



THE BRITISH YEMENI SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 1027531

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Arabic language transliteration follows the guidelines of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) apart from widely used conventional spellings.

Members of the public are encouraged to submit their contributions for consideration or comments to the Journal Editorial Committee at the e-mail address: editor@b-ys.org.uk.



The British Yemeni Society Journal

Vol. 30 (2022)

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THANOS PETOURIS

Dear Reader, the Society is pleased to present the 30th issue of its Journal. What started as a simple newsletter, with the Society's foundation in 1993, has become over the years a much-anticipated annual publication for members and Yemen enthusiasts alike. For this, we owe enormous gratitude to the large number of authors and contributors who have shared their knowledge, research materials, or personal memories of life in Yemen and lent their time generously to write for the Society's most cherished, and enduring, achievement. This is all the more poignant this year as the present issue contains no less than seven long articles — a veritable record-breaking attainment — which I am sure you will appreciate.

This year will be sadly remembered for the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, just after marking her Platinum Jubilee. In honour of Her Late Majesty's memory, we have included two contributions that highlight her historical connections with Yemen. What invariably comes to mind when thinking of Queen Elizabeth in relation to Yemen is, of course, her 1954 visit to Aden as part of the post-coronation tour of the Commonwealth. The Society's Honorary Vice-President Dr Abdulla Abdulwali Nasher recounts his experience of the visit as a then young Adeni student and his subsequent efforts as Minister of Health to revive the eponymous hospital in Khormaksar. Less well known is the extraordinary involvement of the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, with the Queen's approval, in the evacuation of foreign nationals out of Aden in the wake of the 1986 South Yemeni civil war. Society member Daryl Barker, who was evacuated alongside his young family, gives us a vivid account of those events. There is a lot more to be said (and researched) regarding Yemen's connections with the British monarchy. Sultan 'Ali 'Abd al-Karim of Lahj was one of the guests at the 1953 coronation, when he had his photograph taken for the National Portrait Gallery in London. Prince al-Hassan, Imam Ahmad's brother, also attended on behalf of Yemen, presenting the Queen with two Arab horses: the stallion *al-Hilal* (Crescent) and the mare *al-Masuda* (Lucky One).

Adel Aulaqi's memoir of student life in the UK reminds us that British–Yemeni connections are not limited to the official level, but run deep and are embodied in the experiences of countless Yemenis who have made Britain their home, or just spend their formative years studying in the country. Jane Taylor, who provided the truly stunning photograph for this issue's cover, recounts her trip to Hadhramaut's Qabr Hud, including amusing moments that many a visitor to Yemen has encountered while travelling

through mountains and desert alike. This year's BYS academic award recipient, Richard Lee of the University of York, explores in a well-illustrated article relations between Yemen and Ethiopia during the first millennium BC. By contrast, Liam Devlin criticises what he considers the western media's biased positions when reporting the destruction of Yemen's heritage during the current conflict. Lastly, Noel Brehony's 'Political Update', a staple of the BYS Journal for some years now, provides a helpful and well-balanced overview of developments that have taken place in the country since March.

As regular readers among you will notice, in this issue the deputy editor and I are exploring a couple of new formats, in order to maintain the Journal's vibrancy. Hence, apart from the regular entries, you will also find an interview with Dr Nizar Ghanem, a well-known academic, poet, and musician whom Society members will remember for his 2002 BYS performance. An investigation of current conditions in Yemen's interim capital of Aden, presented as a photo essay, apropos of my July visit there, completes the contents of volume 30. Having included a large number of book reviews and obituaries in the previous issue, this time we have just three entries in anticipation of more next year.

The BYS Committee, as well as the Editorial Team, was encouraged by the very positive reception the Journal's new design and thematic have elicited from members and non-members alike. We are committed to presenting you each year with a dynamic publication that reflects the interests of BYS members and takes into account current developments in Yemen. In this sense, we welcome your suggestions for changes and proposals for authors or topics.

We wish you happy reading!

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(Twenty-ninth Annual General Meeting, 30 September 2022)

JAMES FIREBRACE

I would like to start with a recent quote by an eminent Yemen commentator: *"The fascination, tinged with nostalgia (of a romanticised fertile Yemen) is doubtless sustained into the 21st century by the work of a few artists, archaeologists, researchers, or impassioned aesthetes, but their initiatives — those for example of the British Yemeni Society... have done little to bring a change in the dominant perspective."* I doubt this jibe was ever true, but it certainly is not true today, as I hope you will agree by the end of my report on the Society's recent activities.

There has been a lot happening in the Society this last year as we seek to address with vigour our role in building understanding and awareness about Yemen and the situation of Yemenis. The Society's achievements are in large part built on the energies and skills of our Executive Committee, whose members work in their own time, often on top of busy day jobs. We are highly fortunate in being so well supported by people with such varied backgrounds, well distributed between Yemenis and non-Yemenis, and with good gender and age diversity.

We have achieved much over this last year:

- Six well attended events, which now attract much larger audiences thanks to online platforms, to much wider advertising through social media, and to our enthusiastic Events Secretary, Ibrahim Zanta. Topics have ranged from politics and peace, music, history, environmental protection initiatives, the situation of Yemeni refugees and the internally displaced, to the disrupted state of Yemeni education.
- Continued financial and material support for four important projects, well distributed in different parts of Yemen. Each has their own Society member Champion. Their common theme is addressing the impacts of the war, whether on health, children's war trauma, or on the swelling numbers of orphans.
- A redesigned large format Journal with a wider range of more accessible material and images. This has been universally well received. For this we thank our new Journal Editor, Thanos Petouris, and all those working on the re-design and the much expanded contents.
- A new quarterly Newsletter with updated news of Society activities, as well as on Yemen and the Yemeni communities in Britain. This is the initiative of our Secretary, Louise Hosking, who edits and manages the content.
- A major (ongoing) review, under a newly created

Media Committee led by Sarah Clowry, aimed at updating and revising our website and at developing a media policy which will enable us to better showcase our work while allowing members to better connect with the Society online.

- Our membership, coordinated by Robert Wilson, has kept pace with the natural loss of older members, in spite of the dearth of Brits returning from work in Yemen, which has been the basis for so many joining our Society in the past.

Looking ahead I would like to raise three important future issues for the Society:

- By the end 2023 all members will need to move their standing orders to our new Clydesdale/Virgin bank account. There will be communications about this in the coming months. We hope that all our existing members will be happy to sign the new forms, preferably as direct debits, and stay with us as paid-up members.
- The launching of a BYS Investment Fund, started off with a generous anonymous contribution. Income from the Fund will support the Society in delivering its goals more effectively. This will provide a way for people to support the Society through lump sums, including through wills.
- Finally we are increasingly opening the Society and its activities to a wider international audience interested in Yemen. Our events for example, as well as the Journal, are of interest far beyond British audiences. We hope in time this will translate into a wider international membership.

The State of the Society

The Committee and its Officers

Membership of the Committee remains as at the last AGM. Meetings continue to be held online, which enables participation from Trustees living around the country and even when abroad. The changes to the Society's Officers which took place in 2021 have proved most successful. Louise Hosking who took over from Audrey Allfree as Secretary has brought new energy to the pivotal role of Secretary. Robert Wilson, who took over as Treasurer from John Huggins, continues also to act as our Membership Secretary. We are grateful for him taking on this combined workload, which allows us to track membership fee payments more effectively.

Thanos Petouris took over as Editor of the Journal and together with his Deputy, Luca Nevola, produced an excellent 2021 issue. The editorship of the BYS Journal is a labour of love, highly time consuming and requiring multiple skills of selecting authors and subjects for articles, reviews, and obituaries, editing them and ensuring it all fits within the space allocated, while meeting multiple deadlines.

The pandemic forced us to adopt a new format for our events which are now held all online. This has meant a saving on room hire costs. Considerably more time is now being put into advertising on social media and this has enabled us to attract much larger audiences including internationally, especially from the US, Europe and Yemen itself. Ibrahim Zanta has been acting as our Events Secretary and it is largely thanks to his advanced digital experience that we can now handle increasingly complex webinars with panel speakers. With the pandemic hopefully behind us, we will continue with online events, but plan to hold one or two per year as 'hybrid' events where people can attend either in person or online.

We have adopted a system where each BYS event has a Champion who determines the format of the event and liaises with speakers. We also have a Champion for each project supported by the Society and for the BYS Scholarship Programme.

On behalf of the Society, I wish to express our deepest condolences to our former Secretary Julian Paxton on the passing of his wife, Nelly, in September of this year. Many members will recall Nelly as an active member of the BYS and The Friends of Soqotra.

Membership

There has for some time been a debate about how many members the BYS has. Is it the number of people who signed a membership form and paid for a subscription at some stage or is it the number of people whose subscriptions are up-to-date, and at the rate advised by the committee. Since Robert took on the combined role of Membership Secretary and of Treasurer, he has had to take a more pragmatic view. We cannot afford to keep people fully informed by post where we do not have e-mail addresses nor to send out the Journal if they have registered as members but have not contributed to the Society by paying their subscription.



Society Member Muhammad Bin-Dohry with members of staff of al-Rahma Co-operative Hospital in al-Mukalla, Hadhramaut.

With these factors in mind, we can say that we have 208 fully paid-up members as of the end of August 2022. We are glad to welcome sixteen new members since last year's AGM. Sadly, a few members have died, and a few have either resigned because of changing circumstances or allowed their memberships to lapse. Overall our membership numbers have changed little from last year.

We would like to welcome in particular those who have joined the Society who are neither British, Yemeni, or British Yemenis. Membership is open to anyone interested in Yemen, Yemeni history and culture, and the experiences of Yemeni expatriate communities.

Finances

In the report of the 2021 account we noted that an apparent surplus of £3,162 in 2021 should be regarded with caution, as we did not know at that stage what the final cost of designing, printing and mailing the 2021 Journal would be. In the event the bills including postage totalled just over £4,200.

At year-end 2021 the Society had £27,782 in its bank and PayPal accounts. At time of the 2022 AGM we have £30,407 in total, with some minor payments outstanding. Of this amount approximately £1,800 is restricted, leaving £28,607 in the general fund. We have not made any donations from our Yemen Appeal, whose funds were completely exhausted in 2021. Some donations have come in in the present year, but we would like to encourage further support for our Yemen Appeal so that we can continue to support a range of humanitarian efforts in Yemen, as we have done in the past. Subscriptions are broadly in line with previous years.

The Society is thus in good shape financially, but rising costs, particularly of postage, are likely to pose a challenge. January 2023 will be the last year in which standing order payments should be transferred automatically from RBS to our new account with Clydesdale/Virgin. We shall be offering members options to pay in new ways, either by direct debit or by setting up payments through PayPal, which will accept payments from regular credit and debit cards as well as from PayPal accounts. For those who prefer to pay by standing order, instructions are available on the Society's website; and members whose standing orders are already set up with Clydesdale Bank/Virgin Money do not need to make any changes at present.

BYS Activities

Events

We held six events over this last period with one further event delayed due to issues beyond our control. Thanks to the online format and advertising our events internationally, including to non-members, a number of these achieved attendances well over a hundred. Our policy is to record events and make the recordings available later on our website. We try and maintain a diversity of subject matter to ensure broad interest.

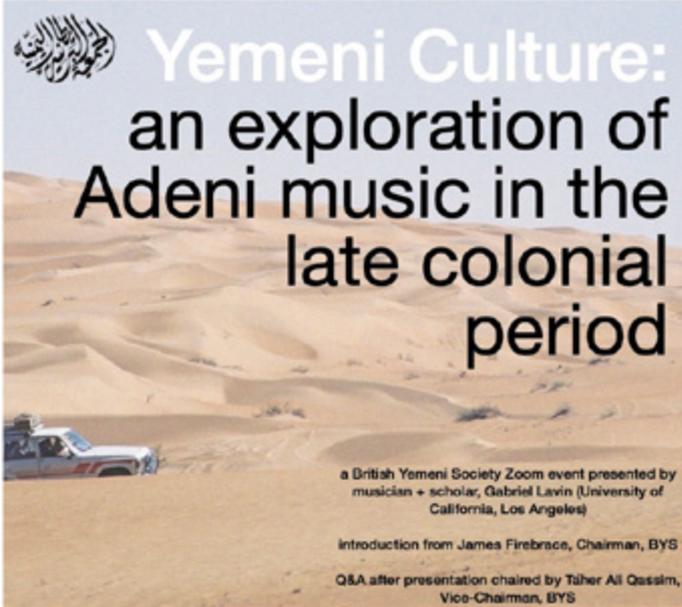
9 September 2021. Last in our series 'Winding down Yemen's War' with outgoing HM Ambassador Dr Michael Aron sharing his insights on *The British Government's Perspective on the Way Forward Towards Peace*. Michael took us through the various attempts to find a peaceful solution to the war and the range of factors that led to the frustration of each initiative, leading to a challenging debate and his fielding of some hard questions covering arms sales, corruption, British aid cuts, the secession issue for southern Yemen, and the preconditions for future economic stability.

2 December 2021. Gabriel Lavin, who won the Society's Academic Award for 2021, delivered a most enjoyable evening for us on the theme of *An Exploration of Adeni Music in the Late Colonial Period* in which he played musical recordings from a wide variety of styles — Lahji, Sana'ani, Hadhrami. In his presentation he explained external influences from India, Egypt, and Somalia, and the ways Yemeni music has in turn influenced that of the Gulf. Gabriel contributed a very interesting article on the same subject in last year's Journal and has interviewed the well-known Yemeni poet and musician Dr Nizar Ghanem for the present issue.

21 February 2022. Dr Ekaterina Pukhovaia, jointly with IASA and MBI Al-Jaber Foundation, gave a talk on *The Transformation of the Imamate in Yemen 1200–1800*. Ekaterina gave an extraordinarily well-researched overview on how pre-modern states in Yemen dealt with the geographical, religious, and tribal divisions now considered severe constraints of successful state building.

10 March 2022. Dr Kay Van Damme spoke on *Pioneering Conservation Initiatives in Soqatra, the Galapagos of the Indian Ocean*. Kay is a Belgian zoologist involved in research and biodiversity conservation in Soqatra for the last twenty-three years. In his talk he described how the people of Soqatra have always lived in close connection with their natural environment. He highlighted several collaborative initiatives between its people and international teams, including over mitigating climate change impacts which have resulted in a series of natural disasters — cyclones, floods and droughts.

8 September 2022. Yemeni author and diplomat Khaled Hussein Alyemany discussed his ideas for his latest project of short stories 'Book of the Yemeni Diaspora' with Society Trustee Martin Jerrett. Guest speakers Angela Wells and Fernando Carvajal joined



Yemeni Culture:
an exploration of
Adeni music in the
late colonial
period

A British Yemeni Society Zoom event presented by musician + scholar, Gabriel Lavin (University of California, Los Angeles)

Introduction from James Firebrace, Chairman, BYS

Q&A after presentation chaired by Taher Ali Qassim, Vice-Chairman, BYS

Thursday,
2nd December 2021

1:30 pm New York
6:30 pm London
7:30 pm Berlin
9:30 pm Yemen

Join the BYS and Gabriel Lavin as we explore music in colonial Aden during the late colonial period, from roughly 1800 to 1960.

Aden was a cosmopolitan Indian Ocean port during this time with large communities of Somali, Indian, Arab, and other peoples from the Indian Ocean region and beyond. This diversity was reflected in the commercial production of Adeni music during this time, which involved several commercial record companies.

A variety of these musical recordings will be played during the presentation, featuring musicians like Fadil Muhammad al-Lahji, Ibrahim al-Mas, and Muhammad Jumah Khan, who played a wide variety of Lahji, Sana'ani, Hadrami, Indian, Egyptian, and other musical styles. Gabriel will also explore some of the ways music was the centre of debates about national identity and culture in Aden during this time, while also showing some of the ways Adeni music and the record industry was influential in the development of popular Khajji (Khalji) music later in the twentieth century.

Use the QR code or link to register and join us. Your ears will thank you.

https://zoom.us/join/register/5416373178387/WN_dy3qZL1R7UW4BC4xblC?g

If you have any questions please email Ibrahim Zarka, Events Secretary at overs@bys.org.uk

us discussing the Yemeni diaspora and challenges in migration.

30 September 2022. BBC Special Correspondent Nawal al-Maghafi addressed the Society, immediately following the AGM on her experience of meeting Yemeni children while reporting in Yemen, comparing this to her own first-hand earlier experience of Yemen's education system. Nawal and her team recently won an Emmy Award for the film *Yemen's Covid Cover-up*.

The Journal

Our Journal remains at the centre of our activities, especially during this time of mostly online events, providing members with a direct, tangible link with the Society, and an update on latest developments in Yemen and new research on the country. We are very pleased with the positive reception its revamped 2021 issue has enjoyed among its readership and we invite members to contribute their own articles or propose topics for inclusion to the Editor. The Journal, with a print run of just over 300 copies, is deposited in all major academic libraries across the UK, and delivered to members as far afield as Australia, Canada, and Sudan.

Society Supported Projects in Yemen

We are currently supporting four projects in Yemen, each one relatively small and localised so that the



ACT-trained teacher organising children's activities in a school in Hadhramaut

Society's contribution is making a real difference in each case. We also aim for a spread across the regions of Yemen.

- **Action for Child Trauma (ACT)** is a relatively new organisation which began operations in Yemen recently. ACT provides expert training for teachers and child care workers, delivered by highly experienced women from the Arab world. The traumatisation of Yemeni children has become a major issue during the war, and ACT works to address anxiety and to build resilience. The Society made its second grant this year to ACT, directed at their work in Ta'izz, Aden and the Hadhramaut. **BYS Champion** is Julian Lush.
- **Ras Morbat Eye Clinic in Aden.** The Society has long supported the essential work of this clinic, which successfully kept going throughout the current conflict and significant periods of insecurity in Aden. Our most recent grant has been for a tonometer. **BYS Champion** is Roy Facey.
- **Al-Rahma Co-operative Hospital in al-Mukalla,** which we are supporting for a second year with contributions towards essential equipment. **BYS Champions** are Noel Brehony and Muhammad Bin-Dohry.
- **Yemen Education and Relief Organisation (YERO) in Sana'a.** This organisation, run by Nouria Nagi OBE who is well-known to the Society, supports orphaned and abandoned children, whose number has increased dramatically in the course of the conflict. We are planning a talk on YERO's work by Nouria later in the year **BYS Champion** is James Spencer.

Website and Social Media

This year, four members of the Executive Committee have formed a Media Committee to begin the process of revising and further developing the Society's online presence. The Media Committee has thoroughly reviewed the current **BYS** website, updat-

ing and revising sections where possible, and is also exploring possibilities for rebuilding and relaunching the website in 2023. The Committee is currently gathering quotes from potential designers and working on the shape and content of the new version of the website. It further aims, and is creating plans, to increase Society activity on various social media, including on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

In the coming months, the Committee plans to create a members-only Facebook group, providing a space for Society members to connect and engage with one another online. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned with formalising and professionalising the Society's online activities and is drafting a Media Policy and Social Media templates to support these aims. We hope that Society members and potential members will be better able to connect with the Society online, and that the Society will be more equipped to showcase its work and further its mission in the online sphere.

Academic Award

Our 2022 Academic Award was made to Richard Lee of the University of York as a contribution to the costs of a research trip to this year's Pan African Archaeology Association conference, held in Zanzibar, Tanzania in August. His work covers the early cultural influences between Yemen and the Horn of Africa. Richard has kindly contributed an article in this year's Journal outlining the results of his study.



Society-donated tonometer in use at the Ras Morbat Eye clinic in Aden

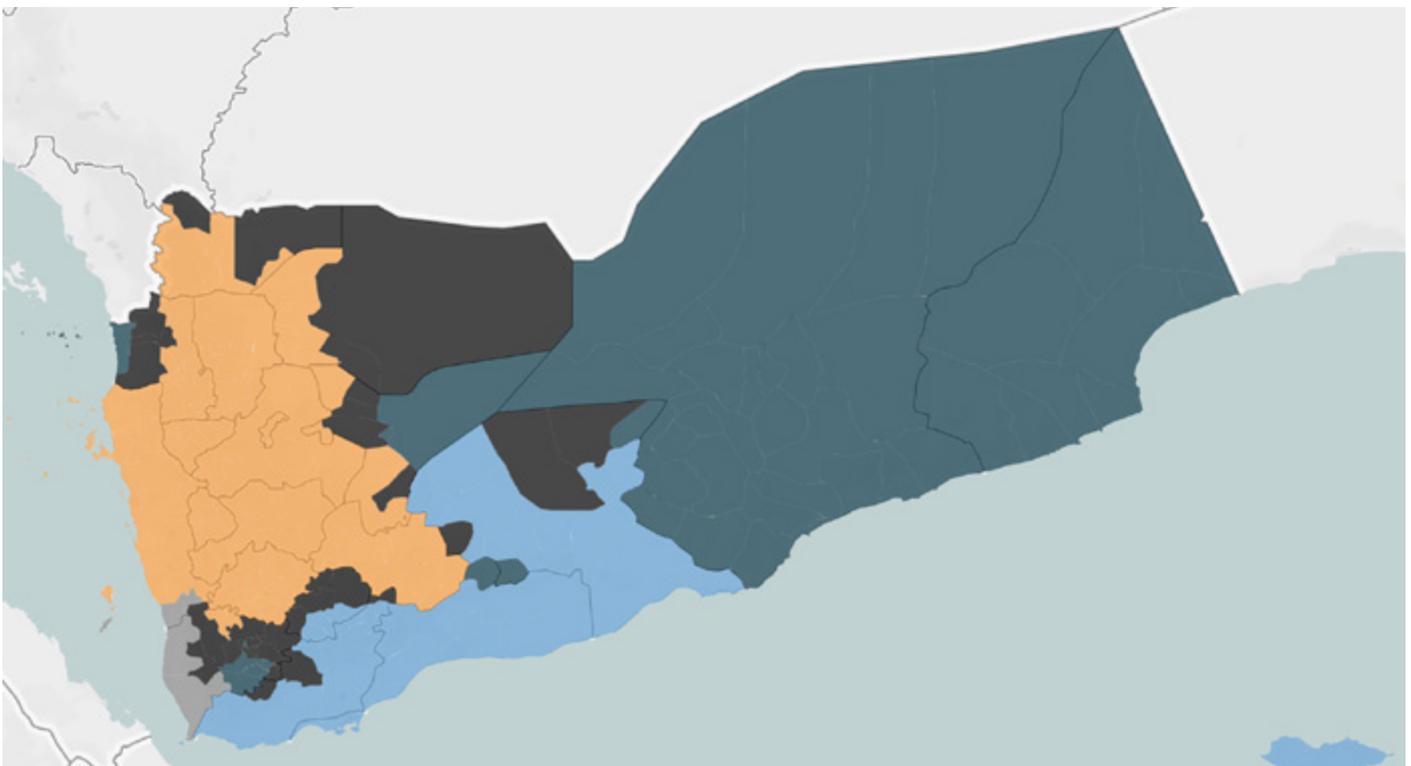
YEMEN POLITICAL UPDATE

NOEL BREHONY

A two-month-long truce starting on 2 April 2022 was twice renewed up to 2 October 2022. For the past month the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, has worked hard to get the parties to agree its further renewal, albeit with little success. Nevertheless, the past six months have brought some tangible relief and benefits to the population, but the warring parties remain in no mood to end the war, and, despite much activity, Grundberg has not yet found a way to re-start peace negotiations or to extend the most recent truce for six months, which was his declared aim.

A combination of developments in the first half of the year made a truce possible. The Huthis, who control the majority of Yemen's population, were exhausted by their unsuccessful two year-long campaign to seize Marib with its energy resources and needed a pause. Stiff resistance from tribal militias and the Yemeni army backed by coalition airstrikes inflicted heavy casualties in early 2022. Long-needed cooperation among the array of military units

and militias loyal to varying degrees to the Internationally Recognised Government (IRG) enabled them to drive the Huthis out of parts of Shabwa and recapture land in southern Marib governorate. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, weary of the war and concerned about the rising threat to their cities and economic targets posed by longer range and more accurate Huthi missile and drone attacks, took a more assertive role in arranging a reform of the IRG and its armed forces to make them better able to wage war or negotiate a peace deal. Grundberg, who had consulted widely in his early months and built a network of contacts, was able to seize the moment to secure a truce at the start of Ramadhan.



