. This is evidenced by the many participants who expressed uncertainty as to whether they were first or second generation compounded by their families' stories of non-linear migration. A large portion of participants born in Liverpool noted that they met their spouses in Yemen, who subsequently moved back to Liverpool with them. Further compounding the confusion, several participants had one UK-born parent and one Yemeni-born parent, but spent their early childhood in Yemen before the family came to Liverpool.

The constant influx of 'first generation' Yemenis largely via spousal ties between UK-born Yemenis has undoubtedly led to the continuance and strengthening of specific instances and performances of Yemeni-ness in Liverpool such as that witnessed during the wedding. Cohen (1996: 516)[12] notes that 'transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination'. While this may hold true for larger diasporas, it certainly seems that some elements of Yemeni life in the Liverpool community are dependent upon continual migration.

Many of the cultural practices described in the wedding cannot be taught or learnt via mosques, schools, or other community organisations; they require a period of intimate socialisation within that cultural framework whereby it acquires social significance – one which is not only broadly Yemeni, but also specific to Rada‘ and its environs. Such processes have been described by various scholars as examples of 'trans locality' which, as Oakes and Schein (2006: 20)[13] write 'deliberately confuses the boundaries of the local in an effort to capture the increasingly complicated nature of spatial processes and identities, yet it insists on viewing such processes and identities as place-based rather than exclusively mobile, uprooted, or "travelling."'

The Liverpool-Yemeni community is certainly thriving, with several well-established and well-attended organisations throughout the city, as well as high profile events such as the Liverpool Arab Arts Festival which have a notable Yemeni input. While many of the participants aged 30 and above have noted that they met their spouses in Yemen, or spent a significant amount of time there, it is unclear what relationship the younger members of the community will have with Yemen given the recent and ongoing political turmoil and humanitarian crises. As the community is relatively small in numbers compared to diaspora communities such as the South-Asian diasporas, it remains to be seen to what extent this ‘diasporic consciousness’ (McLoughlin, 2013)[14] is dependent upon continued contact with Yemen itself and how newer generations who have been unable to travel to Yemen during their formative years will respond. While diasporic identity is by its nature in a continual state of flux, being negotiated to adapt to a range of factors and pulled in different directions, the Liverpool-Yemeni community is at present in a strong position to forge a unique identity despite the many competing outside pressures it faces.

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[12] Cohen. R. (1996) 'Diasporas and the nation-state: from victims to challengers', *International Affairs*, vol. 72, pp. 507-20

[13] Oakes, T. and Schein, L (2006) *Introduction to Translocal China: Linkages, Identities and the Reimagining of Space*. London, Routledge

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[14] McLoughlin, S. (2013). ‘Religion, Religions and Diaspora’ in *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*. Hoboken, NJ : Wiley-Blackwell

THE 1921 CENSUS IN ADEN: FROM “PRACTICALLY AN INDIAN TOWN” TO ADEN FOR THE ADENIS

BORIS KILGARRIFF[1]

When Lord Northbrook, then Viceroy of India, proclaimed in 1875 that the British Aden Settlement in South Arabia was “practically an Indian town,”[2] he was speaking the truth as he saw it. For the past 36 years Britain had controlled Aden through the Bombay Presidency, during this time Aden changed from being an impoverished coastal town of approximately 600 residents to the largest port in the region, with a cosmopolitan population of over 20,000. Aden was ruled from India, using techniques of governance developed in India, and its character was entirely premised on the ‘Indianness’ that had come to play such a large role in the colonial imagination. Aden was fully incorporated into Empire – despite its distance to both London and Bombay. The town was inhabited by a cosmopolitan population dominated by settlers from Europe and South Asia – but the claim also conveys a note of imperial pride. Despite appearances, Aden was not located on the Indian subcontinent, suggesting triumph of imperial power over geography. Lord Northbrook’s Aden is a town created in the image of imperium, of the local sublimated to the global.

Lord Northbrook’s proclamation did not anticipate violent anti-imperial insurgency. Aden was a quintessentially imperial town, with little visible history or culture beyond that which the British had brought, and even in the inter-war years there was little sense of precariousness to the British position. Yet traces of Arab dissatisfaction with British rule can be found as early as the 1920s, when several social clubs promoting the spread of the Arabic language were founded within Aden. These clubs were “the forerunners of the South Yemeni patriotic movement,”[3] which emerged in irresistible opposition to the British during the 1950s. Here I argue that the drive to make Aden legible through the machinery of the census was informed by global considerations, but led to new forms of interactions between the local and the global that accelerated the rise of local challenges to British power.

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[2] Lord Northbrook, in Metcalf, Thomas (2007). *Imperial Connections*. London: University of California Press, p. 29

[3] Naumkin, Vitaly (2004). *Red Wolves of Yemen*. London: The Oleander Press. p. 25

The first decade of the 20th Century heralded the discovery of oil in Iran, an event of global significance that would bring unprecedented imperial attention to the Arabian Peninsula. While the First World War demonstrated the extraordinary strategic, economic and military potential of the resource, a failed 1915 attempt by the Central Powers to destroy British oil infrastructure served as a warning of the vulnerabilities of the British position in Iran. Aden was a settlement approximately halfway between northern Europe and India, a port fully under British control which possessed one of the world's largest natural harbours. This made it an ideal site, in 1919, for the establishment of oil bunkering that, by the 1940s, had become one of the most important bunkering ports in the world.

The reimagining of Aden as a bunkering port required ambition and inspiration from colonial officials. Until the 1910s there was little indication of British engagement with Aden's social and economic life. The censuses of 1901 and 1921 illustrate the extent of the transformation in approach during this period. In 1901 Aden only features in the broader census of the Bombay Presidency as a footnote. Out of 18 tables Aden features in four, the first two of which break the population down by household and village. The third shows the population increase since the previous census and only the table titled 'Religion' engages with social aspects. These tables are a perfunctory fulfilment of a bureaucratic obligation which focuses on topics directly related to population density and increase, which can be tied to general security concerns. Fears concerning the development of sectarian violence explain Aden's presence on the religion table.

By 1921, Aden's census had been transformed into a surveillance tool of considerable power. An officer was hired to run the census from Aden – previously the census had been managed from Bombay, with the census commissioner unlikely to set foot in Aden. Aden was distinguished from the South Asian Bombay Presidency, given its own section of the census, and the officer in charge – E. M. Duggan – produced a six-page report describing the Settlement, the census methods and summarising the results. In comparison to the censuses of 1901 and 1911, it contains considerable detail and represents the first attempt by colonial authorities to engage with non-European Aden as a modernizable space. As well as relevant social information cataloguing sex, civil status, education, 'infirmities' (a count of the number of 'insane', blind, deaf-mute and lepers) and ethnic, tribal and religious groupings, this census introduced an economic section to the statistics, tabulating the main occupation of the town's residents and a wide array of industrial statistics.

These changes are directly connected to the decision to make Aden a bunkering station. They were aimed at defining and understanding the available workforce in Aden in broad statistical terms, to assess the potential productivity of the port. Many new additions to the census can be understood in this light, from calculations of the age, sex and disabilities of the population to the presence of industrial statistics. Equally important, in the context of the drive to mobilise the population was establishing detailed knowledge of Aden's demographic distribution, and to that end the town was divided into 8 charges, 27 circles and 170 blocks. These administrative subdivisions allowed the British to identify where different communities lived, which areas were wealthy or impoverished, and – theoretically, at least – where to locate new arrivals to minimise disruption. The administrative value of the census was demonstrated in the Legislative Council elections of 1955, in which suffrage was restricted based on age, sex, residency and property ownership, ensuring victory for British-aligned candidates.

The census was carried out through several visits by colonial officials to each house in Aden in the days and weeks leading up to the census date, in order to systematically verify information about the inhabitants of each house. On the date of the census – 18 March 1921 – the enumerators checked each house to record any births and deaths that had taken place since the previous check. This census cost almost treble that of 1911 – this is attributed to the "great rise in wages and the cost of all materials."[4]

In the month preceding the census date, the regular presence of enumerators on the streets and within homes represented a hitherto unknown intrusion of state officials into Adeni life. British investigation of the practices of health, education and family among the people of Aden led to interrogations that crossed a threshold between imperial and local, and which required the people of Aden to consider themselves in a 'modern,' British framework – questions about their psychological state, their occupation and their level of education. This made Aden legible in the imperial system by demanding that, once a decade, locals define themselves in the imperial image.

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[4] IOR/V/15/111 (1923). Part III Aden, in Census of Bombay, 1921 (Volume VIII), pp. 1-5

The novelty of these encounters is evinced in the introduction to the census, which recalls that one enumerator, when asked how he would record the age of a purdah lady who he was not able to see, replied "I would take a guess at it!"[5] The officer in charge of the census recommended that this box be left blank. This anecdote speaks to the uncharted terrain that the British were in – the exasperated exchange was presumably indicative of many encounters between locals and enumerators caught between their duty and their sensitivities.

The homeless population of Aden presented a different problem to enumerators. Duggan notes that control of the houseless population – largely immigrant labourers – "constitutes one of our difficulties in Aden," as well as being a "constant thorn in the side of the sanitarian."[6] The British consistently connected immigration and vagrancy with the spread of disease, which reflected growing imperial interest in the welfare of colonised populations. Duggan expresses satisfaction that the homeless population had decreased by almost 15% since the last census, suggesting that the decline was evidence of an existing policy. While it would be churlish to deny the fear of disease as a factor in British policy, it bears mentioning that the homeless population also represented a disruption to British attempts to demarcate Aden's spatial and demographic definition, as the census relied on the premise of a fixed home address where individuals could be found.

The table below compares the population of key ethnic groupings in Aden as calculated in the 1911 and 1921 censuses. These statistics were taken from a table that first classified the population by religion and then by 'Caste, Tribe, Race or Nationality', which means that these figures should be considered approximate – racial designations were not introduced to the census until 1946. Nevertheless, they provide an impression of demographic changes during this period. In 10 years, the Arab population of Aden increased by almost a third due to the influx of labourers from the surrounding countryside in search of work in the expanding port. The South Asian community also increased by 20% during this period, suggesting that Aden remained a popular destination for the merchants and civil servants who made up the Raj's itinerant classes. In contrast, the European and East African populations decreased.

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

Demographic changes in Aden between 1911 and 1921[7]

Population in Aden	**in 1911**	**in 1921**
South Asian	9,374	11,291
Arab	22,966	31,910
European	2,147	1,922
East African	6,881	6,551

source: Censuses of 1911 and 1921

So how did these changes shape Aden's political landscape? The intrusions of colonial authorities into intimate areas of local life – homes and residential blocks which officials had previously little reason to visit – produced an unprecedented awareness of British power throughout the population of Aden. Unsurprisingly given that Aden remained part of India, both bureaucratically and in the British imagination, the British modelled their deconstruction of Adeni society on the classifications that had worked in South Asia, with minimal adjustments for local specificities. The British system of classification required hermetically bounded categories that were unable to provide a full picture of the intricacies of Adeni social relations, yet these categories, premised more on a simplified interpretation of Indian society than on any detailed knowledge of Aden itself, came to form the foundation of British understandings of Adeni society.

The sudden expansion of the census after the First World War introduced Adenis to the spectrum of life contained within the settlement of Aden, while also clearly distinguishing the population of British-governed Aden from outsiders. The links between social classifications – such as race, religion and tribe – and economic status became more apparent to educated Adenis when they were asked to answer questions about their own social and economic situations, with census enumerators expecting them to choose from a list of pre-existing categories. This process did not simply identify the people of Aden, it required that they consider and identify themselves as Adeni subjects of Britain, a demand that suggested the calcification of new political boundaries. It is not a coincidence that, over the next 20 years, administration of Aden was transferred first to the Viceroy of India and then directly to the Foreign and Commonwealth

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[7] IOR/V/15/111 (1912). Census of India 1911; IOR/V/15/111

Office, bringing with it a host of policy changes that would hasten Aden's economic development.

The colonial census was designed as a method for extracting information about the local, with little consideration for how it might be interpreted by its subjects. Yet colonial encounters cannot be monodirectional, and the introduction of grand bureaucratic reforms should be interrogated as the evolution of state power. A link should be drawn between the rise of clinical British interest in Adeni society and the gradual emergence of an Adeni political sphere that sought to define itself using the same categorisations. This feeds into theories of nationalism – a topic particularly relevant to Aden. In order to reach a state of national consciousness, out of which might emerge a national or anticolonial movement, a population must first be introduced to some form of mass media that reaches across the national space and confronts the community as a whole with its own nature as a community. In Aden, the census was the tool which brought together the town's disparate communities into a single body politic. The changes in the census showed that Aden had found new value for the British, and while the significance of this period was not immediately understood by the local population, over time the new iterations of knowledge represented by the census were absorbed and reproduced by the local population. This laid the groundwork for the anti-colonial movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Water shop in a street in Aden, 1923 (Danmission, Copenhagen, Denmark)

IN THE WESTERN ADEN PROTECTORATE: 1948–52

WINKIE ALLEN

Introduction by Hubert Allen

My mother, Winkie Allen, nee Brooke, spent her first 14 years in Mexico and then lived in France for three years. She graduated from St Hugh's College (Oxford) and the Ecole Normale Supérieure (Paris). After teaching for a while she married John Allen, an Education Officer in Tanganyika where she started the Tanga Girls' School, until my birth in 1931, and two surviving daughters in 1936 and 1938. They all spent World War Two in East Africa: she and the children returned to England but two years later she joined her husband in Aden between 1948–1952. They later returned to Tanganyika (1952–1958), followed by Makerere University in Uganda (1958–1965) focusing on research and teaching of Swahili. In 1974 they retired to Oxford until John died in 1979 and later she lived with her elder daughter and family in Bedford and Pembrokeshire until her death in 1992.

Her husband, I.W.T. Allen ("John"), worked from 1928 to 1946 in the U.N. Trust Territory of Tanganyika, teaching for ten years in government secondary schools; throughout the Second World War he served as a district commissioner. After the war John returned to Tanganyika alone, and in January 1947 was transferred to be a Political Officer in the Western Aden Protectorate (WAP).

He very quickly became second-in-command of WAP, promoted to the new post of Deputy British Agent. The very hot and humid climate in Aden was dreadfully exhausting for Europeans, so tours of duty were quite short, and home leaves relatively long. Consequently John's immediate superior, the British Agent, Seager – an experienced Arabist – was very often away on leave, or taking part in policy consultations in London; and so John, from soon after he arrived, as often as not, found himself in charge as acting British Agent, answerable only to the Governor of Aden Colony.

My mother, realising that John was missing her dreadfully, arranged for my sisters to board with a friend. So she spent a couple of years in Aden, and was often able to accompany John when he was touring WAP. She found it a truly fascinating part of the world – most of it barren and bleak: desert sand dunes, but also a lot of very rugged mountainous areas. What follows is taken from her letters to us three children.

I could quite understand, after spending time in those arid deserts, why the Arabs believe that one of the torments of Hell is dry water to drink! Such agriculture as there was seemed very incompetent, with a few pathetic plants poking their way up through a sea of stones. Experts persuaded a group of farmers to clear off all the stones, but the result was the most disastrous harvest, because all those untidy stones were trapping the dew and retaining the precious moisture in the soil which otherwise quickly dried out by the scorching sun …

Women counted for nothing at all in WAP, so I was simply ignored most of the time. I would sit next to John, but nobody paid the slightest attention to me. Always worrying that I might breach etiquette, I was so scared of using my left hand to eat with that I used to sit on it! However, one advantage of being a woman was that I wasn't ever offered special titbits like raw sheep's eyes to eat. I wore full skirts and long sleeves all the time, and kept my head covered, because the sun was so fierce. John and the other British officers normally wore uniform on duty (white or khaki shirts, and matching knee-length shorts and stockings); but on their heads they all used to wear the Arab *agal* and *habiyya* …

Travelling

Once I was able to accompany John when he crossed the Yemeni border to Taiz for discussions with the Imam's regent for southern Yemen, a member of the royal family. I went to the women's quarters with a teenage girl who spoke a little English. The senior wife received me graciously. Through my young interpreter I said how sorry I was that we had no common language. One of the princess's attendants brought in a charming baby, which was placed in my lap. Then the princess said, through the interpreter: "But we do have a common language!" Such a sensitive gesture, I thought. As I was leaving, a whole bottle of expensive Parisian perfume – 'Rêve d'Or' – was broken over me. I was wearing a dress with the fashionable shoulder-pads, so that I simply reeked of perfume! For the next two days John and another officer, Alastair McIntosh, said the stench made them feel sick! …

McIntosh was a brilliant Arabist. The Arabs called him "Toosh". When he first arrived, John was anxious that I should receive his friend warmly. When he was expected, a crowd of Arabs turned up, chattering excitedly. I asked a rather fat one: "But where Mr McIntosh?" The fat Arab replied in a broad Scots accent: "But I am McIntosh! Delighted to meet you, Mrs Allen." He became one of our dearest friends. John's Arabic wasn't nearly so good as Toosh's. He could read and write the classical Arabic quite well, but the spoken language which he'd picked up in the Sudan was no use at all, because the people in WAP spoke lots of very difficult Arabic dialects: they couldn't even understand one another, quite often! The people working in Aden Colony tended to be conventional colonial servants, and mostly – we thought – rather unimaginative and dull, with few exceptions. But the Political Officers and others working in WAP and EAP (Eastern Aden Protectorate) were almost all much more interesting people. EAP's offices were in Mukalla, 300 miles to the east. But WAP's were in Aden Colony itself. Moving the headquarters conveniently into the Protectorate, away from Aden, proved impossible, because the rival sultans would have resented the headquarters being in any sultanate but their own …

Travelling in WAP wasn't easy, as there were very few proper roads. The beach formed the road eastward to EAP, but inland and westward any tracks were rough and treacherous, and often swept away by flash floods. John and his fellow officers often needed to get around quickly, so they used planes from the RAF base. On one occasion John was flying with some senior local dignitaries, when they ran into a sandstorm. It ripped loose the fabric on the nose of the elderly plane they were flying in, and the material whirled back over the cockpit, completely blinding the pilot. A dignified Arab drew his dagger and passed it forward to the co-pilot, who was able to reach round and cut the fabric loose. The Arabs were quite unperturbed: evidently they thought this was an everyday happening, like mending a puncture or dealing with a recalcitrant camel!…

That was the era when the Zionists were calling upon the Jewish diaspora to return to Israel. There were a lot of Jews in Aden, and although most of them didn't in the least want to leave a place which had been their home for generations, the pressures to do so were immense. The British government was still trying to run Palestine under the League of Nations' mandate, and didn't at all want floods of additional immigrants: so the staff in Aden colony and the two protectorates had to try to stem the flow without giving offence to too many people. Eventually that British policy changed. In Aden and the Protectorates the local people had no objection to the Jews. John was outraged by the forcible expulsion of many who didn't in the least want to go …

In WAP ordinary money wasn't much use. The local people dealt exclusively in bullion – solid gold or silver for preference. In the 18th century the

Empress Maria Theresa once sent a ship out with money to pay her troops in what was then the Austrian East Indies. The ship got wrecked in a Red Sea storm and all the money was looted by the locals – solid silver “Maria Theresa dollars”. While we were in Aden these were still the basic units of exchange …

Administrative practices

WAP wasn't in the least like an ordinary colony. The closest parallels seemed to me to be with the North-West Frontier of India during the 19th century - the same sort of chaos of intrigues and scheming and petty wars going on all the time. I think the British government would have liked to be rid of the whole place. But Aden itself was strategically very important for the Royal Navy; and giving up WAP would have meant in effect handing the place over to Yemen, which at that time was under the most benighted tyranny, which was receiving suspicious amounts of "aid" from the Soviet Union …

The international boundaries weren’t agreed and were very ill-defined even where they were accepted. What's more, there were many rumours of oil and other valuable resources in WAP. One of the principal tasks of John and his colleagues was to keep an eye on the activities of the many teams of "archaeologists" from North America and elsewhere who kept wanting to survey areas where there was no earthly reason to expect significant archaeological remains. John hunted up the curricula vitae of these “archaeologists”: most had degrees in geology or petroleum technology… Even the genuine archaeologists could be an awful nuisance. One of them was arrogantly dismissive of the instructions he was given, and liable to stray across into what was unquestionably Yemeni territory in a politically sensitive period. He contemptuously ignored warnings and established his camp in the dry bed of the Wadi Bayhan. A flash flood swept it all away, and he lost masses of equipment and even a couple of his workmen’s lives.

