The Middle East in London

Volume 8 - Number 1
October - November 2011
£4 | €5 | US$6.5

THIS ISSUE » YEMEN AND OMAN » YEMEN'S WATER CRISIS » EFFECTS OF THE HUTHI CONFLICT IN NORTH YEMEN » THE SOUTHERN SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT IN SOUTH YEMEN » SOUTH ARABIAN LANGUAGES » PROTEST IN OMAN » VEILING IN OMAN » PLUS » REVIEWS AND EVENTS IN LONDON
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As the Arab Spring reaches autumn, and most eyes are trained in hope and horror on Libya and Syria, our focus shifts to two of the lesser-known countries of the Middle East - Oman and Yemen - which are experiencing their own unique disturbances. Each of these southern Arabian countries has been ruled by the same man for an extraordinarily long period: Sultan Qabus of Oman for 41 years; President Ali Abdullah Salih of Yemen for 33 years. Both rulers have maintained power with the help of (now diminishing) oil resources and foreign aid – administrative, financial and military. And both now face unprecedented opposition to their authoritarian regimes or manner of ruling - especially from disenfranchised and unemployed shabab (youth) who have little to lose, and dream of better, freer lives.

These internal political pressures are recent and as yet ‘relatively mild’ in Oman, according to Peterson, where its paternalistic ruler has presided over major economic and infrastructural development. But they are older and graver in Yemen, which has a much larger and poorer population, is woefully underdeveloped, and (as Lichtenthaeler describes) faces imminent, catastrophic water shortages.

Two distinct protest movements in the north and south of Yemen have been challenging Salih’s regime for several years, and (as Dahlgren and Weir describe) these have escalated into increasingly violent conflicts which seriously threaten the stability and unity of this fragile state – far more than the presence in Yemen of ’al-Qa’idah in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Since early this year Salih has additionally suffered from Yemen’s version of the Arab Spring - in his case physically as well as politically. An explosion in his palace compound in June severely injured him, and he has since been in Saudi Arabia receiving medical treatment. He recently appeared on TV repeating his intention to return to Yemen, where his sons and allies still hold key positions, but as I write (in early September) he is still abroad leaving Yemen in a limbo of uncertainty. Meanwhile major military, tribal and political figures have defected to the opposition. And mass demonstrations continue in the principal cities, despite attempts to crush them by imprisonments and military force. These protests, which demand Salih go, have gathered people from all parts of society, including businessmen, intellectuals, students, rural tribesmen and women.

During these turbulent events, the stereotypes of all women being secluded at home and politically inactive, and tribesmen being inherently conservative, disorderly and violent, have taken a well-deserved battering. Women have played active and vociferous roles in the Yemeni uprising, including as leaders and spokespeople. And tribesmen have left their guns behind, and marched and danced chanting verses of protest and longing - adapting (as Caton shows) an age old tradition to contemporary conditions.

One can only hope that the intensely communicative Yemenis, with their penchant for using words creatively and persuasively, can resolve their differences, settle their grievances and decide their political future by discussion and popular agreement – and that further bloodshed can be avoided.
A drilling rig was blocking the narrow mountain track when, in 2007, I visited Hijrat al-Muntasir, a village in a tribal region 70 km northwest of the capital Sanaa at an altitude of 3000 metres. Some men from the neighbouring area of al-Ashmur, farmers of the lucrative cash-crop qat, the mild stimulant whose leaves are chewed in Yemen, had gathered around the heavy equipment protectively. On the escarpment above, more than 50 men from Hijrat al-Muntasir were positioned, several with AK-47 machine guns. The Ashmuri qat farmers, desperate after yet another of their wells had run dry, had wanted to drill deep into the limestone for water. But the villagers of Hijrat al-Muntasir were afraid that more groundwater extraction would wipe out their small mountain spring, the sole source of drinking water for 700 inhabitants. So they had mobilized to prevent the drilling. The tension eased, and some Muntasiri men climbed down from the ridge for discussions to resolve the dispute according to tribal customary procedures.

A short bumpy drive took us to the village cistern which stored the trickling water from the sole mountain spring. Women and children with dozens of yellow containers queued up for water which was being carefully rationed, and records meticulously kept, by Ali the cistern gatekeeper. The situation was grave. A village elder showed me a local document listing the water allotments for each family - roughly 10 litres per person per day.

Trouble for the qat irrigators of al-Ashmur had started when the people of a third village, al-Qarin, noticed alarming falls in the water levels of their wells, sparking fears about the future. Despite this, influential village families had continued to deplete the water table by drilling new, ever deeper, wells and extracting water for sale to tanker owners who traded it to new qat farms in other areas, including Hijrat al-Muntasir. The tribal elders of al-Qarin therefore drew up a consensus-based

**Men of Hijrat al-Montasir arguing their case, Amran region, Yemen, 2007**

Even before the crisis, about half the capital’s population of two million depended on informal water markets

*Gerhard Lichtenthaeler describes how recent political events have affected the water crisis in Yemen*
Many families are struggling to cope with severely reduced income due to the continuing political and economic paralysis.

Document (marqun) banning the sale of groundwater from their local wells to outsiders. As this ban came into effect, the desperate gat farmers of al-Ashmur had decided to drill.

Negotiations took several weeks, with the parties to the dispute meeting repeatedly at the site of the drilling rig. Finally the two tribal groups reached a formal agreement to protect the village spring and prevent further over-exploitation of groundwater in the area.

In the spring of 2009, I was invited back for the inauguration of a small village project. It was the first visit for the vice governor and other dignitaries. Hijrat al-Muntasir had slaughtered two oxen for the occasion. Banners leading up to the village welcomed the guests. There was good news - the drilling had been stopped without conflict.

But there was also bad news. As Ali the gatekeeper unlocked the screechy little iron gate to the cistern, several village women came rushing down a steep path carrying empty yellow containers. 'No water today - go home!' shouted Ali. 'Tomorrow morning, inshallah.' The daily flow of the spring had reduced even further, and was now sufficient for only five litres per person per day. Whether this was due to inadequate rainfall or climate change, no one could say.

Communities such as Hijrat al-Muntasir are coping admirably with their diminishing spring. In social science terms, they retain strong adaptive capacity - defined as the sum of social resources available to counter the increasing scarcity of a natural resource. However, traditional coping mechanisms are now being tested as never before. To avoid the terrible prospect of major ecological failure, Yemen must address major structural problems including the draining of finite aquifers to irrigate fields of cash crops including gat.

Yemen already is one of the world's ten most water-scarce countries. Its aquifers are being mined at such a rate that groundwater levels have been falling by three to six meters annually, threatening agriculture and leaving major cities without adequate safe drinking water. Sanaa could be the first capital city in the world to run dry. Many of its wells already have to be drilled to exceptional depths of 800 to 1200 metres to reach water.

The current political crisis, and especially the events triggered by the Arab Spring, have challenged civil society and water providers in new ways. As a result of repeated sabotage of the country's electricity grid, between May and July this year the capital Sanaa had power for only one to two hours a day, insufficient even to recharge mobile phones. The prolonged electrical black-out also brought to a standstill the raising of water from the 125 deep wells operated by Sanaa's public water supply agency. Even before the crisis, about half the capital's population of two million depended on informal water markets. Sanaa has several thousand water traders who own small tankers, and buy water from privately-owned wells on farms around Sanaa then deliver and sell it to people's homes. With the severe shortage of diesel and petrol for most of spring and summer, the price for a tanker of water (three cubic metres) soared from 1500 to 8000 Yemeni Rials ($6 - $32). The situation has been worsened during the protests by many families leaving unsafe areas to seek shelter with relatives elsewhere in Sanaa. Many others left the capital altogether, heading for the safety of the rural areas.

In many provincial towns opposition movements have called for civil disobedience, asking people not to pay fees to government agencies including semi-autonomous water suppliers. Between January and April up to 50 per cent of water collection fees were unpaid, leaving many water providers without revenues and unable to maintain minimum services. In one small coastal town the local water supplier run out of diesel to operate the pump. Angry citizens broke into his offices, destroyed vital equipment, then set the place on fire. In another incident, local people unlawfully occupied the grounds of the urban water supply agency.

Many families are struggling to cope with severely reduced income due to the continuing political and economic paralysis, while the cost for food and basic items has dramatically increased. Many employees of water agencies have not received their salaries for six months. However, temporary relief came with the news that the July salaries for public service workers would be paid by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a goodwill gesture, and no doubt for political reasons.