Control Status:



Areas of Control in Yemen as of 31 October 2022

© 2022 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), courtesy of Valentin d'Hauthuille.

Hadi replaced by the PLC

In the end of March, Saudi Arabia and the UAE inspired the holding of a major Yemeni conference in Riyadh of a wide range of significant political figures (the Huthis were also invited but declined as it was held under the so-called three references which the Huthis, not unreasonably, see as an unconditional surrender). Whilst the conference was in progress, the Saudis and Emiratis orchestrated the resignation of President Hadi and his deputy 'Ali Muhsin and the transfer of full powers to a new Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) chaired by Rashad al-'Alimi, a long-standing member of the General People's Congress (GPC) from Ta'izz with seven Vice Presidents made up of figures who command or influence fighting forces on the ground:

- 'Aydarus al-Zubaydi, head of the Southern Transitional Council (STC)
- Tariq Salih, nephew of the former President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and leader of the National Resistance Forces based in Mocha and increasingly influential in Ta'izz governorate
- 'Abd al-Rahman Abu Zara'a, commander of the UAE-backed Giants Brigades which drove the Huthis out of Shabwa. A southerner, he is not part of the STC, but co-operates with it and has also been allied with the National Resistance Forces
- Sultan al-'Arada, Governor of Marib and tribal leader, whose prestige is high as result of his defence of Marib
- Faraj al-Bahsani, erstwhile Governor of Hadhramaut and Commander of the Second Military District
- 'Abdallah al-'Alimi BaWazir, a senior figure in al-Islah party (associated with its more moderate wing) and former head of President Hadi's office
- Shaykh 'Uthman Mujalli, a tribal leader from the Huthi heartland in Sa'ada

Several subcommittees were set up to help the PLC to rebuild institutions and work for national reconciliation and economic reconstruction. The existing cabinet and regional governors were retained though there have been some changes since and more seem likely. The PLC has based itself in Aden — unlike the former president who preferred the comfort of Riyadh; the Yemeni cabinet also operates from Aden. Saudi Arabia and the UAE each pledged to deposit \$1 billion at the Yemen Central Bank controlled by the IRG and Riyadh is to provide another \$1 billion for reconstruction and the delivery of oil derivatives which should help deal with the power outages that have been causing protests in Aden and Hadhramaut.

Members of the PLC (four northerners and four southerners) may be united in opposing the Huthis but have different interests and competing ambitions which disrupt decision making, especially on

anything that might affect the new future structure of Yemen. The STC controls Aden and much of its immediately surrounding area which gives it negotiating power in dealing with the PLC and considerable influence to al-Zubaydi, who has been its most active member and is now seeking to bring together all southern groups under an STC umbrella. Four new ministers, including defence, have gone to southerners and the new governor of Soqatra, for example, is the leader of the STC on the island. Bahsani was replaced in August first as Governor of Hadhramaut and then of his command of the Second Military district. Bahsani was noted for maintaining some distance from the STC leadership — reflecting a trend in that governorate for greater say over its own affairs.

Fighting broke out in Shabwa in August between militias linked to the STC and al-Islah (which had repelled an STC advance into Shabwa in 2019). Islah was defeated (with clear assistance from UAE drones) but fighting has spread to Abyan (al-Zubaydi has launched an operation there to end 'terrorism') and could break out in Hadhramaut, where military units in the Wadi (the First Military District) are composed of troops from northern Yemen under the influence of al-Islah and former Vice-President 'Ali Muhsin. Islah remains represented on the PLC and its organisational ability and influence in parts of the armed forces (and in Ta'izz) should not be under-estimated.

Fortunately, Rashad al-'Alimi is well-respected and has the political skills, experience and personal relationships to stabilise the PLC. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which provide the funds that pay the army and militias, clearly have substantial influence that they can use to keep the PLC together and focused on the need to show it can deliver a better life to Yemenis. However, Saudi Arabia lacks the networks of influence in southern Yemen (once enjoyed by its *Special Committee* in northern Yemen) and the organisational capacity to prevent rivalries escalating to fracture the PLC. Its UAE partner must decide — as does the STC — if it wants to use its influence to keep the PLC focussed on defeating the Huthis or marginalising Islah.

The Huthis watch and wait. Frequent reports of divisions within the Huthi leadership lack substance although its relations with its GPC allies are strained. They maintain a strong grip and are seeking to impose their version of Zaydism through reform of the educational curricula. Iran provides growing — and

more open — support. The Huthi side has long argued that it should negotiate a deal with Saudi Arabia ‘as the aggressor’ and dismisses the IRG and now the PLC as Saudi concoctions.

Difficulties over the truce

What made this series of truce agreements different from previous ceasefires is that it not only halted “all offensive military air, ground, and maritime operations inside Yemen and across its borders,” but also included two concessions that the Huthis had long been demanding: specified numbers of fuel ships are able to enter Hudayda and two commercial flights could start operating weekly out of Sana’a airport to Cairo and Amman. Both sides agreed to release prisoners, including some high-profile detainees, but this has not happened. Crucially for the IRG the Huthis agreed that talks would take place to end the siege of Ta’izz city with most routes into it having been blocked by the Huthis.

There have been no reported Huthi missile or drone attacks on Saudi Arabia or the UAE or of Saudi airstrikes in Yemen. Both sides have accused the other of numerous minor breaches of the ceasefire at the local level and of preparing for a resumption of fighting. Civilian casualties and displacements have greatly reduced. Agreed numbers of fuel ships have delivered to Hudayda and flights from Sana’a to Cairo and Amman have started. Military officers from both sides have been meeting in Amman to follow up — providing a rare chance of face-to-face negotiations.

However, there has been no progress over lifting the siege of Ta’izz, mostly as a result of Huthi intransigence. Proposals put forward by the UN have been rejected and the Huthis only offered at a late stage to open a minor road that would have had negligible impact. Ta’izz is a focal point for key routes linking Sana’a, Aden, and Hudayda. Huthi leaders do not want to cede the advantage they have — and benefit their enemies — without more concessions, possibly in the opening of routes in places where it would be to their advantage, enhanced fuel deliveries and the use of oil revenues exported from the PLC areas to pay public sector salaries in Huthi-controlled areas. The siege causes immense difficulties for residents of the city (where the two major factions of the anti-Huthi forces are at loggerheads).

The FSO SAFER

Finally, there is some more optimistic news to report on the long drawn out efforts to neutralise the threat posed by FSO SAFER, a massive 45-year old single-hulled oil storage vessel, containing over a million barrels of oil and moored a few miles off Ras Isa in the Red Sea. Since the war began the vessel has had no significant maintenance, nor the injection of inert gases to avoid the risk of explosion. Aside from the vast impact of a spill on fisheries and a sensitive coastline, food imports and humanitarian oper-



Aden Governorate office with portraits of Adenis killed in the course of the conflict, Ma’alla
(© 2022 Thanos Petouris)

ations (largely using the ports of Salif and Hudayda) would be seriously disrupted for many months.

In recent weeks the UN fundraising efforts have finally paid off with the announcement of a further generous contribution from the Dutch government and the Hayel Saeed Anam Group, coupled by a radical rethinking of operations to reduce costs. Once all financial pledges, including those from the British government, have been converted to cash, the long-awaited operations can begin, carried out by the Dutch salvage firm SMIT supported by a Yemeni team in Sana'a. A potential six-month extension to the truce, would have also provided a calmer political space for the smooth roll-out of these operations, which are planned in two phases.

The first phase will involve the transfer of the oil to a double-hulled VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) and is likely to take some four months. A second phase will see the removal of FSO SAFER itself for scrap and the creation of a simple system for the future export of oil from the Ras Isa terminal should the Marib-Ras Isa pipeline route be revived in the future. Pipelines and pumping stations have suffered badly during the war, and it may make little financial sense to revive this pre-war route when a shorter pipeline route, involving much less pumping, exists to the south in the Gulf of Aden.



People gather for a protest in the Sayla, Sana'a
(© 2011 Luca Nevola)

Delivering a better life

Thanks to the truce, relief agencies can deliver greater humanitarian support and mitigate to some extent the worst problems faced by Yemenis. The PLC understands that it must keep the currency stable, restore and enhance government services and protect people from the high and growing price rises of imported food and fuel and other commodities. Discontent is rife. Protests have been taking place in southern Yemeni cities and these could easily get out of hand. Al-Qaeda activity has revived in the last year. It helps instil confidence that the PLC and cabinet are in Aden, but the old ministries and state bodies are mostly in Sana'a. In many parts of Yemen, people have learned to fend for themselves as far as possible locally but that creates inequalities and could exacerbate divisions within the PLC. Saudi Arabia and the UAE need to deliver the money promised in Riyadh when the PLC was formed. Delays have been caused by fears — not without reason — that the money might be misused for personal and political purposes. The PLC was made in Riyadh — which now needs to give it the resources to govern.

The Huthis face different problems, but it will be in their interests to cooperate with efforts to reach an agreement on a transparent and effective disbursement mechanism from earnings from Hudayda port and from the little oil that Yemen can export to ensure the regular payment of civil servant salaries and civilian pensions.

The Future

Grundberg is seeking to extend the truce for six months, which will require progress on Ta'izz, and then using that as a basis for the start of negotiating an end to the war. The spectre facing the UN Special Envoy is that neither side is ready to make the essential concessions needed for peace. Each is too strong to lose the war and too weak to win it. The Huthis and the PLC have starkly different visions of a future united Yemen influenced to varying degrees by their regional patrons.



Southern Transitional Council mural in Ma'alla, Aden
(© 2022 Thanos Petouris)

Some now argue that it might be better if the international community gave up trying to create a single Yemeni state and accepts the reality of the current divisions and seeks a settlement on that basis¹. The history of Yemen since the 1960s suggests that two or more Yemens may not be any less or more stable than a single Yemeni state. The majority of Yemenis live in the former north, but most of the key oil and gas resources are in the south or the territories controlled by the PLC. Nearly all of the former southern state is now within the PLC but Marib and the populous Ta'izz, now closer in outlook to the PLC, were part of the old north. The Huthis still insist that Yemen remains united. The need in the past, present, and future is for Yemeni leaders with the support of the international community to put the lives and welfare of their citizens first and focus on delivering a better life, ideally through cooperating with each other within a single state, if possible, and if not, in a structure that fosters coexistence and cooperation between the constituent parts.

¹ See for example Gregory Johnsen, 'The Art of the Possible in Yemen.' *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington* 2 August 2022; <https://agsiw.org/the-art-of-the-possible-in-yemen/>

BETWEEN YEMEN, SUDAN, AND BEYOND: AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. NIZAR GHANEM

GABRIEL LAVIN

It is an impossible task to distill the infinite complexities of life and living into the two-dimensional medium of writing. It only takes interviewing someone like Nizar Ghanem, a poet, musician, and physician with the family history, life experience, and encyclopaedic knowledge to be reminded of this fact. Born in Crater, Aden in 1958 as the youngest child of Munira Luqman, daughter of Muhammad 'Ali Luqman, and the renowned poet and educator Muhammad 'Abduh Ghanem, Nizar was raised in a home that was an apex of Aden's intellectual and artistic life.

Although Munira Luqman did not have a formal education due to the absence of women's education during the early twentieth century, being the daughter of the figurehead of Aden's 'enlightenment' provided an alternative sort of schooling. While growing up she met everyone from Mahatma Gandhi to Arab political reformers who were greeted by her father when passing through Aden, then one of the busiest ports in the world, that brought in as much intellectual traffic as it did shipping. Muhammad 'Abduh Ghanem hailed from a family of *sada* (pl. of *sayyid*) that traced their ancestry to Prophet Muhammad, and was a pioneering lyricist in South Arabia, coining the 'Adeni' style of colloquial song and later publishing a doctoral thesis on Sana'ani song at the University of London when Nizar was a child. Muhammad was also Director of Education in Aden during the late colonial period, the first time that position had been occupied by an Arab, and would go on to teach at the Universities of Khartoum and Sana'a. Although at the forefront of intellectual life in South Arabia, Nizar Ghanem's family legacy would grow to encompass not only all of Yemen, but also many places beyond the nation's borders, and particularly Sudan.

I met Nizar in Khartoum during March 2017 through the late Sudanese poet Muhammad Taha al-Qaddal, who invited me to perform in the Second Khartoum Festival for the Oud. Although Nizar is professionally trained as a physician with multiple qualifications in occupational and community health, he is one of the most widely cited authorities

on Yemeni music, having published many books and articles that are foundational to the work of Arab and non-Arab scholars alike. Furthermore, the reason Nizar Ghanem currently resides in Khartoum (the Huthi authorities have confiscated his home and library in Sana'a) is thanks to his extracurricular scholarly endeavours: he was granted Sudanese citizenship in honour of his book, *A Bridge of Sentiment Between Yemen and Sudan (Jisr al-Wijdan bayna al-Yaman wa-l-Sudan)*, which was inspired by the Sudanese-Yemeni cultural society he established, called 'Sumaniyya.' Having spent his young adult life in Sudan and later served as a cultural attaché for the Yemeni Embassy there, Nizar's scholarship on Yemeni music has naturally gravitated towards exploring the country's musical and literary connections to the outside world in Africa, India, Turkey, and the Gulf Arab states. This work has greatly inspired my own doctoral research, so I was eager to meet Nizar when the opportunity arose.

Continued conversations between us inspired my article for the previous issue of this Journal 'Music in Colonial Aden,'¹ in addition to the virtual talk I gave to the Society in December 2021 about my BYS-sponsored research at the British Library. Nizar Ghanem has also received support from the BYS over the years for the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) he established in 1992, a Free Musician's Clinic in Sana'a that later expanded to Aden, Dhamar, Ibb, and al-Shihr. In 2002, the BYS invited Nizar to give a concert in London that was a capstone for the Seminar of Arabian Studies. What follows here are excerpts from a long conversation we had about his early life, picking up on some of the themes from my recent BYS article.²

¹ See: *British Yemeni Society Journal 29 (2021), 12-20*

² The interview was conducted virtually on 3 August, 2022 via Zoom



Nizar with his parents Muhammad 'Abduh Ghanem and Munira Luqman in Aden, 1990 (Illustrations courtesy of Nizar Ghanem, apart from those indicated)

You were born during a dynamic time towards the end of the colonial era: many of the political movements of your parents' generation were coming to a head with the activities of southern Yemeni nationalists, Marxists, Nasserists, and North-South unionists. How did these varying movements play out in the musical and cultural fields?

I can think of many examples where the weight of politics had a clear effect on musical artistry. Of course, around the decade I was born there were various musical associations appearing such as the *al-Nadwa al-Musiqa al-'Adaniyya* [The Adeni Music Club] in 1949 and its competitor, *al-Rabita al-Musiqa al-'Adaniyya* [The Adeni Music League] in 1951. My father was a centre-point between the two associations, whose members sang his poetry and featured poets like Yusif Mahiyub Sultan who would imitate his style. The establishment of these associations also coincided with that of political parties like *Rabita al-Janub al-'Arabi* [South Arabian League — SAL], which had a clear cultural agenda and later established organisations in Lahj and Abyan. The emphasis of regional political identities was also reflected in Lahji songs written by Prince Ahmad Fadhl al-'Abdali, well known as 'al-Qumandan,' and more subtly in the work of certain Hadhrami musicians. Even later in my own lifetime, Hadhrami intellectuals like the lawyer Shaykhan al-Habshi would claim that 'the South' and 'Hadhramaut' embodied distinct and separate peoples, even though he was a Ba'thist and thus supposedly an advocate of pan-Arab unification.

In early 1955 when Farid al-Atrash performed in Aden, the Marxist activist 'Abdallah BaDhib criticised Farid al-Atrash's presence as a 'fallacious move' towards women's liberation.³ According to his Marxist views, western dress and belly dancing were not the stuff of a true women's revolution. You know, Farid al-Atrash caused a hell of a stir. Even June Knox-Mawer in *The Sultans Come to Tea* (1961) mentions how her husband, then a judge in Aden, witnessed a peak in divorces because so many Adeni women insisted on seeing their 'Casanova,' al-Atrash. Farid's visit from Egypt took place three years after Nasser's revolu-



Nizar (far right) with the famous Hadhrami lyricist and poet, Husayn Abu Bakr al-Mihdhar (second from left) in Hadhramaut, 1993



Nizar performs for the British Yemeni Society in London, 2002 (courtesy of Paul Hughes-Smith)

³ Farid al-Atrash was a Syrian singer and oud player based in Cairo who became one of the most famous musicians of the mid-twentieth century Arab world



Muhammad 'Ali Luqman (right) and Muhammad 'Abduh Ghanem (left) in Aden



Nizar (second from left) and his siblings, Qais, 'Azza, Shihab, and Isam, on a panel commemorating their father in Sana'a, 1998



Nizar's father, Muhammad 'Abduh Ghanem, playing the oud in London, 1986

tion, so there were clear pan-Arab implications to his popularity. But BaDhib was of a minority opinion that Farid's performances did not represent the true proletariat and that it was an elite bourgeois affair. True liberation would be a grassroots movement. In any case, Farid al-Atrash remained incredibly popular throughout all of Yemen, especially due to the popularity of his movies. I even named my first born son, Farid, after him.

On the other hand, musicians like Muhammad Murshid Naji were criticised for not being Adeni enough.⁴ It was said that he was singing too much Sana'ani music. In the first edition of his book, *Our Popular Songs (Aghanina al-Sha'biyya)* published in 1959, Naji responded that music from the North was a part of a shared Yemeni heritage, unlike the Egyptian and Indian songs many Adenis would perform. He was responding as a political activist that believed in a single united Yemen, which was the call of the *Jabha al-Wataniyya al-Muttahida* [United National Front] party established in 1955 in opposition to the SAL and the Aden Association, the latter the brainchild of my maternal grandfather, Muhammad 'Ali Luqman. Naji still had great respect for Adeni musicians, including Khalil Muhammad Khalil who was heavily influenced by Egyptian and Indian music.⁵ I knew Muhammad Murshid Naji well and he would visit me frequently at my home in Sana'a. He told me he loved my father's poetry, and wanted to sing poems written by me, but I do not write poetry for songs.

How did the socialist political agenda of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) affect the Adeni music scene established during the late colonial period?

In the PDRY they thought about everything ideologically. I remember when president Salim Rubai' 'Ali (Salmin) came to power in 1969 two years after independence. He began his regime by canceling the broadcast of Khalil Muhammad Khalil's song *The Red Rose (al-Warda al-Hamra)*, which was a nice Adeni love song. At first, Salmin demanded that Khalil change the song's main lyric to say 'the red star' instead of 'the red rose.' When Khalil told the president that the song would no longer make sense and perhaps another poem could better articulate socialist sentiments, Salmin retorted, 'get out! Don't educate me, you agent of imperialism!' My brother Isam Ghanem discussed this exchange in his book, *Beer Poetry in Yemen, 1945-1989* published in 1989 in London by Arthur Probsthain. This reflects how during

⁴ Muhammad Murshid Naji was a well-known musician in Aden since the 1950s, and later throughout all of Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. He authored a number of books on the history of Yemeni music. See: Adel Aulaqi, 'Mohammad Murshed Naji: A Major Yemeni Musician,' *BYSJ 21* (2013): 40-46

⁵ Khalil Muhammad Khalil is known as the father of modern Adeni musical composition since 1949

the early years of the PDRY, the songs of many artists who represented the 'Adeni' style were banned because the authorities had a grudge against them. At the same time, the state propagated Lahji music and artists, including Muhammad Muhsin Atrash because he wrote revolutionary songs.

Your family was representative of the elite Adeni class who were targeted by PDRY policies and these 'grudges.' How did this affect everyone?

The situation was difficult not only for us but for many others who eventually left South Yemen. At this time, there was a growing diaspora of the South's intelligentsia, including much of my extended family, in the Gulf and North Yemen. I think this brain drain contributed to Aden's decline as a regional cultural and economic hub. Even the former prime minister of North Yemen 'Abd al-Karim al-Iryani claimed that sixty to seventy percent of the North's infrastructure and human resource development during the 1970s was thanks to the work and labour of migrants from the South. 'Abdallah BaDhib, who I think by then had become the PDRY's minister of culture, was a family friend and would frequent our home in Aden for lunch. He would privately complain to my father how he felt that many in the government did not have any clue how to establish a true proletariat state. He perhaps had a deeper understanding of things; even Marx and Engels themselves admitted in their correspondence that the historical situations that gave rise to industrial capitalism in Europe did not necessarily apply elsewhere. I think most people who worked in the PDRY government would admit now that they were wrong about many things.

By 1972, my family began to leave Aden. My brothers, sisters, and father had all received degrees in England. Then working as a consultant for the courts, my brother Isam began to have an unsteady relationship with the South Yemeni president. In a police state, the slightest infractions would gather lots of attention. My family had a sense that eventually it would become impossible to leave, and even at my school, I felt like I was in the Omar Sharif movie *Doctor Zhivago*, with eyes and spies everywhere! Many of my classmates came from rural areas and families that were given nationalised homes that were formerly owned by Adenis. They thought they were in paradise.

Isam eventually fled to the North along with my mother, who was allowed free passage as a woman. My father stayed in London after a medical procedure there and my brother Shihab stayed in Iraq on his way back from a visit to North Korea. My sister 'Azza left with her husband Dr. Abu Bakr al-Qir-

bi (former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Yemen) to study in London on scholarship. As for me, I was temporarily sent to Lebanon. I had just turned fourteen. We were not allowed to take any money out of the country, so my mother gave me Shihab's jacket and sewed around five hundred dollars into it. I was so frightened at the airport because security caught an Indian man in front of me trying to smuggle gold in his eye patch! Thankfully, they didn't discover my money. I wore that coat for months after to keep the cash close to me.

Being in Lebanon was very difficult as I was separated from my family and living in a boarding school. But the country had so much to offer from food, fun, and cinemas. I also experienced for the first time male-female integration (other than my previous brief stay in Kilburn, London when my father was getting his PhD). I learned French and became exposed to so many new ideas reading the newspapers there, and even saw Farid al-Atrash play live in Aley. But I had become a burden to my father who was facing serious financial difficulties and ended up working as a salesman at his brother's Seiko watch shop in Djibouti. It was the only job he could find. So after one year in Lebanon he moved me to Kuwait and put me in boarding school there. But when my mother visited me she saw that everyone I was living with was much older than me, she sent me back to Lebanon for another year to complete the ninth grade. During my stay in Lebanon 1972-74 the political junta in Aden aided by leftists from Lebanon and Palestine managed to assassinate three opposing Yemeni politicians in Lebanon.⁶



⁶ See the BBC World Service's recent documentary by Mai Noman 'Who killed my grandfather?' on the assassination in Beirut of North Yemen's former Foreign Minister Mohamed Noman in 1974. Available as a film on YouTube and as radio broadcast on BBC Sounds

The Adeni Music Club's record label, Kayaphon. This recording features a song written by Nizar's father called 'Eye Talk' (*Kalam al-Ayn*), c.1950s. (courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara)

Some readers may be familiar with the historic influence of Sudanese education on South Yemen, but may be surprised to hear that Sudan became a refuge for your family because of your father's work as an educator. How did this happen?

Around the time after I moved back to Lebanon, Professor Abdullah El Tayyib, who was the vice chancellor at the University of Khartoum, was prompted by R. B. Serjeant to get in touch with my father, who had earlier cultivated a friendship with Serjeant in Aden. Serjeant knew that my father, a graduate of the American University of Beirut and the University of London, had become a victim of circumstances at the time, and persuaded El Tayyib to offer him a position as visiting professor at Khartoum. So, in 1974 my parents and I moved to Sudan.

It must have been difficult moving between many different places at such a young age. Did finding some stability in Sudan offer you the opportunity to pursue your passion for music?

All this moving around required me to constantly make new friends and learn all these different dialects. After mastering Lebanese, I had to learn Sudanese. I was also exposed to many different musical tastes between Yemen, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Sudan, and of course, in all Arab countries Egyptian music was playing in the background. At our new home in Khartoum, I would often hear my father playing the oud, so I eventually asked him to teach me. The first thing he tried to teach me was a Sana'ani song, but I couldn't figure it out because I hadn't heard much

Sana'ani music at that point. My father told me, 'music is time,' and that singing would help me learn, so I started to learn some of his 'Adeni' songs that I was more familiar with.