Officials in Whitehall sent out an Organization and Methods officer to make the WAP office more bureaucratically efficient. At the end of the first morning John collected the O&M man to go to lunch. The visitor commented: “You’ll have to get rid of that chief clerk. He’s hopeless!” “Oh, no, we can’t possibly do that,” said John, “you see, he’s the Yemeni spy. Look, I’ll show you.” He took out of the safe a file marked ‘TOP SECRET’ and noisily locked it in his desk drawer Then he called to the clerk: “I’m taking our visitor to lunch. Allow no-one into my office until I

John and Winkie Allen in Abyan c.1949

get back. Now," he explained to the mystified visitor, "a letter on the top of that file tells us that the Colonial Office is changing its policy. So we can now do something, which the Yemenis have been wanting us to do for a long time. We need them to know about the change as soon as possible". "Then why not just tell them?" asked O&M. "They would simply suspect a devious plot to throw them off their guard", explained John. "Now Ali will get the news through to them by tea-time today – and they'll believe it." "I give up", said O&M, "I'm not trained for this sort of thing!" …

John's War

Another time John was alone in the office during the peace of a Muslim festival, when all local staff had the day off. A couple of dignified elderly gentlemen asked if they might speak to him. "We've come to ask if you could declare war on us," they explained. "Our two clans have had a blood feud for generations. But neither of us can give way without losing face. However, if we were confronted by the full might of the British Empire, we think we could give way without losing face." John rang up the senior military commander in Aden, an Air Vice-Marshal. "I'm sorry!" he replied, "we're very busy. No wars before October, I'm afraid."

On the first holy day in September the visitors were back, asking: “What about our war?” The A.V-M was more helpful this time: “Yes, you could have three fighter-bombers for a few days in October.” So John had leaflets printed, explaining that His Majesty’s Government disapproved of warfare between persons under the protection of the Crown, and required that it should cease forthwith. The leaflets were dropped by the fighter-bombers over the relevant villages. I had met and made friends with some of the women, so I asked the RAF to drop some toys and sweets and dried fruits for the children along with the leaflets. They kindly did this for me.

The clansmen sent back messages rejecting the British terms – accompanied by greetings to me and notes of thanks for my gifts. So another leaflet was dropped, saying that unless hostilities ceased immediately one named village on each side would be bombed two days later between 9 o’clock in the morning and 12 noon. The clansmen promptly let off all their guns making a great show of ferocity. Then the villagers evacuated their houses and everyone for miles around came to watch the spectacle. The RAF flew over the villages for a couple of hours’ useful target practice. It was the dry season, and the houses weren’t elaborate, so it wasn’t going to take more than a day or two to rebuild them.

When the RAF had used up their bomb ration, John came up the valley with an escort, and delegations from the two clans came across carrying white flags. John presided over the signing of a solemn treaty, undertaking to pursue the feud no longer. Everyone embraced everyone else and a tremendous feast was planned for the next day. The colonial treasury in Aden produced some “hospitality” funds, so John sent me and a clerk to buy some imported luxuries like chocolates and orange squash (no alcohol, as in public all the sultans were strictly teetotal Muslims). So that was “John’s War” – “one of the very few really just wars in history” he used to claim.

Things were not always so light-hearted. Feuds and petty wars led to frequent casualties and injuries. Soon after John’s first arrival in Aden, Peter Davy, a very experienced Arabist, was shot dead near Dhala‘, close to the Yemeni border. It was rumoured that he’d secretly married an Arab woman, to the disapproval of all her clan. Much the worst moment for me personally was when we were having lunch in a tent one day – sitting on mats on the ground as usual. All at once there was a “bang!” and the man sitting opposite me - Bob Mounde, a cheerful young Agricultural Officer – fell forward onto the plate in front of me. A government guard, who had been dismissed and nursed resentment against the British, had sidled up outside the tent and shot Bob in the back of the head, killing him instantly. I had to go and break the news to his young wife, who had three children and a new baby …

I suppose we were all in greater danger than we sometimes realized. When our son Hubert came out for Christmas in 1950, we went to spend the holiday high in the mountains near the Yemeni border. On the way we stopped for a wheel change. We heard odd bangs on the slopes above us, which John told us were caused by falling rocks. Hubert asked what a funny buzzing noise was? "Bees!" said John. Later Hubert asked John whether it had really been bees. "No," confessed John, "it was bullets. I didn't want your mother and the girls to get worried. There are a lot of brigands along this road. I don't think they meant to hit us. They were just warning us not to try hunting them up"….

The local rulers were a mixed lot, with assorted titles; for convenience we generally lumped them together as "the sultans". Several of them were pretty useless, because they spent so much of their time chewing a local drug called *qat* – terribly enervating and stupefying. Others were always up to mischief – scheming against one another, or plotting together or with the Yemenis against the British – not because they particularly disliked the British: but because they thought that under Yemen's jurisdiction they might not be required to conform with so many tiresome laws and restrictions.

However, one of them – the Sharif of Bayhan (who was a thorn in the flesh for the British a lot of the time) – was a devout Muslim of great integrity. He and John came to admire one another greatly, even though they were quite often politically – or even militarily – in dispute about land rights or access to water or permits for "archaeologists" or other problems. The Sharif considered John to be a Christian Sufi – a scholar with profound knowledge of the Qur'an. John was delighted to overhear one of the local dignitaries being told: "That British officer and the Sharif are brothers…" When a new Governor of Aden was appointed, the Sharif asked John: "Why have they sent us a man who is not a gentleman?" John protested that a man should be judged on merit, not just because he came of a good family. "Nonsense!" grumped the Sharif. "If you're buying a horse you look at its breeding, not its looks or its behaviour!"

ARABIAN CALENDARS BEFORE ISLAM, AND THE CALENDAR OF MECCA. A REVIEW OF RECENT RESEARCH

WERNER DAUM[1]

The Islamic calendar (the 12 lunar months from Muḥarram to Dhū al-ḥijja) is generally perceived as being of great age. This view is shared by Muslims and the Western public, but also by scholars of Islam. This calendar, originating in Arabia's central sanctuary, as it were, would have been observed and effective over all, or most, of Arabia.

We will review the various known calendars from the Arabian Peninsula. Recent years have enriched our knowledge enormously – almost everything written more than 10 or 20 years ago has been made obsolete by newly discovered inscriptions in Yemen and Saudi-Arabia, mostly the work of various French missions. Thanks to these exciting new discoveries, we will discuss what we know about the calendar of the kingdom of Saba (beginning of the first millennium BC to early centuries AD), the calendar of the state of Ḥimyar (flourishing from around the beginning of our era to the Persian conquest of Yemen and Arabia in the late 6th century), the reform under the Ethiopian Abraha, who was king of Yemen (Ḥimyar) and most of Arabia in the early and mid-6th century, and, finally, the calendar of Mecca, the most influential of them all, to this day. As we shall see, the calendar of Mecca was created by Prophet Muḥammad in year 10 AH, by reforming the previous calendar. It can only be understood against the background of the old Meccan calendar (which was a variant of the Yemeni calendar). The Meccan calendar and its complete reformation by Muḥammad are intimately connected with the birth of Islam, and Islam's main religious ritual, the *ḥajj*. Our discussion will also shed new light on the origins of Islam.

A lunar year is approximately 11 days shorter than the 365 days solar year which regulates nature and human behaviour. In the remote past, the (easily observable) lunar calendar would therefore have been correlated to the seasons by some kind of intercalation. In the decades before Muḥammad, the system would have gone astray (so it is assumed by both

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[1] Professor Dr Werner Daum has authored or edited about 10 books on Arabia and North-East Africa, plus a number of scholarly articles. As a museum curator, he organised the most successful ever exhibition on Yemen's history and civilisation

Muslims and Western scholars) by about half a year, moving the spring months to the autumn or the month called Jumāda ("icy") to the summer.

None of this is correct. Until the mid, late 6th century, Mecca was "une bourgade isolée, misérable et peu peuplée" (Robin 2017, 289), with very few permanent inhabitants and without influence beyond its immediate surroundings. Its calendar was a provincial version of a widely practised Arabian calendar (based on an experimental, but working, system of intercalation), with only the *names* of the months specific to Mecca. These names, those of the pan-Arabian calendar and their equivalents in Mecca are known thanks to the early Muslim historians, often described as the traditionalists, but nothing else. The entire system (names of months, relevant era, date of New Year, and intercalation) has now been fully reconstructed thanks to the above mentioned newly discovered inscriptions. Nothing of this has filtered into general Islamic studies – scholars simply do not read beyond their horizons.

Most of this discovery and reconstruction, a true sea change in our understanding of an important moment in human history, is due to Christian Robin. Almost single-handedly, he has discovered the sources (the inscriptions in scorching deserts and high up on cliffs) and given a history to a continent that had not previously existed, Ancient Arabia. It is no longer an empty space; it has a surprising history which made Muḥammad's mission possible, and has left its mark on the religion he preached, in both its rituals and linguistic expressions. Incidentally, the picture drawn by the Qur'ān of pre-Islamic Arabia is wrong: in the early 7th century AD, contrary to what the holy book tells us, polytheistic pagan religion had disappeared, Arabia had been monotheistic for the previous 250 years.

It should also be stressed that during much of the 5th and the 6th centuries, all of Western, Central and Northern Arabia (up to the Euphrates) was under the domination of the state of Ḥimyar. The history of Arabia before Muḥammad can only be understood in this political context. Later Muslim historians knew nothing about ancient Arabia: the vague legends connected with invented tribes that never existed should not be used for reconstructing the past.

The following text is largely based on Christian Robin's material and conclusions. I feel however that he sometimes trusts his inscriptions too much. Yes, they are primary documents; but after all, they represent the elites, while ordinary people were not aware of calendars and years, or even of their own age. On the other hand, an incredible continuity of beliefs and communal attitudes in Yemen has survived – unaltered – through the millennia. It is through such anthropological observation that I will question some of Robin's conclusions. Both methods must be combined. Therefore, two thirds of the present paper is a review of Robin's studies and the remaining third (the calendar of Mecca between years 1 and 10 AH) is new.

The calendar of Ḥimyar

Quite a few elements of the Sabaean calendar are known: a total of 14 names of months and the order of 3 of them, but the system as a whole still escapes our understanding. The Sabaeans did not have an era, i.e. they did not count the years from a year zero. Instead, "eponyms" (persons "naming" years) were tasked with giving their names to a group of years, a system also practised in Republican Rome. The annual pilgrimage of the Sabaeans to the great temple of their supreme god, Almaqah, in Mārib was in the month of Dhū-abhay (February / March).

The calendar of Ḥimyar, Saba's successor state, is much better understood. It counted the years from a year zero corresponding to 110 BC. It was in use in South Arabia, including Najrān and in parts of the region of Ḥimā, 100 km north east of Najrān. The idea of creating an era, i.e. a year zero, an idea which seems so natural to us ("Anno Domini") is a "first" in human history: neither the Egyptians, the Greeks nor the Romans had one (in spite of approximating it with Olympics and *ab urbe condita*). The older civilisations had counted the years according to regnal years, or as "year x after the building of canal so-and-so", or after the names of eponyms, to name just a few. The idea of an era was also adopted somewhat later by two other Yemeni "communities" (states), Radmān and Maḍḥa, both lying south east of Ḥimyar.

Luni-solar, with a system of intercalation

The calendar of Ḥimyar was luni-solar, i.e. lunar, using intercalary months in order to bring it into rough harmony with the solar year. In earlier periods, this worked somehow empirically, with probably three intercalated months over 8 years; later on, Ḥimyar introduced the very precise "Metonic cycle" (developed in Babylon, and taken over by the Greek astronomer Meton) of 7 months in 19 years. Most recently, Nebes, a world authority on Semitic and the pre-Islamic languages of Yemen, interpreting a newly found Abraha inscription, was able to establish that in the early 6th century, the kingdom of Ḥimyar inserted the leap month after Dhū-ḥillatān, the first month of its calendar (Abraha's Mārib dam inscription DAI GDN 2002/20). This inscription, discovered in 2002, describes the repair and building work of a pylon supporting and strengthening the Mārib dam. It details the duration of the work by month names, by the total number of months, and the year they began plus the year of their completion. This adds up to one month more than those named, i.e. an unnamed intercalary month had been inserted in that particular year.

When did the year begin in the Ḥimyaritic calendar? It began with the month of Dhū-hillatān which in the medieval Rasūlid calendar corresponded to February. Robin, comparing this with other sources, argues that the Ḥimyaritic New Year would have oscillated between March/April and February. Robin is certainly right in not considering these differences as important. The insertion of an intercalary month adds 30 days, while only 11 are needed in a particular year. We therefore share Robin's view that the Ḥimyaritic New Year fluctuated around the spring equinox.

Nebes' and Robin's conclusions are confirmed and complemented by another source. In fact, three medieval calendars, compiled by the Rasūlid Sultans, and organized according to the Julian (i.e. solar) calendar (but with the Syrian month names) mention the equivalents of these solar months with what were the old Ḥimyaritic names still used by Yemenis. They were identical with the ancient Ḥimyaritic names, except for the article (in Sabaic/Ḥimyaritic post-positional *-ān*, in Arabic pre-positional *al-*). These medieval sources therefore provide us not only with the names of the Ḥimyaritic months, but also with their order. One of these almanacs (referring to the year 1271 AD) has been finely edited by US social anthropologist Daniel Varisco. It was compiled by the Rasūlid Sultan 'Umar[2] under the title *al-tabṣira fi 'ilm al-nujūm*, "a conspectus / treatise / instruction / presentation on the science of the stars". From this almanac, images 1 and 2 overleaf are copies of the two pages for the month of July, here called by its Syrian name Tammūz. The first line thus has "Tammūz Dhū madhrā", where Dhū madhrā is the month name in what we might call "medieval Ḥimyaritic". The original Ḥimyaritic word was Dhū madḥrā'ān (with the post-positional article). The word is derived from the Sabaic / Ḥimyaritic root *dhara* (sowing), still present in a number of Yemeni