Farmers have experienced huge losses, especially those dependent on pumped groundwater for irrigation. Potato growers in the Amran basin had to dump much of this year's spring crop because diesel fuel was unavailable. During the summer, many of the basin's 2500 deep wells, which normally pump 12-15 hours daily, fell silent. The high cost of diesel, which soared to seven-10 times the normal price on the black market, forced most farmers to leave their fields fallow. As a consequence, for the first time in decades, groundwater levels appear to be recovering. The current political stalemate of Yemen's Arab Spring is thus accomplishing, at least temporarily, what years of water legislation have struggled to achieve.

Gerhard Lichtenthaeler studied Arabic, ethnography and geography at SOAS, and has worked in the water sector in Yemen for the past seven years. He is author of Political Ecology and the Role of Water: Environment, Society and Economy in Northern Yemen (2003).
My friend Muhammad in London suggested al-Nadhir, a small ‘town’ in the tribal region of Jabal Razih, as a suitable base for fieldwork. The people were kind and welcomed strangers. And so it was.

In 1977 I travelled north from Sanaa to meet Muhammad’s old friend, Zayd Ali Abu Talib, who was then governor of Majz near the ancient walled town of Sa’dah - far from his home in al-Nadhir. Zayd was a sayyid, a member of the Zaydi-Shi’ite religious elite who claim descent from the Prophet. Despite having been a royalist leader during the 1960s Civil War, like many educated sayyids he afterwards became an official under the republican regime. It needed their learning and local knowledge, and overlooked their previous allegiance. And they accepted that the thousand-year old imamate had ended, and pragmatically adapted to the new political reality.

I climbed the narrow stairs of a mud-built mansion in Majz, entered a chamber lined with petitioners, and a boy ushered me towards a dignified man in a white turban and flowing robe at the head of the room: ‘That’s Sayyid Zayd.’ He studied Muhammad’s letter of introduction while the audience hid their astonishment. ‘The boy will take you to my house,’ he said. There I waited with his wife and giggly little son, Abd al-Salam, until Zayd came home. His stern public demeanour had vanished, and he welcomed me warmly. I explained my mission – to study the customs and traditions of the tribes of Razih. ‘I’ll write to friends in al-Nadhir,’ he said. ‘They will help you.’

Next morning, after a delicious breakfast of freshly-baked bread dipped in hot clarified butter, I set off in a four-wheel-drive Toyota taxi. It took two days to reach al-Nadhir from Majz through the rugged western mountains, one bumping along unmade tracks to the border of Jabal Razih, where the track ended, the second on foot with my bags on donkeys. I spent the night in the massive stone fortress at al-Qal‘ah, seat of the governors of Razih for centuries. There I met Abdu, a local shopkeeper, who invited me home to meet his family. They showered me with hospitality, and insisted I stay with them whenever I came through, which I did.

Further into the mountains I passed

During the months I lived in al-Nadhir between 1977 and 1980, the resourceful Razihis clubbed together and did much to improve their difficult lives.
through Sha’arah, a large open space between the steep slopes where the lively weekly market was in full swing. Traders sat in rows, their wares spread out before them, and shoppers from the surrounding hamlets milled around and exchanged news. Later a clinic was built there. But there were no medical centres in Razih then. The whole region was undeveloped, and its people felt neglected by the distant government.

During the months I lived in al-Nadhir between 1977 and 1980, a relatively prosperous time thanks to remittances from guestworkers in Saudi Arabia, the resourceful Razihis clubbed together and did much to improve their difficult lives. They imported generators on donkeys, wired up their houses, and enjoyed electric light and TV for the first time; they built underground cisterns to store rainwater; and they hired bulldozers to carve out motor tracks between their settlements. A few also opened small private clinics to provide rudimentary medical and dental services to the desperately deprived Razihis.

Zayd visited al-Nadhir regularly to see his family and attend to his terraces. In September 1977 he came to celebrate republican day, and presided with other Razihis dignitaries over a parade of local schoolchildren waving the national flag. The following year, Ali Abdullah Salih became President of the Yemen Arab Republic after the assassination, in quick succession, of his two predecessors. Few imagined then that he would retain power for over thirty years.

Because of Zayd’s familiarity with tribal law and reputation for fairness, he was sometimes invited to mediate between people and groups at odds. As I observed him and local shaykhs in action, I learned that the peaceful resolution of disputes by negotiation was a centrally important tribal ideal.

Bayt Zayd sat on the other side of the Nadhiri mosque and market place from my own house, and I often visited. It was a typical multi-storeyed stone mansion containing several related households, each with its own smoke-blackened kitchen and clay bread-oven, and rooms modestly furnished with mattresses and cushions. Zayd had two teenage sons, Muhammad and Ahmad, as well as Abd al-Salam, so his patriline seemed assured – so important in this culture. His cousin in the house next door was pitied for being childless.

Zayd was generous with his knowledge of the tribes and his family history. He was proud that his ancestors had once ruled Razih under the Zaydi imams, and sometimes independently and in opposition to them, but accepted that era was over. His older sons had not chosen his scholarly path. Muhammad was a driver and Ahmad made clothes.

In 1993, I returned to Razih to do further research. Zayd had long since died, but his sons still lived in the family house with their growing families. Much had changed on the national scene. In 1990 North and South Yemen had united to form the Republic of Yemen. And following President Ali Abdullah Salih’s failure to condemn the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia had expelled its Yemeni guestworkers – abruptly curtailing their valuable remittances. There were also major new religious tensions. A minority of local men had embraced Wahhabi-Salafism, attracted in part by its egalitarian ethos and repudiation of sayyid religious status. They mocked the beliefs and rituals of the Zaydi majority, threatened them in mosques, and accused them of wanting the return of the imam (exiled in Kent since the Civil War).

This divisive anti-Zaydi activism was egged on by charismatic ideologues near Sa’dah, and promoted through mosques and religious institutes which burgeoned throughout the governorate. It was also supported and stirred by elements in Saudi Arabia, and by Ali Abdullah Salih - despite himself coming from a Zaydi background. In reaction, there was a renaissance of Zaydi rituals and teaching, though leading clerics formally denied wanting to restore the imamate.

After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Husayn Badr al-Din al-Huthi, a sayyid and former parliamentarian based in the Khawlan mountains south of Razih, founded a movement in protest at Salih’s pro-American stance, and to defend the religious rights of his beleaguered Zaydi madhhab. Skirmishes took place between his followers and the military, and in 2004, during efforts at mediation, ‘security forces’ assassinated him. His brother took over, and local tribes rallied to his support. Like the imams did before him, Salih sent the army and tribal allies to crush his opponents. Brutalities took place on both sides, hostilities increased and spread, the northern arms trade flourished, and the conflict developed its own complex, escalatory dynamic.

Between 2004 and 2010, six so-called ‘Huthi wars’ took place within Sa’dah Governorate and beyond, alternating with fragile truces – two mediated by Qatar. An estimated 350,000 people fled their homes, and untold thousands of innocent civilians...
were killed or maimed. The full facts may never be known. The government prevented journalists and even humanitarian aid agencies from entering the conflict zone.

A major factor in the escalation of the conflict was outrage at disproportionate state violence, provoking many youths - including one of Abdu’s sons - to join the Huthis. In 2008 I met Abdu in Sanaa. He had pleaded with his son not to go, he told me, and locked him in his room. But he escaped and was killed in the fighting. ‘Then soldiers came,’ Abdu said, ‘and destroyed my house and shop.’

In the tribal society of north Yemen, vital natural and man-made resources, properties, and vulnerable humans including sayyids, women, children and non-combatants, are considered inviolable, and should be especially protected during hostilities. These are serious contract-based obligations. The president is a tribesman himself. He therefore knew that his forces’ deliberate attacks on such targets grossly violated cherished laws and ideals, and could fatally threaten any hopes of reconciliation and peace-making.

Many conclude this, and from the repeated sabotage of mediation efforts, that Salih wanted to prolong, not end, the Huthi wars. By defining the Huthis and their supporters as ‘Iranian-backed terrorists’ (an unsubstantiated claim), or falsely conflating them with al-Qa’idah (to which they are opposed), he punched US, UK and Saudi alarm buttons, and ensured the flow of aid which supported his regime. He also, many believe, desired to discredit and weaken his powerful northern commander, Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar (who opposed Salih’s succession plans), by embroiling him in a hopeless, bloody campaign. He is also claimed to have plotted his murder. Small wonder that Ali Muhsin defected to the opposition in March 2011.