My father was also very busy teaching Arabic literature at the University, so I tapped into the two main Sudanese musical currents at the time: one was the local Arabic songs in the pentatonic [five-note scale] style and the other Western pop music, which was artists like Diana Ross, ABBA, Mary Hopkins, Tom Jones, the Bee Gees, and Bob Marley. This was generally called 'jazz' in Sudan, but it is pop, not jazz. Black American music in particular had political significance at the time for people who wanted to identify with pan-Africanism instead of pan-Arabism. I remember when Bob Marley died in the early 1980s they had a funeral for him near my house. Everyone had dreadlocks and instead of reading the *fatiha* they sang his songs. I went to a Catholic high school and many of my classmates played what they called 'jazz.'

I also remember listening to Sudanese singers like Abu 'Araki al-Bakhit and the late Zaydan al-Ibrahim. I only had to open my window to hear Ahmad Mustafa who lived just down the street.⁷ He would play the oud and sing on his back porch, and I always used to get my kite stuck in his garden. He was a great musical inspiration for me.

So you eventually went back to Yemen in 1985, but you didn't end up settling in your hometown of Aden but in Sana'a where you stayed until the recent war broke out. The history of North and South is fraught with divisions, but it strikes me that these do not entirely define your experience. After all, you are someone who has gone on to promote public health, education, and the arts throughout all of Yemen.

I always knew that I wanted to do something for Yemen despite my newly established roots in Sudan. I felt I had been disconnected for too long. After university, I moved to Dubai for one year. I had family there who had become citizens, so I briefly worked as a medical officer. Perhaps because of my father, both North and South were always my *raison d'être*, so in 1985 I moved to Sana'a. Although my father wasn't involved in politics, he always advocated for a cultural unity between North and South. This is particularly visible in his theatrical plays about famous Yemeni historical figures and in his book on Sana'ani music. My mother was more skeptical, and seemed to question whether or not Sana'a could ever be a 'home.'

Anyway, I joined the army and eventually became first lieutenant. While serving I also received a British Council scholarship to get an MSc in occupational medicine from the University of London. But after returning I left the army and moved back to Aden, partly out of nostalgia. I also witnessed a lot of corruption in the military and wanted to promote occupational medicine, which I couldn't in the



Seal for Nizar's Sudanese-Yemeni cultural society, 'Sumaniyya' or the 'Sumaniyyun'.

⁷ Al-Bakhit, al-Ibrahim, and Mustafa are all Khartoum-based artists who were important to the development of contemporary and modern music in Sudan.

North. After unification I eventually left the practice and started teaching, but in 1992 I started the Free Musician's and Creatives Clinic in Sana'a. You know, I wrote to the American Performing Arts Medicine Society, and I think this clinic was one of the first in the world specifically dedicated to both the physical and psychological dimensions of performing arts medicine. The first British performing arts medicine service was established two years after I established the clinic in Yemen, so you could say I was ahead of my time! Sadly, the Huthis have closed the clinic in Sana'a, but the branch in al-Shihr continued until recently with support from the Friends of Hadhramaut and especially the Qu'ayti and Ingrams families.

Recent Activities and Future Plans

Nizar later received a PhD in Occupational Health from Sana'a University in 2011 with a dissertation on the association between obsessive-compulsive disorder and occupational performance. He has continued to promote public health and the arts as a university professor, civic activist, and cultural scholar. The recent war in Yemen has led him back to his second home country of Sudan. He teaches at the Ahfad University for Women in Omdurman and is waiting for his daughter Afnan to finish her degree in medicine. His eldest daughter Shayma has been living in Birmingham for several years now, so he wishes to find a way to settle down in 2023 in the UK, or elsewhere with his wife and daughters due to the continued political instability and war rampant in his two home countries. He is currently completing a manuscript about African influences in Yemeni music building on his previous book, *Afro-Yemeni Dances*.



At the Free Clinic for Musicians and Creatives with Yemen's minister of culture, Yahya al-'Irshi, and the head of Sana'a University, 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Maqalih in Sana'a, 1992



With recent Master's graduates at Ahfad University, Omdurman, 2015



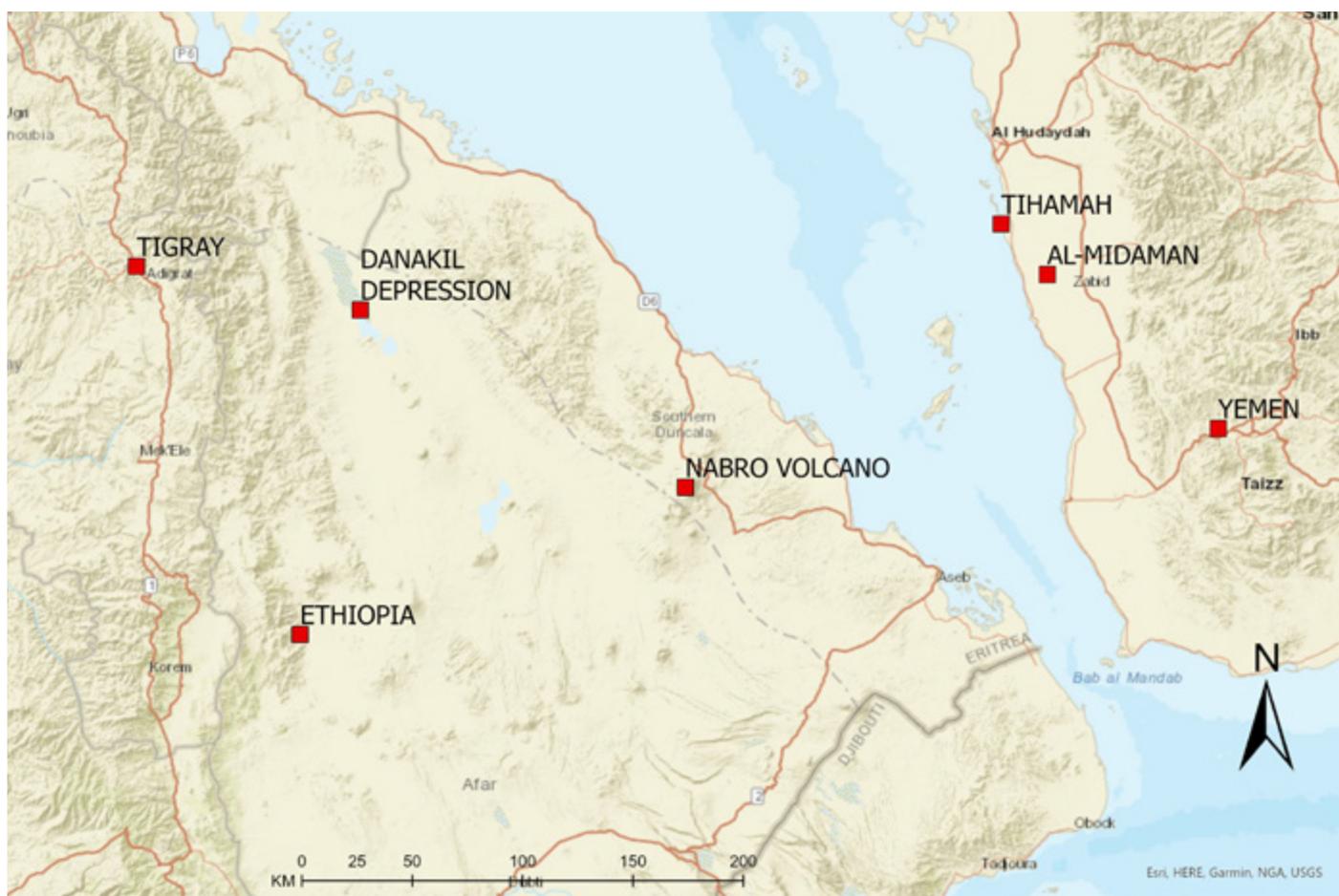
Nizar with his son, Farid, and grandson, Ghanem in Dubai, 2022

CROSSING THE RED SEA: A YEMEN AND ETHIOPIAN INTERCHANGE CIRCUIT

RICHARD LEE

It is a bright clear morning here in Stonetown, Zanzibar, where I am attending the 2022 Pan African Archaeology conference, a large five-day international event with over three hundred papers being presented on every aspect of African archaeology, this year's location being an especially attractive one. I'm here partly through the generosity of the British Yemeni Society to give a paper on part of my PhD that I am currently conducting at the Department of Archaeology, University of York, which explores the relationship between the Yemen Tihamah and the Ethiopian Tigray region c. 800 BC. Both of these places have suffered a calamitous civil war in recent years, Yemen's, of course, still ongoing. In Tigray, regional ethnic conflicts re-erupted in late 2020 and continued for eighteen months until a shaky ceasefire was agreed in spring 2022 although bringing little peace to the region.

When I designed my project in 2019 I had chosen to focus my PhD research on the Tigray region, as archaeological fieldwork was obviously not possible in Yemen. At the time Tigray had been politically stable for the past twenty years, and so once hostilities erupted in the region I had to rethink my project and redesign it as a desk-based rather than field-based study. As I investigated the relationship between the two areas over the ensuing months I realised that, in fact, there was a fascinating story to tell about the Afro-Arabian connection via the medium of obsidian trade. At the conference I was one of a very few people presenting research extending beyond African boundaries and the only person to bring Yemen into the discussion. Yemen and the African coastline is separated by only 26km at the Bab al-Mandab strait hence they are relatively close neighbours.



Map 1 - The Red Sea Region Discussed in this Article (© Esri, HERE, Garmin, NGA, USGS)

Obsidian is an igneous, hard, glass-like substance produced by volcanic eruptions. It is razor sharp, often used for making lithic tools, like arrowheads and hand axes, which have been found as early as 5000 BC on Yemen's al-Salif peninsula indicating that trade and movement throughout the region was occurring at this early date. The same type of obsidian has also been found in Egypt, as lithic tools, in high-status burials dating to the transitional phase between the Predynastic and Pharaonic Periods (3100 BC). It had initially been assumed that the source of the obsidian used in the two regions differed — that the Arabian obsidian came from the Dhamar-Rada' volcanic field on the Yemen plateau and the African source was the Porc-Epic cave in southern Ethiopia. However, in 2019 a team led by Clive Oppenheimer, from the University of Cambridge, used geochemical fingerprinting of obsidian sources identifying the Nabro Volcano in the Danakil Depression, part of the Afar desert, as the source of the obsidian found not only in Yemen and Egypt but also at many archaeological sites throughout Ethiopia and Eritrea (see map 1).¹ So, from a very early date a specific source of obsidian was being procured and traded on a regional scale. My PhD research suggests that obsidian was a key ingredient in the social and economic de-

velopment on both sides of the Red Sea right up to the late first millennium BC.

The Yemen Tihama

My research is investigating two primary regions where this relationship is being enacted, the Ethiopian Tigray highlands, and the Yemen Tihama coastal plain separated, or potentially conjoined, depending on one's view, by the Red Sea. Chronologically I am interested in the people living during the first millennium BC, known in Tigray as the pre-Aksumite phase (800–400 BC). In the Yemen Tihama during the same chronological period the inhabitants are described as South Arabian or Sabaean after the Kingdom of Saba located some 300km to the north. But, significantly, they are part of a unique Tihama culture. To provide a little context, the historical/mythical figure that links Yemen and Ethiopia is the Queen of Sheba. Sheba is directly linked to Marib in Yemen, capital of the Kingdom of Saba, but also to the Temple of Yeha in the Tigray highlands. Yemenis consider Sheba to be their ancient Queen, whilst Tigrayans also consider Sheba to be their Queen and to have resided at the Temple of Yeha. As will be discussed here, the Temple of Yeha links these two countries in more ways than one.

The focus of Yemeni archaeology had for many decades been the ancient city of Marib. Here, archaeologists studied the city's impressive dam and

¹ Clive Oppenheimer et al., "Risk and Reward: Explosive Eruptions and Obsidian Lithic Resource at Nabro Volcano (Eritrea), *Quaternary Science Reviews* 226 (Nov 2019): 105995



Map 2 - The Archaeological Sites on the Yemen Tihama (right), Eritrea, and Ethiopia Tigray (left) (© Earthstar Geographics)



Fig. 1 - The remaining walls of the Temple at the site of al-Hamid (© 1999 Richard Lee)

temples which appeared to be the apex of southern Arabian history. Beginning in the 1980s, archaeologists from the UK, Canada, and Italy gradually began to investigate what was considered to be the archaeologically barren Tihama coastal plain. The UK team was led by Carl Phillips, then of the Institute of Archaeology at University College London, and a member of this Society, who began investigating sites in the northern Tihama between Hudayda and the mountainous escarpment to the east.² Awareness of archaeological remains in this area was initially raised by an anthropological and archaeological survey of the Tihama undertaken by another Society member, Francine Stone in 1982.³

Phillips' archaeological work, under the auspices of the British Archaeological Mission to Yemen (BAMY) in the years 1994–2006 eventually established that the Tihama was far from being a remote backwater on the periphery of the Sabaean Kingdom. Instead, it was at the forefront of both local and regional interactivity with a unique chronological footprint establishing its identity. The site of al-Hamid, with its Sabaean temple (see fig. 1) is located south-east of Bajil and south-west of Jabal al-Dhamir, along the Wadi Siham, the east-west route through the Tihama mountains.⁴ The Temple is the largest structure at the site and is surrounded by clusters of buildings and rooms that appear to represent a way station or administrative and agricultural centre strategically placed to facilitate the trade route linking the Red Sea coastline with the Tihama and the Yemen plateau.

² Carl S. Phillips, "Al-Hāmid: A Route to the Red Sea?" in *Profumi d'Arabia: Atti del Convegno*, ed. Alessandra Avanzini (Rome: «L'Erma» di Bretschneider, 1997), 287–295

³ Francine Stone (ed.), *Studies on the Tihāmah: The Report of the Tihāmah Expedition of 1982 and Related Papers* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1985)

⁴ Carl S. Phillips, "The Tihama c. 5000 – 500 BC," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 28 (1998): 233–237

Further south on the Tihama, is the site of al-Kashawba, one of a myriad of names for a site also known as 'the Gas Station' as it is near a fuel station 10km north of Zabid in central Tihama.⁵ Extensive archaeological survey has also been undertaken across the Tihama by a French team led by Lamya Khalidi. So far however the only excavation at al-Kashawba was undertaken by Carl Phillips and a team including myself in April 2006. Visual evidence for this site was, shall we say, an unprepossessing flat barren landscape. But the archaeological survey revealed significant scatters of ceramics that suggested that there may be more below the ground surface than was immediately apparent. Excavation at al-Kashawba revealed large mud brick walls at three metres depth indicating the significant build-up of deposits at the site. The ceramics found during the excavation indicated a date of 1500–500 BC spanning the Arabian late Bronze Age and early Iron Age. This thousand-year period is of great significance as not only does it expand the Tihama chronology, but it also complements data that has been found at archaeological sites in Ethiopian Tigray. In Tigray this has necessitated a revised pre-Aksumite chronology,⁶ which retains the same terminology, but extends its origins by 800 years to 1600 BC (1600–400 BC). Archaeological excavation in both Tihama and Tigray indicates a close relationship established between the two areas as demonstrated by the presence of ceramics, stone inscriptions, and obsidian.

Further south along the Tihama coast the archaeological site of al-Mohandid (see fig. 2), near the town of Hays, has a sequence, almost an avenue, of upright standing stones unique to this region. Whilst archaeological survey has taken place here to record the stones, little if any actual excavation has been undertaken. Over the last fifty years numerous attempts have been made to record the many upright standing stones here, the most recent being carried out by Carl Phillips and a team including myself in 2001. Archaeological investigations here suggest potential comparisons with the site of Sabir located north of the city of Aden, with both sites having potential links with Asa Koma in southern Eritrea. Whilst this might seem like an extended area to be linked with cultural antecedents, each site has indications of second millennium BC date alluding to, I suggest, a more active second millennium interconnectivity than has hitherto been recognised.

Al-Midaman, located 2km inland from the Red Sea shoreline, is a settlement site with a completely different type of standing stone, dating to the second millennium BC. This site was investigated by Ed Keall of the Canadian Archaeological Mission of the Royal Ontario Museum and is one of the most important sites to be discovered, for both the presence of obsidian and Tihama information.⁷ Large quantities of obsidian were retrieved during Keall's excavations representing the biggest collection of obsidian so far found on the Tihama. The site was almost certainly the coastal landing place for obsidian being transported across the Red Sea from Nabro Volcano. From al-Midaman the volcanic glass and exotic trade item would then have been transported to other sites throughout the Tihama, including al-Hamid, al-Kashawba, and al-Mohandid. Gradually these sites and their chronology are developing a picture of first millennium BC trading routes between the Yemen Red Sea coast and Ethiopian Tigray. This illustrates that whilst obsidian was being moved east to Yemen, culture, language and material artefacts were exchanged with the pre-Aksumite Tigray region, with a consequent economic and social boost to both areas.



Fig. 2 - The standing stones at the site of al-Mohandid (© 2000 Richard Lee)

⁵ Carl S. Phillips, "Preliminary Excavations at Al-Kashawba, 2006," *The Society for Arabian Studies Bulletin* 12 (2007)

⁶ A. Catherine D'Andrea, et al., "A Pre-Aksumite Culinary Practice at the Mezber Site, Northern Ethiopia," in *Plants and People in the African Past: Progress in African Archaeobotany*, ed. Anna Maria Mercuri, et al. (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2018), 453–478

⁷ Edward J. Keall, "Possible Connections in Antiquity Between the Red Sea Coast of Yemen and the Horn of Africa," in *Trade and Travel in the Red Sea Region*, ed. Paul Lunde and Alexandra Porter (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), 43–55

Coast to Coast

All of the aforementioned sites and their archaeological evidence indicate occupation and regional interconnectivity occurring during the first millennium BC along Yemen's Tihama coastal plain. Through obsidian from the Nabro Volcano these sites can also be linked to the Afar desert, Eritrea, in the Horn of Africa. The Danakil Depression, where Nabro Volcano is located, and which is also known from the writings of William Thesiger, and Henry de Monfreid, is one of the lowest and hottest places on earth. In summer, the ground heat can melt rubber shoe soles, so it is not an easy place to travel through. How is the obsidian being moved from Nabro Volcano to the Tihama, 175km away? And perhaps more significantly, why do the inhabitants of the Tihama value this exotic overseas commodity so highly? Closer sources of obsidian exist in Yemen, in the Dhamar-Rada' region, yet these are not being exploited.⁸

In Egypt, at the sites of Abydos, Naqada, and Hierakonpolis, Nabro-sourced obsidian is found specifically in high-status burial contexts (3100 BC). This is a further indicator of the extent of the huge regional trade, movement, and the value, of obsidian predating the first millennium BC. The difference between the archaeological contexts in which obsidian is found in Egypt and the later Arabian first millennium BC sites is one of ubiquity. The obsidian found in Tihama and Tigray is almost utilitarian in its frequency, an almost common occurrence in contrast to the high-status burials in Egypt. What is absent at present, is Afro-Arabian archaeological evidence for



Fig. 4 - The Temple of Yeha, Tigray highlands, Ethiopia (© 2018 Richard Lee)

the period that links Egypt in 3100 BC to the Tihama and Tigray in 800 BC, a huge gap in the archaeological record of the region. Whilst we are extremely well informed about the Egyptian pharaonic period at this time, we are less knowledgeable about what was taking place in the lower Red Sea.

Ethiopian Tigray Highland

Far to the north-west of Nabro Volcano are the highlands of Ethiopian Tigray where a significant number of archaeological sites can be linked to the South Arabian Tihama culture via artefacts and even language. Whilst Nabro-sourced obsidian was being transported across the Red Sea to Arabia, language, culture, incense, and building expertise was brought back to Tigray and so we have abundant evidence for Yemen Sabaeen culture in northern Tigray in the very early first millennium BC. The incense trail was well established in the Kingdom of Saba by the second millennium BC with its capital Marib representing the exchange hub. At the Ethiopian temple of Yeha, the western-most extent of pre-Aksumite culture in Tigray, there is distinctive evidence in the earliest archaeological phase for Sabaeen ceramics. It appears that these ceramics are actually from an archaeological deposit that predates the current temple and is suggested as being a 'shrine'.⁹ Inscriptions of Sabaeen language engraved on stone, probably predating the temple, have also been found (see fig. 3). Given that the Yeha temple is the oldest, and only standing structure, known in this area, it is my hypothesis that the visiting Sabaeen merchants or traders were also involved in the temple's construction, possibly as architects, with local people actually building the temple. Research indicates that the style of the Yeha temple (see fig. 4) is probably based on that at Sirwah, in northern Yemen,¹⁰ and other temples in the Kingdom of Saba. As a result, Yeha evidences abundant Sabaeen influence moving west, whilst Nabro obsidian moves eastwards, distinctive exchanges of cultures and values in both directions across the Red Sea.



Fig. 3 - Sabaeen inscriptions on stone at the Temple of Yeha museum (© 2018 Richard Lee)

⁸ T. Wilkinson and C. Edens, "Survey and Excavation in the Central Highlands of Yemen: Results of the Dhamar Survey Project, 1996 and 1998," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 10 (1999): 1-33

⁹ Rodolfo Fattovich, "The Pre-Aksumite State in Northern Ethiopia and Eritrea Reconsidered," in *Trade and Travel in the Red Sea Region*, ed. Paul Lunde and Alexandra Porter (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), 71-78

¹⁰ Iris Gerlach, "Sirwah: New Research at the Sabaeen City and Oasis," in *Caravan Kingdoms: Yemen and the Ancient Incense Trade*, ed. Ann C. Gunter (Washington DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2005), 34-41

There are numerous other archaeological sites in Ethiopian Tigray that bear evidence of Sabaean influence. Usually, Sabaean contact is visible through ceramics, particularly the highly characteristic Sabaean incense burners.¹¹ The eastern Tigray sites — Ona Adi, Mezber, Seglamen, Adi Ba'ekel amongst them — appear to be part of the trade route that linked the Yeha temple with Nabro Volcano and the Red Sea coast, as evidenced by the exchange of obsidian, ceramics, and inscriptions. Excavation at the site of Meqaber Ge'awa close to the modern city of Mekelle, revealed the remains of a further Sabaean influenced temple, not dissimilar to the Yeha temple.¹² This appears to confirm that the trade route passes from Yeha to Meqaber, then over the escarpment and down into the Danakil Depression towards Nabro Volcano.

Parallel to the pre-Aksumite phase in Ethiopian Tigray (800–400 BC) is the ancient Ona culture of northern Eritrea. Parallel because although there are close trade links between the two areas they are clearly separate entities defined by their distinctive material culture. Significantly, the ancient Ona culture extends over a longer period of time (1400–300 BC), than its Tigray counterpart. There is less obsidian at the Ona sites, which is surprising, considering the proximity of both cultures to the obsidian source.

¹¹ Carl S. Phillips, "A Preliminary Description of the Pottery from al-Hamid and its Significance in Relation to Other Pre-Islamic Sites on the Tihama," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 35 (2005): 177–193

¹² Pawel Wolf and Ulrike Nowotnick, "The Almaqah temple of Meqaber Ga'ewa Near Wuqro (Tigray, Ethiopia)," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 40 (2010): 367–380



Fig. 5 - The façade of the Great Be'al Gebri, Yeha. (© 2018 Richard Lee)



Fig. 6 - Danakil depression landscape
(© 2018 Richard Lee)

At the time the ancient Ona culture was likely to have been a significant partner in regional trade and power, yet today we know little about it, lost as it now is below the modern Eritrean capital of Asmara. One of the Ona sites, Mai Chiot, has a second millennium BC date which is, I suggest, a significant factor in establishing regional activity during the second millennium BC. To the west of the ancient Ona lands are two significant sites — Mahal Teglinos, located in the Gash Delta in Sudan, and the Agordat Kokan rock shelter site in Eritrea, both of which date to the second millennium BC and probably formed part of a trade route linked to the Nile valley. Much discussion over the last fifty years has evolved around the character of the pre-Aksumite identity and its proposed regional polity known from inscriptions as D'mt. Now, the revised pre-Aksumite chronology finally extends this narrative.¹³

Some characteristics of the obsidian from Nabro Volcano must have represented a specific value in Tihama, to be given preference over the nearby Yemeni source in Dhamar-Rada'. Both sources of obsidian look similar, so it must then have been more than just its physical appearance. Obsidian first appears on the al-Salif peninsula of the Tihama coast in the fifth millennium BC, four thousand years prior to the core of this discussion. It is possible that obsidian is intertwined with notions of ancestry for those living on the Tihama. Perhaps it was known that the source of obsidian was overseas, a landscape that was very different to the Tihama, a landscape of even more intense heat and altitudes.