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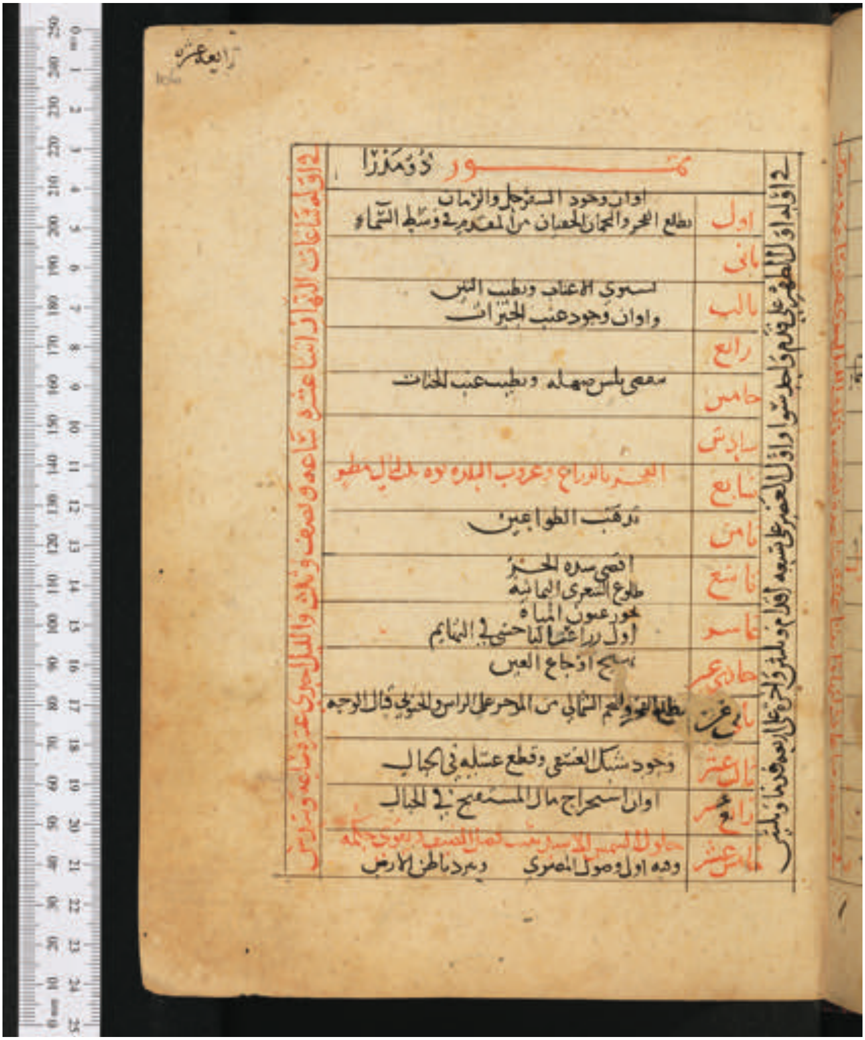
[2] al-Malik al-Ashraf Mumahhid al-Dīn 'Umar b. Yūsuf b. 'Alī b. Rasūl b. Hārūn b. Abī Fattāḥ al-Ghassānī, r. 694/1295 – 696/1296



al-Tabṣira, the Rasūlid Almanac for the year 1271 AD; here: July (=Tammūz) 1-15.
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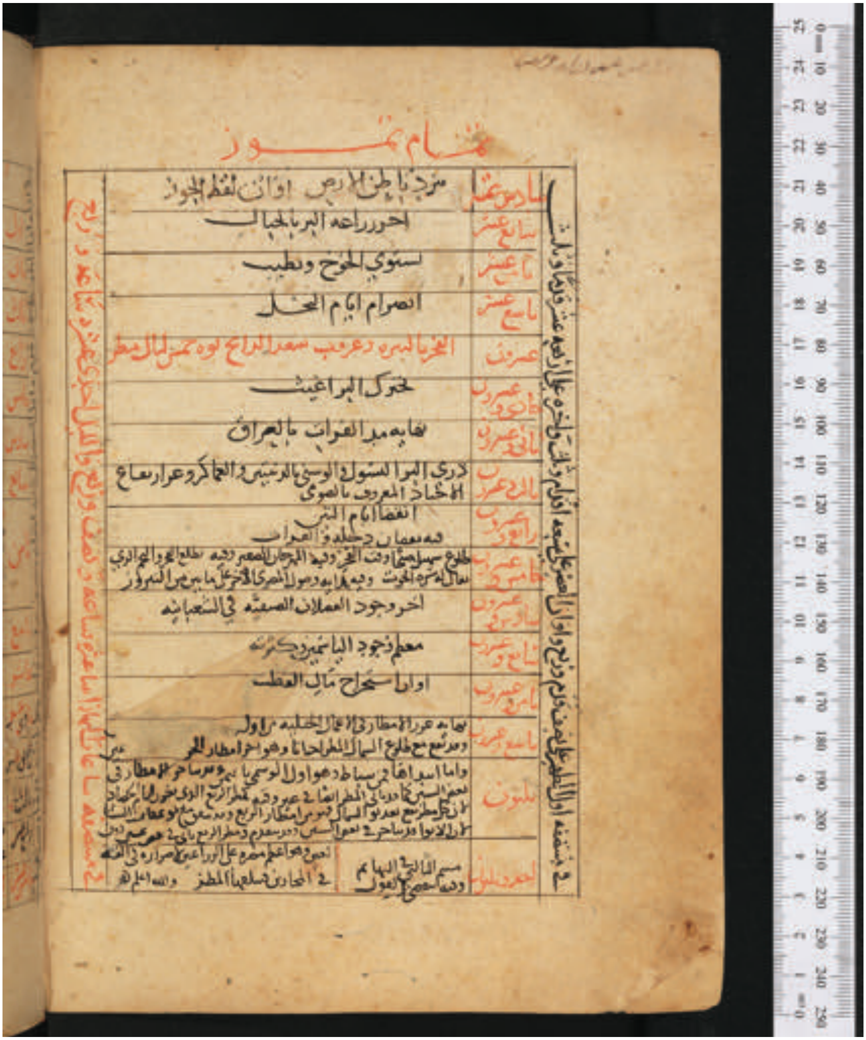
dialects. Varisco notes that the *tabṣira* explains that the month was so named because it was the main time for sowing grains such as wheat and barley in the mountains of Yemen, and that several varieties of sorghum were also planted in the coastal region during this month.

Readers familiar with Arabic writing will notice that the text of the



tabṣira does not read Dhū madhṛā, but Dhu mazrā! This is a superb Freudian scribal slip and its explanation is quite interesting: the scribe knew that *dhara* (the root of the word *madhrā*) meant “sowing” in Ḥimyaritic and in the dialect, but instinctively connected “sowing” with the Arabic word for sowing, namely *zara*ʿ. And so he let his pen go for the z, but did it correctly for the r and the ā.

The days of the month are marked in full words in the right hand column, *awwal* (first), *thānī* (second), etc. The first 15 days are on the first page, the days 16 to 31 are on the second page. Everything here is interesting, but I have to refer readers to Varisco's translation (p. 35). Here, I will just provide a few quotes:

> 1st: Season for availability of quince and pomegranates ...
> 3rd: Grapes ripen. Figs are good to eat …
> 13th: Availability of acacia honeycombs in the mountains …
> 14th: Season for assessing the *mustaftah* tax in the mountains
> For days 29 and 30, and written halfway into the column for the 31st, the Almanac says "End of abundant rainfall in the mountain areas, which began on the first of this month". The text then provides much detail about rains in Yemen in general. But this is not correct! The summer rainy season in Yemen falls in July and August. Sultan ʿUmar knew this of course, and gives the correct details elsewhere in the *tabṣira*, as noted by Varisco (p. 106).

In this almanac, the first Ḥimyaritic month, Dhū-ḥillatān, is called Shubāt (the Syrian name for February). In the medieval calendar (where the year began in the autumn), the first month is however Dhū-ṣurābān, Arabic Dhū-ṣurāb, corresponding to (the solar Julian) Tishrīn al-awwal (= October). *Ṣurāb* is the Yemeni dialect word for harvest, referring to sorghum. The famous medieval Yemeni historian, Nashwān al-Ḥimyari, would however (more correctly) equate the main sorghum harvest (*ṣurāb*) with September, and thus have the year beginning in September.

Some reforms when Yemen converted to Judaism

Robin then discusses the question whether the calendar might have been reformed in the 380s AD, when the kingdom of Ḥimyar converted to Judaism. He believes that such a change seems plausible (for instance, eponyms – whose authority was no doubt anchored in religion – ceased to be mentioned in the 380s), but cannot be proved from the inscriptions. I think that it can be proved from other indicators. Thus, the month name Ṣayd ("hunting") was replaced by the name Dhū ālān, which the *Almanac* gives as December. Ibex hunting in Yemen is an age old religious ritual, performed by the earliest Sabaean kings, and alive to this day. The myths behind it and the concomitant popular beliefs leave no doubt that it is a rain rogation. It would therefore seem commensurate that such a religiously charged term (referring to the old Arabian religion) was abandoned. We should however note that the ritual hunt continued to be practised by the Jewish kings, such as Abīkarib As‘ad, in the 5th century. The month “Ṣayd” corresponds to December. The ritual hunt is indeed performed in December/January. The date fits! Another element is the word for the New Year in the popular Yemeni agricultural calendar. In fact, the Julian / Christian / Syrian / Rasūlid solar calendar persists in the Tihāma (Daum p.10) and in other regions as well. In it, the New Year is called *ra’s al-sana* (it falls in September, 14 days before a full moon). It seems impossible to me not to understand this peculiar term as a translation from its Hebrew cognate, Rosh ha Shana.

Yemen adopts the Christian/Julian solar calendar in the middle of the fifth century AD

Concerning the probability of a subsequent reform under Abraha, Robin is on even safer ground and I agree. The conversion of Yemen from Judaism to Christianity (following the Ethiopian invasion and the defeat of the last Jewish king in the early 520s) was a major symbolic and material event, culminating on the one hand in the building of Abraha’s magnificent cathedral (ca. 540 AD) in Sana‘a, with material assistance from Justinian, and on the other hand his subsequent conquest of the whole of Western, Central and Northern Arabia, up to al-Ḥīra on the Euphrates where he eliminated the Persian client state of the Lakhmids, rulers of north-eastern Arabia. The cathedral was erected around a pre-Islamic sanctuary, encompassing its cult-symbols. Later on, in the early years of Islam, the cathedral was transformed into the Great Mosque – an almost unique example of sacred continuity from pagan sanctuary through a Christian church right to a mosque. The only other example known to me is in Damascus (temple-cathedral-mosque).

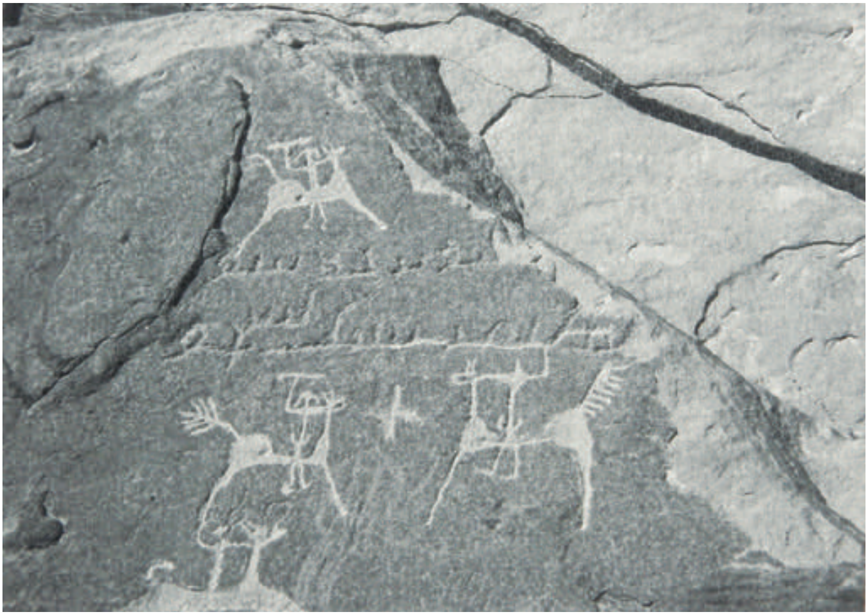
It is difficult to imagine that Abraha did not then introduce the Julian (Christian) calendar. Robin gives an additional argument: Abraha wanted to turn Sana‘a into Arabia’s foremost pilgrimage centre, eclipsing Mecca and its markets. No wonder therefore that he wanted to align his calendar (and its religious feasts) with the calendar observed by the Christians who were by now the majority in Northern and Eastern Arabia, and beyond.

I take a broader view, but reach the same conclusion. As I just said, Abraha’s cathedral was built around a sanctuary of the old Arabian water religion, situated on the site of the future Great Mosque. But his new “Christian” church did not replace the old sanctuary – instead, it integrated it (including its cult symbols, two tall standing poles) within the new cathedral. This means that Abraha also adopted the yearly pagan festival which we know in its Meccan form as *‘umra*, but celebrated everywhere in Arabia on the nearest day of full moon to the spring equinox. The pre-Christian feast of Sana‘a was therefore not only on the same day as that of Mecca, but it also coincided (roughly) with its old Semitic brother, Passover, and with Passover’s Christian successor, Easter. Abraha’s strategy to turn Sana‘a into Arabia’s foremost pilgrimage centre was therefore quite logical; it was equally logical to support this with the adoption of the Christian solar calendar. New Year was in March. The fact that the form of the Ḥimyaritic calendar as a purely solar calendar remained in force at the time of the Rasūlids proves that such a reform took place.

The calendar of Northern Arabia

Another calendar – also ultimately derived from the Babylonian model – was observed in the north of the peninsula. The first of its twelve (undoubtedly lunar) months was called al-Mu’tamir; its 12th month was called Burak. The month which later Muslim tradition considered as the seventh was called al-Aṣamm (“the deaf-one”), a synonym for Rajab. We will expand on this below. Among the new inscriptions discovered in 2014 by the Saudi-French mission at the wells of al-Ḥimā (bi’r Ḥimā), about100 km north-east of Najrān, this calendar, hitherto known only through early Muslim historians, poetry and the dictionaries (for the North of the Peninsula) is now found that far south. For the first time also, some of its month names are now confirmed in a primary source, namely in inscriptions.

The era used is the era of the Roman Province of Arabia. But what is new is that here we have the ancient northern Arab month names, because in Syria and Northern Arabia, where the Roman Province of Arabia era was also used, the month names were the Syrian ones. One of the new inscriptions is the commemoration of a local Christian martyr. It is prominently inscribed on a large boulder, with a big cross. It is dated the month of Burak year 364 (corresponding to February/March 470 AD). The other inscription, reproduced opposite, is dated to al-Mu’tamir year 408. This date corresponds to March/April 513 AD. In both cases, the era is that of the Roman Province of Arabia. Further north, as is to be expected, this era was quite generally used in the regions near Roman Arabia, and in Taimā’, Madā’in Ṣāliḥ, Dūmat al-Jandal, in the Ḥijāz generally, as well as in Syria, but with the Syro-Babylonian month names.



Rock inscription found near the wells of Ḥimā, dated al-Mu'tamir year 408 = March / April 513 AD. Photograph courtesy and copyright MAFSN, published Robin et al 2014, fig. 65

The inscription reproduced here (the riders were probably added later), discovered by the Mission archéologique franco-séoudienne de Najrān (MAFSN), and catalogued (with the “siglum”)Ḥimā al-Musammāt PalAr 1, is transcribed as follows:

…(s)w br Khidāshw
5 + 1 + 1 + 1
… (’)l-m’tmr snt 4 x 100

The month *’l-m’tmr*, to be vocalised as al-Mu’tamir, is here corroborated for the first time in an original epigraphic source. According to the lists provided by Quṭrub and al-Farrā’, discussed further below, this was the first month of the year, corresponding to February / March. The text is to be translated as follows:

(Qays?) son of Khidāsh
(in the month of)
al-Mu’tamir
year 408

We note that the writing is practically Arabic, while the words are somewhere between Aramaic ("son" is *bir* or *bar*, and not yet *bin*), and the Arabic article *al* used for the month.

The language of these short inscriptions is therefore Nabataean Aramaic, on its way to becoming Arabic; the script is already almost identical to the earliest Arabic inscriptions. For both language and script Robin proposes the term Nabataeo-Arabic. The switch from Nabataeo-Arabic to Arabic occurs around 500 AD. The inscriptions from al-Ḥimā are thus earlier than the three previously known earliest inscriptions which clearly qualify as Arabic, all of them found in Syria: Zabad (near Aleppo), 512 AD, Jabal Usais (near Damascus), 532/33 AD, and Ḥarrān (Jabal Drūze, south of Damascus), 568 AD.

While Muslim traditionalists have in general not preserved anything of true value from pre-Islamic Arabia, the calendar al-Mu'tamir / Burak seems to have survived into the Islamic period. But it is also known from pre- and early Islamic poetry, and therefore discussed in the dictionaries and commented upon by Muslim literati. Robin provides useful and interesting references of these sources. Quṭrub (d. 206/821) and al-Farrā' (d. 207/822) have the most complete sequences of those pre-Islamic month names, and their equivalents in the later Muslim calendar. According to these lists, the seventh month of the old calendar would have been al-Aṣamm otherwise known as Rajab (more references at Wellhausen p. 97).

The Meccan calendar before Muḥammad

From these parallels, Robin concludes that the Meccan calendar was (in both months and intercalation system) identical with the al-Mu'tamir / Burak calendar, with the only difference being the use of other names for the months. I will question this assumption below on the grounds that the al-Mu'tamir / Burak calendar is attested in inscriptions, while the Meccan calendar is only known through tradition which might not be correct.

The most important moment in the history of the Meccan calendar was its complete restructuring during Muḥammad's last pilgrimage, his *ḥajjat al-wadā'*, the Farewell Pilgrimage, in Dhū al-ḥijja of year 10, as recorded in Qur'ān 9,36 and 37. In this speech, Muḥammad abolished the system of intercalation, and thus created the quite unique "Islamic" pure lunar calendar. Without intercalation, a lunar year moves every year by about 11 days, compared with the solar year. Within three years, the difference is already more than one month; after about 16 years, summer is in winter, and vice versa. The Qur’ānic argument goes as follows: the insertion of a leap month would postpone the divinely instituted sanctity of the sacred months (four, according to the new calendar) and thus contradict God’s will.

Robin argues that intercalation was last practised in Mecca in year 10. He reaches this conclusion on the basis of the date of the Farewell Pilgrimage, which took place one month later than the pilgrimage of year nine. I totally agree with this but wish to introduce a general caveat: from the Farewell Pilgrimage onwards, all Islamic dates can be converted exactly into Julian (or Gregorian) dates. But we do not know anything definite about the earlier years. In fact, the date of the Hijra itself (June 622) was only fixed retrospectively by Caliph ‘Umar in year 17/638. It, and the beginning of year 1 AH (supposedly 19 April 622) are by no means certain. On the contrary: we must assume that Muslim historians unconsciously used their “pure” lunar calendar when reconstructing and dating the events of the first 9 Islamic years.

An official responsible for the intercalation: the *qalammas*

According to Muslim tradition, the intercalation for Mecca had been in the hands of a person called *qalammas* for about 200 years. Robin discusses the role of the *qalammas* in great detail and with a number of new and convincing arguments. In order to explain the background, I have to include here an excursion into the political history of Ḥimyar and Arabia. When Ḥimyar (under Abīkarib As‘ad) conquered Western and much of Northern Arabia (around 430/440 AD), a considerable number of its auxiliary troops were from Kinda. During the 1st century AD, the Yemeni tribe of Kinda had emerged as ruler of the state based in Qaryat al-Faw (in contemporary Saudi-Arabia). From the 430s/440s onwards, until about the middle of the sixth century, the Kinda princes (the princely clans and their tribal followers, but not “the whole tribe”) ruled the territories of Western and Northern Arabia as vassals of the kings of Ḥimyar; they then returned to Ḥaḍramaut. The people of these territories were called “Ma‘add”, which the Arab genealogies understand as “Rabī‘a and Muḍar” (see Kindermann and Zwettler), meaning in fact all of Central and Northern Arabia, including Mecca.