In August 2009 Salih launched ‘Operation Scorched Earth’, the most ferocious ‘Huthi war’, which spread to Razih. Ground troops, tanks and fighter jets attacked roads, power plants, petrol stations, water tanks, mosques, schools, clinics and houses in a frenzy of violence. Even open-air markets thronged with traders and shoppers were mercilessly targeted. Little news of this reached the outside world because of government embargos, but later Amnesty International gathered statements from refugees who witnessed the following atrocities.

During November and December 2009, following skirmishes over the border in Asir, the Saudi air force joined in the rampage – it is assumed with Yemeni and American collusion. I heard the roar of planes when I called friends in al-Nadhir. There were daily bombing raids, they said. They were terrified. Soon after everyone fled ‘except the old and weak, and those who couldn’t afford transport.’

Around December 12 2009, Bani Ma’in market near al-Qal’ah was bombed, killing 80 to 90 people.

On December 30 2009, an allegedly Saudi bomber targeted Zayd’s house in al-Nadhir and his cousin’s next door. About 45 men, women and children perished, including Zayd’s sons Muhammad and Abd al-Salam. His other son Ahmed had been killed earlier in the Huthi wars. Thus ended Bayt Zayd Ali Abu Talib.

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During the ‘Huthi wars’ an estimated 350,000 people fled their homes, and untold thousands of innocent civilians were killed or maimed
Much of the commentary on the increasing popularity of face covering (hijab, niqab, burqa) among Middle Eastern women has linked it with the resurgence of religious fundamentalism in the Islamic world. What is overlooked in such popular political explanations is the antiquity of the practice, and the fact that veiling – like clothing everywhere - conveys multiple messages about status and identity, and commitment to social ideals.

The custom of face veiling is certainly pre-Islamic. Historical accounts indicate that Arabian women just prior to and in the early days of Islam played an active part in the social and political life of the community. The covering of women’s heads and faces in public therefore became a symbolic expression of their seclusion from such roles. It was mainly an urban phenomenon, as only the wealthy ruling and merchant families could afford to seclude their women.

The Qur’an clearly encouraged both men and women to dress modestly, and to cover their hair and ornaments when outside their domestic environments. For women this meant covering the upper chest, neck and ears which were typically adorned with jewellery. However, Qur’anic stipulations were variously interpreted in different regions. In Oman and elsewhere veiling practices included covering the hair while exposing the face, veiling half or the whole face, to all-encompassing body covering.

Veiling in Oman

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For most of the 20th century, Oman was geographically and psychologically isolated from the rest of the Middle East. Even today mountain ranges separate Oman’s coastal plains from the interior in both the north and the south of the country. Many communities continue to live isolated existences with little external exchange of people or ideas. Furthermore, these encapsulated ethnic and religious minorities often live side by side in single villages, where female dress is the most obvious visual badge of identity, status and class. In the interior, for example, some villages are shared by Sunni Baluchi communities and Ibadi Omani tribespeople. Dress identifies women as belonging to one community or another.

Simple but locally significant distinctions such as length of dress, colour of head covering, or type of embroidery on trouser cuffs are sufficient for local inhabitants to identify an unknown person’s ethnic or community identity. For example, in Ibadi mountainous communities of northern Oman women wear full-length, loose baggy trousers (sirwul) under long sleeved shifts. The head and neck are covered with a long rectangular scarf (laysu) which is wrapped around the head and neck, leaving the face fully exposed. Women’s dress is similar.
to this among the Sunni communities along most of the Batinah coast, but with a tendency to match the fabric of the shift with the head scarf. Again the face is fully exposed, but the hair and neck are completely covered (this is also called hijab). Along the northern parts of the Batinah, however, among communities of settled nomadic pastoralists, Baluchi farmers, and others with close ties to the Trucial Coast (United Arab Emirates and Qatar) and to the Baluchistan coast of Makram (which stretches across from Persia to Pakistan), dress is similar to that described above, but with the noticeable addition of a short face mask called the burqa.

Among the Shiite communities, concentrated mostly in the trading towns of Matrah, Muscat and Ruwi, women are completely covered, but the style of dress is more western in design. The head cover is often a thin chiffon rectangular scarf of the same colour as the dress. The face is uncovered and the head scarf may be tightly wrapped around the face or left lying loosely over the head and shoulders. When leaving their homes, these women don the black cloak, called abaya, which is closely associated with women’s proper public presentation of their bodies elsewhere in the Middle East.

Until the last decade – the burqa was known only among the former pastoral communities of the north Batinah and the pastoral tribes of the interior deserts of Oman (for example Duru, Wahiba, Harasiis, Mahra, Beit Kathir). Here lengths of black muslin up to three metres long are wrapped around the head over the burqa - a full face, black or deep blue fabric mask dyed with natural or synthetic indigo. Occasionally jewellery is glimpsed through the black neck and head covering of younger women. Young women’s burqas reveal part of the chin and its tattoos which indicate tribal membership, but face masks progressively lengthen until, by late middle age, they completely cover the face.

The burqa and head coverings give pastoral women in the interior a freedom to travel around, while communicating that they have adopted the sexually modest behaviour associated with wearing the mask. Its wearing also conveys messages about personal dignity, and the honour which decorous, generous, and stoic behaviour bestows on the family. In the desert, a woman appearing in public without a burqa is unthinkable. She would be considered not fully dressed, and would be socially and sexually compromised.

Dress and head coverings have multiple meanings in Oman, as elsewhere. They not only identify a person as belonging to a certain community, class, and economic strata, but they also convey a multitude of messages, and their meanings can change over time. The common western journalistic association of the face veiling with religious fundamentalism does not apply in Oman, where it does not have that connotation, at least not yet. In the urban and agrarian regions of the northern Omani coast, it rather identifies a middle class, conservative population. For a short period in the early 21st century a full face veiling, the niqab - was adopted by many urban young women who were either in higher education, or employed in the civil service or businesses some distance away from the families. These women used the face veiling as a way to carry their private space with them as they moved about freely in the public spaces of the large indoor shopping malls that sprung up everywhere in Oman. However, this face veiling among the urban youth has recently lost popularity.

In the south, face veiling is a statement of upward mobility by former slaves, or of the new wealth and leisure of the richer classes. In the desert communities where face veiling is considered part of the appropriate dress of respectable women, refusal to comply courts social death. In the rapidly changing social world of the Middle East, the significance of face covering can only be understood in the context of the totality of the society. Certainly to view face covering as fundamentally a modern political phenomenon is to fail to understand the way in which the parts of the total structure of personal appearance is consciously manipulated to assert and demarcate differences in status and identity. Face and head covering are only part of a much wider social reality.

Dawn Chatty is Professor of Anthropology and Forced Migration in the Department of International Development, University of Oxford. She is author of Mobile Pastoralists: Development Planning and Social Change in Oman (1996) and Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East (2010)

(Left) Harasiis woman in Mukhaizana, Oman

(Opposite) A young woman, with a more open burqa with an adolescent girl in Haima taken in 2006
In 1960, Aden, still a British colony, was the second busiest port in the world and the base for 15,000 British troops. The British ruled indirectly the Sultans and shaykhs outside Aden and were gathering them in a broad federation in preparation for eventual independence. On November 30 1967, the British handed over power to the National Liberation Front (NLF), which had been established only in 1963, and had driven out the Sultans and defeated its political rivals. Its victory was greatly assisted by the regime of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), created by army officers who had removed the Imam in 1962 and by Egyptian training, weapons and support. Many in the north expected the south to unite with it in 1967 even though the north was in the final stages of a civil war.

The NLF, which in alliance with Communists and Ba’athists, later became the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), inherited an economy devastated by the closure of the Suez Canal in June 1967, the loss of jobs linked to the British military and the departure of 100,000 civil servants, businessmen and workers. The state was highly unstable with uprisings and attempted coups until a group of Marxist nationalists seized power in 1969.

The NLF had grown out of the Movement for Arab Nationalism and was present in both north and south Yemen. The NLF set out to transform south Yemen into a Marxist state, which would abolish tribalism and make Islam a purely private matter for the individual. It educated party cadres at a school in Aden assisted by the Soviet Communist Party. Banks and business were nationalised, large land holdings confiscated and peasants and workers encouraged to rise up and seize their rights. Austerity was the watchword in the early years: the regime even organised demonstrations by workers to demand lower wages!