Further, the obsidian itself had to be retrieved from the slopes of a volcano, the topography around which may have been covered in black tephra deposits from earlier lava expulsions. The volcano may have been active with dense clouds of toxic sulphur dioxide billowing from its caldera and broiling red hot lava swirling around inside. To see this now in 2022 is awe-inspiring, intimidating perhaps, yet we

can scientifically rationalise it. We don't know how ancient peoples understood what they saw or how they interpreted it, but perhaps with a sense of awe that was attached to the obsidian, it being a product of this intense natural phenomenon. Hence, to those living overseas in the Tihama, this was a commodity of potential mystical significance originating in difficult to reach, dangerous environs. It could be used practically, as a tool, in everyday use, but it also possessed a physical beauty that was unlike anything else they would know. Flint lithic tools are practical and attractive but not, it has to be said, in quite the same league as shiny jet-black glass-like obsidian. This was a pinnacle of aesthetic value, to be desired, to be aspired to, valued, perhaps enhancing one's social status.

The Archaeology of Natural Landscapes

I think of the movement of obsidian, ceramics, and language as a Temple-to-Temple trade route (see map 3). That is to say, we have two geographic poles of Sabaeen culture, one at the Yemen temple site of al-Hamid in eastern Tihama. Then, 300km to the west there is the Ethiopian Temple of Yeha with its early chronological identity with Sabaeen culture. In between is a challenging landscape of mountains, hills, harsh deserts, and sea, that was being navigated. From Nabro Volcano there must have been a route that linked the volcano with the Red Sea coast. Brief archaeological reconnaissance survey along the Eritrean coastline has identified ancient settlements including deposits of worked obsidian at the villages of Beilul and Assab.¹⁴ This location would make an advantageous crossing point to reach the Tihama at the coastal landing site of al-Midaman. Although not the narrowest place between the two coastlines, it does have the added advantage of sailing via the Hanish Islands, which could be used as a safe haven in case of difficulties in crossing the Red Sea. One might assume a crossing point at the Bab al-Mandab strait being the shortest point between the two coasts, but very strong tidal currents are known to make this a difficult place to cross.

Moving from Nabro to Tigray the routes are perhaps easier to identify in part because we know which archaeological sites are possessing obsidian. The mountainous escarpment dividing the Danakil Depression from Tigray has a number of passes through it, notably at the village of Desi'a, a junction on the modern-day salt trail. From there, circuitous routes lead upwards towards the Tigray plateau with archaeological sites indicating probable avenues of movement. The route leads west towards the modern town of Mekelle, where the Sabaeen influenced temple of Meqaber Ge'awa is located. From here trade routes would likely extend northwards to the sites of Ona Adi and Mezber, and from there connecting west to the Temple of Yeha. It is probable that trade routes from Yeha crossed north-west to

¹³ A. Catherine D'Andrea, et al., "A Pre-Aksumite Culinary Practice."

¹⁴ Clive Oppenheimer et al., "Risk and Reward."

Mahal Teglinos in Sudan and then connected with the Nile valley.

Routeways across the Tihama can be suggested with relative ease given the topography. From the coastal site of al-Midaman a route leads directly east following the Wadi Zabid. This leads to central Tihama, the modern city of Zabid, and then divides into a northern or southern route. The northern route leads 10km to al-Kashawba before zigzagging through the sand dunes towards the Wadi Siham. Once here the wadi can be followed until it reaches the site of Waqir and shortly afterwards the temple site of al-Hamid then through the escarpment and eventually passing on to the Yemen plateau. Travelling south from Zabid is a similar tale as one moves towards the escarpment, near modern Hays, to encounter the site of al-Mohandid. From here the route may lead south along the Tihama and onto the Gulf of Aden before turning east towards Sabir, close to Aden, although that discussion extends beyond the limits of this article.

The routes between Nabro Volcano, Beilul, and Assab on the African coast, are more difficult to identify. The landscape around Nabro is a challenging one and routes through it were limited and would have been carefully chosen. A part of my future research is to identify these routes via remote sensing using Google Earth and mapping with ArcGIS. The resolution of Google Earth is surprisingly good here, and combined with personal experience of desert landscapes, makes identification of potential routes a real possibility. By mapping these routes, a picture can be created of the ingredients for the interconnectivity of these two cultures on either side of the Red Sea.



Map 3 - Regional Routes Between Yemen and Ethiopia as Proposed in this Article. (© National Geographic, Esri, Garmin, HERE, UNP-WCMC, USGS, NASA, ESA, METY, NRCAN, GEBCO, NOAA)

Conclusion

The term 'Afro-Arabian interchange,' proposed by Rodolfo Fattovich in 2004, met with a lukewarm response at the time, but is wholly appropriate, I suggest, for what we see taking place across the region. It places the interaction of the first millennium BC into a recognisable broader context and, based on the evidence of obsidian from Yemen and Ethiopia found thus far, suggests that Fattovich was correct. Whilst obsidian is only one part of the large scale inter-regional, Afro-Arabian interchange circuit, it is a tangible component of it. Investigating the role of incense in this interchange presents more of a challenge that still awaits research. But the procurement and trade of obsidian is a singular resource that links both shores of the Red Sea during the first millennium BC. Although there are other volcanoes in the Danakil Depression, current research indicates that Nabro Volcano, specifically, was chosen for its obsidian source. It is still unclear however, why there is such a strong early Sabaeen presence at Yeha temple when it is so far west of Nabro. The Sabaeans arriving at Nabro did not then need to travel a further 120km west in the opposite direction. Hence it might be that Yeha is on the trade route to the Nile valley, via Sudan, and perhaps a popular route for the incense trade.

Archaeological research indicates, I suggest, that although less investigated so far, a strong second millennium BC presence could be found in the Ethiopian Tigray region perhaps linked to Yemen. D'Andrea's revised chronology extends the Tigrayan pre-Aksumite period back a further 800 years to begin at 1600 BC. The Tihama has a unique indigenous culture within Arabia that differentiates it from the Sabaeen culture, but a second millennium BC pres-

ence is also possible here. It is partly Yemen's interconnectivity that has contributed to the development of this characteristic culture. Further fieldwork in both areas may extend that connection across the Red Sea to an earlier date than we currently understand. Archaeological fieldwork is required in the vicinity of Nabro Volcano to identify sites and their Sabaeen and/or pre-Aksumite characteristics, as no work of this type has yet been undertaken there. Likewise in Yemen, once the conflict subsides, further excavation is required throughout Tihama as we really are only still at the beginning of understanding what was taking place there. As part of this future work, ideally in identifying the trade routes that were being used, there is no substitute for walking through the landscape and physically observing what remote sensing can only hint at. This is easier said than done of course but must be an aim for future archaeological research in this region. Whilst the answers retrieved will be from specific sites, the information that they provide will be of regional value, informative of both the Yemen Tihama and Ethiopian Tigray and the routeways between them. The PhD research that I am currently undertaking will shed new light on areas that will be highly informative to our understanding for the Yemeni and Ethiopian relationship.

Richard Lee is a field archaeologist working in Arabia, the Middle East and Africa and is currently undertaking his PhD research at the University of York. He is the Society's 2022 Academic Award recipient.

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POSTCARD FROM ADEN

THANOS PETOURIS

This July I had the chance to return to Aden, a city in which I lived and worked for almost three years in the period 2005–10. Aden's built environment is a mosaic of styles representing the various regimes and polities that have controlled it in the course of its modern history as a colonial outpost, cosmopolitan port, capital city of a socialist state, Yemen's purported commercial hub, and latterly the interim capital of the country's Internationally Recognised Government. Its diverse social fabric reflects its position and long history as a prominent Indian Ocean port, a cultural melting pot at the crossroads of Arabia, Africa, and Asia. However, the city also bears the scars of the numerous wars and power struggles that have been played out in its streets from colonial violence and tribal feuds to proxy wars and civil strife.



Yusra Kulayb: Department of Women and Children, STC General Secretariat. 2020 Khormaksar



'Abid and 'Ala: "Peacefully We Want our Country Back." 2018 Khormaksar (all photographs © 2022, Thanos Petouris)



'Abid, Shatha, and Amin, Mural of a Young Man with Sapling. 2018 Khormaksar



Restored early colonial-era building on the Saila Road in Crater



Restoration in progress of the War Memorial, built in 1919 at the Prince of Wales Pier, Steamer Point (Tawahi), hit by a missile in 2015



The damaged shell of the Crescent Hotel with the socialist-era Monument of the Unknown Soldier in the foreground seen from the Queen Victoria Gardens

Ever since the youth uprising of 2011 Aden's walls and buildings have provided local young artists with an open canvas to express their political positions and make statements on the issues that their generation deem important. It is no wonder that after years of political upheaval, Aden's youth dreams of a peaceful, inclusive future, a way to restore the city's openness and cosmopolitanism.

During the Battle of Aden in March–July 2015 when Huthi militias and national army units loyal to former President Salih and his allies, attacked the city, all parts of Aden suffered significant damage, especially the historical districts of Crater and Tawahi (Steamer Point). A large number of heritage sites were deliberately attacked and destroyed, including places of worship and cemeteries, erasing in some cases the last remnants of an erstwhile cosmopolitan past. More than seven years after Aden saw active conflict, most of its heritage sites still lie in ruins, suffering further deterioration and plundering. Local initiatives have successfully restored a small number of iconic buildings, and have documented some of the city's heritage in an effort to draw attention to its importance and perhaps even international funding.



Late colonial-era residential building in Ma'alla riddled with bullet holes. Ma'alla became the battleground of one of the fiercest battles between local resistance groups and the Huthi/Salih allied forces in summer 2015

Front cover of a brochure prepared by 'Aden Identity' on the city's architectural heritage (courtesy of Prof Asmahan al-'Alas)



Yafi'-style architecture in Ma'alla

Aden's population has increased three-fold since the start of the war, and this is evident across the city. Large numbers of internally displaced people either fleeing conflict, or moving in search of livelihoods have established themselves there. Skilled Yemenis who lost their jobs in Saudi Arabia, as a result of the Kingdom's 'Saudisation' drive, have returned home with enough funds to push real estate prices up, or to build their own dwellings proudly adding to the city's architectural mosaic the tastes of their tribal regions of origin. The country's extraordinarily high birth rate that has seen Yemen's population double in the course of the past ten years is also increasing demand for housing, just as the existing housing stock is crumbling after decades of no maintenance and subsequent war damage.



New development in al-Hiswa on the road to the oil refinery in Little Aden in what until recent years was desert. On the left one of the huge pylons supplying electricity to the city from the so-called 'presidents power station,' President Hadi having inaugurated the installation of new General Motors generators some years ago

Aden has witnessed for more than a decade now profound political and social change, marked by the emergence of the Southern Movement (*al-Hirak al-Janubi*) and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), whose headquarters are in the city. As the historical capital of southern Yemen it has provided the backdrop for all expressions of local political life, including secessionist demonstrations, civil unrest, and internecine fighting. Despite all its wounds, obvious to the naked eye, the city has maintained its distinctive character, albeit in increasingly shrinking islands of local heritage. Everyday life scenes such as children playing pool under street lights at a cross roads, the makeshift stalls selling tuna, and whose presence is heralded yards away by the pungent smell of rotting fish, or the Indian family's spice shop standing in the same spot for more than a hundred years, instil a renewed sense of hope even in the inveterate pessimist.

Acknowledgments

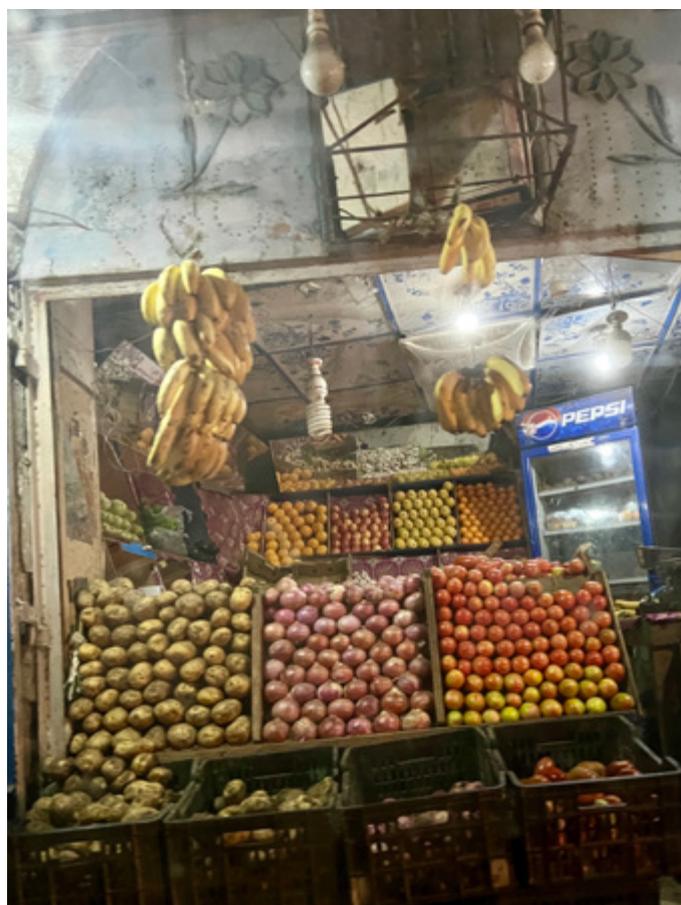
With profound thanks to the European Institute of Peace for facilitating my visit to Aden as part of its Southern Dialogue Process in Yemen project, and to Ammar Darwish and Gaizan al-Garadi for their help in dealing with all the expected and unforeseen challenges as we navigated the city.



Selling jasmine garlands (*ful*) in the Ful Roundabout



A typical Adeni fruit juice cafeteria



An Adeni greengrocer's

THE SOUTHERN ARABIAN SUBTERFUGE: THE WESTERN MEDIA RESPONSE TO THE CULTURAL HERITAGE CRISIS IN YEMEN

LIAM DEVLIN

In May 2015, Saudi-led coalition jets bombed and significantly damaged the Great Dam of Marib in central Yemen, destroying its northern sluice (see fig. 1). This dam dates from the 8th cent. BC, and served the ancient Sabaean city of Marib, which was a desert kingdom that grew wealthy and regionally dominant as a caravan stop on the incense trade route which connected southern Arabia and the Horn of Africa with the eastern Mediterranean and Europe. Renowned as an engineering marvel of the ancient world and lauded as one of the most significant archaeological sites in Arabia, in its heyday the dam measured 15 metres in height, 650 metres in length, and provided water for an irrigated area covering 25,000 acres.¹ Yet, its bombing, perpetrated in an international climate of heightened awareness regarding cultural heritage destruction during conflict in the Middle East, went largely unnoticed, and

elicited barely any response or meaningful condemnation from Western governments or mainstream media.

By way of comparison, when the architecture of a different desert caravan city, this time dating from the 3rd cent. AD, was destroyed with explosives by the Islamic State in Syria in 2015, it made headlines around the world. The destruction of Palmyra was universally condemned as an ideologically-fuelled act of destruction, and a deliberate attempt to erase cultural heritage of fundamental significance in the creation and sustainment of local, national, and regional identities.² Whilst Marib and Palmyra share similarities in that they are both sites of cultural heritage intentionally targeted during the civil wars and armed militant uprisings that have gripped the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring, their central difference is the *perpetrator* of their destruction. The disparity in reaction suggests that not all cultural heritage destructions are viewed as innately or equally important in the eyes of the international community, and that implicit criteria are drawn upon when deciding which acts of destruction to devote coverage to and condemn.

¹ Donald Hill, *A History of Engineering in Classical and Medieval Times* (London: Routledge, 1996), 19

² "Irina Bokova Condemns Latest Destruction of Cultural Property from the Site of Palmyra in Syria," UNESCO 03/07/2015, accessed 20 May 2022, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1313>



Fig. 1 - The ancient Marib Dam in Yemen (1988, photo by H. Grobe on Wikimedia Commons)

Background to the Civil War and the Cultural Heritage Destructions thus Far

A basic background to the Yemeni civil war is as follows. The Huthis are a Zaydi Shi'i militia movement who seized power in 2014, when they drove the then Yemeni President, 'Abd al-Rabbu Mansur Hadi, out of the nation's capital, Sana'a. In exile, he enlisted the help of a Saudi-led coalition to dislodge the Huthi rebels and reclaim the country. The Saudi government, who view the Huthi militias as a proxy movement of Iran,⁵ provided the bulk of the coalition's military strength, sending one hundred warplanes and 150,000 troops to displace the Huthi militias in an operation titled 'Decisive Storm' (later to be renamed 'Restoring Hope'). This coalition was at the time also aided by the armed forces of the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan, and Sudan; and crucially, it was, and remains backed financially, logistically, and politically by the US, Britain, and France.⁶

A core component of coalition tactics is the blockade of Yemen, whereby all sea, air, and land routes into the country are obstructed, preventing food, water, and humanitarian aid from entering. Prior to the blockade, Yemen was already one of the poorest countries in the Arab world, with a 90 per cent dependency on food imports and a severe drinking water deficit.⁷ The resultant famine has been described by the UN as "the worst in over 100 years," and is responsible for the deaths of at least 85,000 children.⁸ Parallel to this blockade, the coalition has also embarked upon a punitive bombing campaign across the country, with allegations that hospitals, schools, weddings, refugee camps, and archaeological sites have been deliberately targeted.⁹ Both the bombing campaign and the blockade have been widely condemned by international governments (albeit, non-Western), UNESCO, NGOs and charities operating in the country.

It is a regrettable fact that the bombing of the Marib Dam was not an isolated incident. Many other archaeological sites within the country have fallen victim to aerial bombardment, including the Old City of Sana'a, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and prominent example of Yemeni vernacular mud brick architecture (see fig. 2). Among other archaeological sites, these bombing campaigns have also severely damaged the Sabaeen citadel of Kawkaban, the Sabaeen temple of al-Muqah in Sirwah, and the Mi-

⁷ Lamya Khalidi, "The Destruction of Yemen and Its Cultural Heritage," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 4 (November 2017): 735

⁸ See: "Yemen: 85,000 Children May Have Died Since the Start of the War," *Save the Children* 21/11/2018, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/yemen-85000-children-may-have-died-starvation-start-war>

⁹ Jeffrey S. Bachman, "A 'Synchronised Attack' on Life: The Saudi-led Coalition's 'Hidden and Holistic' Genocide in Yemen and the Shared Responsibility of the US and UK," *Third World Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (2019): 298-316

The reticence of Western mainstream media to provide comprehensive or consistent coverage on the overall Yemen conflict is well-established and widely accepted, and the reasons behind it arguably rest with Western support of the Saudi-led coalition, and the vast financial interests associated with arming the Saudi military.³ Correspondingly, the paucity of media coverage concerning the war in Yemen thus far has rightly and predominantly focussed upon the scale of human suffering in the conflict, which to date has seen almost a quarter of a million people killed and over four million civilians internally displaced.⁴ Cultural heritage destruction in the country therefore faces a two-fold struggle to receive adequate or proportional media attention: competing firstly with a dearth of reportage on the very conflict which is its root cause, and secondly being overshadowed by the simultaneous and widespread human misery which has arisen from the same conflict.

Though this lack of reportage and the reasons behind it are well-established and understood concerning the Yemen civil war as a whole, what is less clear are the specific nuances and permutations which characterise and surround the lack of reporting regarding cultural heritage destruction in the conflict. How does this reserved and very often muted approach manifest itself within Western media narratives? And what are some of the supplementary factors that could be obscuring and preventing this destruction from taking its rightful place at the helm of mainstream media output? This article offers some clarity on the issue, by surveying and analysing selected aspects of the media coverage on the cultural heritage destruction in Yemen so far, before making tentative suggestions for the necessary conditions that may allow for more adequate reportage in the future.

³ See: "Yemen: US-made Weapon Used in Air Strike that Killed Scores in Escalation of Saudi-led Coalition Attacks," *Amnesty International* 26/01/2022, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/01/yemen-us-made-weapon-used-in-air-strike-that-killed-scores-in-escalation-of-saudi-led-coalition-attacks/>, and "UK Approved \$1.9bn of Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia Since Ban Lifted," *Al Jazeera* 09/02/2021, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/9/uk-approved-1-4bn-of-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-post-export-ban>

⁴ See: "UN Humanitarian Office Puts Yemen War Dead at 233,000 Mostly from 'Indirect Causes'," *UN* 01/12/2020, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1078972>, and "Needs Mount as Conflict in Yemen Rages On," *UNHCR* 01/04/2022, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/needs-mount-as-conflict-in-yemen-rages-on>

⁵ W. Andrew Terrill, "Iranian Involvement in Yemen," *Orbis* 58, no. 3 (2014): 429-440

⁶ Lynn Meskell and Benjamin Isakhan, "UNESCO, World Heritage and the Gridlock over Yemen," *Third World Quarterly* 41, no. 10 (2020): 1781

naean city of Baraqish.¹⁰ Overall, it is estimated that more than eighty cultural heritage sites have been bombed or significantly damaged since the onset of the civil war,¹¹ with a full and systematic appraisal of the damage not being possible until the cessation of the conflict.

Concerning museums, the situation is equally grave. The 'Ataq Archaeological Museum in Shabwa and the Military Museum of Aden have both been damaged by Saudi-coalition airstrikes. The most egregious museum bombing thus far was the destruction of the Dhamar Archaeological Museum, which was obliterated by an airstrike in 2015. This museum held over 12,500 artefacts spanning from prehistory to the medieval period, as well as a thousands of unregistered objects from recent archaeological survey and excavation projects in the region.¹²

A consistent strand throughout these airstrikes is that the majority of archaeological sites and museums targeted have been of little to no strategic or tactical significance, and are often situated either in densely populated urban areas, or in remote regions far from the frontlines of the conflict. The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultur-

¹⁰ Andrea Zerbini, "Developing a Heritage Database for the Middle East and North Africa," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 43, supp. no. 1 (2018): 9-18

¹¹ Monassar quoted in: Frederick Deknatel, "Tearing the Historic Fabric: The Destruction of Yemen's Cultural Heritage," *Los Angeles Review of Books* 21/02/2017, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/tearing-the-historic-fabric-the-destruction-of-yemens-cultural-heritage/>

¹² Khalidi, "The Destruction of Yemen," 736



Fig. 2 - Aerial bombing of Sana'a by the Saudi-led coalition (March 2016, photo by Fahd Sadi on Wikimedia Commons)



Fig. 3 - Aden's ruined Military Museum
(© 2022 Thanos Petouris)

al Property in the Event of Armed Conflict makes allowance for the targeting of cultural heritage sites during war only in exceptional circumstances as an act of "military necessity," i.e. if the location is actively being used as a position from which attacks are being planned, orchestrated, or implemented,¹³ but many of these strikes fail to meet this criteria. This has led to accusations that the bombing of these cultural heritage sites are flagrant breaches of international law, and that they constitute a punitive and deliberate attempt to destroy cultural heritage which is central to Yemeni national identity.¹⁴

Perceptions of 'Good' vs 'Evil'

Being sceptical towards notions that media attention afforded to looting and cultural heritage destruction is generally focused upon 'spikes,' previous scholarship has instead suggested that both media reportage and concerted international action are generally drawn towards situations of threatened cultural heritage *only* when they occur in geographical areas of political significance to the international community.¹⁵ However, if this were indeed the case, then it would be expected that cultural heritage destruction in Yemen would feature significantly within mainstream reportage and multilateral policy, as it is occurring in an area of intense geopolitical interest for Western powers.