Quraysh, the tribe of Mecca, belonged to Muḍar. Kinda governors primarily had political authority, but they also determined the calendar, as explicitly stated by al-Kalbī and al-Azraqī. This calendar was of course the (pre-Christian) calendar of Ḥimyar, i.e. the luni-solar one, inserting an additional full month from time to time. The intercalation itself was administered by an official known as al-*qalammas*, a hereditary office. The first *qalammas* to whom the Kinda governors entrusted the intercalation, was a certain Mālik b. Kināna, a relative by marriage of one of the Kinda princes. The *qalammas* – of Kināna – was responsible for the calendar throughout the tribal confederation of Maʻadd and the territory so designated. He therefore also administered the calendar of Mecca.

Robin concludes, with some reservations, that all three calendars used in Arabia at the eve of Islam were probably identical and luni-solar: they used the same year, and the same intercalations. These were the old calendars of Ḥimyar (until Abraha's reform, when he introduced the Julian solar year), the calendar al-Mu'tamir / Burak, and the calendar of Mecca.

The calendar of Mecca: did it really exist?

Robin's reconstruction of the Ḥimyaritic calendar(s) and the North Arabian calendar al-Mu'tamir / Burak is based on primary sources except of course for the parallels with the Meccan calendar, provided only by Muslim tradition. Future research will not change these conclusions much. The situation is rather different for the "calendar of Mecca" itself (al-Muḥarram to Dhū al-ḥijja). We should maybe pause here for a moment. Researchers too easily forget that there is no single primary historical document demonstrating the existence of the Meccan calendar. Literacy was widespread in ancient Arabia – tens of thousands of short inscriptions have been discovered in recent years, thousands are still waiting to be found and registered. Wouldn't the people of Mecca – many of them great merchants and their equally literate employees, travelling wide and far – not have immortalised themselves with "Kilroy was here, month and year"? Should we dare to imagine the unimaginable?

Muḥammad changed most of the system in year 10 – so why not dare to think that he also changed the rest of it, namely the names and sequences of the months? As I said above, we are on firm ground with respect to the Muslim calendar only for the period after 10 AH. For the first 10 years, a few things are likely or indeed certain, such as a working intercalation system, because people knew what solar season it was, when their animals were dropping their young, when trees blossomed, when it was time to harvest etc. The *qalammas* had a 200 years family tradition of adjusting the 12 lunar months (354 days) to the real year, the solar year of approximately

365 days. Could he have been so massively wrong, by 6 months, in year 10? Above all, there were the three developed calendars, of Ḥimyar, Syria, and the Roman Province of Arabia which must have been known to most people living in or visiting Mecca.

Examining the *sīra*, the Life of the Prophet, to reconstruct the Meccan calendar between the Hijra and year 10 AH

I think we can provide some insight on the nature of the calendar in Mecca, before year 10. The key is Ibn Isḥāq's *Life of the Prophet*. While we may not accept all its dates as absolutely correct in the modern historical sense, I am convinced that we can assume that the years and the months follow events chronologically and that the sequence of events as remembered by those who lived through them follow an accurate timeline. These events are connected with dates (i.e. day, month, and year) that appear to follow the later Muslim calendar. But in fact, another calendar was in force between years 1 and 10, as we already pointed out above concerning the intercalation, and as we are now going to prove. When later Muslim historians retrospectively activated their calendar for the years 1 to 10, they tried to eliminate the original dates. But traces of them remained as I will now demonstrate. We shall see that the dates given in years and names of months were not the original ones, but a backward reconstruction from the new calendar which came into effect after year 10.

Intentional confusion: the *ḥajj* was *not* the Meccan pilgrimage

We must first provide a very important clarification about the so-called Meccan "pilgrimage". Most scholars, including Robin, are not aware that there were *two different pilgrimages* connected with Mecca: the great celebration of Mecca, the *'umra*, and the feast celebrated outside Mecca's ḥarām, in 'Arafa and Minā the *ḥajj*. On the occasion of his Farewell Pilgrimage, Muḥammad united the two into one (to be celebrated on the date of the *'umra*). His Farewell Pilgrimage was on 8-10 Dhū al-ḥijja of year 10 and is the first date of the Muslim calendar that we can establish with certainty. The 10th corresponded to March 10, 632 AD, i.e. a date in spring, near Passover, and near Easter.

In the reality of popular tradition, however, this unification was only achieved much later: in fact, for centuries the *'umra* (the feast of the Ka'ba) continued to be celebrated in the month of Rajab, separately from the *ḥajj* which fell in Dhū al-ḥijja, in spite of Muḥammad's unification of *'umra* and *ḥajj*. The *‘umra* had always been “the Rajab feast,” its sacrifices were called *rajabiya* (Kister p. 193). Caliph ‘Umar made his *‘umra* in year 17, during Rajab, of course. Nasīr Khusraw (mid 11th c. AD) tells us that the people of the Hijāz and of Yemen continued to make it in Rajab. In Yemen, this was still the case in recent decades: it took place in Rajab, on the full moon day (Semitic 15th – our 14th). I have written extensively about it elsewhere.

Until year 10 AH, the great feast of Mecca was in Rajab equivalent to March

Let us now look at Ibn Isḥāq’s “Life of the Prophet” and try to find out if it tells us anything about the dates of the *‘umra* before year 10. In year 6 AH, Muḥammad wanted to perform the Meccan pilgrimage; the *sīra* mentions expressly that it was an *‘umra*, which is obvious, because Muḥammad wanted to do it in Mecca. The Prophet intended to enter Mecca with a large number of followers. The Meccans were evidently not pleased, and did not agree. Instead of fighting it out, both sides concluded the treaty of Ḥudaybiya, according to which Muḥammad was not allowed to enter Mecca or indeed the ḥarām at that time, or to slaughter his camels at the Ka‘ba, but was instead promised he would be allowed to return the following year, and then perform the full *‘umra* (which of course included the sacrifices at the Ka‘ba). According to Ibn Isḥāq, the Ḥudaybiya treaty and the aborted *‘umra* took place in the month of Dhū al-qa‘da. Ibn Isḥāq does not give the day, but the day of the full moon would have been the 27 of March 628.

In year 7, Muḥammad was allowed to perform the *‘umra*. This was called the *‘umra al-qadā’*, the “Fulfilled Pilgrimage”, a misleading translation, as it was not a *ḥajj*, but an *‘umra*. The correct translation should be the “Fulfilled *‘umra*.” Muḥammad stayed 3 days in Mecca in the month of Dhū al-qa‘da, its 15th day corresponding to 16 March 629.

In year 8, shortly after the almost bloodless conquest of Mecca, Muḥammad performed his second *‘umra*. Again this was in Dhū al-qa‘da: day 15 corresponded to 6 March 630. Ibn Isḥāq quotes several poems that were written on this occasion. Implicitly denying any issues of political power, the poems assert that the aim of the conquest was to facilitate the performance of the *‘umra* (Guillaume, p. 558, Sīra Arabic, p. 423, FN 2). Ibn Isḥāq also asserts that, that year, the people performed the *‘umra* in the way the (pagan) Arabs used to do it. Of course, what else should they have done? They therefore performed it on the full moon, and they slaughtered animals for their sacrifices (*ʻatāʼir*, Kister p. 193) at the Kaʻba.

In year 9, the pilgrims' procession to Mecca was led by Abū Bakr. Muḥammad stayed in Medina. The event was focused on the Kaʻba and was therefore again an *ʻumra*. It was performed in Dhū al-qaʻda, its 15th corresponding to 23 February 631.

As discussed above, year 10 was the year of Muḥammad's Farewell Pilgrimage when he announced the reform of the calendar. He prepared himself for the journey from Medina to Mecca at the beginning of the month of Dhū al-qaʻda, but he actually only went on the 25th and performed the pilgrimage the following month, from the 8th to the 10th Dhū al-ḥijja, corresponding to March 8-10, 632 AD.

What does this chronology tell us? It tells us that before year 10, the *ʻumra* was celebrated in March (i.e. around the spring equinox, Passover, Easter). Which "Meccan" month was that? Ibn Isḥāq speaks of Dhū al-qaʻda. But this is a manipulation: as we said above, the *ʻumra* continued for centuries to be celebrated independently from the *ḥajj*; the pre-Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca was a spring festival. It was celebrated in the month called Rajab, corresponding to March, not in Dhū al-qaʻda. Muḥammad not only united *ʻumra* and *ḥajj*, not only introduced the "pure lunar calendar", he also changed most of the names and order of the pre-Islamic months (such as putting Rajab in position 7), but, probably unintentionally, left some traces of the previous situation.

Muslim traditionalists (such as Ibn Isḥāq) thus preserved the sequence of events as they occurred between years 1 to 10, so that we can basically trust the timeline, but they naturally retrospectively used "their" calendar for those 10 years when in fact another calendar had been in place. We can discover how it operated through the dates of the *ʻumra* which we listed above. In fact, we know that prior to year 10, the *ʻumra* was celebrated in Rajab (on the day of its full moon). Before year 10, Rajab fell in March (in years 6, 7 and 8), and in February / March in year 9. If we add 12 lunar months to the date of year 9, the *ʻumra* in year 10 would have taken place on 12 February 632. But in fact, it was performed in March 632. Muḥammad, residing in Medina, had initially not been aware that an additional month had been proclaimed; he therefore prepared his journey to Mecca too early, in the beginning of Dhū al-qaʻda (12 lunar months after the *ʻumra* of the year 9), thinking that the *ʻumra* would be on the 15th of that month (which the Muslim historians called and calculated as Dhū al-qa‘da, counting backwards from their new post-year-10 calendar). Somewhat later, Muḥammad became aware that the next *‘umra* was one month later, i.e. not on 12 February (called “Dhū al-qa‘da”), but in the following month (which the sources call “Dhū al-ḥijja”). And indeed, so it was: the *‘umra* of year 10 was in March 632. This can only be explained by the insertion of an intercalary month, as discovered by Robin. Following my reconstruction above, this month was inserted after the last, twelfth, month of the previous year. Robin (personal communication) agrees with this: the intercalation occurred after the 12th month of year 9, bringing its total length to 13 lunar months.

The ancient Meccan calendar functioned correctly until year 10 AH

The system is now perfectly clear: the *‘umra* was the celebration of the month of Rajab; it had taken place in Rajab not only in the remote past, but also during the first 9 years of the Muslim calendar, and even in year 10 itself. This month of Rajab was called Dhū al-qa‘da by later Muslim historians who extended their new calendar backwards. The Farewell Pilgrimage itself was still held in Rajab / March, but that month was now officially called Dhū al-ḥijja, because of the insertion of an intercalary month. In other words: the old system functioned correctly until year 10. No disruption, no summer in winter, no winter in summer, as has been wrongly assumed by scholars ever since Armand-Pierre Caussin de Perceval’s pioneering studies (1843). What we said for calendar years 9 and 10, must therefore be applied to the previous years, namely the years after 1 AH. While we can accept the order of events of the life of the Prophet, i.e. the chronology that constitutes the birth of Islam, we cannot accept the names given to the months of years 1 to 10 by later Muslim historians. The old calendar of Mecca – in vigour until year 10 – was luni-solar; its concordance with the solar, ie natural, year was maintained through intercalation. It worked, the first month of the year was Rajab. The Prophet changed all this in a bid to desacralize Rajab, by moving it away from its first position to position 7, and to merge *‘umra* and *ḥajj*, by shifting the autumn *ḥajj* to the date of the spring *‘umra*. Until year 10, the two (spring and autumn) feasts connected with Mecca were the same as the Jewish Passover and Tabernacles. In order to eradicate any possible link with the past, but above all to remove the feast from the very pagan date of the full moon, Muḥammad also changed the day (within the month) from the 15th to the 10th.

The great classic Western scholars of Islam, such as Ewald, Robertson Smith, or Wellhausen correctly saw the Rajab *'umra* as a parallel to Passover, and the Jewish autumn festival Tabernacles (called *ḥag*) as parallel to the Muslim *ḥajj*. For the latter, even the word is the same! Both (*'umra* / Passover and *ḥajj* / *ḥag*) have their roots in the earliest Semitic religion; both are agricultural feasts and rain rogations. Rajab was the first month of the year: "Gewöhnlich aber wird er schlechtweg *al-shahr al-harām* genannt, der heilige Monat. Der Grund war ein grosses Fest, das im Rajab an allen heiligen Statten gefeiert wurde" (Wellhausen p. 98). I have shown in a number of articles that the Rajab festival (held on the full moon) has continued to be celebrated in Yemen at a number of sanctuaries that go back to the pre-Islamic period. Thus, before year 10, Rajab was the first month of the year (i.e. the first month of the first semester); it was called "sacred", *harām*. Muḥammad changed its position to the first month of the second semester, but left the name *al-muḥarram* where it used to be, i.e. with the first month of the year.

We have seen above that the month which Muslim historians call Rajab corresponded (according to their lists) to the month called *Aṣamm*, in the al-Mu'tamir / Burak calendar, but also in the continuous tradition of Islamic usage. "*Aṣamm*" means "deaf", so named because "dass er Waffen und Kriegsgeschrei nicht hörte" (Wellhausen, quoting from the classical collection of the Aghani poems). What does this mean? It means that Rajab was the only sacred month, *al-muḥarram*, and the first one of the year. Another name for Rajab was *al-Aṣabb*, "the pouring." Pious interpretation understood this as "mercy is pouring forth in this month," but this is of course nonsense. *Aṣabb* means the pouring of rain (used at Qabr Hūd with this same religious formula asking for rain). And, of course, March is the month of rain in Yemen.

A comparison

What happened in year 10 is so extraordinary and so difficult to understand that I think it is useful to give a comparison set in our culture. Imagine that the apostle Paulus (the founder of Christianity as a socially established religion) or indeed St. Peter had united Christmas and Easter, by shifting Christmas to Easter's date in March. To the new March feast, they would have decreed the name "Christmas" and its ritual, the Christmas tree. They would then have renamed the month of March, calling it December. Progressing backwards, they would have changed the names of the months preceding March, renaming February as November, January as October, etc. And, finally, they would have changed the day of the celebration, from the 25th, to the 10th, in order to break up any continuity with the old date and its pagan background (the winter solstice). This is what happened in year 10 AH.

Conclusion

Until year 10, Rajab (*al-shahr al-ḥarām*) was the first month of the first semester, and therefore the first month of the year. It was the month of the great festival celebrated at Mecca, and all over Arabia, especially in Yemen, the *ʿumra*. The *ʿumra* sacrifices (which Muḥammad abolished in favour of the sacrifices in the valley of Minā) were called *rajabiya*. Muḥammad transferred Rajab to be the seventh month (September), thus desacralizing it, but he retained the name Muḥarram for the first month of the year. However, in spite of Muḥammad's reform, the Meccan *ʿumra* continued to be celebrated in Rajab for centuries and in Yemen to this day. There is no doubt that, until year 9, Rajab corresponded to March. When Muḥammad made his Farewell Pilgrimage, in year 10 / March 632, he announced a new calendar. On this occasion, he renamed March as Dhū al-ḥijja. But despite its new name, the *ḥijja al-wadāʾ* was not held on the date of the *ḥajj*, but on that of the *ʿumra*. It was an *ʿumra*, not a *ḥajj*, only Muḥammad had now united the *ʿumra* with the *ḥajj*, and abolished its true name and its sacrifices.

Later Muslim historians, foremost among them Ibn Isḥāq, naturally used their calendar when reconstructing the events between the Hijra and year 10. They therefore called the month in which the *ʿumra* of years 6, 7, 8 and 9 had been performed (which was Rajab / March) by the (backward calculated) name of Dhū al-qaʿda. Equally wrongly, they dated the Farewell Pilgrimage of year 10 to the month of Dhū al-ḥijja, in spite of the fact that it was held in March, in what was then still called Rajab.

The 13 months leap from the *ʿumra* of year 9 (23 February 631) to that of year 10 (March 632), can only be explained by the insertion of an intercalary month aligning Rajab with the spring equinox (March). Muḥammad not only introduced the pure lunar calendar, and attached the *ḥajj* to the *ʿumra*, switching the date of the *ḥajj* to spring, he also changed the order and the names of the months in order to conceal these changes and desacralize Rajab. A desire to abolish the authority of the *qalammas* probably was another major factor behind this reform. Muḥammad could not tolerate that the date of the great festival of the new religion might be determined by anyone whom he had not appointed.

Only one question still remains unanswered: why was the new *'umra cum ḥajj* festival celebrated on the 10th rather than the 15th (the day of the full moon), as both the pre-Islamic *'umra* and *ḥajj* had been? In year 10, when Muḥammad united *'umra* and *ḥajj*, he attached the autumn *ḥajj* to the spring *'umra*. To achieve this, or maybe to hush it up, he restructured the calendar, changed the names of the months, and invented new-ones. The change from the full moon day to the 10th must surely be seen as part of this effort to put an end to a pagan tradition. But where did the inspiration for the choice of the 10th come from? I guess it must have come from Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is connected with the *ḥag*; it also includes a sacrifice. The parallel seems plausible. The old Semitic system (a spring festival and an autumn *ḥajj* / *ḥag*, both on the full moon night of the 15th) was thus abolished in Mecca, but remained alive in the religion of the Jews and in popular tradition in Yemen.

Envoi

Yemeni calendars after Islam are of equally great interest. The most well-known is the calendar based on the stations of the moon (*manāzil al-qamr*, Qur'ān 10, 5). Another one is based on the heliacal risings and settings of certain stars. A third system, the Almanac tradition, has been mentioned above. The system still most widespread in the Yemeni highlands and in the Tihāma is another star calendar that gives the timing of the lunar months according to the number of days which have elapsed between the first day of the month and the day of the conjunction of the moon with the Pleiades. I intend to describe these calendars in a future article.