The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) became a virtual associate member of the Soviet Bloc. Moscow provided arms and military trainers and experts. The former East Germany helped build the security services and the Chinese and Cubans trained the Peoples’ Militias. The Soviet Union would not, however, provide the level of economic assistance needed for such a poor country. International organisations partially filled the gap but most regional governments refused to provide much economic support for the PDRY because of its support for like-minded revolutionary groups in Oman and elsewhere. Remittances from workers in the Gulf sustained many south Yemeni families despite attempts in the 1970s to prevent migration.

The PDRY achieved a great deal. It extended state authority and its version of the rule of law to all parts of the country although this was achieved through harsh security measures. It built the schools, hospitals, roads and government services that had not been provided in British times much beyond Aden and parts of Hadhramaut. It created jobs for its citizens and subsidised food and basic commodities. People were poor but there was little corruption. Women had better rights than anywhere in the region apart from Tunisia.

The PDRY might have survived into the 1990s and enjoyed for itself the oil fields of Hadhramaut but for some important failings. The NLF had not had time before independence to form a united leadership with a shared vision. Its most important ‘historical’ leaders had emerged from the tribes or tribal alliances of the previous Sultanates and continued in PDRY to draw support from them, placing allies in key positions in the armed forces and government. Aden-based politicians mostly originating from north Yemen and lacking a regional base in the south believed that the party should be the dominant voice. As the PDRY matured the two groups clashed over the role of the party, the need for pragmatism rather than Marxism in managing the economy and on balancing the strategic dependence on Moscow with the need to get access to oil money from pro-Western Arab regimes.

In the 1970s the PDRY was stronger than the YAR in terms of administrative and military capacity despite the disparity in population (the north had three times as many people). The Adeni-based northerners wanted to use allied YAR political groups to replace the regime in Sanaa and unite Yemen under the YSP. Their southern rivals saw unity as a long term project and in the meantime worked as amicably as possible with the Yemeni presidents. There were
border wars between the north and south in 1972 and 1979. Much to the astonishment of the outside world each war was followed by agreements to unite the two Yemens. These were not seriously intended and were not followed up.

Unity only took place after the rivalry between southern tribal politicians burst out into a virtual civil war in January 1986 causing extensive damage to Aden, undermining the legitimacy of the regime and severely damaging its economy. Some of its historical leaders were killed and almost a third of its leadership moved to the YAR. They supported and were given support by President Ali Abdullah Salih, now confident that the PDRY was no longer a threat. Though the weakened and divided PDRY leadership considered drastic reform of its political and economic systems and its international relations it was the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 that exposed the flaw in its strategic relationships. It concluded that it should seek a federation with the north. There are still uncertainties over why Ali Salim al-Bidh, then as secretary general of the YSP (the de facto leader of the south), agreed to full unity in private talks with President Saleh, without first clearing this with his party. Both presidents knew there was opposition to unity in their respective Yemens and wanted to achieve unity as soon as possible of the two very different political systems. The leaders may have signed the unity agreement but they had not made the psychological and political adjustments that were required. The almost inevitable result was the civil war of 1994 and the start of what many in the south see as ‘northern occupation’.

In recent years a secessionist movement has grown in the south even though the Yemeni Socialist Party, now part of a coalition of parties opposed to President Saleh and many southerners within the Yemeni regime (including the vice president and prime minister) want southern grievances addressed within the framework of unity. The secessionist movement suffers the same failings as the PDRY: there are regional divisions, several organisations and competing leaders. Two former PDRY presidents have been working with the YSP and Yemeni political parties to propose a new form of federation. The tens of thousands of protesters that demonstrate weekly in Yemen’s cities also want a solution within unity. None want a return to the PDRY. What they do want is for Sanaa to recognise that the southerners have a separate Yemeni identity that needs to be accommodated in a reformed political structure. This identity is the main legacy of the south Yemen of 1967-1990.

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Since early 2007, a movement that addresses popular grievances and offers an option to the current political crisis, has gained importance throughout southern Yemen. Dismissed as merely ‘secessionist’, the movement has failed to convince the world of its viability, and it has been overshadowed by other concerns such as al-Qa’ida. But as it had the support of some 70 percent of the population by 2009, it merits serious consideration. Is the Southern Movement (harak) a threat to Yemen’s future, or could its goals, mobilisation tactics and popular support set an example to the whole nation?

The unification of the Yemen Arab Republic (north Yemen) and the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (south Yemen) was already being considered in the early 1980s when Socialist party functionaries in Aden concluded that ‘The North has to develop as a society first’. But Yemeni unity was declared on May 22 1990, and most of the two states’ institutions were merged except the army - the ultimate guarantee of any state’s sovereignty. After a short honeymoon, things went wrong, and Southern leaders withdrew from Sanaa back to Aden.

For southerners, it became evident that Yemeni president, Ali Abdullah Salih, was not genuinely promoting multi-party democracy, decentralisation of rule or good governance, as had been agreed in the unification process. As a consequence, the two armies fought a short but devastating war in the summer of 1994, and the Northern troops rolled over Aden. Thereafter southerners have felt that they live under northern occupation.

For years Yemeni exiles in the UK have actively promoted the re-establishment of an independent south Yemen. Starting in 2004, on the tenth anniversary of the 1994 war, the Southern Democratic Assembly (Taj) in the UK has provided a platform for political action, despite denouncing unity being regarded as high treason in Yemen.

The Southern Movement joins people of all social and economic strata. It started in spring 2007 with protests that gathered former military commanders and soldiers from the south. These were men whom the 1994 ‘reorganisation’ of the army had ‘sent home to sit with my wife’ as one former air force pilot sarcastically described his dismissal. They were joined by unemployed youth, and peasants throughout the southern countryside. The movement is most active in Dhala’ governorate, where the pro-independence Southern revolution started in 1963, and in Hadhramaut, the eastern region with most of the country’s oil resources. Later all other sectors of society joined the protests, and the biggest social movement of the 21st century in the Arab world before the 2011 Arab Spring was formed.

Ali Abdullah Salih, responded with fury, declaring that he would make the Southerners ‘drink from the sea’. He sent tanks, air raids and snipers against peaceful demonstrators, and stated that pledging support for Yemeni unity was like pledging loyalty to God. The protests culminated in a mass demonstration in Aden on January 13 2008 to promote southern reconciliation after the divisions of the 1986 civil war, which ended with soldiers shooting into the crowd. On February 25 2011 a similar massacre was carried out in Aden, this time to crush a huge rally organised by the Aden Youth Revolution. In shaky video posted on YouTube, bodies lie in the street while tanks roll by. More military crackdowns followed until the Sanaa-appointed governor and his lackeys fled town. The former PDRY flag was then hoisted. Aden presently looks as though the Sanaa government has surrendered and the Southern Movement has won. But no independent state has yet been declared, and people have become impatient. What happened?

For many southerners it is impossible

For years Yemeni exiles in the UK have actively promoted the re-establishment of an independent south Yemen
to accept the idea of re-uniting with the North because they perceive them as having a different mentality to their own, as putting tribal attachment before state loyalty, as preferring patronage to equal citizenship, and because of the corruption at all levels of the administration. The north has to change, many feel, before the two countries can merge. Still, not everybody agrees that all Northerners are *dahbashi* (uncivilised hicks) as many describe them. For some the northern approach to modernity is a problem. They think that while northerners are keen to change their SUV’s to the latest model, they fail to send their daughters to university. Many also believe that Northerners regard politically active women as a sign of social chaos. Both these stereotypes were challenged this spring when young women led the youth revolution in Sanaa and Ta‘izz, and causing some southerners to reconsider the need for separation.

According to *harak* supporters, the withdrawal of state rule from Aden in July 2011 was intended to allow Islamists to enter. This had occurred in the southern Abyan province where Islamist fighters took over after the army withdrew. Abyan residents claim that President Salih did this to prove his threat that, if he stepped down, al-Qa‘ida would exploit the ensuing chaos and take over. Heavy fighting followed with government troops occasionally shooting ‘friendly fire’ at the tribes and the *harak* supporters who had joined in the fight against the Islamists.