As previously noted, the reserved and very often muted nature of media coverage regarding cultural heritage destruction in Yemen rests predominantly with the backing of the Saudi-led coalition's bombing campaign by the US and Britain. However, when assessing the media treatment of cultural heritage destruction in Yemen compared with that committed in Iraq and Syria, a contributory factor may be the primed and publicity-orientated character of the cultural heritage destruction committed by ISIS, and the utility this has in harnessing perceptions of 'good vs evil' within collective public mentalities. The destructions wrought upon the archaeological sites of Iraq and Syria by ISIS had a pronounced propagandistic nature, and were recorded, carefully edited, and internationally disseminated with the express intention of public consumption. These preprepared videos and photographs arrived at media headquarters and newspaper publishers across the globe almost overnight, and their ideological underpinnings, deliberately instilled by their creators, allowed for rapidly implemented sensationalist news coverage, that contrasted defenceless and inanimate cultural heritage with the explosions and proclamations of armed religious extremists. The sum product of such reportage was that it created

¹³ See: "Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict," UNESCO 1954, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://en.unesco.org/protecting-heritage/convention-and-protocols/1954-convention>

¹⁴ Khalidi, "The Destruction of Yemen," 735

¹⁵ Neil Brodie, "Why Is No One Talking About Libya's Cultural Destruction?" *Near Eastern Archaeology* 78, no. 3 (2015): 213

a binary and easily intelligible dichotomy between the good (cultural heritage) and the evil (ISIS). This served not only to firmly anchor ISIS as the enemy, within the public psyche, but also clearly delineate cultural heritage destruction as an evil and morally reproachable act within civic consciousness.

Lack of propagandistic materials aside, if this kind of reportage were continued, and its dualistic substructure were transplanted to the situation in Yemen, it would make for uncomfortable reading for Western governments, as the Saudi-led coalition would be clearly perceptible as the destroyers of cultural heritage, and therefore firmly enshrined as the group on the 'evil' end of the schema. Naturally, this kind of negative media exposure would mean increased focus upon cultural heritage destruction within the conflict, which would mean increased focus on the war overall, which would in turn mean increased focus on its backers, financiers, and beneficiaries. It would also expose the hypocrisy and selective outrage of Western governments, who make public statements of outrage and dismay regarding cultural heritage destruction in Iraq and Syria and spend vast sums of money on rebuilding initiatives, whilst indirectly supporting the same phenomenon of cultural heritage destruction in Yemen.

An instructive example can be found within an online news article by the BBC. This article deals with a Saudi airstrike on the Old City of Sana'a, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which killed five people and destroyed rare Yemeni vernacular mud brick architecture. The headline is simply *UNESCO Condemns Yemen Heritage Site 'Air Strike'*.¹⁶ Note the conspicuous absence of an attribution to a defined perpetrator: it is simply and ambiguously an 'air strike.' The first mention of the Saudi-led coalition is seven sentences into the article, and even at that, it is a markedly clipped sentence, which abruptly states that the Saudi-led coalition denies responsibility for the attack; "The Saudi-led anti-rebel coalition has denied it carried out the bombing." There is a discernibly evasive nature to this article, for it labours many points, such as the dismay of the UNESCO Director, but does not squarely apportion blame to those who committed the act. To contrast with the BBC coverage of the destruction of Nimrud in Iraq, its headline unambiguously ran: *Islamic State: Ancient Nimrud Ruins 'Bulldozed' in Iraq*.¹⁷

The Sensationalising Media

Another subsidiary factor which may potentially contribute to the restricted nature of reportage is the somewhat opaque character of cultural heritage destruction in Yemen when compared to Iraq and Syria. The uprising of ISIS in the Levant and their preoccupation with the destruction of cultural heritage allowed for them to be distinctly associated with this practice in international media reporting, and demarcated them as the sole party committing these acts in Iraq and Syria. The continuous nature of these destructions between 2014 and 2015 meant that sensationalist, attention-grabbing news stories and headlines could be produced and subsequently reproduced in a relatively straightforward fashion, with only minor geographic and historic details needing to be amended. Each successive news story of this kind would have served to further entrench the group within the public domain as the sole and central actors in Middle Eastern cultural heritage destruction. Examples of this can be seen in three separate headlines ran by CNN, which read: *ISIS Publicly Smashes Syrian Artifacts*; *ISIS Reported to Have Blown Up Ancient Temple in Palmyra*; and *U.S, Iraq Say ISIS Blew Up Famous Mosul Mosque*.¹⁸

The result of such reports is that ISIS fundamentally becomes a known quantity, whose methods, motivations and objectives are firmly engrained and readily intelligible within the collective public perception. The created associative correlation between ISIS and cultural heritage destruction borne

¹⁶ "Unesco Condemns Yemen Heritage Site 'Air Strike'," *BBC News* 12/06/2015, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33108113>

¹⁷ "Islamic State: Ancient Nimrud Ruins 'Bulldozed' in Iraq," *BBC News* 05/03/2015, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31759555>

¹⁸ See: "ISIS Publicly Smashes Syrian Artifacts," *CNN* 03/07/2015, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/02/world/isis-syrian-artifacts/index.html>; "ISIS Reported to Have Blown Up Ancient Temple in Palmyra," *CNN* 25/08/2015, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/24/middleeast/syria-isis-palmyra-ruins-temple/index.html>; and "US, Iraq Say ISIS Blew Up Famous Mosul Mosque," *CNN* 23/06/2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/21/world/mosul-iraq-mosque-destroyed/index.html>, all accessed 28 May 2022

of this reporting means that any future story involving ISIS and cultural heritage destruction will now not only be far more likely to sell, but from the perspective of the reader, it will also be far more easily understood.

The situation in Yemen is comparatively at odds with this dynamic. Whilst the overwhelming majority of cultural heritage destruction has come as a result of Saudi coalition bombs, there are many other groups in the conflict who are well-documented as having deliberately destroyed or damaged cultural heritage. The Huthi rebels have faced accusations of shelling the district Museum of Ta'izz and allowing widespread looting and pillaging in its aftermath, whilst al-Qaeda are reported to have destroyed a large number of Sufi shrines in southern Yemen.¹⁹ There are also reports that the youth of Yemen, growing frustrated with the gridlocked conflict and social stagnation, have turned to deliberate acts of vandalism against ancient sites, including in Marib.²⁰

In selecting which stories to run, news editors will actively seek and prioritise stories that lend themselves to mass public consumption and are likely to sell well. Sensationalising, ISIS-laden headlines concerning cultural heritage destruction are far more likely to fit this mould, as they would stimulate latent strands and sensibilities active within the public consciousness through drawing upon already-known names, repeating previously outlined paradigms, and playing upon deep-rooted public fears. What would be far less likely to fit this mould and offer nowhere near as much ease in the cultivation of sales and public revulsion is a story on the murky, multi-faceted world of cultural heritage destruction in Yemen, where a diffuse range of armed groups and non-state actors are destroying or neglecting cultural heritage for a vastly differentiated array of complex ideological motivations.

The culpability of the Huthis in heritage destruction is an especially noteworthy phenomenon, which has been capitalised upon by the Saudi-led coalition and its constituent nations for propagandistic and socio-political purposes. In the immediate wake of the Qatar diplomatic crisis, Egyptian media outlets published news stories stating that the Qatari government was central to an extensive looting ring operating within Yemen ran by Huthi rebels, Iranian militias, and Hizbullah, which formed part of a regional Qatari plan to spread “political chaos, fragmentation and unrest.”²¹ A more recent feature article published by *The National*, a UAE-based newspaper

owned by the royal family of Abu Dhabi, presented the “inhuman” looting conducted by the Huthis as part of a pan-Middle Eastern cultural heritage crisis, alongside the destructions of ISIS and the pilfering of museums in Egypt after the fall of the Mubarak regime.²² Unsurprisingly, conspicuously absent from both of these articles was any mention of the systematic bombing of Yemen's cultural heritage sites and museums by the Saudi-led coalition, of which Egypt and the UAE are both members. Within such strikingly obscurantist examples, the utility of cultural heritage as a contemporary instrument to condition and compel public opinion becomes clear.

Conclusion

There are two subsidiary factors which appear to be contributing to dearth of reportage on cultural heritage destruction in Yemen. Firstly, there is the established dualistic nature of reporting cultural heritage destruction in the Middle East (‘good’ vs ‘evil’), and the ideological impracticalities of transplanting that onto the situation in Yemen, as doing so would depict the Saudis — a key Western ‘ally’ and source of income — as innately ‘evil’. Secondly, there is the somewhat opaque nature of cultural heritage destruction in Yemen, beyond that conducted by the Saudis. The public have been conditioned to understand ISIS as the unitary perpetrators of these crimes, and any stories which deviate from this narrative are likely to sell poorly and be broadly misunderstood.

In light of these facts, one can ask: what may make for better and more representative reportage in the future? What is centrally lacking are case by case accounts of destruction in Yemen, as was often afforded to ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Documenting who had done it, what was done, and the significance of what was done (in that specific order) would subvert most of the shortcomings of the current reportage outlined here, as it would clearly identify the guilty parties in the public arena, and over time, inform society on the complex geopolitical situations in Yemen and the wider Middle East, and elucidate the modern resonance of ancient archaeology in the region. However, given the priorities of Western governments and their influence on mainstream media, this sadly seems unlikely.

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¹⁹ Deknatel, “Tearing the Historic Fabric.”

²⁰ See: “Yemen: Ancient Ruins of Saba Kingdom Temple Vandalised and Looted,” *France 24* 10/06/2021, accessed 20 November 2021, <https://observers.france24.com/en/middle-east/20210611-yemen-ancient-ruins-saba-kingdom-temple-awwam-vandalism-looting>

²¹ See: “How Qatar Supported Artifact Smugglers in Yemen,” *Egypt Today* 01/08/2017, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/15054/How-Qatar-supported-artifact-smugglers-in-Yemen>

²² See: “Stealing From History: Inside the Multimillion-Dollar Illegal Trade in Artefacts from the Middle East,” *The National* 13/06/2022, accessed 28 May 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/weekend/2022/05/20/inside-the-multimillion-dollar-illegal-trade-of-artefacts-from-the-middle/>

THE VALLEY OF THE WIND-CURVED SANDHILLS: A 1995 PILGRIMAGE TO THE TOMB OF NABI ALLAH HUD IN WADI AL-MASILA

JANE TAYLOR

You cannot help it," wrote Harold Ingrams in the 1930s, "in the Hadhramaut you are living in Genesis." Visiting in 1995, six decades after Ingrams, Genesis was still with us, for this was the land of 'Ad — he who was son of Uz, son of Aram, son of Shem, son of Noah. Many Yemenis believe that the people of 'Ad, a mighty race of giants, lived in Wadi Hadhramaut until they were wiped off the face of the earth because they refused to acknowledge the authority of the one God. The very name 'Hadhramaut' — death is present — is thought to come from Hazarmaveth, a great-great-grand-son of Shem through another line of descent. His father, Joktan (Qahtan in Arabic), is held to be the ancestor of the southern branch of the Arabs, and to have brought agriculture to Yemen.

Several of these descendants of Noah have become honorary Muslim saints and prophets, and none is more revered than Qahtan's father, Eber, identified in Arabia with Nabi Allah Hud — Hud, the prophet of God — the first man, they say, who spoke Arabic. Here in Hadhramaut he is the national saint, second only to the Prophet Muhammad, and his tomb far in the east of the wadi is an ancient place of pilgrimage. According to the Quran, Hud was sent by God to his own people, the 'Ad, who were suffering from drought, to plead with them to turn from their idols and serve God alone:

My people, seek forgiveness of your Lord and turn to Him in repentance. He will send from heaven abundant rain upon you; He will add strength to your strength. Do not turn away from Him with wrongdoing... I have made known to you my message. If you give no heed, my Lord will replace you by other men. You can do Him no harm. My Lord is watching over all things.

But the people of 'Ad responded to Hud's message with contemptuous disbelief, so God destroyed them with a roaring desert wind.

Such were the Aad. They denied the revelations of their Lord, disobeyed His apostles, and did the bidding of every rebellious reprobate. They were cursed in this world, and cursed shall they be on the Day of Resurrection. Aad denied their Lord. Gone are Aad.¹

Yemeni legend has a colourful extension to the story, with two 'Ad horsemen chasing Hud on his she-camel deep into the eastern reaches of the wadi. Unable to throw off his pursuers, Hud dismounted near a great rock and cried out, "Open by permission of God." A great cleft split the rock, into which Hud disappeared, and the rock closed behind him — but not completely. His camel, couched nearby, was turned to stone. So Hud escaped and was never seen on Earth again. He was said to be 464 years old.

The Hadhramis do not have exclusive rights on Hud and his grave — Saudis have claimed he was buried in Mecca, near the Ka'ba; Syrians that he lies in the south wall of the Great Mosque in Damascus. But Hadhramaut has the longest history of Hud leg-



'Aynat, the first pilgrimage halt between Tarim and Qabr Nabi Hud, has an extensive cemetery full of the domed tombs of local *sada* — the most important is that of the saintly Bu Bakr b. Salim (all photographs curtesy of the author © 1995 Jane Taylor).

¹ *The Koran, trans. by N. J. Dawood, London 1983; 'Houd', 11:49-57, pp. 137-138*



A view of Qabr Nabi Hud from the village below, the prophet's 36-metre grave visible behind the domed tomb at the top of the complex

ends, and the sanction of no less a character than Sayyid Ahmad b. 'Isa b. 'Ali al-'Uraydi b. Ja'far al-Sadiq b. Muhammad al-Baqr b. Zayn al-Abidin b. Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib. His pedigree shows his direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter, Fatima, and her husband 'Ali b. Abi Talib, a cousin of the Prophet.

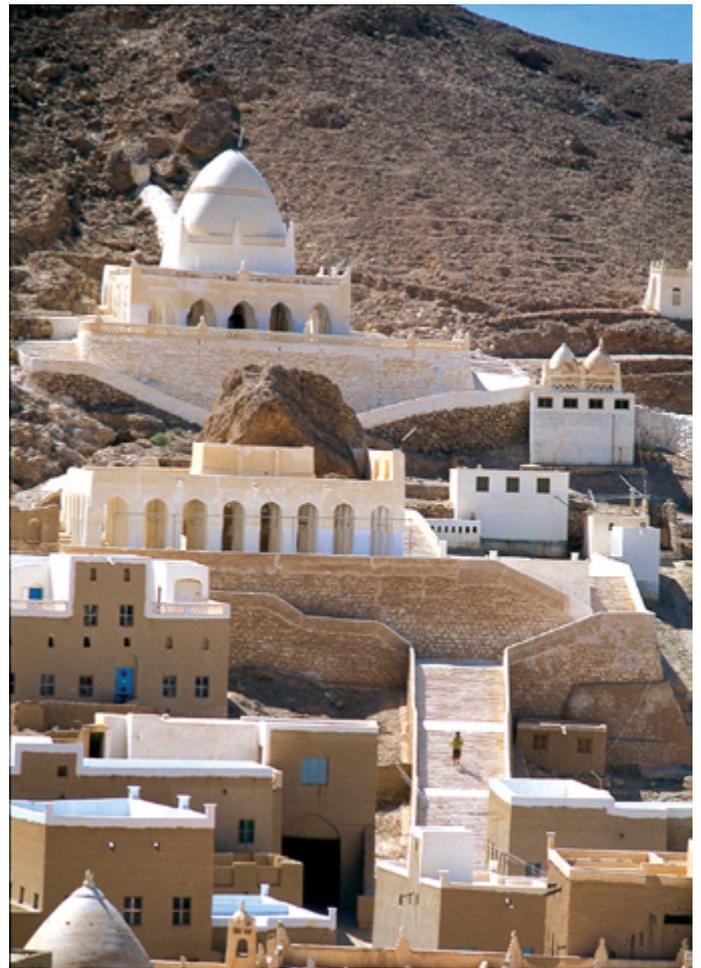
Sayyid Ahmad b. 'Isa, known as *al-Muhajir*, the emigrant, is said to have arrived in the Hadhramaut around AD 951 from Basra in Iraq with a large band of disciples, most of them also descendants of the Prophet with the title *sayyid*. He set about converting the lapsed Muslims of the wadis back to the true path of orthodox Sunni Islam, advocating peace and non-violence, and using either reason or force to achieve his aims, whichever proved more effective. The privileged religious class of the *sada* (pl. of *sayyid*) in Wadi Hadhramaut claim descent from this 10th century revivalist leader.

Sayyid Ahmad, with a keen eye for the value of a good shrine as a focus for faith, made enquiries about the site of Hud's tomb. For some time no one co-operated, but finally a merchant called Shaykh Ba'Abbad, who shrewdly first negotiated a reward of the tithes of the wadis, led Sayyid Ahmad to the spot which, after inspection, the sayyid declared to be the genuine burial place of Hud. He ordered a stairway to be made, leading up to the tomb, over which a dome was placed, and a mosque was constructed nearby.

This story probably originated with the *sada*, to promote their own authority — but pilgrimage to the shrine was already happening at least 300 years before their arrival. The early 10th cent. historian, al-Hamdani, who had probably already died before Sayyid Ahmad ever set foot in the Hadhramaut, makes it clear that Hud was already revered in the wadi, and his tomb known. He tells of a conversation reputed to have taken place in the 7th century between the Prophet's cousin, 'Ali b. Abi Talib, and a man from Hadhramaut who had newly converted to Islam. Even in the days of his former ignorance the Hadhrami had performed what appears to have been a kind of pilgrimage to the tomb of Hud:

'Ali again asked, "Do you know the place of the wind-curved sandhills?" To this the man replied, "You mean the tomb of Hud?" 'Ali assented saying, "Bless your soul, you are right." The man answered, "I do, for, when I was still in the prime of manhood, I accompanied a number of young men and set out to find his tomb. We were motivated by the important position the prophet Hud held in our midst and by the fact that many have denied his prophethood. We plodded along in the valley of the wind-curved sandhills for a number of days, led by a man in our company who was familiar with the place. Finally we reached a hill of red sand which had a number of caves in its side. The guide led us to one of the caves, into which we entered and carefully looked around. Presently we saw two interlocking stones partly separated so as to enable a thin man to pass sideways between them. As I went in, I saw stretched on a bier [the corpse of] a man of dark brown complexion, with a long face and thick beard. The corpse was dried up and felt hard to the fingers. I saw beside his head the following inscription in Arabic: "I am Hud who believed in God. I had compassion on 'Ad and regretted their unbelief. Verily nothing can forestall what God has ordained."²

Whenever its origin, the cult of Hud became firmly entrenched in the religious life of Hadhramaut, and the trade fair that had been held at the site of the tomb from very early times was incorporated into the annual Islamic pilgrimage that still takes place today.



A man walks down the staircase that leads up to Qabr Nabi Hud from the village below. Above the stairs stands the columned prayer hall of the she-camel, and behind it the stone said to be Hud's petrified camel

² Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-Hamdani, *Kitab al-Iklil*, tr. as *The Antiquities of South Arabia* by N. A. Faris, 1938

Isabelle Ruben and I had arrived in Hadhramaut about a month before the pilgrimage — to which, even had our timing been better, two foreign women would not have been welcome. We decided to make our own pilgrimage to the tomb, and read up what real pilgrims did at the various stages. We left from the Peace Hotel in Sayun at 5am, having been advised that the morning was the best time to photograph Hud's tomb. As it was a three-hour journey, we wanted to arrive when the sun still had an early-morning gentleness.

We were driven by a magnificent member of Yemen's Muhammad majority, who had been gifted to us for nearly three weeks by a company based in Sana'a, together with the 4x4 Mitsubishi he drove. Every day Muhammad wore a long white *thawb*, with a belt around his ample middle and his *janbiyya* tucked into the front of it. On his head was a red and white chequered *kaffiyeh*, a corner of which was usually held between his teeth — an endearing habit which made him look rather like an amiable retriever. To protect us in the event of untoward incidents he had a pistol tucked under the cushion on the driver's seat. We viewed it with some trepidation at first, but soon forgot about it. It was never put to the test. And as the days passed and we came to

know Muhammad better, we appreciated more fully the abundance of the gift.

"Alhamdulillah, what am I to do," Muhammad crooned as we set off. His family, he had explained, were avid watchers of Egyptian soap operas on television, and this individual way of pronouncing praises to God, with a rhyme in English to follow, had been adopted from one of the soaps and had become a theme expression in his family. It was a recurrent refrain throughout our travels with Muhammad.

The road to Qabr Nabi Hud was tarred as far as Tarim, from where a great many pilgrims set out on the final stage of their journey. They leave early in the morning, after coffee and a prayer for a safe journey, and to spur them on their way along the rough track from Tarim onwards, they sing rousing 'Hud-songs' led by a precentor:



Inside the columned prayer hall of the she-camel, with a view of Wadi al-Masila in the distance

Thou heedless man remember God,
And say, "There is no God but God."
Eternal God, sole Lord of all,
Allah, Allah, Allah.

Several verses follow, extolling God, the Prophet Muhammad, and Hud, and are neatly rounded off in the final verse:

We begin with mentioning God,
We end with blessing the Prophet.
Ahunnabi, Ahunnabi, Ahunnabi.³

After Tarim the first pilgrimage halt is at 'Aynat, reached along a bone-shaking old stone road, complete with frequent axle-breaking potholes. 'Aynat is a place of many tombs of which the most important is that of the celebrated local saint Bu Bakr b. Salim, whose sanctity included a dedicated aversion to tobacco; his help and presence is invoked by the pilgrims (smokers to a man) in special chants. But a visit to the lovely cluster of tombs, with their delicate, trellis-like decoration, was barred to Isabelle and me, and we had to content ourselves with a view from outside the high surrounding wall. The wall had only recently been built and it bore a notice at the gate in Arabic and English, firmly prohibiting non-Muslims from entering.

A few kilometres east of 'Aynat the stone road ended and was succeeded by an equally rough dirt track. From here, even Muhammad — well-travelled as he was through the length and breadth of Yemen — was in unknown territory, and despite the terrible road, he let loose a volley of joyous Alhamdulillahs at the prospect of seeing something new. His delight knew no bounds when we reached a stretch called Wadi al-Kuhn where there is permanent water and lush vegetation — in stunning contrast to the arid 'wind-curved sandhills' which surround it. It is also, we were told, a favoured haunt of the anopheles mosquito, against whose advances we were well lotioned and potioned for this area has the highest incidence of malaria in the wadis.

Adapting to the road conditions, Mohammad's driving style, which was usually reliably steady, developed four distinct, and occasionally alarming, modes — hurtle, brake, lurch, and swerve. Particularly exciting moments occurred when there was a fork in the track ahead; he hurtled full-tilt towards it, leaving the choice of direction to a last split-second inspirational swerve to right or left. At one point the track disappeared completely where a flood had swept a bridge away, and we had to drive across the perennial stream — fortunately shallow as it was the dry season.

We reached Qabr Nabi Hud around eight o'clock to find that the sun had still not touched the fork in the wadi where the tomb stood. We lit a fire in



Muhammad stands beside the cleft rock into which Hud is said to have disappeared

³ A contraction of *A, Hud an-Nabi; Oh, Hud the Prophet!*

a sheltered spot outside the town, brewed some of the coffee we had bought in Sana'a and breakfasted on the biscuits and melons we had brought with us. And we waited. For a photographer nothing seems so interminable as time spent watching the sun creep towards the place you wish to photograph; but slowly the shadows inched away and the domed tomb of Hud and its encircling town were bathed in golden sunlight.

The place seemed deserted, its neatly mud-plastered houses locked and shuttered against intruders. So it remains for most of the year, for the town exists exclusively for the three days of the pilgrimage, when owners or tenants re-inhabit the houses. The morning after their arrival they bathe in a pool in the river — "Verily a river of the rivers of paradise," they chant — the hyperbole is understandable, given the surrounding aridity. Then they perform their pilgrimage and pray at the shrine of Nabi Allah Hud.

We wandered through the empty streets of the small town and then scrambled a short distance up the hill opposite the shrine. From here we could see the domed tomb on its hillside, with houses clustering below it separated by the stately, white staircase that runs from the bottom of the wadi to the tomb of Hud. A man appeared at the top of the steps and walked down, ant-like in the distance. The guardian of the shrine, we thought. Then we saw that there were more men, busily at work on the roof of a building near the shrine, thatching it with green branches — clearly repairs were under way in preparation for the forthcoming pilgrimage.