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ENDANGERED ARCHAEOLOGY IN SOUTHERN ARABIA: THE WORK OF THE EAMENA PROJECT IN YEMEN

MICHAEL FRADLEY AND ROBERT BEWLEY[1]

Introduction

This paper introduces the work of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA) project in documenting threatened heritage sites in Yemen and Oman. Since January 2015 the Arcadia Fund has supported a team of archaeologists at the Universities of Oxford and Leicester and, joined by a team at Durham from 2017, has been digitally documenting heritage sites across the MENA region, primarily using open-source satellite imagery. Here we explain why we focused on Yemen from an early stage in response to the threat posed to the country's rich heritage by the ongoing conflict, before considering some of the important new datasets created by the project. We conclude with a brief comparison with a more recent survey in Oman, where contrasting circumstances has allowed the development of detailed aerial survey of archaeological sites. While these two aspects of the EAMENA project show significant variation in levels of endangered archaeology across southern Arabia, they highlight how aerial and satellite-centric survey methods can contribute to understanding the rich historical environment of this region.

Remote-sensing Endangered Archaeology in Yemen

When work on the EAMENA project began in January 2015 it had not intended to focus on Yemen. However, the rapidly evolving political and military situation in subsequent months led to a change in staff deployment and a rapid process of identifying heritage site data for monitoring. While we use published gazetteers, our primary methodology is the systematic analysis of the landscape using high-resolution satellite imagery hosted on open-access platforms, principally Google Earth. Recording sites of any period or type, often covering areas that have not previously been investi-

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[1] Robert Bewley is the Director and co-founder of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA) project at the University of Oxford. Michael Fradley is a researcher on the EAMENA project focusing on Yemen, Palestine and use of historic aerial photographs. We thank the Arcadia Fund, the Augustus Foundation and the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund, for the Aerial Archaeology in Oman project: HRH Sayyid Haitham.

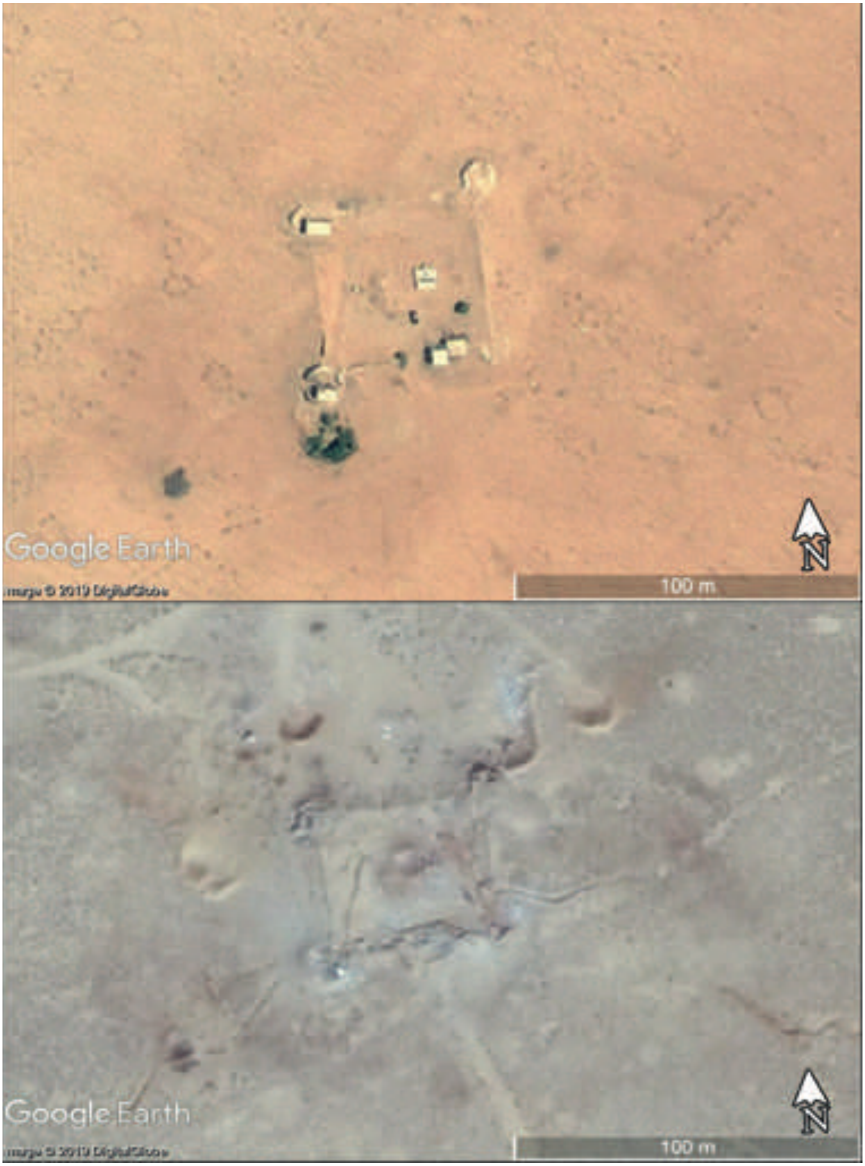
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Fig.1. Composite of satellite images showing a small Islamic fort north of Midi, with the first showing the ruins prior to the current conflict (16 June 2010) and after its apparent occupation and damage from explosive ordnance (18 January 2017). Map data: Google, DigitalGlobe.

gated systematically, the project has created a new historic environment dataset for Yemen.

The early stages of the conflict were marked by significant damage to a number of major heritage sites in Yemen from aerial bombardment by the Saudi-led coalition in support of President Hadi. This included sites at Baraqish, the northern slipway of the great dam at Mareb, and the citadel at Taiz, although the project recorded other damaged sites such as a small coastal fort north of the town of Midi in Hajja governorate (Fig. 1). In spite of this initial wave of damage, the number of major monuments damaged directly by military activity has dropped in frequency and scale. One notable exception to this has been damage to the historic buildings of many major settlements in the main conflict zones such as Sana‘a and Sa‘da. While historic centres have infrequently been targeted by air strikes, the bombing of more modern complexes on the peripheries of historic settlements has led to damage to historic buildings through the impact of reverberations from explosives, shrapnel and poor targeting.

More broadly the project has recorded evidence of different types of disturbances and threats to heritage sites across Yemen. This documentation has started to show that the most common factors affecting these sites are small-scale incidental actions, such as construction of new buildings, expansion of agricultural areas and development of local infrastructure. These types of incidents are far more common throughout the country than intentional damage such as the looting of antiquities or conflict-related damage. There are also regional variations in the issues affecting heritage sites: for instance, in the sparsely populated al Mahra governorate in eastern Yemen, many stone cairns and trilith features are impacted by the development of dirt vehicular tracks along *wadi* channels.

A more positive outcome of the current remote-sensing survey work undertaken by the EAMENA project is the identification of a whole range of previously undocumented archaeological sites from across the country. The potential of these new datasets to significantly enhance understanding of areas that have previously been the focus of study on the ground has already been demonstrated in re-analysis of areas of al-Baydha governorate and the Wadi Hadhramaut.[2] More recent survey by EAMENA in areas such as the Tihama plain and in eastern part of Dhamar governorate

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[2] Rebecca Banks, Michael Fradley, Jérémie Schiettecatte, Andrea Zerbini, ‘An integrated approach to surveying the archaeological landscapes of Yemen’, *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* Vol.47 (2017), pp.9-24.

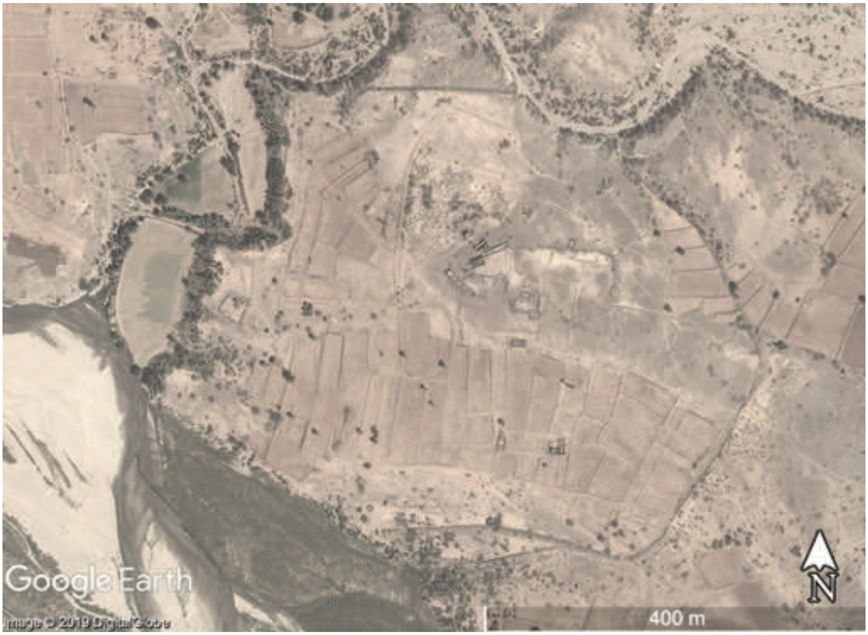

Fig.2. A newly documented undated 'city' on the Tihama Plain, the interior of which has been largely disturbed by modern agriculture from a satellite image (16 February 2011). Map data: Google, DigitalGlobe.

has further highlighted the wealth of undocumented archaeology in parts of Yemen.

The Tihama plain alongside Yemen's Red Sea coast is not in general an area that is easily surveyed for archaeological sites using satellite imagery. The small scale of many sites in this region, the lack of distinct building material and the shifting nature of modern agriculture makes observing sites particularly difficult. An exception has been the identification of two large sites enclosed by embanked ramparts that the project has identified which had not been recorded by previous international ground surveys. The first, near the modern settlement of Hays, consists of an enclosed area, backing onto an area of foothills, with extensive evidence of internal structures inside the 'ramparts,' on the lower slopes of the foothill, and with a single structure at the crest of the nearest hill. The second site (Fig. 2) is further north, on Wadi Mawr, and is comparable in the form of its rampart and the fact that both sites sit in the angle of a major and a minor *wadi* junction. While fewer internal structures are visible at this second site, probably due to the impact of more recent agricultural clearance, there are the remains of some form of central citadel, as well as a pair of apparent gate towers along the southern course of the rampart. It is not possible to assign a clear date to either of these sites, which in scale could reasonably be interpreted as city settlements, due to a lack of clear comparison sites in Yemen and the fact that they cannot currently be safely visited on the ground. However, there can be little doubt that they represent major new additions to the documented corpus of archaeological sites in Yemen.

In eastern Dhamar the project has built on earlier field surveys and research by international missions to significantly expand understanding of late prehistoric settlement across this region. Beginning with the improbable identification of a major hilltop settlement (Fig. 3) to the west of the well-known archaeological landscapes around Baynun, the project has subsequently identified a raft of settlements, boundaries, route ways and extensive cairn cemeteries along the lava flows that make up much of

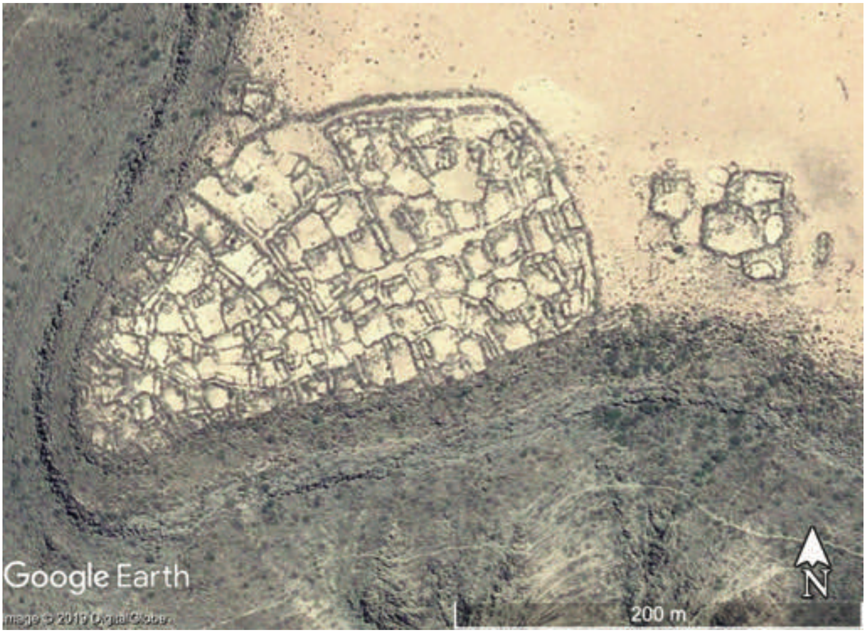

Fig.3. A satellite image (8 June 2009) of potential Bronze Age settlement documented in Dhamar governorate. Map data: Google, DigitalGlobe.

the border area between the governorates of Dhamar and al Baydha. Basalt-rich areas such as these are particularly productive areas for survey via satellite imagery, as the overall geological landscape inhibits the spread of intensive agriculture, while structures built of basalt are often visually distinct on satellite images. The use of these remote-sensing survey techniques are allowing a complete reappraisal of the archaeological landscapes of Yemen, where regions such as eastern Dhamar are transformed by the scale of new data generated by the EAMENA project. However, the full value of these newly-documented sites will only be realised when they can be investigated more fully on the ground, and could form the basis of a raft of new research for archaeologists in Yemen as part of a process of cultural reconstruction in a future, post-conflict Yemen.

Beyond the use of satellite imagery, in order to provide a deeper time-depth of analysis the EAMENA project has also been gathering historic aerial photography created by the RAF during the period of British occupation in southern Yemen, and the later work of the Directorate of Overseas Surveys over the Yemen Arab Republic. The project has already digitally scanned about 40,000 prints held at the Bodleian Library covering the period 1952-73, as well as pioneering mapping surveys of the Aden hinterland in 1928 and western Abyan governorate from 1933-4. In addition the project has run a campaign to gather aerial photography from the area held in private collections. Smaller collections held in archives such as the British Library, the National Archives and St. Antony's College, Oxford, have also been analysed. In bringing together much of this imagery in the EAMENA database, the project can identify archaeological sites lost under subsequent development, as well as open up this material to a wider audience of researchers in the long-term.

The next step of the project in Yemen has been to begin development of a bespoke version of the EAMENA database for the General Office of Antiquities and Museums (GOAM) in Yemen, with the support of UNESCO Doha and members of various international missions that have operated in Yemen over previous decades. This system, known as the Yemen Heritage Management Platform (YHMP), will provide the GOAM team with a digital platform that can be utilized across their regional offices to document heritage sites and the issues affecting them. It will also house the data collected by the EAMENA project, including the historic aerial photograph archive discussed above.

Aerial Archaeology in Oman.

The contrasting political situation in Oman has enabled the EAMENA project to develop a very different research approach to that described above for Yemen. In February 2018 one of the co-authors (Bewley) and his colleague Sufyan al Karaimeh (Leiden University) undertook the first flight of the Aerial Archaeology in Oman project. This was a significant moment in the development of aerial reconnaissance in the Middle East as it represented an expansion of the twenty-two years undertaking similar work in Jordan[3].

The two primary objectives for this aerial reconnaissance project are:

1. To discover and record archaeological sites from the air, highlighting the breadth and range of the archaeology of Oman.
2. To monitor and record, through photography, the condition of sites that are under threat from damage.

Conclusion

The work of the EAMENA project in Yemen and Oman reflects the different political and economic conditions of the two countries. In Oman, the project has been able to undertake detailed aerial survey work in conjunction with the Royal Air Force of Oman, producing in many cases the first oblique aerial photographs of heritage sites across the country, many of which have not previously been documented. In Yemen the project has focused on the use of rapid assessment of satellite imagery, in some cases surveying areas that have not previously been subject to archaeological investigation. In spite of the differing circumstances, the result of these two projects has been to generate a range of new data for southern Arabia, which has the potential to form the basis of a range of future research projects and transform our understanding of these historically rich regions.

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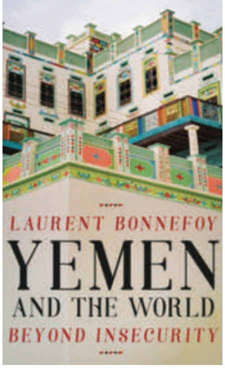
[3] See David Kennedy and Robert Bewley, *Ancient Jordan from the Air* (2004), London, CBRL.



Yemen and the World, Beyond Security, by Laurent Bonnefoy, London, Hurst, 2018, pp 256, ISBN: 9781849049665, £ 35

Laurent Bonnefoy is a well-known scholar based at Sciences Po and was the author of the excellent *Salafism in Yemen* (Hurst 2011). His new book, which was published in France in 2017, is elegantly translated by Cynthia Schoch. Its ambition is to "analyse contemporary Yemen through the various ways it integrates its international relations" rather than though the "prism of internal dynamics as social science researchers generally do." He asks "Why is Yemen, despite its apparent marginality, an issue? In what way are Yemenis, even excluded, still agents in world affairs?" He adopts an internationalist approach to fill a void in the literature. This book more than justifies the validity of his approach.

The introduction is almost worth reading on its own. In a relatively few words he conveys how Yemen has been part of world history for nearly two millennia and reminds us that a Zaydi state has existed in the north west for nearly one millennium and that the British presence in the south from 1839 "established a dualism between north and south" that remains. Yemen has seemed forbiddingly isolated but dozens of travellers, trade missions and merchants and poets (e.g. Rimbaud) have left accounts to show that this image is "belied when the *longue durée* is considered. The British-Yemeni Society (p. 10) gets a mention for not doing enough to change the dominant perspective even while sustaining interest in Yemen, albeit with a touch of nostalgia. I think that was true up to a few years ago but has since changed.

Part one of this book deals with Yemen's Challenges. It summarises the history of events and brings out the regional differences which have been repressed by recent regimes but re-emerged since 2011 and especially since the start of the war in 2015. Whilst in the 1970s and 1980s the Cold War seemed to embrace Yemen, it never quite penetrated; the political system of the PDRY now seems long in the past. It was the entry of Al Qaeda in the 1990s that led the outside world to view Yemen as a source of threats to international security. Counter terrorism became the priority but with too much focus on the symptoms of violence almost to the exclusion of doing enough to address the underlying ills that were exploited by terrorists. The Friends of Yemen established in 2010 (and prompted by the so-called Christmas Day bombing) was a move in the right direction but came too late in the day.