As the Arab Spring at first created optimism about a joint future for north and south Yemen, the situation that followed dashed hopes. In May a meeting of *harak* sections in Cairo declared that ‘equivalent partnership between the two states’ is possible. But when Islamists were allowed to enter Abyan in June, and president Salih’s son Ahmed effectively took over power in Sanaa after the President was injured that month, *harak* sections again opted for separation. The February 16 Movement of the Aden Youth Revolution also joined the *harak* to fight for an independent state. Fadi Hassan Ba’um, son of the jailed *harak* leader Hassan Ba’um, commented that the formation in Sanaa of a transitional council was the right step but too late. The latter includes former Southern leaders, Ali Nasir Muhammad and Haider al-Attas, who are both unionists, and one of its tasks is to ‘urgently solve the southern problem’.

The main official strategy of the *harak* is to re-establish the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen by cancelling the unity agreement. It wants to preserve a centralised state, the rule of law, and the British administrative system that the PDRY embraced, and to disallow a one party system. They wish for press freedom and human rights to prevail, and to keep out al-Qa‘ida. While some Southerners dream of European social democracy, others look back to the strong state of the PDRY era. To preserve their identity, youth activists study southern history in seminars in-between the demonstrations. While the path is clear for these young people, the outcome is uncertain. It looks as though Southerners in exile will have to continue demonstrating in London, Sheffield and Birmingham for some time to come.

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(Opposite) Aden University professors demonstrating against government early retirement scheme that aimed to replace Adeni intellectuals with government loyalists. (2007)

(Below) A sit-in supporting Adeni newspaper al-Ayyam against government crackdown. (2008)
One hears little of Oman in the international media. Mention is most likely to be found in the travel pages as it has grown as an attraction for tourism. The country is commonly described as calm, peaceful and hospitable; a Danish journalist once likened it to an ‘Islamic California’. But perceptions shifted slightly in 2011 as O曼is followed the example elsewhere in the Arab world and inaugurated their own activism. That this should have happened in quiet Oman should not have been a surprise.

Oman began its efforts towards political and socioeconomic development only in 1970, when the present Sultan, Qabus bin Said, overthrew his isolationist father. Not surprisingly, the early stages were tentative and rather rocky. Development required expertise, infrastructure, and planning, which was difficult to come by in the early years. Progress in development was also impacted by the emergence of an entirely new and narrowly based political structure. The new Sultan unquestionably presided at the apex of authority without challenge, and with little need of approval from his family (unlike elsewhere in the Gulf) or from politically powerful religious figures, tribal leaders, or military commanders. At the same time, Sultan Qabus was inexperienced, having spent the six years after his Western education in near-seclusion in Salalah in the south of the country. As a consequence, consultation and advice were confined to a small circle of advisers, most of them non-Omanis.

While these advisers may have benefitted the country with their expertise and contacts, all too often their principal interest was in building their own fortunes. As more O曼is took up high positions and acquired influence with the sultan, the pattern of combining public service with personal aggrandisement became institutionalised. The Sultan rarely acted against individuals unless they were seen as particularly egregious.

It is striking that this system with all its faults has still produced an enviable record and evidence of socioeconomic development. But Oman still faces enormous problems. Oil production has generally been dropping in recent years. While exports of liquefied natural gas have bolstered the government’s income stream, they will never be as profitable as oil. Furthermore, an increasing amount of gas is required for domestic use. Meanwhile, Oman’s population has exploded since 1970. Thousands of secondary-school graduates enter a stagnant jobs market every year. The sultanate is one of the relative ‘have-nots’ of the Gulf Cooperation Council and there is a wide disparity in wealth between the prosperous middle-class enclaves of Muscat – not to mention the palatial estates of the elite – and the average Omani.

Perhaps as many as 80 per cent of all O曼is were not yet born in 1970. They have no idea of what life was like before that seminal year, and therefore do not feel the same loyalty and gratitude to Sultan Qabus that their elders did. Instead, many have discreetly criticised the waste and favoritism for years. The state brooks no dissent,
Without significant change, this year’s relatively mild pressures may well be transformed into active dissidence

civil society is weak, and the only forums for discussion have been the sometimes tolerated blogs. With all this in mind, it is therefore not surprising that young, disaffected Omani should follow the example of their fellow Arabs and gather in protest in early 2011. The first protest march took place in Muscat in mid-January with demands for better wages and controls on rising prices. But as the protests continued, there were also political demands for expansion of the powers of the elected consultative body, the Majlis al-Shura, and the replacement of long-serving ministers.

The protests soon spread elsewhere in Oman, especially to Salalah in the south and in the Batinah to the west of Muscat – as well as in Ibri in the northwest and Sur in the far east. Suwar, the major town in the Batinah, was particularly significant since it is the nexus of government plans for a major industrial base for the country. Private companies, including the national oil company and the national telecommunications company, were also hit by strikes.

The government’s initial response was to raise the salaries of civil servants and security forces, increase pensions, and announce the creation of 50,000 jobs. But this did not stem the protests. Eventually, the Sultan replaced a number of his ministers – including the minister of finance, the minister of the Royal Office, and the head of the police – with a number of Majlis al-Shura members. He also promised more powers to the elected Majlis al-Shura and its appointed companion house.

At the same time, however, the government reacted forcefully against repeat demonstrations. One or more persons were killed by rubber bullets in Suwar in late February, and a number of others were injured. The Globe Roundabout at the main entrance to Suwar was only re-opened after a month of occupation by protesters, but a subsequent demonstration saw another protester killed by a rubber bullet.

Instead of subsiding, strikes spread to other commercial entities, as well as the Rusayl industrial complex, and protesters demanded trials for the dismissed ministers and other government officials on charges of corruption. More than two hundred protesters who had been arrested earlier were pardoned in mid-April while another 27 were put on trial. More arrests followed in May, although most of the protesters were released afterwards.

In contrast, a wave of convictions followed in June: 21 men were sentenced to jail in Ibri on charges of arson while a further 15 were sentenced to jail a week later. Another 55 were convicted in Jalan Bani Bu Ali in eastern Oman and 13 more in Suwar later in the month. An additional dozen were sentenced in Suwar in July, prompting a new round of mass protests against the arrests and convictions.

What is most striking about the agitation in Oman is not so much that it happened but that it has been so prolonged. There is no doubt that the Sultanate of Oman has made great strides in its development since 1970. But political institutionalisation and economic constraints have not kept pace with the progress in development. Essentially, the political system remains little changed since those early days of the 1970s. It remains heavily dependent on a single personality, Sultan Qabus. While he has justifiably earned respect for setting the nation on the road to relative prosperity (and in carving out a remarkably viable foreign policy), he has tolerated many abuses of the public trust by his officials and maintained a certain distance from his people. July 2011 marked the 41st anniversary of his taking power and, given his age (71) and lack of a son and heir, there are continuing concerns over the succession.

The events of this year unequivocally demonstrate that increasing numbers of Omanis seek a voice in the decision-making process, but the paternalistic nature of the political system continues unabated. Without significant change, this year’s relatively mild pressures may well be transformed into active dissidence and more insistant demands in following years.

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Most find working or doing research in the Middle East a stimulating and rewarding experience, and after returning home wish to meet others with similar experiences, and to maintain relationships with the nationals amongst whom they lived, and from whom they received so much hospitality. Out of this need several ‘friendship societies’ have been formed focussing on various parts of southern Arabia. All provide occasions for present or former diplomats, business people, teachers, academic specialists and others to socialize with one another and with people from Yemen and Oman. They are all also registered charities which aim to disseminate information about these countries, and to promote good causes, by means of lectures, study grants, student exchanges and philanthropic activities. All these societies have websites from which further information can be obtained, and are keen to attract new and especially younger members.

The Anglo-Omani Society (www.oman.org.uk) was founded in London in January 1976 to foster the long-standing relationship between citizens of the United Kingdom and the Sultanate of Oman. It is now an incorporated company and a registered charity. The Society has throughout its existence received the generous support of its Patron, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, enabling it increasingly to develop a programme in furtherance of its charitable objects. Membership is open to British and Omani nationals, and Associate Membership to other nationalities. Corporate Membership is available to companies with a commercial interest in Oman.

A principal objective of the Society is to promote knowledge amongst British people about all aspects of Oman, mainly through illustrated lectures given by specialists in their own fields. Lectures are held at the Society’s premises at 34 Sackville Street, London. The Society also makes grants for UK students with an interest in Arabic or Middle Eastern studies to visit and study in Oman, and for Omani students to visit the UK. The Society supports conservation projects of archival material relating to Oman, archaeological research, traditional music, and books and films about Oman. There is an increasing emphasis on recent developments in the Sultanate, and the Society hosts meetings and seminars with Omani ministers and senior government officials and their UK counterparts and senior figures from the relevant UK sector. An annual lunch enables an
Omani Minister to provide an up-to-date assessment of developments in Oman to the wider membership of the Society.