We set off towards the grand stairway to complete our own pilgrimage, wondering if the workmen would forbid our entering the shrine. But they took little notice of us. On the first terrace a forest of columns, joined by arches and covered by a flat roof, stands in front of a large stone — Hud's petrified camel. The succession of columns in every direction creates corridors of cool white light, ribbed with shadow, with an arch-framed vista of the golden wadi at the western end. After praying in this serene hall — the prayer hall of the she-camel — pilgrims proceed up the final flights of stairs to the tomb of the Prophet Hud.

Standing on the platform outside the tomb, we read — as real pilgrims do — the *Sura Hud* from the Quran, recounting the stubbornness of the people of 'Ad and the faith and obedience of the Prophet Hud. The stark words fitted well with the landscape around us: rocky cliffs and scree slopes dropping to a green ribbon of vegetation in the wadi bed. Hud's tomb is also stark in a simple and lovely way, its pointed cupola set on a square base whose open arches lead into the columned interior. The only decoration is three bands of trellis-like plasterwork running around the top of the square building above the arches, at the base of the cupola, and around its middle.

We went inside, to the cleft rock at the centre where Hud is said to have disappeared, uttering the prophetic words 'Hadhr al-Maut' — death is present.



The 36-metre white mound that is believed to cover the body of Nabi Hud



Looking down from the terrace of Nabi Hud's tomb to the stone said to be Hud's petrified camel, and behind it the columned prayer hall of the she-camel. Beyond them are the village where pilgrims stay for the three days of the pilgrimage, and on the left is Wadi al-Masila

The rock stands under the dome, and beneath it is the supposed place where Hud's head rests; his body is under an elongated white mound that extends to the southern edge of the building and on up the hillside. Its overall length is around 36 metres — a giant of the tribe of 'Ad indeed.

Centuries, even millennia, of caresses by devout hands and lips have made the cleft rock smooth and shiny — pilgrims are apparently undeterred by specific injunctions in the service book against such hands-on devotion. Lined up on ledges of rock were scores of small perfume bottles whose contents had been used to waft sweet-smelling prayers to heaven; and stuck onto the walls and ceiling were tiny patches of cloth, each representing a request for a particular favour, offered in the name of Nabi Allah Hud. This austere prophet is considered especially effective for couples praying for a child.

Following this the pilgrims offer more prayers in honour of the Prophet Muhammad, Nabi Allah Hud, other prophets and the saints of Hadhramaut. Then, after prayers for personal guidance and help, the pilgrims ask God to accept through "this noble prophet

the pilgrimages that are made in his honour... and give us His assistance to do good deeds and to refrain from evil ones..."

All prayers completed, the pilgrims descend the great stairway to the town below, and throw themselves energetically into the processions and firing of guns into the air, the active commerce, the chanting and dancing and pageantry of the combined religious festival and trade fair. When all is over, they make their way back through the wadi to Tarim, and then to their homes.

We too descended the stairway — though with no festival and trade fair to rejoice in at its foot — and made our way back along the bone-shaking track to Tarim, en route to Sayun and the peace of the Peace Hotel.

IN SEARCH OF FULFILMENT: ROADS NOT TAKEN LIGHTLY

ADEL AULAQI

Arab members of 'The Generation of the Colony' were born in Aden in the 1930s and '40s. Though our parental schooling focussed on our Islamic identity and heritage, our parents were full of hopes that we would experience a modern education for a better future. Both our parents and the state were keen to have the boys and girls of Aden's cosmopolitan population take the Cambridge or London University General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary and Advanced Levels. We were keenly enrolled especially in the fabled Aden College. Our self-made parents, who often could not afford the steep costs of a higher education, made many sacrifices so that we could achieve these shared hopes.

From the mid-1950s until 1967, Adeni students who excelled in A-level subjects were given the opportunity to receive an Aden Colony Scholarship, which meant the chance to study in foreign Universities. Most of the scholarships were awarded to men and a few women, who would study disciplines that would help create leaders to run the country when independence finally came. In that period, it is esti-

mated that at least forty became medical doctors on government scholarship. Despite the natural competition that came with the much-desired opportunity to study abroad, we helped each other. We revised together, solved problems together, and it was all to make sure that our friends travelled with us to be our support away from home too.

Between 1958 and 1964, a group of a few young men took up places at Edinburgh University to study medicine and laboratory technologies. While there were no signed or verbal contracts, it was understood that each newly qualified student would return home to serve their home country. Many from Aden College studied in the UK while few did in Ireland's academic institutions. A slightly bigger group of nine we are about to look at are all alumni of Western, especially UK, educational institutions. Of specific interest are Edinburgh, Liverpool, Aberdeen, and Dublin Medical Schools whose members were closely knit.

Sadly, I have no data on the numerous other Aden College students who went to university at various Arab and European countries and the USA. They deserve to be written about in their own right and as alumni of Aden College. Most gained many post-graduate degrees on their own account. Most returned eagerly to serve their homeland. The vast majority migrated unwillingly; they sought and achieved fulfilment in many parts of the world.



Aden College Faculty and Students on the College's official opening day (1953, Aden Public Relations Department, courtesy of Raza Yousef)



Aden College Teaching Staff (courtesy of Raza Yousef, seen in the front row, third from the left)

Some Aden College students on scholarship in the UK (1958–1965)

Medical Doctors

- Mohammed Mahyoub Sultan (*Medicine, Dublin 1956–1962*)
- Qais Ghanem (*Medicine, Edinburgh 1964*)
- Hafedh Luqman (*Medicine, Aberdeen, 1960–1966*)
- Musa Mohammad Abdul Karim (*Medicine, Edinburgh, 1960–1966*)
- Adel Aulaqi (*Medicine, Edinburgh, 1961–1967*)
- Abubaker Al-Qirbi (*BSc Pharmacology, then Medicine, Edinburgh 1961–1968*)
- Abdulla Abdul Wali Nasher (*Medicine, Liverpool, 1963–1968*)
- Wigdan Ali Luqman (*Medicine, Edinburgh, 1964–1970*)
- Amin Nasher (*Medicine, Birmingham, 1963–1968*)

Other Aden College Students on Scholarship in the UK

- Hussain Mahyoub Sultan, Chartered Civil Engineer and Businessman
- Shihab M. A. Ghanem, poet, translator, engineer, and industrial development economist
- Abdulla Uqba (*English, London, 1964*)
- Faisal Abdul-Aziz Alwan (*Engineering, London*)
- Abubaker Saleh Maisari (*Engineering BP Scholarship, 1961*). He worked in BP Aden Refinery. In 1985 he left Aden for Sana'a.
- Aidarous Maisari (*UK-trained Physician and Surgeon*). He returned to Aden where he worked at the Gumhuriyya (former Queen Elizabeth) Hospital. He died in a car accident in 1978 on his return from 'Aqan, Lahj to Aden after a qat chewing visit there to avoid the ban on qat in Aden.
- Suleiman Mohammad Faqirah (1941–1998). He died in Australia.
- Abubaker Salem al-Qutti. He was prefect at Aden College, and captain of the football team. In 1961 he came with our group to study possibly data analysis, in the UK. On 21 November 1967 he was a member of the southern Yemeni negotiating team in Geneva under Qahtan al-Sha'bi with Lord Shackleton on the British side. He served in the first post-independence government (1967–69). After the Glorious Corrective Move he left politics to pursue a non-political career, initially in the Public Corporation for Electric Power.
- Saeed Mohammad Basha.

There were students who had gone before us and returned home to work, as was expected. Our encounter with our Adeni trailblazers came in 1960; we had to pass the vital medical examination that proved we were fit and healthy enough to travel to the UK — TB was a particular concern at the time. Ja'far 'Ali 'Aziz and Muhammad 'Abd al-Qadir Muhayraz examined us thoroughly, and despite the anxiety-induced racing hearts, we all passed easily. Earliest trailblazers were doctors Ahmad Sa'id 'Affara, 'Abdallah Salih 'Affara, and Salim 'Abd al-Khaliq.



Aden College in the 1960s (Aden Public Relations Department)



1st row standing left to right:—

A. Qutti, A. Maisari, M. Khatib, A. Ockba, A. Saleh, A. Aulqi.

2nd row standing left to right:—

M. Assem, M. S. Fadhli, K. Carriappa, N. H. Ali (Senior prefect), H. Meswari,
A. Jiffri, I. Sheikh.

3rd row standing left to right:—

A. Qirbi, A. Sareef, A. Yossuf, M. A. Karim, A. Girgirah, R. Hodivala, S. Faqirah,
Shihab Ghanem.

Aden College Prefects of 1959
(Aden College Magazine, 1960)

Arrival: London, September 1961

Our group of ten travellers — full of the excitement at the promise of a new life — all flew on the same London-bound jet on 26th September 1961. Seeing the fresh green grass of England's fields below for the first time was an exhilarating experience. It didn't take us long to realise that the lushness of grass came at the price of a seemingly incessant, chilling rain which somewhat dampened our high spirits. We soon became familiar with the UK's 'four seasons in one day' climate — where the clear blue skies suddenly grew dark with scurrying clouds, only for a few moments to pass before the sun (which did not mean warmth here like it did at home) came out again. We had arrived here during the early autumn months, and we found the beauty and vibrancy of the changing leaves breath-taking. Aden, by contrast, only had two seasons: hot and hotter.

Our ten days in London were frenetic as we tried to cram in as much of the culture as we could. We explored the museums and galleries and took in the latest films showing in the Piccadilly Circus cinemas, including a trip to see South Pacific in CinemaScope. We visited the emblems of power and glory; Oxford Street and its fancy shops, the British Museum and its vast collection of world treasures and our own Aden Office in the one and only Park Lane. All were lessons in a strange society and idiomatic language, which is so different from the Oxford or Queen's English that we had been taught at home.

We learned how to navigate the Underground with the help of our Aden College predecessors who had by now become seasoned experts using the city's baffling transport system. This was not without its pitfalls, however. One day, as we came down into Kings Cross Station, we realised that we had made a mistake — we were headed for the wrong platform. In our minds there was nothing to do but simply turn around and attempt to walk back up the descending escalator. The civilised natives naturally believed this was just the type of behaviour one could expect from foreign savages, and merely tutted at our ignorance.

Chilled vending machines had been in operation since the early 1880s, but like the green grass we didn't have any of them back home in Aden. We found them so novel, we used them a few times a day. Deliciously chilled half pint and pint cartons of milk for the princely sum of 4d and 6d respectively were simply too good to pass up.

Bright lights drenched night-time Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square in glorious colour. We had never seen the dark vanquished in flares of neon before, and we felt as if we had been transported to the magical world of the tales of Scheherazade. In the light of day things were different. The sandstone buildings were covered in a thick layer of soot, caused by chimneys everywhere spewing the thick suffocating black fumes of burning coal. The smoggy London air felt thick and heavy to breathe. Pathologists could identify at post-mortems city dwellers from their black lungs compared to the cleaner lungs of country-side dwelling residents.

Our time in London soon came to an end, and we were to move on to our respective universities. Some headed for far away, chilly Edinburgh and Glasgow, whilst the others dispersed to Wales, Belfast, Dublin, and Southend-on-Sea. Taking up University places all over the British and Irish islands, cynically perhaps so that the Colonial Office would have guaranteed we will at least have different accents and slightly non-homogeneous cultural bents and would represent Britain in its 'true colours'.

The Adeni medical students in Edinburgh were, Qais Ghanem, Musa Mohammad Abdul Karim, Abubaker al-Qirbi, and Wigdan Ali Luqman and myself. We were lucky enough to take the last of the steam-powered jaunts of the legendary Flying Scotsman, a journey which felt like travelling on history itself. Dr P. W. R. Petrie, Secretary to the Dean of the Medical Faculty Dr Brotherton, and one time Missionary in Aden and physician on secondment to the Imam and Absolute Ruler of the Kingdom of Yemen, kept an eye on the welfare of the arriving Adeni students. He was kind enough to meet and transport a few of us on arrival at Edinburgh's Waverley Station.

Edinburgh, 1961-1969

Early in the first year we missed our Adeni food. When Mrs Brown, Abubaker's landlady went to see her sister, we got down to business. Abubaker and I still remember the massive amount and variety of rice, *sanoona*, fish and chicken we cooked but then could not bear to eat any of it. We all knew Qais Mohammad Abdo Ghanem from Aden college. He was our most senior member, an accomplished poet, raconteur, poker player, and talented chef. He came up with the most apt nicknames to the people who crossed his path. A cake-lover became *Cakeie*, a sneezer *Uttaish*. His flat was in the highly desirable Marchmont area, across from The Meadows and the Links that separated his home from the Medical School and the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. Qais had a TV set and we loved watching the cowboys and Indians programmes, especially *Bonanza* at weekends.

Although some of my father's friends were concerned about the possibility that I would be led astray and lose my innocence, the truth was that all I learnt in this bachelors' flat was the generosity of friendship; how to laugh at almost anything; how to cook a good Adeni chicken curry known as *sanoona*. There was gossip, or *hashoosh* — "the normal exchange of what everyone is doing." The group frequently played cards, though I never learned to play; I was too lazy to remember who held which card in poker.



Aden College Sixth-formers with two new teachers. From left to right: Adel Aulaqi, Abubaker Qirbi, Ahmed Girgirah, Abdulla Uqba, Abubaker Saleh Maisari (reading) (Aden Public Relations Department)



The old 'Barbeque' tea room, now 'Doctors' (2013, courtesy of the author)



Qais Ghanem, Musa Mohammad Abdulkarim and Abubaker al-Qirbi at the British Council Centre, Morningside, Edinburgh (1963, courtesy of the author)

The corner tearoom and coffee shop then known as 'The Barbecue' and now called 'Doctors', was opposite the medical school main building and was our favoured rendezvous spot. We also often stopped at the putting green to play a round for a few pence. Qais always won of course, because he had a few years head start and he excelled at it. He had joined medical school in 1959 and qualified in 1964. In the three years he was with us at University, we often ate together at lunch time either at De Marco's Italian Bistro or at the rather quaint University restaurant that went by the now old-fashioned name of the *Men's Union*. Women were not allowed in, except by invitation at dance nights, and had to be accompanied by a male partner. All had to leave the premises by eleven o'clock when the dance ended. I confess that on weekends I never saw anyone revise or open a medical book.

We moved to new accommodation each academic year. Often a few of us shared the same new digs and then moved into the next one together. In our second homes, we interacted with students from all over the world. Evening mealtimes were often lively with political discussions on the topic of the day. In those years, news of decolonisation filled the airwaves and BBC Radio and *Sawt al-'Arab* were our main sources of information.

We were amazed at the invention of the colour television and wondered how many artists were employed to colour each picture. TV in those years only transmitted for a few hours each day. We all wanted to watch the magic of electric activity fading into one single, sharp, point of light that seemed to resist the fade oblivion, as someone somewhere in London switched off the signal to all the TVs at the same time after the National Anthem had played. Reluctantly, each went to his room to read or sleep.

One event stands out. In the summer of 1962, Anne MacIntosh of the Aden Office arranged for a group of Adeni medical students in the UK to take an unforgettable two-week trip to Spain. The tour cost some £60 each, which I had saved over the year from my monthly scholarship of £35. Our excitable

group gathered at Waterloo Station, from where we took our tour bus. The Mahyoub Sultan brothers Mohammad (in his last year in medicine in Dublin) and his younger brother Hussein, (studying Civil Engineering in Glasgow University) were the heart and soul of the group. Mohammad was ebullient with a hugely infectious laugh. We all loved him for his zest for life and immense affability.

We were met at the station by our tour guide, a no-nonsense Iraqi man of few words. We boisterously boarded the bus, all looking forward to a jolly good time. Soon we discovered the bus did not have a toilet and our guide would not stop the bus for anything short of a catastrophe. Occasional appeals to stop for breaks fell on deaf ears, and our guide stuck rigidly to the schedule he had written on bundles of papers. Thankfully, throughout the journey there were no physiological accidents.

By 1964, Qais was living in 11A Gloucester Place with Musa Mohammad Abdul Karim and Wigdan Ali Luqman. In 1965, my fifth year, Abubaker al-Qirbi and I joined the group to stay there until I qualified in 1967 and Abubaker in 1968. We continued the previous good communal living system we had developed in the previous digs. There were no restrictions on guests visiting or staying the night. One rule was that we would take turns to cook lunch for the group, which was usually Adeni chicken curry, for which we would gather to eat at lunchtime every day. However, Wigdan kept a different schedule to the rest of us, and no amount of pleading with him to change his routine and get a meal on the table before 4pm would be successful.

Still, we had so much fun and companionship in the coal-heated flat. We all often revised our clinical medicine by passing it on to the others, studying together for exams. We shared one kitchen, bathroom, and toilet by simple negotiation. Girlfriends sometimes cooked for us, and we shared the food. Cleaning one's room was the individual's responsibility, but chores for the communal areas and facilities were done by a rota. It was a very harmonious place.

On qualifying in Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBChB), each doctor first had to go through a year of hospital attachment as the lowest rank of pre-registration house officer, which involved six months in 'Medicine' and six months of 'Surgery.' Once registered with the UK's General Medical Council (GMC), it was time to pursue a career in their chosen field. Most of us, if not all, chose to do the Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (DTM&H). This is the clearest indication that we all intended to return to South Arabia and fulfil our deepest desire to serve our country of origin.

Roads Taken Next

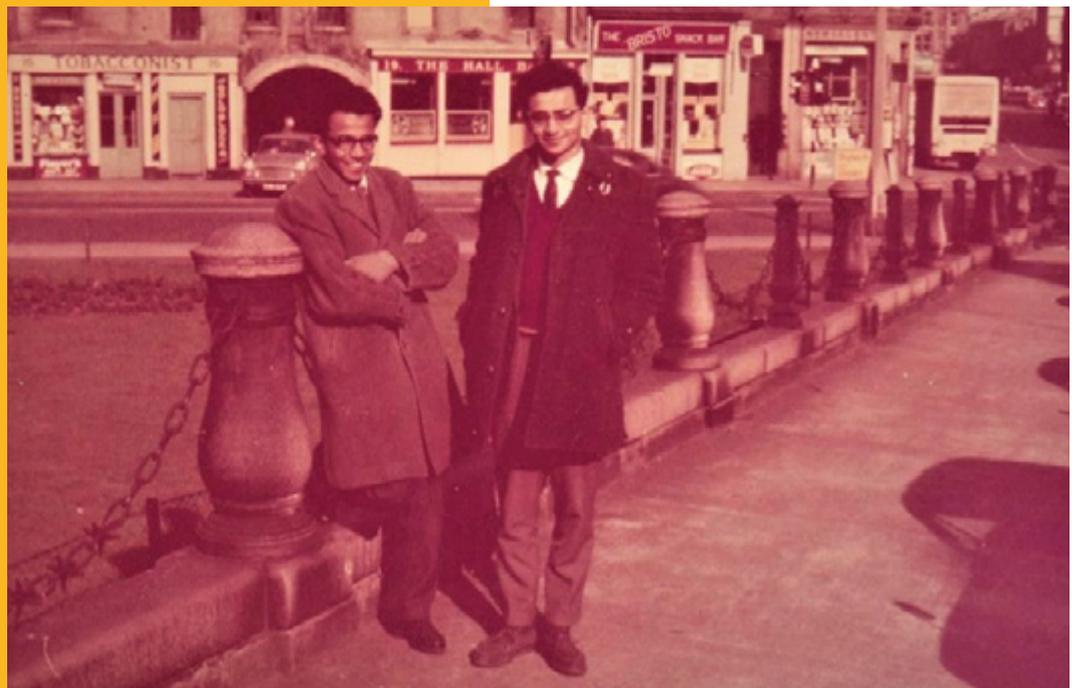
After the 1967 uprising that bought South Arabia its independence, many returning newly-qualified graduates felt uncertain about the place and their role in the new republic. Doctors were accustomed to working for the British NHS, an established insti-

tution founded on the ideals of meritocratic career progression. The post-1969 republic applied Marxist ideology and eventually many of us needed to make a painful choice where our futures would lie — returning to a home-country vastly changed by independence, or to emigrate in search of fulfilment. Here I follow a few brief notes about each of the heroes of this story. I include Mohammad Mahyoub Sultan, Hafedh Luqman, and Abdulla Abdul Wali Nasher as they have also shared with me their stories of their time in Edinburgh.

Mohammad Mahyoub Sultan

Mohammad's first medical degree was from the Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin (1956–1962) followed by the specialisation Diploma in Tropical Medicine & Hygiene from London University and the medical specialist degree from the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh. Soon after qualifying he worked in the then Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Aden. He married Nisreen Saud Al Kharousi, who was of Omani origin, in the early 1970s.

When Sultan Qaboos returned to Oman around 1971 from his years with the British Army and took over from his father all the Omanis in exile returned to Oman to start building and developing it. Mohammad became a highly respected physician to senior political figures in Aden, which suited his ebullient and affable nature. His sudden departure from this elevated post to join the Omani Royal Household must have caused consternation in Aden. He left his privileged senior post to migrate to Oman where he served until his death in 2008 in the UAE following major surgery in London.



Adel Aulqi (left), and Qais Ghanem (1964, courtesy of the author)

"My brother Mohammed moved to Oman around 1973 and joined the only hospital in Muscat as Superintendent of Ruwi (al-Nahdha) Hospital. He was treating the Queen Mother. His Majesty Qaboos promoted him soon after to Director General of Medical Services in the Palace, a title he held till September 22, 1996. After the death of the Queen Mother, he enjoyed fully his retirement". "Mohammed passed away in Muscat, Oman, on April 7, 2008 and was buried there". Hussain added.

Qais Mohammad Abdo Ghanem

Qais graduated in medicine from the University of Edinburgh in 1964 and took the Professional Diploma in Tropical Medicine & Hygiene. He served in Aden's Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but soon left to pursue his further postgraduate studies. He took and practised specialty training in Public Health, Paediatrics, and Neurology at McMaster, Michigan, and practised his expertise in Sana'a, Yemen, the UAE and Qatar and finally, Ottawa University after emigrating to Canada in 1970.

In his 'retirement' he conducted insightful interviews with many Aden College alumni, whose different ethnicities represented the diversity of colonial Aden. His substantial output included video recordings, the radio program 'Dialogue with Diversity' and his various books collectively form brave explorations of topics such as migration, religion, and social stereotypes. These now offer historical documentation of real human stories of courage, achievements by people who migrated to fulfil their dreams when their own homeland was unable to offer them the opportunity to excel.



Edinburgh University Medical School
(2013, courtesy of the author)

Hafedh Mohammad Ali Luqman

Hafedh studied Medicine (1960–1966), graduating from Aberdeen University. He returned to Aden and worked at the then Queen Elizabeth, renamed Gumhuriyya, Hospital which became South Yemen's major teaching university hospital. He worked in Aden for several years, including a few years up country in rural Bayhan. In the new republic he was a highly respected and much-loved doctor and surgeon. In 1978–79 he received a scholarship to study Ophthalmology in Alexandria, Egypt. It was not for him though, and he soon headed for Britain to specialise in Orthopaedics, the first Adeni to do so.

In the early years of the new republic Hafedh, along with many others, opened a private clinic in Crater. He treated poor patients of low income for free or for a nominal fee. Soon, at the time of President Salmin's era, (1969–78), such private clinics were nationalised by decree. The government salary was inadequate, plus other difficulties to practise medicine under the constraints of a Marxist regime forced him to emigrate. Like many others, Hafedh moved to the United Arab Emirates. He worked in Abu Dhabi in al-Jazira Hospital, under the care of Sheikh Zayed al-Nahyan for a brief time.

On 24 July 1982, Hafedh, his sons Hamad and Ma'ad and his daughter Hala were involved in a road traffic accident. Hafedh, at 42, and his son Hamad died from their injuries. This shocked many in the UAE, Aden, and far-away places where he was known and much loved.

Musa Abdul Kareem

There is a dearth of information on this most urbane of men. He hailed from British Somaliland, which sent its most capable students to study at Aden College. Musa so completely integrated with us all and with Aden life that we thought of him as Adeni. During 1960–66 he studied medicine at Edinburgh Medical School. He specialised in Anaesthesia. He returned to work in Somalia, but subsequently migrated to eventually work in Saudi Arabia, where he still lives and is now retired.

Faisal Abdul Aziz Alwan

Faisal came to the UK with our group in September 1961 to study Engineering in London. Sadly, he fell ill at quite a young age and passed away, I believe, before completing his degree.