The world saw external intervention in the Yemen Spring as a potential model for how a regime could be reformed and modernised – Bonnefoy calls it "an enchanted interlude" – only to be disappointed by failures in implementation, exacerbated by the international community's "poorly-conceived" policies and a failure to deliver financial pledges. For ordinary Yemenis there was a disconnect between the spirit of hope generated by the GCC transition deal and the day-to-day reality of no visible improvement in their lives. Not enough attention was given to the rise of the Huthis, who were excluded from the coalition government created in 2011. They surprised the world by not only seizing power in 2014 but also in holding it in the face of an international coalition.

Western governments see Yemen as a priority for Saudi Arabia, a state in which they have substantial defence and commercial interests. It is assumed that Riyadh has the knowledge, networks and means of influencing events in its favour or at least not in its disfavour. However, the signing of a border agreement between the Kingdom and Yemen in 2000 put an end to Saudi fears that Yemen might aspire to recover the provinces of Najran, Asir and Jizan lost in the 1930s. Following 9/11 and the Al-Qaeda campaign in Saudi Arabia in the mid-2000s Riyadh also came to focus more on counter-terrorism. There were signs of competition or, as I saw it, a lack of coordination among the Saudi institutions dealing with Yemen. Bonnefoy reminds us that it was the expansion of Salafism in Yemen inspired by Saudi Arabia (albeit not entirely in the direction they might have wanted) that was a factor in provoking the rise of Zaydi revivalists such as the Huthis.

One of the most interesting sections of the book deals with the US "obsession with the jihadi question" – one that is broadly shared by Europe. He shows that there is a disconnected approach to security which since the start of the war in 2015 has virtually sub-contracted Yemen to Saudi Arabia and the UAE – and without the insights that were lost when embassies were closed and staff relocated. The Saudi-led coalition is bogged down on the ground, relies too much on bombing and blockading and neglects the impact of the war, direct and indirect, on what is now a fragmenting country and seems indifferent to the humanitarian disaster that has ensued.

Bonnefoy is excellent in dealing with the challenge of armed Islamism, the subject of his third chapter, which is an illuminating – brilliant at times – survey of how jihadism emerged in Yemen and developed in different ways. He discusses how jihadi violence “can only seriously be analysed, on a continuum, if it is superposed on other forms of social or regional mobilisation.” He adds that “It becomes difficult to single it out for study without fitting it into the broader context of political interactions and balances, but also other types of violence, often made invisible” including “repressive counter terrorism by the state and international actors.” Terrorism can be a matter of context.

He develops the argument by looking at the emergence of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and how, when Yemeni Afghan veterans brought their ideology and fighting skills to their homeland, they were opposed not just by the Saleh regime but also by the highly influential Salafis such as Muqbil al-Wad ‘i. Some armed Islamists were tolerated by Saleh who used them to counter threats from Marxists – part of his game of dancing on the heads of snakes. One interesting section deals with how AQAP either stopped or lost the ability to mount operations outside Yemen (including Anwar al Aulaqi’s attempts to inspire lone wolf attacks via the internet) to focus on targets within Yemen and set up Islamic emirates in Abyan and later move into Mukalla. It seemed to ignore strictures from Osama bin Laden and his successor to take the fight to the US and the West.

Yemeni Interactions form the second part of the book. Yemenis are just not pushed and pulled by the interests of major powers but are integrated in international exchanges. The most obvious example is the Yemeni – and especially the Hadhrami – diaspora initially around the Indian Ocean and more recently directed towards the GCC states. At its height one in four Yemeni adult males were working abroad, mostly in Saudi Arabia. The kingdom had welcomed them but expelled over 800,000 in 1990. Saudisation policies have more recently led to a renewed exodus, leaving Yemenis with nowhere to go – few countries in the GCC now open their borders to Yemeni workers. Yemenis, he notes, are no longer migrants but refugees.

Subsequent chapters deal with the reverse: how outsiders have influenced Yemen: for example the foreign students who attended Salafi institutes in Dammaj or Sana‘a and those, mostly from South East Asia who flocked to the Sufi institutes in Tarim. Further back, it was Greek navigators, Ottomans who brought the outside world to Yemen – and in the nineteenth century the British East India Company. Aden became a centre for expatriates, many from India at a time when Aden was controlled by the Raj. The outside world knows of the writings of travellers visiting Yemen – and of Tim Mackintosh-Smith who has stayed in Sana‘a throughout the war. It is often forgotten that Yemen has provided a refuge for over 250,000 Somali refugees – and many still come from the Horn of Africa despite the disturbed situation since 2011. The transition phase in Yemen 2011-14 brought in many new foreign experts, not least constitutional experts from France, to assist in the National Dialogue Conference.

The final chapter is on how "Yemen has marked many an artistic imagination" (p 155). Yemeni artists do not achieve much international recognition even within the Arab world: only two enjoy some esteem (Abdullah al-Baraduni, a poet and writer, and Abd al Aziz al-Maqalih). There are virtually no European translations of Yemeni works. For those interested in Yemeni music, Bonnefoy surveys the current scene. The Arab Spring generated surprising artistic endeavour – there is Yemen's Banksy (Murad Subay). There was a more vibrant scene in the days of the PDRY. More recently there has been an emergence of Yemeni plays and films, some of which now reach international audiences.

In conclusion Bonnefoy rightly compares the terrorist threat and existence of jihadi groups as incidental to the major environmental challenges Yemen will face over the next few decades: drying up of aquifers in the highland and salinization of water in the coastal plains against a background where population numbers double every 20 years. Such challenges cannot be overcome by Yemen alone and Yemen's neighbours, the most likely to be affected by the impact, will need to take the lead in providing solutions and relief. This is a highly engaging book written with clarity and elegance and an intellectual rigour based on the author's deep knowledge of Yemen.

NOEL BREHONY

Yemen, Ecrire la Guerre, edited by Franck Mermier, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2018, pp 186, ISBN 978-2-406-08363-4 Pb, Euro 18, ISBN 978-2-406-08364-1 Hb Euro 57

Following an introduction by the editor, social anthropologist Franck Mermier, who outlines the basics of the Yemeni conflict and its participants, the book brings together in French analyses of the conflict by Yemeni thinkers whose writings are not usually available in European languages. Five of the eight authors have literary credentials, and their writing here is evocative and complementary to the more arid and impersonal analyses provided by most other excellent writers on Yemen.

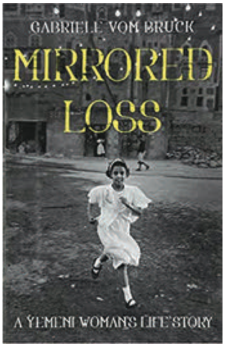
Ali al Muqri opens the book with the story of the origins of the 'dancing on the heads of snakes' myth, which became a mantra to describe the country's, and particularly Ali Abdullah Saleh's, politics. He continues with his reading of the causes of the current crisis, focusing on the flaws of unification in 1990, the 2011 revolution and the National Dialogue Conference. Arwa Othman provides a feminist reading of the 2011 uprisings, clearly enriched by her broader cultural vision and approaches, while Jamal Jubran discusses the daily personal difficulties encountered by anyone taking positions not considered 'politically correct' in the Yemeni environment, whether in the context of the Islahi Muslim Brotherhood tendency or that of the Huthis. Personal perception and details of daily [or rather in this case nightly] life by Sara Jamal give readers a real 'feel' of the most intense war moments in Aden in 2015. Her testimony is followed by that of Bushra al-Maqtari who, in the midst of the fighting, reflects on the life of a writer and the implications of going into exile.

Some chapters focus on the social differences which have been exacerbated by the war: moving beyond the immediate reactions to the fighting, Jamal Jubran describes the emergence and reality of 'ethnicism' throughout Yemen, first with the anti-northern movement in and around Aden and then how he was personally insulted as perceived as a Somali in Sana'a. Maysaa Shuja-al-Deen examines the history of tensions between Zaydi and Shafi'i in the North and contrasts them with the last hundred years in the South, the heritage of British colonialism and the socialist regime of the PDRY. The impact of Salafism on southern separatism and other features of southern society are discussed by Maged al-Madhaji, followed by al-Maqtari's complementary analysis of Salafism in Taiz.

The last part of the book focuses on developments in 2017. Having discussed the Saleh-Huthi alliance and its underlying stresses Shuja al-Deen also presents the background and main characteristics of the Southern Transitional Council and the multiple militias active in the South, while al-Maqtari briefly assesses the implications of the Huthi assassination of Saleh. Novelist Habib Sarori closes the book with a deep reflection on the contrast between the positive cultural perceptions of Yemen (Arabia Felix, Manhattan of the Desert, Arthur Rimbaud) and today's reality of world indifference to the fate of Yemenis in the current war.

Completed in early 2018, the book does not address the few significant political developments of the past 18 months, nor does it focus on the economy. It is not an academic treatise but, rather, in its diversity and different literary styles, covers most of the important aspects of the origins of the war and the suffering it is inflicting on the population, materially, physically but also psychologically and philosophically. Unlike most other writings, it presents a variety of rarely available Yemeni perspectives on the war. Its format, style and length, the quality of the writing (and the translations) make it an eminently worthwhile acquisition and read for anyone able to read French.

HELEN LACKNER



Mirrored Loss: A Yemeni Woman's Life Story, by Gabriele vom Bruck, London: Hurst, 2019, pp 289, ISBN 978 1 8490 4903 0, Hb £35.00.

Abdullah al-Wazir was one of the leaders of the Constitutional Movement, a political group aimed at reforming the Zaydi Imamate. In February 1948, members of the movement assassinated Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din and al-Wazir was proclaimed Imam and ruled Sana'a for a few weeks. Overthrown by tribesmen loyal to Crown Prince Ahmad, Yahya's son, he was executed in Hajja on 8 April 1948.

Gabriele vom Bruck's book tells the life story of Amat al-Latif (b. circa 1930), Abdullah al-Wazir's daughter. It recounts her memoirs as collected by the author in 2007, over the course of several recorded interviews. The first part of the book outlines the theoretical framework of the work engaging the relationship between autobiographical memories and cultural and political frames; also, it provides a useful historical overview (1904 to mid-1950s) depicting the vicissitudes of al-Wazir's family and of the Constitutional Movement. The second part deals with the same historical period, yet reconstructing it from Amat al-Latif's perspective. It opens with the death of her mother and it closes with the tragic execution of her husband and her father, followed by the destruction of her family house. The third and last part revolves around her second marriage and her life outside Yemen, in Lebanon, the United Kingdom and the United States. A theoretical epilogue and four appendices enrich the volume.

Methodology is critically assessed in the introduction of the book. The role of the author and her presence in the text are problematized and characterised as "co-operation in dialogue" (p. 17). The subject of the book, Amat al-Latif, emerges as the product of a 'polyvocal approach:' not only does she actively participate in text construction by reading transcripts, providing feedback and additions, and obliterating passages, but also the point of view of other actors (e.g. her sons and daughter, her ex-husband) is combined in the making of complex memory worlds.

The author's theoretical insights rightly dwell on two main topics: first, vom Bruck reflects on a gendered biographical construction of history that challenges "men's heroic political narratives" (p. 5). Amat al-Latif's life story mirrors "male elite rivalry and conspiratorial machinations" in the intimate sphere (p. 158), providing a fascinating alternative version of modern Yemeni history. Her objective "is an implicit request for her father's martyrdom to be recognised" (p. 158), confirming the decisive role played by the notion of 'martyrdom' in legitimising or contesting hegemonic historical discourses and shaping contemporary politics.

Second, vom Bruck tackles the thorny topic of multiple marriages through a polyvocal and relational approach. Amat al-Latif's two marriages are compared through the lenses of love and loss. In particular, her second husband's parallel marriage – which Amat al-Latif harshly stigmatises – is scrutinised from the perspective of multiple actors and further compared to the multiple marriages of her father, the other man in her life, which she justifies. The overall picture is an outstanding account of the multi-layered contradictions implicit in the topic of polygynous marriages in Yemeni society.

Amat al-Latif's life story revolves around losses that only acquire meaning through a careful cultural and social contextualization. The memory of her now-demolished paternal house opens the book and brings to the foreground the emotional layer of what Martha Mundy has termed "domestic government". During the spring of 1948, Abdullah al-Wazir's house was sacked and destroyed on the orders of Imam Ahmad's brother, his women humiliated by economic privations. The demolition of a rival's house as a means of creating memories of "places of devastation where life has ceased" (p. 92) is a theme that speaks to contemporary Yemen. Moreover, moving from these facts, Amat al-Latif expresses a cogent political critique drawing an interesting parallel between political ethos and the treatment of dependant people.

Dependence is also addressed through the topic of filial piety. As anthropologist James Ferguson has cogently pointed out, Western epistemologies often fail to understand that people can actively pursue dependence as a legitimate form of construction of the human subject. Amat al-Latif's relationship with her beloved and respected father permeates the whole narrative. If respect is nurtured by the standing of a man described as religious and faithful, a model of rectitude, the main qualities of the relationship are obedience, dependence and servitude. In her words, "After being God's servant, I was my father's servant" (p. 65). The notion of protection, embodied in her father's figure, also emerges in everyday anecdotes. Exemplary, in this respect, is her father's role in guaranteeing her well-being and reputation in her husband's house.

Eventually, the book is interspersed with interesting ethnographic details, such as the description of *yawm al-dhibbal* (p. 74; "day of cotton rolling," the first day of the wedding), and implicit – though highly relevant – details on the lives of male and female members of the Mutawakkilite kingdom's elite. Ethnography and interpretation are gracefully blended into narrative, making the book highly readable, though this stylistic choice is also one of the few weaknesses of the book: some passages of the interviews would need a "thicker" description in order to be intelligible to a non-specialist of Yemen. Altogether, the book is an outstanding contribution to the interrelated fields of history, biographic narrative and anthropology.

LUCA NEVOLA[1]

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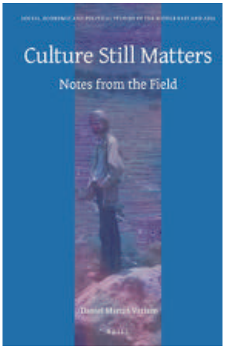
[1] Luca Nevola holds a PhD in cultural anthropology. He conducted extensive fieldwork in northern Yemen and currently works for the VERSUS project at the University of Sussex.



Culture Still Matters: Notes From the Field, by Daniel Varisco, Leiden, Brill, 2018, pp 174, ISBN 978-90-04-37557-4 Hb, 978-90-04-38133-9 e-book Euro 83, USD 100

Varisco is one of many US and European anthropologists who chose Yemen for their doctoral research in the late 1970s and 1980s when earlier Arab destinations like Lebanon were inaccessible due to war, and today Yemen is inaccessible for the same reason. Their influence on Yemeni studies remains both active and relevant today. Despite its subtitle, Varisco's book only discusses his field experience in any detail in chapter three which addresses a broad range of issues on the significance of anthropology in explaining major social conflicts in the contemporary world. This review will only take up a few of the fascinating points made in the book. Explicitly focused on the American anthropological community, he therefore does not differentiate between 'cultural' anthropology [the US version] and 'social' anthropology [the British version] through his basic early references include some of the British founders and most famous anthropologists [Malinowski, Evans Pritchard, Firth] and his points are largely valid for both, indeed the distinction is wearing thin.

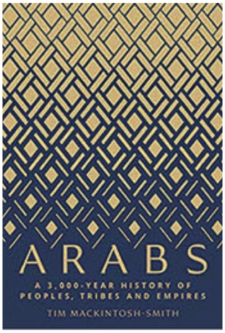
Concentrating on issues currently dominating the academic discourse in social sciences, Varisco refutes many of the arguments in the US denying the role and importance of culture [in its broad, anthropological sense] and anthropology. In the first chapter he argues against those who see culture as no more than a written text, by demonstrating its reality 'on the ground' or 'being there' and examining the many historical and contemporary concepts of culture, confronting the anthropological interpretation with the literary one .

Chapter two further discusses the concept of culture in the literary and anthropological contexts focusing on the work of Edward Said. It provides a detailed refutation of Said and all too many other authors who have dismissed anthropology as a 'handmaiden of colonialism' and an instrument of oppression of 'native' people by western states. Not only does Varisco argue effectively against this interpretation but he does it by using examples of the earliest anthropologists who actively struggled in opposition to the colonial enterprise and vigorously defended the communities where they worked against colonial interventions.

His third chapter contrasts his own field experience with that of Rabinow's memoirs of fieldwork in Morocco in the 1970s, ie during the same historical moment. Vividly reminding readers of some of the practical issues faced in daily life in remote locations, he strongly argues for the unique importance of fieldwork as the fundamental characteristic differentiating anthropology from other social and human sciences. The final chapter demonstrates the essential role anthropology (including fieldwork) can play in addressing major contemporary social conflicts and other situations, illuminating people's understanding and debunking misrepresentations of major contemporary social issues, focusing on racism in particular.

Throughout, this book is enriched by discussion of the contributions of numerous other anthropologists and Varisco's defence of what I still call 'social' anthropology is powerful. Written clearly, including some 'entertaining' occasional word plays, this book should encourage many to take up anthropology as a way of life and a worldview.

THE EDITOR



Arabs; a 3,000-year history of peoples, tribes and empires, by Tim Mackintosh-Smith, New York and London 2019 Yale University Press pp 601 pages, IBSN 978-0-300-18028-2 Hb. £25

Tim Mackintosh-Smith is well known to members of the British-Yemeni Society. He has lived in Yemen for over 35 years, virtually since first visiting the country as an undergraduate from Oxford and is the author of Yemen: Travel in Dictionary Land and of several books on Ibn Battuta. His new book, Arabs, is a formidable piece of scholarship but told using anecdote, quotation, striking and original analogy and parallels between the past and the present to make it a joy to read. This reviewer, though at first daunted by its length, found himself drawn in and eager to spend an hour daily enjoying the author's erudition, command of the sources – historical as well as literary, prose as well as poetry – and brilliant turn of phrase. It is comprehensive and the subject matter complex, but he makes it utterly comprehensible. It has been widely praised.

The book looks at the three outstanding conquests of Arab history – those of arms, Islam, and of Arabic – "the first and most enduring has been the victory, over themselves, of the tongue that bears their name," he writes. "The grammar of their [the Arabs'] history would be unstoppably active, and they would earn not just a capital letter but a definite article." What defines Arabs is the shared language whose first known inscription dates from 893 BCE, making the first recognition of Muhammad as a prophet in 582 AD about the mid-point of Arab history.