In order to encourage continued interest in Oman for younger members, many of whom have been the recipients of the Society’s student grants, a New Generation Group has been established with its own programme of lectures, events and expeditions. It is envisaged that this will insure the continued development of the Society for the future.

The British-Yemeni Society (BYS) (www.al-bab.com/bys) was formed in 1993, in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, with the aim of promoting friendship and understanding between the peoples of Britain and Yemen. It holds regular meetings and lectures on a wide range of cultural, social, economic and historical subjects concerning Yemen. It publishes an annual magazine. And it has been involved in various other activities including sponsoring visits of Yemeni artists and musicians to Britain, the recruitment of British teachers to work in Yemen, support for a medical clinic in Aden, a visit of Welsh musicians and craftsmen to Yemen, and support for publications and exhibitions. The Society also awards one grant of £500 annually to assist academic study related to Yemen. A counterpart society based in Yemen, the Yemeni British Friendship Association (YBFA), has been active for even longer than the BYS, and supports its activities. The BYS has recently formed a younger members and students group, with its own events and activities. Those interested in joining should contact bys.youngmembers@gmail.com. Information on Yemen-related activities in Britain can be obtained from www.facebook.com/groups/britishyemenisociety

The Friends of Hadhramaut (www.hadhramaut.co.uk) was formed after a visit to the area by Sultana al-Qu’aiti and Bryan Fyfield-Shaw as part of a 1996 BYS expedition. Registered as a charity with the broad aim of relieving poverty, its aim is to strive to raise living standards collectively and individually in the region. Its work is purely humanitarian and strictly non-political.

Although a small charity its work is spread as widely as possible, both in the main towns, and among the more remote towns and villages, including al-Qatn, Shibam, Seyyún and Tarim, along the great wadi and its tributaries and their rural hinterland. Over the years it has provided equipment and supplies to hospitals and clinics, schools and libraries, and helped the handicapped. After the floods of October 2008 a special appeal was launched to help with house repairs and replacement of livestock including bees (honey being a major cash crop). The most ambitious project to date has been a purpose-built sewing centre for women in Fuwwa, completed in 2006. A more recent focus has been on girls’ education.

The charity draws on the good will of well-wishers around the world. At least one fund-raising event is organized annually, not just to increase profile and funds, but also to provide an opportunity for supporters to meet.

The Friends of Soqotra (FoS) (www.friendsofsoqotra.org) was established to promote the sustainable use and conservation of the natural environment of the Soqotra archipelago, and in so doing to raise awareness of its biodiversity and the unique culture and language of the islanders. The primary aim of FoS is to provide information about the archipelago to a wider public, and to develop a network of experts to communicate the uniqueness of both natural resources and people. It is hoped that recognising this special character will help ensure the development of benign tourism to the benefit of the island communities. FoS members are actively involved in publicising the latest activities and research on the archipelago through talks and articles on the FoS website and in its newsletter, Tayf. Recent FoS activities have included producing awareness posters alongside the Soqotra Governance and Biodiversity Project (SGBP): ‘Soqotra is not a souvenir’ states its promotion of responsible tourism. FoS has also been involved in joining the National Geographic on a trip to Soqotra, and helping the BBC with research on the whole archipelago. On the island of Soqotra FoS activities have included donating historical photographs to the Soqotra Library and the Soqotra Historical and Cultural Association, funding the purchase of non-prescription reading glasses, and assisting in soil conservation projects and in the prevention, or at least management, of alien and invasive species.

Sarah Searight is a member of the MEL editorial board
The ancient Arabic-speaking tribes of Yemen have always produced great oral poetry which is composed spontaneously, during the act of performance, rather than recited from memory. A high artistic premium is placed on improvisation - the ability to produce novel lines of verse on the spur of the moment. Poetry is produced for specific social occasions such as wedding ceremonies, religious festivals and, above all, dispute mediations. The most famous poetry is the qasidah, which has been extensively studied and described. Here I focus on two other genres of poetry, most commonly known as the zaamil and the baalah, that are quintessentially performative.

The zaamil resembles some aphoristic and 'condensed' poetry familiar to us in other traditions such as the Japanese haiku. It has highly varied meters and tightly constrained rhyme schemes. Here is a famous example, composed by a poet who was also one of Yemen's greatest shaykhs, Ali Nasr al-Qardaci, head of the al-Murad tribe in the far east of the country. He composed the poem in 1948 upon returning to his natal village after assassinating Imam Yahya, the ruler of Yemen, who had failed to initiate badly needed reforms which the shaykh and many other like-minded progressives considered essential for the development of the country. Assassinating an Imam was no light matter, and al-Qardaci had to justify his action before his people:

O these fortress towers that loom before me/
there is no blame on the fugitive
Say to Yahya bin Muhammad, /’We will
meet on Judgment Day.’

The ‘fortress towers’ refers to the multi-storied houses distinctive of Yemeni architecture. Yahya bin Muhammad is the Imam the shaykh had just killed. The implication of the poem is that al-Qardaci refuses to be judged by anyone on earth for what he did, claiming that it will be between his conscience and God.

Poetic performances are multi-media affairs. The poem’s chant would have been in a high tenor (almost a falsetto) that is hard on the larynx, and is meant to be, for the performance is supposed to demonstrate stamina. Such poems are ‘carried’ by a chorus, consisting of two groups of men, one carrying the first line on the first half of the tune, the other the second, and thus alternating until a new poem is created. There is also a dance component involving a simple step while holding the hands of one’s companions and marching down a wadi to a destination, in this case the shaykh’s village.

The other great performative poetry is the baalah, a poem composed competitively by two or more poets who vie to produce the most beautiful lines or wittiest rejoinders. The occasion is the groom’s wedding night, and the playfulness of the poetry is meant to entertain the groom. Many of the zaamil’s aesthetic features are also found in the baalah, but the latter is more dramatic. As the performance warms up, a new routine kicks in called ‘challenge-and-retort,’ in which only the most gifted dare to compete. One of the baalah’s thrills is to track the encounter of duelling poets throughout the evening. These competitive routines often focus on political themes or current events.

Improvisational poetry, especially when it involves music and dance as it does in Yemen, does not lend itself well to writing or print, which fixes the poem’s text at one moment in a compositional process, and fails to capture the excitement and

The timeless art of Tribal Poetry

Steven Caton describes how a traditional genre has adapted to modern technology and political change in Yemen

The tape recorder gave a new life to this tradition as it enabled the entire performance to be recorded and appreciatively listened to
dynamism of the process itself. The tape recorder gave a new life to this tradition, especially the zaamil, which enabled the entire performance to be recorded and appreciatively listened to by tribesmen throughout Yemen and the Yemeni diaspora.

Though the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria produced their own verse, Yemenis was perhaps distinctive for the prominence of tribal poetry. Of the millions of people who turned out in the streets and squares, a very large proportion were tribesmen led by their shaykhs. They joined the peaceful protests in the capital leaving their weapons behind, preferring to wage their political battles with poems rather than bullets.

All three genres of the Yemeni poetic tradition were represented during the protest chants and marches, and they can be seen on the internet. However, it is important to bear in mind that only some of these are completely authentic. Street demonstrations that have been filmed for TV show some zaamil performances similar to those in example 1, in which tribesmen march with thousands of others down the main boulevards of Sanaa. (Note that in example 1 they are Murad tribesmen, the same tribe as that of Sheikh al-Qardaci)). Substitute the paved street for the wadi, and the city square for the dispute mediation arena, and the main coordinates of tribal performance are transposed from a rural to an urban space. It did not take much adjustment for these tribesmen to perform their traditional poetry in such a different setting.

If one does not get totally authentic performances on the internet, what, then, does one get? Some examples have been recorded in a studio (which would account for the clarity of the sound but also the impression that the performance has been rehearsed). They also seem to have been musically ‘doctored’ or altered in significant ways, sounding in some instances more like traditional religious hymns than tribal chants (see example 2). The religious hymn would ‘frame’ the tribal poem in pietistic terms, which is not surprising: once a poetic text of this sort is cast into the public sphere, it is up for grabs by whoever wants to use it for their own political purposes, including Islamists. When the poem is chanted by a male chorus on the internet, there may be no vocal antiphony, and no high-pitched voices, as commonly heard in zaamil poetry - no doubt because the latter would sound strange to an audience unfamiliar with the Yemeni tribal poetic tradition (see example 3).