Abu-Baker Abdulla Al-Qirbi

His academic life saw him earn eight degrees and diplomas. During 1970–72 he worked at Gumhuriyya Hospital and privately. In search for fulfilment, he left Aden in 1972 for the UK and then Canada. He progressed through a number of clinical posts as doctor, specialist and consultant and Lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Dalhousie, Canada in 1974–78.

His appointment as associate professor at Sana'a University in 1979 was followed by first becoming Dean of Sana'a University's College of Health Sciences (1979–83), then Dean of the Faculty of Medicine (1982–87). Between 1982–93 he was Vice-Chancellor of Sana'a University. One of his major achievements from such senior academic positions can be considered that the Medical School in Sana'a became the template for the other medical schools in the pre-unity Yemen Arab Republic.

After Yemeni unity, he was appointed Minister of Education (1993–94). On 4 April 2001, his career shifted to centre-stage politics becoming Yemen's Minister of Foreign Affairs, a post he held till 11th June 2014, when he became member of Yemen's Upper House, the Shura Council. A strong voice of long experience and wisdom he continues to play a role in Yemeni national and international political affairs, albeit currently perhaps more from outside of Yemen.

Abdulla Ali Omar Uqba

Abdulla returned to Aden soon after gaining his BA in English around 1964. He represents the majority of the Aden College students who strove to serve the newly independent country. He taught in Aden College for a couple of years, then joined the newly-formed post-independence government of Qahtan al-Sha'bi. In 1967, Abdulla was the official translator and interpreter for the South Arabian delegation at the independence negotiations with the British side in Geneva. He also held ministerial posts in the first post-independence government and spoke on behalf of his country at the United Nations. In 1969 he was imprisoned when Qahtan was deposed after the Glorious Corrective Move, but was released in 1978 and eventually migrated to the UAE where he resides today.

Abdulla Abdul Wali Nasher

Primarily a surgeon and physician, a medical academic, a professor and teacher Abdulla crossed many other borders into politics to become a Minister of State, diplomat, and published author. Abdulla graduated from Liverpool Medical School (1963–68). He chose a career in general surgery obtaining surgical qualifications from Vienna Medical School and the Royal Colleges of Surgeons of England and Glasgow in 1978–79. He practised his surgical craft in the UK's NHS teaching Hospitals and in 1970 the Gumhuriyya Hospital, when it became the tertiary referral, and later on teaching hospital, for the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). After Yemeni unity, in 1994–97, he was Chief of the Surgical Department at Sana'a's Faculty of Medicine.

Between 1997 and 2001 he became Minister of Public Health. It was no surprise that he turned to his Aden College colleagues for support. But in 2001 his house was riddled with bullets in response to his

anticorruption actions. He, naturally, left Yemen for Canada where in 2004–8 he took up the post of Ambassador of the Republic of Yemen to Canada.

Amin Ahmed Abdu Nasher (1945–1990)

In 1973, Amin Nasher was appointed specialist Paediatrician at the Gumhuriyya Hospital. Amin rapidly created the Paediatric Services as separate discipline in Aden. Through the Higher Institute for Health Sciences in Aden (1989) he instigated medical, nursing, and medical ancillary education for all PDRY. He founded and edited the English language *Yemeni Medical Journal* and the Arabic language *Community Doctor*. He was held in immense respect in PDRY, across the Arab World and internationally, especially by his Aden College colleagues. The first paediatrician to receive the John Holt Medal of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. Amin seemed to have received full support by the various factions who ruled in Aden until his premature death in an horrific road traffic accident on 27 March 1990.

Wigdan 'Ali Luqman

Wigdan, the last Aden College student to join us in Edinburgh in 1964, was the most jovial and lovable of us all. He sailed through his studies and obviously thoroughly enjoyed his medical student days. He took an honorary science degree, BSc, in third year (1967) and qualified as a medical doctor in 1970. He spent 1971–73 in both South and North Yemen hospitals practising and gaining experience in varieties of clinical medicine. He then proceeded to establish his medical expertise in the United States to become an Internist and rose in his career to reach, in 1989, the position of Chief of Medical Specialties Service at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Lake City, Florida.



The imposing and daunting MacEwan Hall used to be the examination and graduation hall in the 1960s (2013, courtesy of the author)

Interestingly, between 1977 and 1980 he served as a Major in the US Army. He had an excellent academic track record and published more than sixty papers in the various fields of Endocrinology, including a paper on social and medical observations on the use of qat in Yemen. Wigdan died on 20 January 1999, at the age of 54.

Conclusion

As if bound together by mystical threads, the students of Aden College have sustained their friendships for decades, and those who are still alive continue to be in touch with each other. Their life's mission, if one can call it that, was to excel academically and practically, to prosper in the process, and to return home to serve and help develop the country that they so deeply loved and the parents who had made so many sacrifices to help them achieve their dreams. Those returning to repay the unspoken debt considered this the rightful way to thank those who had sustained and supported them as they were growing up. Theirs was perhaps a generation born too soon and returned to a changed post-colonial country that sought a different developmental approach uncoloured by its colonial conditioning.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank big-hearted Shihab Ghanem, Ashraf Girgirah, Huda M A Luqman, inimitable Abdulla Abdul Wali Nasher, the indefatigable Qais Ghanem and Abubaker al-Qirbi for their immense support and contributions to our continued communications. We all have created an unusual bond forged by shared history, values, experiences and similar influencing forces that led most of us to migrate far and wide despite our immense desire to serve in our country of origin with all its various names it took. Dr Abdulla al-Sayyari astutely identified the greatest influence was our shared education in the melting pot of Aden College. This story would also not have been possible without the contributions and input of many of my Aden College colleagues, many friends across the globe and especially my brothers Watheq and Faiq (both alumni of Aden College) and my daughter Hannah, who made this article flow.

ADEN'S QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL: A LASTING MONUMENT TO BRITISH-YEMENI RELATIONS

DR ABDULLA ABDUL WALI NASHER

Queen Elizabeth II will be certainly considered as one of the greatest British monarchs, as well as being the second longest serving monarch in the world, after Louis XIV of France, who ruled for 72 years. My admiration and attachment to Her Majesty extends all the way back to April 1954, when I was a fourth-year primary school student in Aden.

On 27 April 1954, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh arrived in Aden, by sea on *S.S. Gothic*, on their way back from Australia, choosing Aden as part of their six-month Royal Tour of the Commonwealth, just a year after her coronation in 1953. I still remember when, at that time, the Aden colonial authorities brought all the school children from all the Aden Colony schools together in the main football stadium in Crater. We were handed a small version of the Union Jack to wave as a gesture of welcome to the royal couple. We were very happy and overwhelmed when

we saw the open Rolls Royce entering the stadium with The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, both standing and waving for us as they were driven all around the stadium. When we arrived that morning at the stadium, each one of us was presented with a little wooden box decorated with the Union Jack some pencils and a beautiful geometric set. Through childhood eyes, we saw a young Queen with a lovely smile, who looked smart, bright, and beautiful.

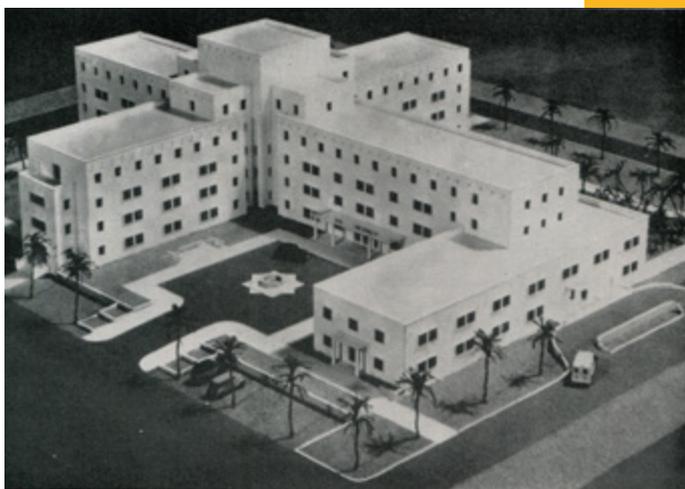
As she left the stadium, she was greeted and cheered by thousands and thousands of Adeni people who gathered to welcome her. During this historical visit, they visited the Royal Air Force (RAF) Hospital in Steamer Point (Tawahi), and the Duke the newly built British Petroleum (BP) Refinery in Little Aden, which was the first of its kind in the whole of the Arabian Peninsula and perhaps the whole of the Middle East at the time. She also laid the foundation stone of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Khormak-sar, which represented, at that time, the most modern, highly sophisticated, and well equipped hospital, with 500 beds, in the Arabian Peninsula. Since its establishment, this hospital has treated and saved the lives of millions of people of South Arabia, Yemen, the Gulf, and the Horn of Africa. During Her Majesty's visit to Aden, she also knighted the late sayyid Abu Bakr b. Shaykh al-Kaf KBE, for his public services as peacemaker and philanthropist in Hadhramaut. She also knighted Air Marshal Sir Claude Pelly KCB, Commander-in-Chief of the RAF in the Middle East. The Royal Visit to Aden has remained indelibly in my memory as a young child and student.

I received an excellent education in Aden Colony schools, which enabled me to pass the London University GCE Examinations in the Ordinary and Advanced Levels and qualified me for a scholarship to study medicine at Liverpool University during 1963–1970. When I returned to Aden in 1970, following independence, with qualification to practice medicine at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, I found that the name had been changed to al-Gumhuriyya Hospital. In 1975, I returned to Liverpool to work with the NHS, and pursue my postgraduate education. I passed the FRCS examinations in 1979, from both London and Glasgow, following which I returned to Aden, to work in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, or al-Gumhuriyya, which by then had deteriorated beyond recognition.

In 1992, following the unification of South and



Programme Cover of the Aden Royal Visit (courtesy of the editor)



Model of the Queen Elizabeth (later al-Gumhuriyya) Hospital in Khormaksar, Aden
(*Port of Aden Annual 1958–59*, p. 71)

North Yemen, a group of us founded the first Yemeni–British Friendship Association in Sana’a. I had the honour of having been elected as its first president. At the same time, our friends in the UK founded the British Yemeni Society in London. Both these organisations have worked very hard to promote the historical ties and relationships between Britain and Yemen. One of our highlights was that both societies worked towards a state visit by the then President of Yemen to the UK, as the first of its kind, which successfully took place on 4 September 2000. President ‘Ali ‘Abdallah Salih was received by HM Queen Elizabeth II. I was told that the meeting went very well and even exceeded its planned duration.

As a Minister of Health in the Republic of Yemen (1997–2001), I wanted to do something special for al-Gumhuriyya Hospital in Aden, where I had started my medical career. I approached the then British Ambassador to Yemen, Vick Henderson, and discussed with him the possibility of restoring the Gumhuriyya to its original name Queen Elizabeth Hospital, if the British Government would agree to take over its rehabilitation, expansion, and management. The Ambassador explained that this would be difficult for the British Government to undertake, but there was a possibility that they could help by sending a team of experts from the UK to evaluate the current situation of the hospital and recommend the required rehabilitation, modernisation, and provide an estimate of costs. Based on the experts’ report, it would have been then possible for the British Government to provide a soft loan to Yemen to cover the expenses. A team was sent, studied the situation of the hospital, produced a detailed report, and recommended the cost which amounted to about £40 million. On the 8 August 2002, one year after I had left the Ministry of Health, a loan agreement for Yemen was signed in London, with a total amount up to £38 million, to be used to finance the project of enlarging and rehabilitating the al-Gumhuriyya Teaching Hospital in Aden. Unfortunately, the Yemeni Government at the time failed to follow up this vitally important project. The loan never materialised, and the hospital has continued to deteriorate till today.

I would like to send a humanitarian call through the readership of this journal to the new King Charles III, the British Government, and our friends in the UK to do something for the people of Yemen. They have been severely impacted by eight years of war which has resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of injured and displaced, widespread extreme poverty and malnutrition, broken services of education, health, water, electricity, and all other basic human needs.

Dr Abdulla Nasher is Honorary Vice-President of the Society.

EVACUATION FROM ADEN: THE ROYAL YACHT BRITANNIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH YEMEN'S CIVIL WAR

DARYL BARKER

Mr Daryl Barker who works at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation in Aden had a terrifying escape dodging tanks and sheltering from rifle fire. "It was very dangerous and every so often when we saw a tank or rifle started rattling away near us, we would just head for cover. We made a bunker in a bedroom and our building was hit by small fire. It was terrifying," said Mr Barker. "When we heard the Britannia was coming, some of us thought it was a joke. Then the boats came in with the sailors and the marines. Some of the evacuees had to brave neck-high waves to wade out to the motor launches. It was women and children first. My wife and baby daughter went before me and I joined them later on Britannia," he said (Sunday Telegraph, 19 January 1986).



Hadhrami women winnowing near Shibam, 1984 (photographs courtesy of the author from his time serving with UN/FAO in the PDRY in the 1980s, apart from those indicated).

Monday 13 January 1986

I personally had no inkling of the events that began on Monday, 13 January 1986 except that morning I was in the harbour car park inspecting two newly arrived project Land Rovers, when I heard gunfire and some very loud explosions nearby (where in fact the assassinations and war had started). I hurried back to my office in the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and was told to go home immediately, with no other information given me. I soon arrived at our home which was a small pre-fabricated project house away from the main UN compound in Khormaksar, where I lived with my Dutch wife and daughter of sixteen months. We had friendly Russian neighbours we talked to but they were also very alarmed and worried and could not tell us anything, or wouldn't.

Later on we heard small arms firing increasing in our neighbourhood and beyond and tuned in to the BBC World Service on our shortwave radio, as we regularly did, but this time to try and find out what was going on around us. We listened with incredulity to "This is a message from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to all British residents in South Yemen to contact urgently the British Embassy, telephone number 32711." We just looked at each other and laughed nervously, as at that time we did not have a telephone and did not, in fact, get one until October later that year. The rest of the day was spent inside our home wondering what to do, so we carried on as normal as possible looking after each other and our baby daughter. However, later that afternoon, just before nightfall, we heard and saw through a window a huge tank arrive very noisily and park a few metres away just beside the fence of our house. One or two men soon emerged and were wandering about and we were worried that they might come into our compound but luckily they kept to themselves, smoking and talking quietly.



Hadhrami woman winnowing near Shibam, 1984

Then all hell broke loose and they started firing their cannon towards the centre of Khormaksar, where there was a military base and this went on for sometime. We were terrified and sought shelter on the floor in a corridor in the middle of the house. Our daughter, Francisca, went to sleep and eventually exhausted we crawled into bed and fell into fitful sleep until we were woken up at dawn by the tank revving up its huge engine and slowly, thankfully, clanking away from our house.

We still had no idea what was really happening and had no contact with anyone except briefly our Russian neighbours and worse, what to expect in such a situation. Until then we had never had any security problems living and working in nor coming in and out of the then People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) but we were well aware of surveillance everywhere as foreigners, particularly I as a Brit working in the UN. Everywhere we were and travelled to and from, we were treated with courtesy and guarded friendliness and even, occasionally, by older people who had some nostalgia about the colonial past. I must admit that when we arrived in Aden two years earlier, in October 1983, I was rather naïve and ill-informed about the history of PDRY and the political situation then. However, the civil war and evacuation in 1986 was indeed a rude awakening, and an intense education in local politics.

Tuesday 14 January 1986

Flag Officer Royal Yachts report: ¹

Time 2000 - Call received from MOD instructing HM Yacht to proceed with all convenient despatch to ADEN. Informed that Civil War had broken out in PDRY. Needed to evacuate about 100 UK and 100 Commonwealth nationals.

¹ The author obtained through a Freedom of Information (FoI) request to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) the report on what was then termed Operation Balsac to evacuate British and foreign nationals from Aden submitted by Rear Admiral John Garnier, Flag Officer Royal Yachts marked Confidential. Excerpts of this report are cited in the coloured boxes

After the tank left early in the morning, still shaken by the night's events, although Francisca seemed to have slept through it all, we had some breakfast and had a brief chat through the fence with our Russian neighbours, who were as frightened as we were. Our other neighbours, Yemenis in surrounding houses, seemed to have disappeared though were probably bunkered down in their homes. Very quiet except for the constant cawing from the crows in the trees surrounding us. Our house was rather isolated and a good way from the UN compound and offices so we had no news then from them about what was happening.

However, later in the morning a Dutch FAO colleague passed by and we agreed to move to a more secure location in a flat with his family on the top floor of a building with other UN/FAO personnel overlooking the sea on the beach front of Khormaksar. More similar buildings nearby accommodated other foreigners, including many Russians and East Germans.

We packed what we thought we might need, with no idea for how long and also took several large containers of water and all the perishable and other food and drinks we had. I took the project Land Rover, a six-cylinder armour plated vehicle gifted to the project by the British embassy as surplus to their requirements and parked it near our building where it remained untouched until we left on Friday afternoon when the evacuation began. We tuned in to BBC and Radio Netherlands for any news and made ourselves comfortable with mattresses on the floor and waited and waited and waited.. There seemed to be less gunfire and explosions in the Khormaksar area and it remained relatively quiet that night.

Wednesday 15 January 1986

0630 - Arrived 15 miles off ADEN. Instructions to remain this far off shore, but do not intend going more than 20 miles off shore.

0640 - Position of main artillery in harbour. Khormaksar airport strafed by MIGs. Fighting tanks on harbour foreshore using merchant ships as cover.

Comment: thoughts of an easy evacuation from ADEN harbour receding.

1736 - Sunset. Evidence even at 20 miles of fighting continuing ashore. Oil refinery at LITTLE ADEN possibly hit.

2130 - VHF traffic indicates local tugs still bringing out refugees to merchant ships in the harbour.

Summary: A quiet day off ADEN keeping a low profile.

HM Yacht presence however, must be obvious to all.



Housing in Khormaksar in the 1960s, with Abyan beach in the background, from where foreigners were evacuated to the *Britannia* (Jim Ellis collection, courtesy of the editor)

Lull in fighting, collecting sea water during morning for domestic needs: washing and flushing toilets. Suddenly appeared in the afternoon, a huge group of armed men in uniform and futas mustering in front of our building on the beach side in several groups, having a big conflag among themselves, then they all left quietly in the direction of the centre but not without a fright for us. I was peering carefully over the balcony railings and suddenly Francisca starts crying and they looked up at me. I wondered what, if anything, they might do, fortunately, they chose to do nothing and ignored us.

Thursday 16 January 1986

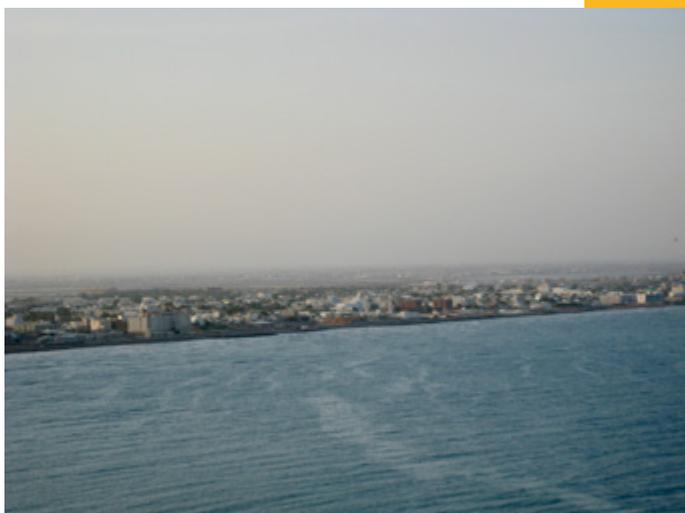
0625 - Sunrise

1000 - Observing considerable evidence ashore of continued fighting. Mounting activity off shore with Soviet and French units.

Comment: At last some relaxation in the directives which will allow me to make some progress. Interested to learn that the French Embassy does not wish to be evacuated and all is quiet — it doesn't look very quiet from here.

1756 - Sunset

I can't remember much about this day except that we watched, sometime during the morning, a tank driving slowly along the beach in front of us from the east, when suddenly there was some gunfire from behind our building towards this tank. Two men were on the ground floor firing their RPG weapons at the tank. Slowly the tank swivelled its turret towards our building and started indiscriminately firing its canon towards us, hitting several outer



Khormaksar with the long stretch of Abyan beach
(© 2007 Thanos Petouris)

walls near us. (We had hung out a white sheet on the balcony!) Women and children were rushed into the back room to shelter under mattresses whilst I watched this terrifying sight crouched behind the balcony but fortunately none of us were physically injured, but very shocked.

After a while, all shooting stopped and the tank moved slowly along the beach towards the western side of Khormaksar. We saw the two men with RPGs slink away from our building, giving us a sly wave as they went. When there was a lull in the afternoon we went across the beach to collect sea water in buckets to flush our toilet and wash as the mains water supply had stopped, but the electricity supply had continued.

Friday 17 January 1986

0130 - NEWCASTLE and JUPITER take up position in patrol areas 30 miles south of ADEN. Fighting died away ashore to a lower level.

0253 - Signal received in HMY instructing HYDRA to proceed with all convenient despatch to ADEN.

0625 - Sunrise.

0930 - Established comms with FNS DE GRASSE (French destroyer). Understand through French the British Ambassador considers situation critical.

1032 - DE GRASSE reports that fighting has started again and a paratroop drop may have occurred.

1205 - DE GRASSE reports that Soviet Embassy was coordinating evacuation of refugees from KHORMAKSAR beach on the east side of ADEN.

1210 - Established contact with Soviet MV PAVEL ANTOKOLSKIY offering to help in evacuations.

Comment: No proper response received from the Soviets but it is noticeable that all the Soviet ships in the area are moving towards the east side of ADEN.

1215 - The more overt approach by HMY starting to have an effect.

1250 - Message received that any HMY boat proceeding inshore was to have Royal Marines embarked with firearms.

1630 - HMY in position 13 miles off KHORMAKSAR beach. Soviets have stated HMY has no authority to enter territorial waters.

1755 - Sunset.

1800 - 5 Soviet merchant ships close to KHORMAKSAR beach. Getting the impression that Soviets are not keen on UK participation.

1820 - Passed by DE GRASSE who says she is going in to rescue French people.

1825 - DE GRASSE returning — clearly no approval to enter territorial waters. Authority received from British Embassy via French Embassy via DE GRASSE to enter territorial waters so proceeding to the beach.

2005 - Anchored 1.05 mile off KHORMAKSAR beach with 7 Soviets also there. Still confusion with Soviets over approval for HMY's presence but tacit agreement holding.

2015 - First HMY boat away to beach with beachmaster (Lieutenant Easson) and party to establish contact with British Embassy staff on beach. The French have asked to be evacuated in our boat and I have agreed in view of the assistance already received from them.

2030 - **Evacuation commenced.**

2045 - First evacuees onboard HMY.

Comment: I have had to send a radio operator inshore with an HF Clansman set to establish direct comms with the British Embassy and Ambassador. Also I have been asked to supply diesel fuel for their generator to maintain their comms equipment. Somewhat surprised at the lack of emergency facilities, particularly comms, for the Embassy.

2145 - Telegram from HM Ambassador received stating that Soviet agreement for HMY participation has been countermanded by Soviet Ambassador. Disregarding as dated and we are in contact with Ambassador on the beach.

2345 - **Evacuation completed** but remaining until morning to collect HMA and the remaining UK nationals sheltering at Aden Hotel; they have not been able to move.

We had noticed a group of ships on the horizon and they seemed to be getting nearer to the beach at Khormaksar. We saw a lot of Russians leaving in buses from nearby buildings. About midday we received a message from the UNDP Resident Representative that all foreign UN personnel and their families should assemble in front of the Soviet Embassy ready for evacuation from the beach on these ships. We packed our personal belongings in small bags and I drove a group from the flats where we were staying in my project Land Rover towards the Soviet Embassy on the beach front where we met many friends and colleagues, all anxious, excited and relieved, exchanging experiences from the past few days of maelstrom. After awhile, when we saw the lifeboats being launched and coming towards the beach, we went onto the beach waiting to board as many Russians went first and then UN persons. As the water was rather shallow many had difficulty getting into the boats which had remained in deeper water.