Before the coming of Islam this was a largely oral culture with the Arabic language and idiom replacing more ancient tongues as peoples became "Arabised." It was the "gathering of the word" a phrase that he comes back to over the period of Arab history. The gathered word has set three waves of unity: a growing ethnic awareness before the coming of Islam; the "tsunami of physical expansion of the Arab conquests that left behind a sediment of language;" the third started in the nineteenth century with the growth of Arab nationalism. Throughout its history Arabic has embraced other peoples so that "the son of the Albanian viceroy Muhammad Ali Pasha declared: 'The sun of Egypt changed my blood and made it all Arab.'" Egypt with its ancient indigenous population and dynasties of foreigners is the prime example of how Arabic has come to mean Arabs – though that can be contested even today in the land of the Pharaohs.

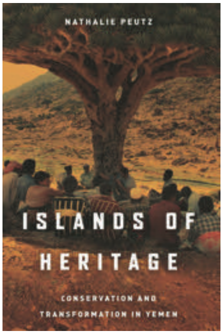
The book is divided into sections. The first from 990 BCE to AD 630 is 'Emergence and Revolution'; the second 630-1350, 'Dominance and Decline' and the final, 1350 to the present, is 'Eclipse and Re-emergence'. Throughout he returns to the writings and ideas of Ibn Khaldun and Albert Hourani (whose *A History of the Arabs* is his main predecessor), the importance of *asabiyah* (solidarity) of the tribe, the federation or the state and ever-present tensions between the *badu* and the settled.

What will particularly interest members of the British-Yemeni Society is how he places South Arabia in the story of Arabs and his linkage of the past to what is happening outside his house today in Sana'a, "a little tower" that "stands on the tail end of a ruined mound built up of bits of pre-Islamic Sana'a, and an Abbasid Governor's palace". He reminds us that Yemen has only rarely been united since pre-Islamic times "briefly in the fourteenth century and briefly again in the seventeenth century." A 14th century Egyptian observed that if Yemen could unify, its position among the pre-eminent nations would be strengthened. That remains to be proven. The divisions that undermined unity not just in Yemen but in the Arab world are exposed in fine detail in the history of the Arabs and Arabic – unity is expressed in the centripetal force of high or classical Arabic whilst everyday events and lives are in the centrifugal local colloquial dialogues. Language unites but also divides Arabs. The first Arabs were nomads existing in the vast Arabian Peninsula and coming into contact not just with the Fertile Crescent of the north but the kingdoms of southern Arabia, itself a fertile crescent. Linguistic evidence suggests that Saba and Himyar may well have had origins in the north – despite supposed differences between Adnanis and Qahtanis. In their heyday these kingdoms would not have considered themselves Arab but, by the ninth century, they were almost completely Arabised. They brought to Islam a sense of unity through their previous devotion to Ilmaqah and other deities and the organisational requirements of its complex watering system exemplified by the Mareb dam and a greater tradition of urbanism. Tim Mackintosh-Smith draws on recent scholarship that suggests that there has been a disconnect between Islamic and pre-Islamic studies that has marred a full understanding of the influence of South Arabia.

Whilst writing his book the author was "kept awake by mortars and missiles (my third major conflict) and bombarded by slogans sermons and poems – political, not lyrical omens." He was "seeing the land I live in and love falling apart." He writes about causes of the conflict, of the early hopes of the Yemen Spring and the disappointment as the Transition Deal fell apart. He finds parallels in Arab history in the alliance between ex-President Saleh and the Huthis. Failed rulers of Saba used marauding tribes in their vendettas against those who had ousted them. The Huthis, the Hashimi branch of the Quraysh, have followed earlier examples of building a system that is in effect a super tribe to overcome Saleh who saw himself as a master of tribes. Coalition leaders speak of the Huthis as being agents of Iran referring to them in the language of earlier Arab leaders as being Magians and Zoroastrians.

Tim Mackintosh-Smith does not give up hope. As Ian Black wrote in his Guardian review: "Hope is kept alive by a writer who lifts spirits and fires the imagination by comparing pre-Islamic poetry to pop festivals and quotes the timeless reflections of a sixth century Arabian for the loss of his young son Zayid – foreshadowing the famous lament, at the going down of the sun, and in the morning, when we too remember our loved ones. Words are, indeed, still the sharpest weapons." On the other hand the author uses words in this book to enlighten, entertain and inspire.

NOEL BREHONY



Islands of Heritage, Conservation and Transformation in Yemen, by Nathalie Peutz, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2018, pp 346, ISBN 978-1-5036-0714-9 Pb USD 30

Soqotra has attracted more international attention than other parts of Yemen thanks to its unique natural environment. Although politically and historically part of Yemen, it is near the far north-east of Somalia and was only accessible by sea until recent decades and only for parts of the year. The pre-Arabic Soqotri language, related to Mahri and Jabali [in Dhofar in Oman] has been another attraction to researchers. Often compared to the Galapagos Islands, authorities in Soqotra as well as in Yemen's capital saw it as a major potential earner from eco-tourism after the unification of the country in 1990. Its remoteness, difficulty of access, endemic species, extraordinary mountain and beach sceneries have given it a 'mythical' image confirmed by its inclusion in 2008 on the UNESCO list of world natural heritage sites, an event which increased outside interest in the archipelago from many who may have no other interest in Yemen or Yemenis.

Nathalie Peutz's accurately titled book focuses on the social and political changes which have taken place on the main island of Soqotra during the first two decades of this century and concentrates on a number of main themes, only a few of which will be addressed in this review. Unlike some anthropological monographs, this one takes a historical perspective including British perceptions and plans during the entire British colonial period when the Soqotra archipelago was part of the 'Sultanate of Mahra and Soqotra'. She also addresses in detail the Sultan's ruling strategies with respect to both the population and the British. Contrary to the often proclaimed isolation of the area, she reminds us of numerous research expeditions and field studies, during the British and PDRY periods, which clearly demonstrate a continuous interest in the islands' unique characteristics.

Another major theme which, among others, resonates today is that of the politics of food and hunger. She details the importance of food imports given the limited local production and frequent droughts or floods destroying both livestock and crops, and how the Sultan controlled the population by enforcing his monopoly on food imports and marketing,

ensuring that food prices provided him with healthy profits. After having told readers how the PDRY regime's food subsidies and imports were the first time the population could rely on financially accessible sufficient supplies of basic staples, she then blames it for 'encouraging a greater dependence on imported goods' (p 106); a bit surprising given that she had earlier told of the deaths from hunger of substantial numbers of Soqotris under previous regimes! Her overall analysis of Soqotris' relationships to the state recognises the ambiguity of their perceptions, on the one hand calling for increased presence and involvement of the state to provide basic necessities (which Soqotris prioritise as food, roads and medical services) and, on the other, resentment at the presence and interference of outsiders (including Yemenis from other parts of the country).

One of the main themes of the book is a detailed analysis of the relationship of some sectors of the Soqotri population with the internationally funded series of conservation and development projects which operated on the island from the late 1990s onwards. Presenting their interventions from the viewpoint of the intended 'beneficiaries,' ie rural Soqotris, she clearly demonstrates the disconnect between project implementers (international UN and NGO staff alike) trying to implement pre-conceived participatory approaches, bringing a baggage of unverified assumptions about the population's ability and local commitment to conservation and management of natural resources. While almost laughable, it should not be a surprise to note the outsiders' implicit perceptions of 'superiority' and 'knowledge' or indeed their ignorance of the effective management traditions which enabled Soqotris to survive in their harsh environment and sustain its unique characteristics for centuries. Given the projects' research objectives with respect to the natural environment, one might have hoped that they would also be willing to research the mechanisms by which the population had historically successfully managed their environment. While this discussion focuses on Soqotra, many of the book's fundamental criticisms are equally valid for conservation and development projects elsewhere in Yemen and beyond.

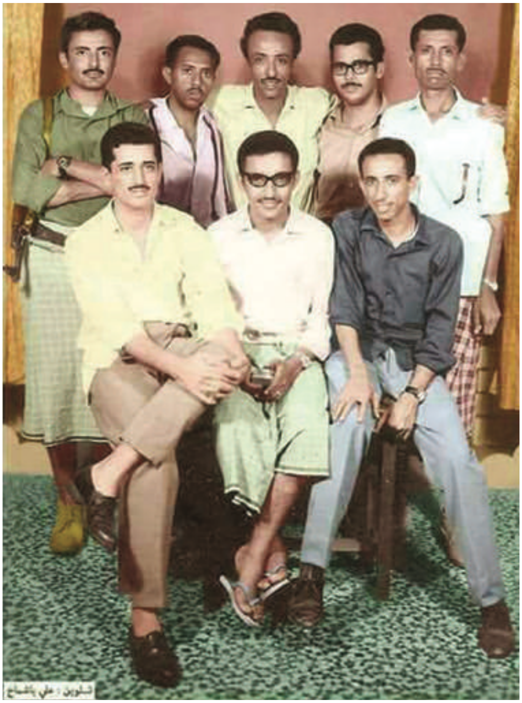
The final theme of the book to be discussed here is the relationship of Soqotris with the outside world and particularly with the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Poverty and hunger have driven Soqotris to emigrate for decades and, in the past half century, most have gone to the UAE where, until recently, they were welcomed and many achieved Emirati nationality. This has created a significant Emirati population of Soqotri origin whose relationship with Soqotra remained strong, through remittances, marriage, and support for their extended families as well as raising expectations of living standards in Soqotra itself. In the context of the major political intervention of the UAE in Soqotra since 2017, this has significant implications for the future of the islands, particularly as the internal Yemeni political struggles have now reached Soqotra with partisans of all the major factions present and active. Peutz's presentation of the many local and political disagreements and factions within Soqotra suggests that Yemeni and international actors will easily find supporters within Soqotra, thus worsening the divisions and conflicts which were never absent from the Islands and which were exacerbated in recent decades both by the conservation projects and various state actors.

While it is likely that most of the book's conclusions are also valid for other social groups and elements in Soqotra, it must be recognised that this analysis is primarily based on limited experience of a small social group within the interior of Soqotra. This well written and readable book presents contemporary Soqotra and its history in an accessible volume. Peutz joins the already large number of anthropologists working on Yemen, and in particular on Soqotra, leaving unsolved the mystery for this reviewer as to why Yemen has receives so much attention from anthropologists by comparison with other social scientists.

HELEN LACKNER

OBITUARIES

ALI SALEH ‘UBAD “MUQBIL”
CIRCA 1933–2019



Rear (l-r) Salmin, Muqbil, Hasan Ba‘um, Abdallah Salih al-Bar, Ja’am Salih. Front (l-r) Muhsin, Abd al-Aziz Abd al-Wali, Muti‘

In this remarkable photograph from 1968 are eight of the core NLF fighters, newly victorious leaders of the guerrilla war against the British. It is visually striking because these eager figures are confident, fresh faced young men embodying a tipping point in history. These men had put an end to 128 years of British presence in South Arabia and they were on the cusp of leading their newly independent country. The eldest is Salmin, then aged around 32, who would go on to become president. Three others would become ministers within the year, while Muqbil would rise to become the fourth most powerful figure in the formative years of the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen. The picture is historically extraordinary, capturing them at the zenith of their triumph but off guard and in a moment of innocence, before the revolution turned on itself. Little over a decade later three of them would be executed, others exiled, while Muqbil would find himself in prison along with a number of others including Mahmud ‘Ushayh and Hasan Ba‘um. All this at the hands of their erstwhile colleagues.

The photograph shows Salmin arms folded, dressed in a *ma‘waz* with a Kalashnikov rifle draped over his right shoulder, the epitome of a tribal fighter from his native Abyan. On his left stands fellow Abyani and closest friend, confidant and adviser, Ali Salih ‘Ubad, or, “Muqbil”, the *nom de guerre* that he would carry throughout his life. Their friendship started as students at the Zinjibar intermediate school in Abyan where they were also contemporaries of Muhammad Ali Haytham. They both joined the Movement of Arab Nationalists in the 1950s. Together they would become core of the next iteration as the MAN morphed into the National Liberation Front.

Shaping the NLF

In common with much of the NLF leadership, Muqbil remained almost completely off British security forces radar during the entire Emergency which started in 1963. His friend Salmin was the exception, being arrested at least twice by local British authorities in Abyan. On only one, brief, occasion was Muqbil picked up in Shaykh Othman along with Abdallah al-Khamri only to be released shortly after. Early on, Muqbil revealed himself to be an intellectual driving force and was also one of the key organisers, particularly of workers. In 1965 the NLF structured itself into a number of thematic sections. While Abd al-Fattah Ismail headed the Guerrilla Section, Muqbil was head of the Trade Union Section. He took part in the First NLF Congress in Taiz that produced the NLF Charter and the election of a core leadership group which gave it a more representative and stronger social base.

From this vantage point, Muqbil then worked closely with Abdallah al-Khamri and by 1966 they were holding regular political education classes in Aden to ensure their supporters were fully bought into the movement. They soon began to push for the Second NLF Congress, held in June 1966 in Jibla, in the Republican held area of North Yemen. At this congress Muqbil was elected to the NLF Council, which had been expanded to 21 members. Further empowered, he worked with al-Khamri to organise three days of strikes and mass protests in Aden in January 1967 to mark the anniversary of the 1839 British occupation. The success of these strikes demonstrated the mass support the NLF could command on the street, despite the efforts of the rival Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY) to claim they had organised the demonstrations.

PDRY Days

If Muqbil had been key to organising and moving the NLF against Britain, he became even more influential in the early months post-independence. He was a key component of the leftist group around Abd al-Fattah Ismail and Salmin who advocated for the vast programme of nationalisation, including breaking up the large landholdings of the Sultans and redistributing them to the rural peasant class. This was set out in the programme of National Front's Fourth National Congress held in March 1968 in Zinjibar.

Muqbil, along with his constant companion Abdullah al-Khamri, one of the chief ideologues of the NLF, took the initiative to draft a document on "National Democratic Liberation" setting out agrarian reform, nationalisation, disbanding of the army and establishing a people's militia. Palestinian Marxist Nayef Hawatmeh worked closely with Muqbil and gave considerable input during the drafting process. Muqbil himself was from a relatively wealthy landowning family in Abyan and this background gave weight to the project as it was, clearly, counter to his family's best interests.

Muqbil sealed his popularity among the party rank and file, getting elected to the expanded 41-man General Command. Initiatives such as this by the radical left, driven by Muqbil, out manoeuvred the more pragmatic elements of the leadership around President Qahtan al-Sha'bi and his cousin, Faysal. The al-Sha'bi faction preferred a less radical solution to the problem of the new country's looming bankruptcy and proposed to look abroad for aid. Al-Sha'bi's opposition to land redistribution and the other proposed reforms effectively brought the two factions into direct conflict and he had hundreds on the left rounded up and detained.

In the immediate aftermath, the leftist faction was in disarray but by May 1968, Muqbil and Salmin used their safe haven in Abyan to denounce the putsch and call for an uprising against al-Sha'bi. Unfortunately for Muqbil his rebellion was short-lived and he was imprisoned, albeit briefly, in Aden. It took the return of Abd al-Fattah Ismail from Bulgaria, where he'd been convalescing from injuries sustained in fighting earlier in March, to inspire the re-organisation of the leftists into mounting an effective return to power in June 1969. That became known as the "Glorious Corrective Move" and it put Salmin in power as chairman of the Presidential Council. The years of the Salmin presidency from June 1969 to June 1978 saw Muqbil become the most prominent of his advisers, and the man who provided the theoretical underpinning for Salmin's policies as well as the public face of the party. In this highly sensitive hierarchical system, Muqbil was placed fourth on the podium. During public occasions and in official photographs he was always sitting or standing directly behind Ali Nasser, the future president.

As Salmin's authority inside the party crumbled and his behaviour became ever more erratic, he grew increasingly reliant on his powerbase in Abyan but this was insufficient to maintain him in power. He was ousted in June 1978 and swiftly executed by his erstwhile colleagues. Muqbil was lucky and was sentenced to prison. Less fortunate were up to 250 of his colleagues as Salmin's core support faced a firing squad. Muqbil was to spend the next five years in prison. The catalyst for his release came when a delegation of Lebanese and Palestinian leaders, Yasser Arafat, George Habash and others, were invited to Aden to mark the end of the siege of Beirut that summer. The delegation was given hints from one of Ali Nasser's advisers to request this of the president. Responding to the performance, Ali Nasser assented. Muqbil, Mahmud Ushaysh, Abdullah al Bar, (see photo above), and a number of other prisoners were released on 14 October 1983, twenty years to the day from the start of the revolution against the British.

Chastened from his experience and without a direct patron, Muqbil took a back seat in politics on his release. His lack of involvement did not spare him, or his family, from the bloodletting in 1986, which divided along geographical and tribal identities instead of strictly political lines. His brother, Ahmad Saleh 'Ubad known as "Hamadi," head of the Zinjibar intermediary school was killed that January. Muqbil, along with the man he once stood behind on the podium in public events, Ali Nasser, fled Aden for Sana'a where he made his second home.

Unification and Return

Unification in 1990 saw Muqbil's return to the South and to a political role with the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), the party the NLF morphed into in 1978. Muqbil found himself working with the rump YSP under Ali Salim al-Beedh as head of the party and vice president. In April 1993 he was elected to the House of Representatives in Sana'a, in a demonstration of his continuing popularity in the South.

As unification fell apart, he was the target of an attempted assassination in December 1993 when gunmen fired at his car. He was injured but survived. Dozens, perhaps up to 150, security and political leaders from the South had been assassinated for a variety of reasons from 1990 onwards. When the would-be killers were caught and interrogated they confessed they were directed by Shaykh Tariq al-Fadhli. The latter's motivations appeared more to do with score settling from the 1960s between the family of the dispossessed Sultan of Fadhli and a *bête-noire* of the NLF rather than the broader political turmoil of unification. Northern soldiers perfunctorily surrounded the home of al-Fadhli in the Jabal Muraqishah area of Abyan and a short, if somewhat pointless, stand-off ensued before he was allowed to escape. This wasn't the end of the matter, which was dealt with in a more diplomatic and typically Yemeni tribal manner.