Looked at one way, these changes make tribal poetry more accessible on the web to a cosmopolitan audience with very different expectations of music and imagery from Yemeni tribesmen. However, the purist might object to what the poetry has become in the process - a pale shadow of its former performative self. But oral poetry is composed in order to be heard (and seen), and to be broadcast throughout the public sphere. The first major shift was from face-to-face communication to the audio cassette tape. Now tribal poetry is mediated by the internet, and there are many examples, especially that of dispute resolutions, that have been recorded with a cellphone or even a video camcorder. The intention is the same: to spread the voice to a wide political constituency. Instead of decrying the transformation, we should welcome it, for it marks just one more way that tribesmen are inextricably part of, and adapting to, the modern world.

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Example 1 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNmIIu0j51c
Example 2 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrSnxIL5uYA
Example 3 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K079KnNkdk

(Opposite) Dancers at a tribal wedding
(Below-left) A poet performing baalah poetry
(Below-right) Zaamil procession during wedding celebration
A Letter to the Corpse

By Shayef al-Khaledi (1932-1998)

Khaledi said: How much yearning and hope?
Aching, ache upon ache, has availed me nothing
Craving and yearning empty, they have no meaning
I cannot recall my heart or hopes... such deceit...
Never forgive that maligned era that misled and separated us
Separating those in the group from their own
How my companions were lost, and we became lost ourselves after them
Each crossing a mountain, one to the left and another right...

Where is our family, our beloved? Where have they gone?
Where is the accompanying friend? Where am I to him?
Where are those whom I used to see with my own right eye?
Our obliged prayers and our laws went with them
Where are those spliced from the world ahead of me,
Those to whom the world was so wretched?
Where are those who were with us, wherever we went?
What do we say or tell those who ask about them?

No one has come from the cemetery to tell us
Are they in fire, or in heaven?
Not a letter from the corpse allays our concerns
About his health. How is he, beneath that grave?
That the evening news might tell him about us!
Why, my heart can bring him not a single word, visible or hidden
Or that a wireless phone could lead us there!
Why, I would speak to the blessed corpse, to his ear
I would explain to him how my gaunt heart suffers
After him the tears of my eyes would flow upon my cheeks.
And yet, I can seek consolation from nothing but empty loss...

How I was comfortable at his side, with his poetry!
Yes, I taught him poetry, until he excelled and savored it
And a thousand of my verses were found in his song
I have no other task but the path of poetry and singing
And the plucking of strings, the work of my comrade and delight
Remember his beauty, the winking of his fair eyes
And the good words that flowed from his tongue?

Death has startled us, with such shock, and has barred us
From the beloved friend in whose bosom I rested
Never forgive death, which has brutalized us with such violence
(Or shall I call with a voice of solace and peace?...)
Yet if cursing death were possible, I would curse, if only for the health of my own house!
I would curse death this very moment, a hundred curses...

But from fate to fate we surrender
Rebuking not death, from which there is no absolution.
The poem below, by Atef Ghurama, dates from the period of Marxist rule in south Yemen (1970-90). Ghurama was a member of the Ahl al-Haqiqa, an esoteric order of Yemeni Muslims whose hermeneutics of mystical knowledge (ma`rifa), and ideals of social justice and egalitarianism, gave them a romantic appeal among Marxist revolutionaries. Documentaries such as “Communists in the Year 1000,” by East German film-makers in the 1970s, portrayed the Ahl al-Haqiqa as early communists whose practices of socialism, collective property ownership, and female emancipation were legacies of the 10th century Qarmatian revolt against Zaydi-Shi`ite authority in the predominantly Sha`fi-Sunni region. In his poem, Ghurama expresses his hopes that Marx and Lenin will lead to a new era of righteousness, equality and ‘justice’ in Yemen, ideals compatible with those of the Ahl al-Haqiqa. The current strains of anti-Western “counter-idealism” being voiced by al-Qa`ida on the Arabian Peninsula in Abyan and Lahej, Ghurama’s own governorate, give this poem added historical interest.

Counter-Idealist Speech Arrives Triumphant!

By ʿĀṭef Ghurāmah, 1970s

Speech arrived, the destroyer of Idealism
Clarifying tangible reality with Materialism
The transformations of the past are a natural matter
Human thought is a state of sense and sensations
How many ongoing revivals has history known?
For every era and people [there is] a prescribed path
From the primitive to the age of capitalism
Idealism has failed to reach its runic extreme
The hands of the clock have wound down
Until they reached the bell and struck the alarm
Teacher of the principles of the socialist revolution
Marx (and the) plans of Lenin were proven in Russia
The working class strives to stand firm
To eradicate tyranny and the nightmare
(And) the exploiter of men, over centuries past
(They) steadily gnawed at the will of nightmarish rulers
Sectarianism and the kambrādūr of Idealism:
Adherents seek a special banner
To fly above capitalist authority
The pulse of the hand of injustice suffers from desperation
(While) the symbol of social life rises in the east
As science enjoys its studied place
A spirit of friendship appointed for the people of Yemen
With revolutionary consciousness accompanying their blessed path
A place for the production of industry and self-reliance
Commercially mobilized, a wide march of humanity in file
Its sections assuring daily production
Exchanging between them, with their discount prices
A spirit of peace that fosters equality
With justice assessing both surplus and paucity
The slogans of science fluttering high in the air
With a high star clarifying its five-pointed form
The non-Arabic languages of southern Arabia

Janet Watson explores the six languages which survive alongside Arabic in the southern Arabian peninsula

Six unwritten Semitic languages, known as Modern South Arabian Languages (MSAL), still survive in the southern Arabian peninsula: Mehri spoken in eastern Yemen, western Oman, and fringes of the Empty Quarter; Jibbali (or Sheri) spoken in western Oman; Hobyot spoken in eastern Yemen and western Oman; Harsusi and Batari spoken in western Oman; and Socotri spoken on the island of Socotra. The MSAL share with other Semitic languages the consonantal root-and-pattern structure of verbs, nouns and adjectives. Thus words involving k-t-b, for example, express the notion of writing. They also share much of the basic lexicon with one or another Semitic language. They are not, however, mutually comprehensible with their close cousins Arabic, Hebrew or Ethio-Semitic. They are the only Semitic languages still straddling three state borders still speak them. Threats to their survival include education (dominantly in Arabic), the development of mass communication, and the rapid loss of traditional cultural knowledge and practices. They therefore urgently need documenting for future linguists to study, and for the sake of future generations of speakers.

The MSAL are of great typological interest to Semitists and general linguists. They are the only Semitic languages still spoken to have three plain sibilants - /s/, /š/ (English 'sh') and /ś/, a lateral sibilant very similar to Welsh 'll'. They are also the only ones which differentiate between singular, plural and dual in pronouns and verbs. Thus 'we went' in Omani Mehri can be realised as akay syarki 'we (dual) went' or as nḥah sъyъrъn 'we (plural) went'. The majority of MSAL are also unique within both extant and extinct Semitic languages in negating a clause with a final negator, as in: la-hams tinkā lā [literally: not I want her come not] 'I don't want her to come'. The fact that Socotri, the most conservative of the MSAL, negates at the beginning of the clause, as in other Semitic languages, suggests that some MSAL have gone from using an initial negator to an initial and final negator and then to a final negator only. This development is seen in French, for example, where ne, the original negator, was reinforced by pas 'step', and in some dialects pas can express negation on its own, as in je veux pas 'I don't want'. This discovery is of great interest to comparative linguists.

All MSAL are endangered languages, and not all members of their ethnic groups still speak them. Threats to their survival include education (dominantly in Arabic), the development of mass communication, and the rapid loss of traditional cultural knowledge and practices. They therefore urgently need documenting for future linguists to study, and for the sake of future generations of speakers.