I was about to take the Land Rover back to the building where we had been staying when a man in a futa approached me and demanded the car keys. I wasn't ready to argue with him so promptly handed him the keys. He then spotted a small pair of binoculars I had around my neck and motioned that he would have them as well. When I asked him if he would also like to take the Union Jack that I had been given by one of the embassy staff to drape around the front of the vehicle, he gave me a wry smile and



Interior view of HMY Britannia's Drawing Room being used as a temporary dormitory by British and foreign national refugees picked up on Khormaksar beach on 17 January 1986. Men are shown crouching on the sheeted floor with their luggage (© IWM HU 74275)

said "la, la, shukran" and we both laughed nervously. So off he went and was driving back and forth along the beach for awhile before disappearing. Friends wondered what I was doing driving around but then realised, it wasn't me!

I joined my family on the beach with a small group of friends. It was starting to get dark. Whilst we were milling around, chatting, we were informed by someone from the embassy that the Royal Yacht *Britannia* was on its way to assist with the evacuation. We didn't believe it at first but sure enough soon afterwards there she was with full lights on, in front of us so we joined the queue, women and children first, supposedly. A couple of vehicles from the embassy were behind us with their headlights on, guiding the way for the motor boat coming towards us with the beachmaster who strode through the surf to meet us.

Unfortunately, this boat got stuck on the sand in the shallow water and we helped to push it away for it to be soon replaced by a couple of other smaller boats which then picked up passengers from the shallower water and relayed them in tandem to the larger motor boat which then ferried their passengers to the yacht. When all the waiting group, including persons from several different embassies and many others, mainly French, had been rescued by HMY *Britannia*, about 150 that evening, we helped the beachmaster load the luggage that had been left behind onto one of the boats and were chatting for awhile until he wished us "good night and hope to see you in the morning" and with that, he boarded the remaining boat and went towards the yacht.

I walked back to the flat where we had been staying with a FAO colleague and it was very quiet everywhere with no-one left on the beach. From the balcony we could see and watch as the *Britannia* moved away from the shore and were so relieved and grateful that our loved ones and many others had been rescued and were now safe and sound on board.



The author (right) with his wife Lies and daughter Francisca on board HMY *Britannia*

Saturday 18 January 1986

0610 - **Recommended evacuation.** The crowd waiting for evacuation from the beach has grown and there is clearly many more than anticipated to ferry out. No fighting ashore.

0625 - Sunrise.

0730 - First signs of fighting ashore and Soviet Embassy using callsign "MARFLOT" comes up and tells us to accelerate the evacuation. Situation ashore deteriorating?

0819 - After two hours on the beach have had to suspend evacuations due to sniper fire falling around HMY boats.

0835 - Evacuation restarted further down the beach, but situation ashore becoming more tense. KHORMAKSAR airfield being shelled — large fire from fuel storage.

0909 - Forced to stop evacuation as tanks advance down the beach to the north of our beachhead firing at buildings to the south of us. HMA brought off but had to leave about 160 people on the beach, but believe no Brits, women or children. 431 in all evacuated.

1110 - Transfer of 81 French and other nationals with French associations to the JULES VERNE completed.

1200 - After attempting to approach the beach again heavy fighting has been witnessed and some shrapnel falling in the water about half a mile ahead of HMY.

Intend:

1. Going to DJIBOUTI with remaining 350 evacuees.

2. Transferring the British Vice Consul (Mr. M. Sheppard) to NEWCASTLE.

3. The situation is very confused and needs clarification.

4. HMA will remain with me, returning tomorrow.

1220 - Contact established with Captain YAFAI (Aden Port Captain) and negotiations commenced on possible evacuations at TAWAHI and LITTLE ADEN. Comms established with camps at WADI BANA, MUKALLA and SEYUN.

1755 - Sunset.

2259 - **HMY arrived DJIBOUTI and started to disembark evacuees.**

We began to pack our essential personal belongings and then fell asleep until waking very early to see only the *Britannia* approaching, all the other ships had buggered off during the night. We were informed by the BBC World Service to go to the beach to wait further evacuations by the *Britannia* which we did and waited our turn to board one of the jolly boats when suddenly there was a lot of gunfire near us and we hurriedly managed to get on board the last one that morning which included the British Ambassador and his wife. I had to leave a bag behind, assured it would be collected later but alas it wasn't and lost my passport and other personal items which were inside. There were many, unfortunately, left waiting on the beach that morning but the Admiral reckoned it was too risky to remain so close to the beach as there was no let up in the gunfire centred on the beach and surroundings and eventually some also towards the *Britannia* herself, so the evacuation had to be delayed until it was halted for that day.

When I eventually got on board after 'checking in' I asked: "Where might I find my wife and daughter?" and was informed, "Oh, they are having breakfast in the officers mess." So there, we were happily reunited and could tuck into a real English breakfast soon afterwards. When they had arrived on board the previous night they had been allocated the maid's room next to the royal apartment and dressing room. I went to change my clothes and had a lovely bath in a huge bath next to the maid's cabin.

Lies had been issued soon after boarding with men's working dress RN shirt and trousers as her clothes were wet through and was still wearing them that morning (see picture). We went onto the verandah deck with others to chat and look over the side at Aden burning whilst the *Britannia* was getting ready to move away as it had become too risky to pick up anybody else from the beach.

Whilst we were there the Admiral's secretary passed by and asked if anyone spoke French and Lies said "Yes, my husband." So I was asked if I would come to the bridge with him and make an announcement requesting all French citizens (about 80) on board to disembark into their navy inflatables which had been circling the yacht for awhile and to be taken to their own destroyer which was waiting outside territorial waters. A great cheer went up, either from them or others as many had forced their way when on the beach, in desperation, when it was supposed to be women and children first, but some had left



Man in Aden using a so-called Bayhani 'chair'



The author and his wife present Admiral Garnier with a Bayhani 'chair' during the *Britannia's* return visit to Aden on 16 September 1986

hotels and embassy and it was obviously too dangerous to return especially at night. I learnt from the Admiral later that he was told by the Russians and Yemenis to keep away the previous day but ignored the order as the *Britannia* was not a warship and unarmed except for a contingent of Royal Marines.

A hot curry lunch was prepared and served in the dining room and I was at table with a large group of very hungry Chinese who were not very impressed with the soggy rice but seemed grateful, as I was, for a meal suddenly prepared for so many by so few. Later whilst on deck, I was approached by the Admiral's secretary who asked if I would agree to be interviewed by the BBC. So, I followed him to the Admiral's cabin where he was with the Ambassador. Whilst we were waiting to be hooked up to MOD satellite phone, I asked cheekily "When does the bar open?" Within minutes, I was served a generous welcome measure of whisky by the steward and could begin to relax in their company. Interviewed by Peter Gould, firstly, the Admiral gave his account, followed by the Ambassador and then myself. Altogether during her involvement in the Aden crisis *Britannia* rescued 1,082 of the 1,379 people of 55 nationalities saved by British ships during *Operation Balsac*.

Sunday 19 January 1986

We arrived in Djibouti harbour about midnight and disembarked. Some Royal Marines, doubled up as musicians who serenaded us on the way to Djibouti that evening and when we arrived in Djibouti harbour and berthed later that night gave a hearty rendition of 'suitable music' - I especially seem to remember 'Land of Hope and Glory' and maybe even 'Rule Britannia'. We were met by UN staff and taken to a hotel and quickly given a room where we broke down sobbing in relief and cuddled Francisca in our arms before falling asleep, safe and sound at last, until breakfast time next morning. There, we were besieged by various news reporters.

After a meeting later that morning with the local UNDP Representative, I decided contrary to his 'orders', as we were supposed to wait for a decision from UN HQ in New York, which was closed on Sundays, before leaving as we might have to go back shortly to Aden. I told him, no way was anyone going back soon and decided to purchase seats by credit card for us on the earliest available flight to Amsterdam via Paris leaving that night.

Post-Script

Eventually, we were able to return to Aden in June 1986 to carry on with my project for FAO, establishing the Post Harvest Centre in the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. My staff, UN colleagues and many friends were very glad to see us back. Many Yemenis had lost family members and friends in the civil war and had been severely traumatised by the events. Our house had been ransacked and the side where the two bedrooms were, were riddled with bullet holes, which we soon filled in with mastic and duck tape. We tried to continue as we were before the war in January and subsequent evacuation and had no further problems before leaving eventually in January 1989, project successfully completed, with full support of government and UN agencies.

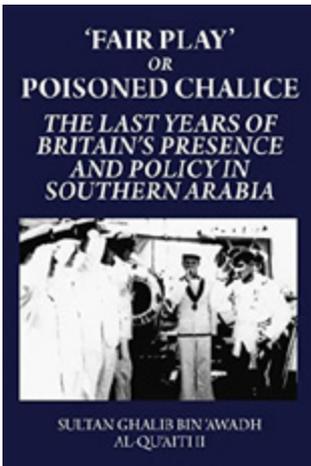
A few months after the evacuation, we received an invitation from the Ambassador to a reception on board the HMY *Britannia* for 16 September 1986. It was apparently the first time a UK Royal Navy vessel had been allowed into the harbour in Aden since 1967 and was partly a post-evacuation courtesy visit. We were ferried to the yacht by boats from Steamer Point in Tawahi and during the reception presented the Admiral with a Bayhani 'chair'. Afterwards we had our photos taken with the Russian Ambassador, his wife and entourage as well as a couple of British engineers working in PDRY and the Head Steward Capt Saeed Yafai (Aden Port Captain) and his wife Leila Noman also present. She taught English to several of my project staff to prepare them for technical training courses in England.



The port of al-Mukalla, 1984

'Fair Play' or Poisoned Chalice: The Last Years of Britain's Presence and Policy in Southern Arabia

Sultan Ghalib Bin 'Awadh al-Qu'aiti II



Darf Publishers, London, 2021
pp. 320
Abbr. Maps. Endnotes.
Appendices. Bibl. Index. Hb
£35.00
ISBN 978 1 8507 7331 3

This book is most welcome in that Sultan Ghalib was both in office for the last decade of the period prior to the independence of South Arabia, having had to grapple with the events leading up to that independence, and has had time subsequently to reflect on and study the record. As Sultan of the Qu'ayti State, by far the largest in the Aden Protectorate, he was naturally concerned about the implications of British withdrawal for his state. However, his book has a breadth of focus, covering the history of Aden State, the erstwhile Federation of South Arabia, the various states within the federation and the various parties involved, from the British Government, the various political parties and interest groups, and the neighbouring countries.

The author describes the exchanges which took place in 1937 at the time when responsibility for Aden was being transferred from the Government of Bombay to the British Government in London. He recalls that Sir Bernard Reilly, the then British Resident in Aden, intended to set up different arrangements for the Hadhramaut from those used in the Western Aden Protectorate, but Harold Ingrams, mainly responsible for the Hadhramaut, and very much to his later regret, persuaded Reilly not to do so. Thus, the four eastern states were allocated to an 'Eastern Aden Protectorate'. He also mentions that in establishing their control over the Hadhramaut his family had been influenced by their experiences in Hyderabad in India since earlier times and indicated that the Qu'ayti State had been supported by the family's assets in India. Ingrams came to understand

that the Hadhramaut was not, and never had been, part of the natural hinterland of Aden, complementary with the Western states, in the sense that Sir Charles Johnston later implied when initiating the Federation of South Arabia.

When the Federation was first proposed in 1961, two leaders of the Qu'ayti State Council — Sheikhs BaMatraf and BaRahim — had argued that the Federation in the form proposed at that time was not in the interest of the Qu'ayti State. The Resident Adviser in Mukalla at that time, Arthur Watts, drew this opinion to the attention of the Aden Government. This view prevailed in this State. Sultan Ghalib emphasised that in establishing the five provinces of the Qu'ayti State (Shihr, Mukalla, Hajjar, Shibam, and Daw'an) his family had been much influenced by their experiences and the institutions in the State of Hyderabad.

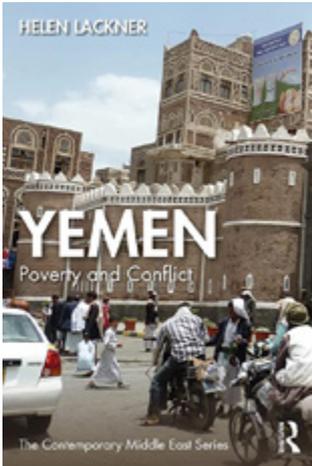
Sultan Ghalib describes the rapid growth of the Port of Aden which was averaging eighteen ships a day, making it one of the busiest ports in the world. He also describes in some detail the composition of the political parties emerging in the Western Aden Protectorate, in particular the South Arabian League (SAL) supported importantly by Sultan 'Ali 'Abd al-Karim of Lahj. Sir William Luce, when Governor, had held a series of meetings with Sultan 'Ali, trying to persuade him to remain in Lahj to participate in the newly created Federal Government and, in particular, not to go off to Egypt to oppose the local politics. He was unsuccessful as Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian president, favoured the National Liberation Front.

Sultan Ghalib also describes the tribal complexity of the small states of the Western Aden Protectorate, relative to the larger tribal groups in the Yemen. This became critical when Yemen's Imam Ahmad died in 1962, after which civil war broke out. The Imam's son, Badr, who had support from Saudi Arabia, found himself confronted by Egyptian and local republican forces opposed to Imamic rule.

JOHN DUCKER

Yemen: Poverty and Conflict

Helen Lackner



Routledge
London, 2023
pp. xxii+162
Maps. Abbr. Chronology. Bibl.
Index. Pb
£34.99
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Yemen is the latest country to join a series of books on the contemporary Middle East published by Routledge. All sixteen titles follow a similar format which aims, in the words of the publisher, to provide “an easily-digestible analysis of the origins of the state, its contemporary politics, economics and international relations.” In Yemen’s case, the “easily-digestible” part is quite a challenge given the complexity of the country’s problems but Helen Lackner’s book lives up to its promise. *Yemen: Poverty and Conflict* gives a clear account of the history, the politics, and the problems with plenty of detail but without losing sight of the overall picture. Lackner, whose previous work is well known to Society members, has the breadth and depth of knowledge needed for the task.

The book will appeal to readers looking for a concise introduction to the country, but those more familiar with Yemen will also find it worth keeping at hand for reference purposes: there’s a substantial index, plus seven pages of bibliography and a chronology from prehistoric times to the present. In line with the format for the series, the book contains four main sections. The first of these, on the formation of the state, deals briefly with Yemen’s early history, plus the Imamate and the British presence in Aden, but it focuses mainly on the period after Britain’s withdrawal: the rival states of north and south, unification, the 1994 civil war and its aftermath. The section ends by questioning whether a Yemeni state exists in the usual sense of the term. Lackner comments that the country has not shown itself capable of either democracy or full-scale dictatorship and, despite its autocratic tendencies, different social and economic interests have managed to retain more influence than in many other parts of the region.

That theme continues in the next section which discusses Yemen’s political fragmentation. It begins

with a review of the political parties, but focuses mostly on the Huthi conflict and, to a lesser extent, southern Yemeni separatism. “Yemenis have failed to develop a political system able to deal peacefully and by negotiations or elections to address political differences or promote political programmes,” Lackner writes. “Most political organisations and military groups are aligned with one or other rival elite, rather than offering Yemenis socio-economic and political programmes to address their problems.”

She is scathing about the Huthis, who currently rule with “an iron fist” over two-thirds of the country’s population and seek to impose “their retrograde interpretation of Islam,” but she is also dismissive of governance in the areas outside Huthi control: “The rest of the country is under a wide range of local authorities, with little involvement from an internationally recognised government which has very little influence and does not even ensure that civil servants receive their salaries, let alone issue new laws and regulations or attempt to enforce existing ones.”

Even without the war, Yemen faces a daunting economic situation. Limited natural resources coupled with a rapidly growing population provide the seeds for future conflicts, while climate change is likely to exacerbate the problems. Lackner sees water management as “by far the country’s major long-term problem,” noting that one-third of the water extracted in Yemen comes from non-renewable fossil aquifers. Water resources are not distributed evenly, so “if most of the country is to remain habitable, water management policies have to be both firm and sophisticated.” Whether a postwar Yemeni government will be capable of meeting that challenge remains to be seen.

When the war eventually ends, reconstruction will need a lot of international support, though how helpful that support will really be is questionable. Most of the world views Yemen as a country of limited importance and concern, Lackner says — and it attracts attention mainly for negative reasons. The exceptions to that are Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf Cooperation Council states and Yemen’s future is likely to be heavily influenced by its relations with them. Even so, the prospects do not look particularly bright. “Neither the KSA nor the UAE is likely to favour a democratic regime, even a flawed one, nor do they want to see a flourishing and stable Yemen,” Lackner writes. “More likely than not, their strategy will be to have Yemen neither too strong nor too weak to present a threat, which has been their policy for decades.”

BRIAN WHITAKER

Stewart John Hawkins (1938–2022)



Stewart Hawkins in the hinterland of al-Mukalla wearing Nigeria Regiment hat (1960, courtesy of the author)

Stewart Hawkins was a life force whose humour, courage and capacity for friendship inspired all who knew him. Born in London, he was afflicted by asthma as a child but won a scholarship to Charterhouse where he was introduced to climbing by Wilfred Noyce, his French tutor. Noyce imbued him with a love of mountains and proposed him for the Climbers Club in 1956. Stewart subsequently repaid his debt by writing Noyce's biography *Far, Far The Distant Peak* (Curbans Books, 2014).

National Service with the Nigerian Regiment gave Stewart scope to develop his talent for languages and at Balliol College, Oxford he read both Farsi and Arabic. The latter was put to good use in 1960 when he was granted a one-year attachment with the Colonial Service in South Arabia when he settled a long-standing tribal territorial dispute and gave the Hadhrami Bedouin Legion front-line support against dissident incursions.

After Balliol, Stewart worked for Shell in Nigeria and the Steel Company of Wales. He later joined IBM based in Paris but with frequent visits to the United Arab Republic states when his fluent Arabic was a vital negotiating asset. In 1992 aged 54 he took early retirement and settled in the French Alpes-Maritimes village of Curbans where he played a full part in village affairs and devoted himself to the care of his beloved first wife Alison who died in 1998. His subsequent marriage to Sandra in 2004 was a source of great joy and comfort during his own long years of illness.

I first got to know Stewart when we shared a house in al-Mukalla and explored the limestone cliffs of its shoreline and the desiccated wadis of its hinterland. While on leave in 1962, we did a number of classic routes in the NW Highlands and thereafter several alpine treks including a circuit of Monte Viso in 1994 when tracking Hannibal's route across the Cottian Alps, which we believe we correctly identified.

Stewart's house in Curbans, where he and Sandra so generously entertained a stream of family and friends, was within an hour of the Écrins National Park. Regular visitor excursions included the Pic de Bass and the 3,250m Pain de Sucre with Stewart's more serious climbs including the Barre des Écrins, aborted at 3,800m when an avalanche necessitated evacuation by helicopter.

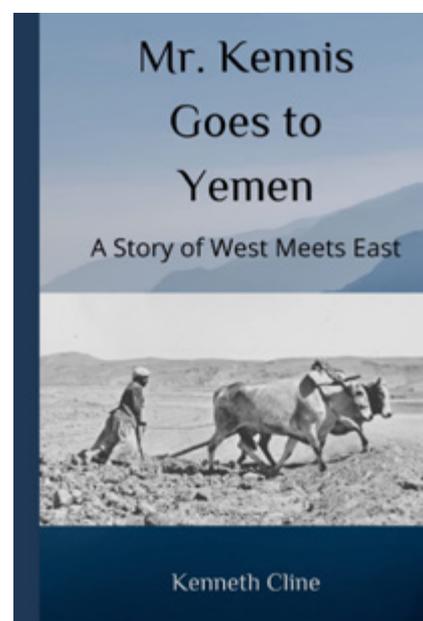
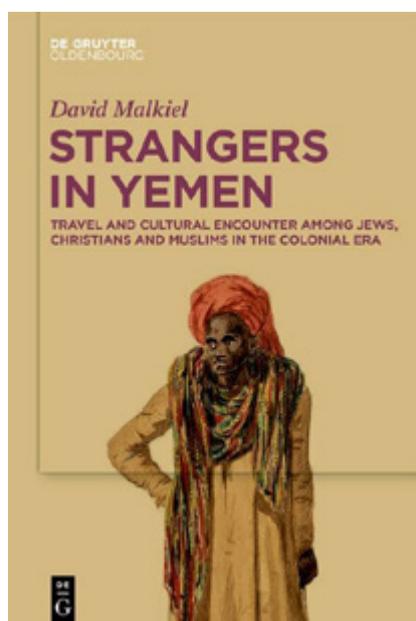
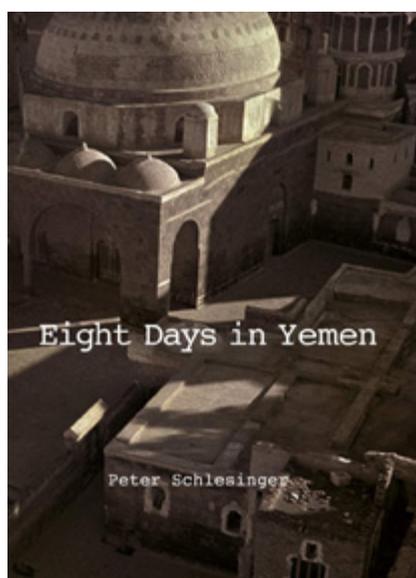
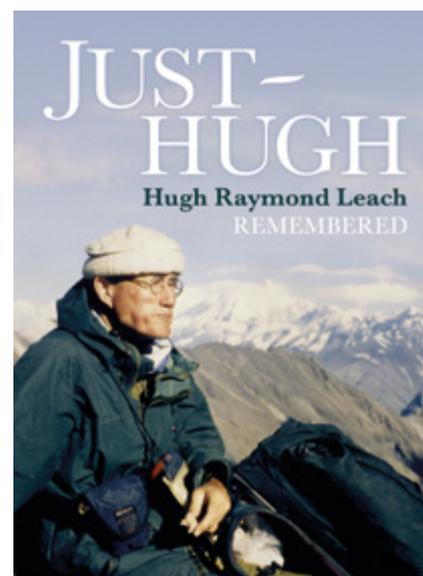
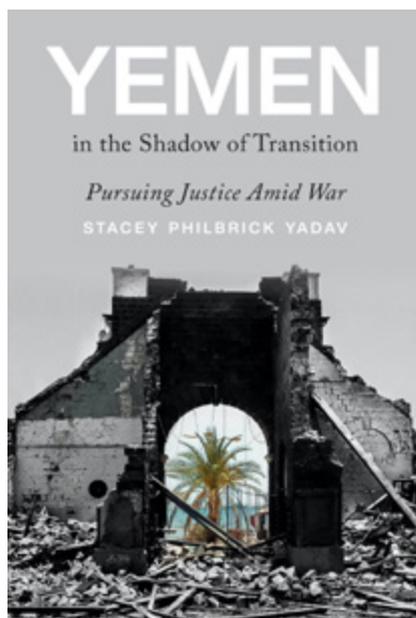
In tandem with his professional life, Stewart served as the International Commissioner of the UK Scouting Association and was later awarded the Bronze Wolf Award for his outstanding services to scouting worldwide. After retirement, he also undertook several missions to Central Asia for the European Union's Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States and on his 1999 visit climbed to 3,800m in the Kirghiz Altai mountains.

These visits so stirred youthful memories that he resolved to locate the stone cairn in the Garmo Valley in Tajikistan erected by Russian climbers as a memorial to Wilfred Noyce and Robin Smith who had perished on Garmo Peak during John Hunt's 1962 Pamirs expedition. His first attempt in 2008 was frustrated by the swollen Kirghiz Ob river, but in 2009 he returned with members of Noyce's family to add a commemorative plaque to the Russian memorial. In later years, Stewart battled valiantly with life-threatening serious illnesses never complaining and ever cheerful "It's not all bad then, Eh!" We will miss him dreadfully.

JOHN HARDING



Stewart Hawkins climbing Jabal al-Qara, al-Mukalla (1960, courtesy of the author)





View of Wadi Dhahr from Dar al-Hajar (© 2006 Luca Nevola)



Front Cover: Street Scene in the Old Walled City of Shibam, Hadhramaut (© 1995 Jane Taylor)

Back Cover: Young Boy of Ibb (courtesy of John Mason; BYS tour of Yemen 2002)

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