Shaykh Abdullah al-Ahmar, on perhaps the only visit ever made to Abyan by the head of the Islah Party, came from Sana'a to demonstrate support for Muqbil and calm tensions caused by the attempted killing. His convoy of vehicles wound their way through the dusty roads of the Abyan delta until they arrived at the village of Dirgag. Unable to identify Muqbil's home despite several drives through the village, they stopped a passer-by who pointed to an unremarkable, modest house. Al-Ahmar was said to have been taken aback and exclaimed that he had been looking for a palace. Instead he found Muqbil living with his mother, three brothers, and a married sister with her children in a house of few rooms. Whatever the truth of the matter, unlike many of the southern cadres killed in those turbulent times, Muqbil was not an enemy of the state and he was deemed too important for the greater project of unification and al-Ahmar's visit was one of public contrition.

Post 1994

Muqbil played no role in the 1994 war although he remained a target for his enemies and his house – from which he was absent at the time – was surrounded by the army and ransacked during the fighting. The war had given Ali Abdullah Saleh a decisive military victory but he knew he had to win a lasting peace, and realised he had to maintain a balance of political plurality. Simply pasting his GPC party or the Islah onto the South would not be enough to achieve that. In Muqbil, then the new Secretary-General of the YSP, he found an ally who had moral authority but, unlike the previous YSP head, Ali Salim al-Beedh, lacked an army under his command.

Muqbil used what leverage he had. His experience of five years in prison informed his first advice to Saleh and he requested the release of all political prisoners. He also asked for the suspension of all prosecutions of YSP leaders, and for the military to vacate the party offices they had looted. Despite his entreaties the dismantling of the YSP continued unabated but Muqbil took it upon himself to visit the detainees, defend them and often attended their trials. The YSP entered a period of steep decline. From this point onwards it played the role of official opposition to the GPC/Islah alliance and Muqbil served it as best he could for the next decade.

By 1997 the YSP was unable to capitalise on the failures of the Saleh regime and had mired itself in a narrative of victimisation and dogmatic messages of redistribution of wealth that rang hollow with most Yemenis. Worse, the party held endless meetings arguing over whether to participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections. It decided on a boycott. This resulted in the party returning less than the 10% of parliamentary votes Muqbil needed to become a candidate in the 1999 presidential election.

Seemingly a spent political force and ideologically moribund, the party bided its time until 2003 when, with Muqbil's help, it was ready to face the next round of elections. It had developed a fresh approach and reinvented itself as a pro-democracy party promoting electoral reform, human rights, good governance and counter corruption. The party won only eight seats but had re-established itself as a viable opposition. It was his last major contribution as leader, and the party elected Yassin Saeed Noman in 2004 to head it. Muqbil remained a prominent voice of opposition and appeared regularly on television to analyse and criticise the government.

A Political Life

Relying on his intellect, drive and above all his charisma, Muqbil played an instrumental role in the formation and later development of the NLF as he steered its course through its various conferences. In the 1960s, his leadership and energy successfully harnessed street level opposition to Britain organising strikes and demonstrations proving that the British had lost physical control and moral authority. His ideology and heartfelt belief in socialism drove the project of nationalisation post-independence and it is here that his legacy is most controversial. The policies of land re-distribution dispossessed a small elite but conversely it established a culture of impunity where land could be taken by force from its owners. After 1994, the state elite confiscated land in the South, not on behalf of the state this time, but as individuals for individual benefit. This pattern of the powerful squatting on important land continues to this day in the South. In pursuing this policy, Muqbil and those around him, acted in the best interests of the state, rather than motivations of personal profit.

His energy and pragmatism allowed him space to return to the South after unification and to continue to shape the development of the YSP. He steered a decimated YSP through the difficult days of Ali Abdullah Saleh rule post 1994 and maintained YSP relevance in a time when socialism was in decline on the global stage and, in Yemen specifically, political Islam was in the ascendant. His was an extraordinarily rich political life of two halves, neither of which were without controversy, but his personal contribution, marked by his integrity and humanity, was deeply influential across half a century of Yemen's history.

MARTIN JERRETT

MUHAMMAD SALEM 'AKKUSH
1941–2019

Mahra's geography blessed it with being on the periphery of the Arabian Peninsula. Isolated, inhospitable and sparsely populated, the people were able to resist the spread of Arabic and retain their own language. Its great distance from Aden ensured the British also largely left it to its own devices. Muhammad Salem 'Akkush was born in the Mahri village of Damqut which lies at the far edge of this periphery, only 30km from the Oman border.

We know about his life largely through his memoirs, published in 2000. His mother gave birth to him in 1941 and died 18 months later leaving him to be raised by his grandmother. He received a rudimentary schooling, learning to read during his religious instruction. Aged 11, 'Akkush and a group of Mahris took a boat heading for Muscat and Saudi Arabia where he eventually found work in the cafeteria of Saudi Aramco. In Dhahran he was exposed to a cosmopolitan mix of nationalities working in the oil industry: Lebanese, Palestinians, Americans and Europeans. With access to Arabic literature he was encouraged to develop an interest in the world of politics. A few years later he moved to Kuwait to work as a driver. There he found a group of Omanis connected to the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN). They soon welcomed him into their organisation and helped him establish the Mahra Youth Sports Club back home in 1962.

This club was ostensibly a focal point for the MAN to recruit Mahri youth into its ranks and was financed through Kuwait's MAN leadership, particularly Dr Ahmed al-Khatib (who with George Habash had jointly founded thef MAN in 1952 at the American University in Beirut). Perhaps in response to this activity, the British began to pay closer attention to Mahra, sending their first permanent political adviser in 1963. In 1964, the Kuwait MAN branch sent ‘Akkush to Iraq, along with 40 other Mahris, for military training. Later he would travel to Taiz for training, with Egyptians this time, who then sent him to Cairo for additional training. It is doubtful whether all this drilling was ever put into practice, as ‘Akkush explained in an interview decades later: "For us in the governorates of Mahra and Hadhramaut, most of the struggle against the colonizer was in the political sphere, in the form of marches and demonstrations, interaction with the Yemeni revolution, organising protests, strikes and civil disobedience. This was unlike the rest of the southern regions around Aden, which witnessed military resistance and fierce battles fought by armed factions against British colonial forces."

His success lay less in any proposed unity with Aden and more in linking Mahra to Cairo, President Nasser, and Arab nationalism. This same sense of linking his small corner of Mahra with the wider Arab world later drove his deep conviction in Yemen's unity. The NLF arrested the Sultan and his adviser, Abdallah bin Ashur, both of whom were executed in 1972. Nearly half a century later this act of state violence appears excessive and redundant against a foe in Mahra who was never especially powerful.

Former president Ali Nasser said that it was important for someone from Mahra to be represented in the NLF because it "made it a geographically complete party and that the revolution covered the entire country." ‘Akkush was their man and he was rewarded with a string of political positions thereafter: Governor of Mahra 1967-69, Governor of Hadhramaut 1971-72, Minister of Agriculture 1972-79, followed by diplomatic posts in Africa, including Tanzania, Mozambique, and Madagascar until 1983 when he returned home and was minister without portfolio until 1986. In 1997 he was appointed to the Shura Council, in what became his last political position until he was called upon to represent Mahra at the National Dialogue Conference in 2013.

When the war came to Aden in March 2015, President Hadi left in convoy for the Oman border. His last port of call was the Mahri capital al-Ghayda, where he made sure to stop by his old friend ‘Akkush. They were both exiled in Sana‘a after 1986 and left the Yemen Socialist Party for the

General People's Congress. Mahra remains on the outer edges of Yemen and 'Akkush, somehow pivotal to Mahra, embodied that isolated region as a peripheral figure on the fringes of Yemeni politics.

MARTIN JERRETT

KHALED IBRAHIM HARIRI

1943–2019

Khaled Ibrahim Hariri was another figure of the southern Yemeni left, though he never joined either the NLF or the YSP. Born into a professional old Adeni family, with a home in Crater, he attended Aden College and thus mastered English from his earliest days. He then studied at the AUB in the 1960s where he joined the MAN and became involved in its left wing and associated organisations. Returning to Aden he joined the Democratic People's Union and the Labour Party and was a founding member of the Writers Association, the only union which covered all of Yemen in the days when there were two states.

In 1970 he was appointed Director General of the Fisheries Corporation when it was part of the Ministry of Agriculture, and thus held the top position in the sector. By 1977 when political tensions rose within the PDRY left, he obtained a UN scholarship to study in the US, thus removing himself from the political in-fighting and in 1982 he obtained his PhD in Fisheries from the University of Washington in Seattle. He then returned home to take up a senior position as adviser in fisheries as his political views meant he was not appointed Minister. He later expanded his interest to marine protection and to all aspects of environmental conservation.

Politically he operated as an independent, and although he remained close to Marxism till well into the 1980s, he refused to join the YSP. He was a Member of the PDRY's Parliament from 1987-1990 and then of the United Parliament until its dissolution in 1993. After unification and the 1994 war, he gave up political activity and set up his own consultancy office working with most of the main international funding agencies, being involved with the first stages of the environmental conservation projects on Soqotra, and numerous projects connected with environmental protection on the Yemeni mainland, including in al Mahra and Dhamar. He helped to establish the Regional Organisation for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

In the last decade, he moved back to Aden after having been based in Sana‘a for many years, but ran his consultancy firm with offices in both cities. He died unexpectedly during a medical intervention in India.

HELEN LACKNER

FITZROY DOUGLAS BOSCAWEN SOMERSET
1923–2019

FitzRoy Somerset in Aden
(colaimages / Alamy Stock Photo)

FitzRoy Somerset, or Roy as he preferred to be known, found himself in Aden by default rather than design. After almost a decade of service as a District Officer with the Colonial Office in Nigeria, he was in need of a new job halfway through 1957 in anticipation of Nigerian independence. He had joined the Colonial Office in 1949 shortly after leaving the army. Describing his time in Nigeria, he recounted that “a District Officer was the best job in the world as far as I was concerned.” Looking back he vividly described his deep fondness for the people and the beauty of the country.

While his friends quickly found alternative employment in places such as Uganda, Roy was less lucky. After several months of search, in desperation, he wrote to an acquaintance who then recommended him for a position in Aden. He was sent on an Arabic course at SOAS although, knowing nothing of the Arab world save for a few months posting with his army unit in Egypt after the war, he felt no natural inclination for the Arab world or the language.

By his own admission, he focused more of his time on courting a young lady in London, whom he later married, instead of being a conscientious student.

Despite his admission of a less than auspicious start – at least to his career – he would spend ten years in Aden and Dhali‘, beginning as an Assistant Political Officer. The high point of his time in the Western Aden Protectorate was in 1958 when he found himself in a house, surrounded by armed tribesmen who had been paid by the Imam to stir up rebellion. Roy recounted that this was not particularly out of the ordinary at the time but the British press devised excited headlines such as "Descendant of the Plantagenets besieged in desert fort."

It wasn't the only time he was in the firing line. Roy had seen war but the Aden Emergency didn't feel like the war he knew. He had been in Normandy in 1944 and shot during fighting in the Bocage. He was wounded a second time, in Aden, in early 1967 when someone threw a grenade at him in the Crescent Hotel bar. Roy was one of the very last British officials to leave Aden in November 1967. He was also the last Deputy High Commissioner, a post to which he was appointed by his senior, Nigel Pusinelli. Together they shared a great love of sailing and Roy was happiest on a boat, fishing in the late afternoons off the coast of Aden.

MARTIN JERRETT

PAOLO COSTA

1932–2019

Anyone working in Yemen in the early 1970s will recall Italian archaeologist, Paolo Costa. By training he was a Roman archaeologist, but his career path was markedly Arabian. Between 1964 and 1970 he was secretary to the Italian Archaeological Institute in Baghdad, where he also advised the Iraq Museum on their archaeological displays and taught at Baghdad University. Between 1970-1975 he worked in Sana‘a; moving to Oman in 1976 where he advised the Omani antiquities authorities on establishing their museums and continued to energetically survey and excavate archaeological sites on this side of the Arabian Peninsula. He was instrumental in establishing and editing the Journal of Oman Studies. In 1986 he was appointed Professor of Islamic Art and Archaeology at the University of Palermo and later moved to Bologna until his retirement in 1997.

I first met Paolo and Germana Costa soon after arriving in Baghdad, in September 1969 when I was working as Social Secretary to newly-

appointed British Ambassador, Glencairn Balfour Paul and his wife, Marnie. Britain was officially viewed as the evil colonial oppressor by the Iraqis; as a consequence, few nationals dared to cross the Embassy threshold, unless detailed by their ministerial employers – only expats engaged in the oil industry, diplomats and archaeologists readily accepted the gold crested invitations. Many of these events were dry and boring, but the Costas always enlivened any gathering and were ideal guests to make a party buzz. Paolo would 'sing for his supper' and was a marvelous mimic. He could easily have had a career on the stage. Sadly for our small community, he left Baghdad in 1970 to take up an appointment in the newly formed Yemen Arab Republic, then emerging like the veritable phoenix from the ashes of the 1962 revolution and a hard-fought civil war. Paolo had been summoned by his foreign ministry to advise the Yemeni General Organisation of Antiquities and Libraries (GOAL) and established the National Museum in the Dar al-Shukr, an Imamate palace on Tahrir Square. He was also to draft antiquities laws in order to preserve their fabulous heritage. Hitherto poor communications, lack of infrastructure and mechanical aids had prevented mass pillaging of remote sites, but everyone knew that this would not last for long once foreign aid poured in and new roads were established, facilitating access to hitherto inaccessible mountain sites.

In early 1973 serendipity catapulted me into Yemen, where I found an even smaller foreign community, but a friendly government happy to permit nationals to mix freely with all aid workers and diplomats. The Costas by then were well entrenched in Sana‘a society and Paolo was easy to identify riding around town on his beloved bay mare, Julschen. A visit to their charming traditional house and garden in the leafy ‘new’ Turkish suburb of Bir al-‘Azab, west of the old city’s towering skyscrapers, was a delight. The garden, where Julschen was stabled, teemed with chickens and the children’s (Francesca, Stefano and Lorenzo) pets. It was a tranquil oasis relative to the bustling, dusty city streets – few of which were paved.

Although Paolo had been employed to establish order to and display the pre-Islamic collection in the National Museum, he soon discovered that for the GOAL Chairman, Qadi Ismail Ali al-Aqwa, anything pre-622 CE paled into insignificance relative to Yemen’s equal wealth in historic mosques, manuscripts and artefacts. Fortunately for posterity, Paolo’s time in Yemen coincided with the World Festival of Islam Trust’s Sana‘a studies, so with Qadi Ismail’s blessing he was able to participate in this project and contribute to the invaluable volume: *Sana‘a an Arabian Islamic City* compiled by the late Bob Serjeant and Ron Lewcock. Between his time in Yemen (1970-1975) and move to Oman (1976) he was available to assist in the memorable 1976 exhibition at the Museum of Mankind, bringing the Sana‘a *suq* and all its crafts to London and a far wider audience.

Looking back at his Yemen publications one is struck by how much Paolo achieved in a very short space of time. When Saudi-funded contractors were hired to renovate the Great Mosque in 1972 without any professional historical advisers, as a good archaeologist, he took it upon himself to pay regular visits and monitor their progress. Imagine everyone’s surprise when they discovered an Arabic Geniza consisting of sack loads of loose manuscript pages that over the years had become wedged between the roof and the prayer hall’s wooden ceiling. Instantly realizing the importance of this cache Paolo had little trouble in persuading Qadi Ismail to remove the entire contents to the safety of his office until a decision could be made to invite a team of conservators in to preserve them and train Yemeni nationals in this time consuming process. Of course, the now famous Sana‘a palimpsest was amongst this cache.

His life in Sana‘a did not always look into the past. Working for GOAL sometimes involved domestic happenings in Qadi Ismail’s incongruously modern house along the Haddah road. Paolo delighted in retelling the 'washing machine incident' – one morning he was summoned to Bayt al Aqwa as the hysterical ladies of the house were at odds with their modern appliance. He arrived to find that this commotion was caused by a moving machine travelling around the room due to lack of stabilization! Quickly finding a solution he managed to restore order and tranquility and return to his antiquities. It is ironic that the influx of such machines on a non-existent central sewerage system was a root cause of many climatic problems for historic buildings in Yemeni cities, which were not resolved until much later.

Yemen should be grateful to Paolo Costa for his hard work and enthusiasm – his *Yemen Land of Builders* and participation in the World Festival of Islam's portrayal of Yemeni life and architecture brought the country to the forefront and it is a great pity that today it is better known for its troubles and travails.

ROSALIND WADE HADDON[1]

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[1] Rosalind A. Wade Haddon is an archaeologist who worked with the Yemeni General Organisation of Antiquities and Libraries from 1978-1983, and spent most of her time there concentrating on Islamic monuments.

Seiyun covered market (Danmission, Copenhagen, Denmark)

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BY-S APPEAL

Since last year, the humanitarian situation in Yemen has worsened, leaving far more than 20 million people in desperate need for everything. The UN Humanitarian Response Appeal is the largest ever, for USD 4.2 billion but by end of September it was only 56% funded. More and more people are desperate for food, medical services and support in distress. There is greater need than ever for whatever help any of us can provide. In particular the fact that the contributions of the B-YS go directly to two reputable and important organisations, Médecins Sans Frontières and the Yemeni Red Crescent gives them additional significance as they avoid intermediary overhead costs.

In the first week of September, the Red Crescent tragically recovered the bodies of 130 men who were killed in a Coalition air strike on a section of Dhamar University which had been transformed into a prison; the victims were prisoners of war, including soldiers loyal to the government, as well as civilians who simply did not support the Huthi movement and, being locked up, had no possibility of escaping. MSF has been treating people wounded in the recent fighting in Aden, Abyan and Shabwa. You can be sure that your contribution will be used most effectively to relieve suffering, whether mental or physical.

So please be as generous as you can afford and send cheques to the British-Yemeni Society (marked appeal contribution), directly to the Treasurer at 44 Constitution Hill, Norwich NR3 4BT. If you have not already completed the Gift Aid form, please do so. It can be obtained from the Secretary at The Gateway, 85-101 Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1SR. Thank you

Mother and child at an MSF cholera treatment centre in Yemen (MSF)