Janet Watson is Professor of Arabic Linguistics at the University of Salford, and author of several books and articles on southern Arabian dialects and languages, including The Phonology and Morphology of Arabic (2002) and The Structure of Mehri (In preparation)
Adornment and Identity: Jewellery and Costume of Oman

Clara Semple

The Sultanate of Oman is celebrated for its dramatic mountains and coastline, lush oases and handsome stone forts. A less visible but equally impressive feature is its long tradition of exquisitely crafted silver jewellery once worn throughout the country by townspeople as well as bedouin. This rich heritage is fast disappearing due to a decline in the popularity of silver and a preference for gold ornaments. Many old silver ornaments are now in private collections, although museums in Muscat and Kuwait have significant displays. Until now, however, there has been no such collection on public display in the United Kingdom. So when a private collection of Omani jewellery came up for sale in 2009, the British Museum, with great prescience, seized the opportunity to fill a gap in their collections.

The result is a dazzling exhibition: ‘Adornment and Identity: Jewellery and Costume from Oman’, which is not only aesthetically pleasing, displaying the lustrous patina and fluid forms so distinctive of Omani jewellery, but also informs us of the use and deeper significance of the ornaments. On display is a breathtaking array of jewellery together with colourful costumes and other related artefacts reflecting the regional and cultural variety of this rich and diverse country. Opulent wedding necklaces made from multiple chains, and embellished with coins, semi-precious stones and amulets, hang alluringly on the walls. And showcases entice one with exquisitely crafted bracelets, massive anklets and weighty ear ornaments. Also displayed are ornate silver daggers once worn by many Omani men, and a remarkable leather and silver bedouin woman’s headdress.

We learn through a series of panels and texts that none of these ornaments is worn randomly or simply for decoration. All are part of a well-established tradition of costume and jewellery worn on celebratory occasions such as weddings, births and circumcisions. Each item fulfils a function, be it to protect the wearer from harmful spirits, to promote fertility, or to reflect the wearer’s marital and financial status.

A lavishly gilded amulet case containing a script from the Qu’ran and suspended from a chain to form a necklace is a protective device to keep its wearer from harm. The salwa (meaning ‘amusing’), a delightfully quirky bicycle reflector encased in silver and embellished with chains, is worn by unmarried girls also for protection. Children too wear silver ornaments to ward off the ‘evil eye’.

Jewellery is also vital for dowry payments which become the property of the bride to use as she pleases. It was important to maintain the value of the jewellery, so the main source of silver was the Maria Theresa thaler, a trade coin used as currency in Oman until the mid-20th century, which had a high and reliable silver content. This magnificent coin, with its effigy of the 18th century Hapsburg Empress, was also used as a component in wedding necklaces and other ornaments, as were Indian rupees and other imported coins.

Omani silversmiths, with a few simple tools, created some of the most intricate jewellery in the world. Happily a few of these venerable craftsmen are still at work, and one showcase is devoted to this dying craft. Most of the pieces shown date from the 1950s, and many are re-worked from melted down silver jewellery - a common practice.

Also on display is an exuberant collection of costumes from Dhofar, Sur, Muscat and Nizwa, cleverly juxtaposed to emphasise the contrasts in regional styles and embellishments. This sensitively curated, compact exhibition provides the visitor with a rare opportunity to enjoy a unique style of silver jewellery and at the same time gain insights into the rich and diverse culture of Oman.

The exhibition is well complemented by an exhibition of Balkan costume and jewellery in the adjacent gallery, which also includes bridal costume and jewellery.

Clara Semple is a writer and researcher on Middle Eastern jewellery, and author of A Silver Legend (2005), a history of the Maria Theresa thaler.

(Left) Anklets
(Above) Lawati dress from Muscat
**BOOKS IN BRIEF**

**The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda**
by Fawaz A. Gerges

Fawaz A Gerges is professor of Middle Eastern politics and international relations at the London School of Economics. In this book, his seventh and a follow up to two previous works focused on Jihadism, he argues that Al-Qaeda has degenerated into a fractured, marginal body, which has neutralised its political potency.

Gerges interviews Jihadis to demonstrate the factions he observes and also provides a brief history of the organisation, showing its emergence from the disintegrating local Jihadist movements of the mid-1990s up to the most recent activities.

*Oxford University Press*
*November 2011*
*£15.99*

**Qatar: A Modern History**
by Allen James Fromherz

Fromherz analyses the role played by Qatar in the Middle East and how it differs from the other Gulf states. The author examines how the al-Thani tribe has shaped the history of modern Qatar, and how a traditional tribal society is adapting to its status as a burgeoning economic superpower. Drawing on original sources in Arabic, English and French, as well as his own fieldwork, Fromherz presents a portrait of Qatar which analyses the country’s paradoxes and Qatar’s growing regional influence within a broader historical context.

*IB Tauris,*
*November 2011*
*£29.95*

**Syria and the USA**
by Sami Moubayed

Sami Moubayed is editor of the Forward news magazine in Syria. In this book, he analyses the tumultuous relationship between Syria and the USA that officially began after the First World War.

In the 40 years between 1919 and 1959, envoys from the White House, along with presidential candidates from both the Republican and Democratic parties, Secretaries of State, and US celebrities like Eleanor Roosevelt and Helen Keller all went to Damascus and reported very different observations. This book presents an insight into the political and social relations between the two countries and cultures.

*IB Tauris,*
*November 2011*
*£56.50*

**Algeria: France’s Undeclared War**
by Martin Evans

Martin Evans examines the origins and consequences of the Algerian War and in doing so uncovers interesting insights into the relationship between the French socialist party and Algerian nationalist movements.

Evans argues that it was the Socialist led Republican Front, in power from January 1956 until May 1957, which was the defining moment in the war.

To demonstrate this he delves into classified archival sources as well as new oral testimonies, including with Mohammed Harbi, an original member of the FLN liberation group in Algeria.

*Oxford University Press,*
*November 2011*
*£20.00*
Taher Qassim MBE
Chairman of the Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival

I was born in al-Karabah, a small poor village near Ta’izz. I studied in Yemen, Sweden and England, and paid for my education by working in public health in various African and Middle Eastern countries including Yemen, which remained my main work base. From 1980 to 1995 I was employed by several major international health and development agencies, and travelled throughout the country on their behalf.

In addition to my main work, I was also involved in difficult international campaigns against unethical practices in pharmaceuticals, the misuse of food aid by the World Food Programme, and the aggressive promotion of baby milk powder. Because of the scarcity of clean water and unsterilized bottles, bottle-feeding was a major cause of infant mortality. It was therefore a major victory when baby-milk commercials were banned from Yemeni TV.

I met my Irish wife, Ann Hoskins, while she was working as a doctor for the British Organisation for Community Development on Jabal Raymah in the Yemeni highlands. We lived in Yemen for ten years, then moved to England in early 1995 to seek a better education for our children. We settled in Liverpool and I worked for the local council then the Liverpool Health Authority, where I have been for the past ten years. I am presently in the Public Health Department where I work on health improvement and the delivery of services.

In addition to my professional work in the health sector, I have been heavily involved in voluntary community activities at local and national levels. I find this work very rewarding because of the rich experience I gain of how people live, interact, socialise, resolve issues or run into trouble.

I have been the initiator, founder, co-founder or leader of the Liverpool Yemeni Community organisation, Liverpool Arabic Centre (LAC), the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Consortium (for which I received an MBE in 2008), the Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival (LAAF), the Yemeni Community Coordinating Council (YCCG) UK, and Change Point Liverpool, which I chair. The latter was created recently in response to the current uprising in Yemen, and its main purpose is to support changes which will hopefully lead to freedom, democracy, peace and justice for all Yemenis.

One of my proudest achievements is to have helped develop the annual Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival, which aims to bring a vivid and diverse representation of Arab culture to Britain. It was launched in 2002, and its audience has increased from a few hundred a year mainly from Liverpool, at the beginning, to more than 40,000 from all over the UK in 2011. At the start only a few local organisations were interested in our Festival, in addition to our major sponsor, the Bluecoat arts centre. This year most of the art organisations in the city were involved, and where there were formerly only a few events, dominated by belly dancing, we now have films, theatre, music, dance, literature, exhibitions, talks, debates, lectures, and the popular family day. This year the Festival also took place at a time when the eyes of the whole world are focused on the Middle East, so provided a particularly good opportunity to celebrate and publicise Arab culture, and offer valuable insights into the history, passions and aspirations of the people of the region.

The Festival is now striving to become independent of the Bluecoat in order to maintain its dynamism. To help achieve this we have invited the much-loved Lebanese composer and musician, Marcel Khalife, to be its first Patron and international ambassador.

In 2010 the Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival was proud to receive the annual Arab-British Culture and Society award for its outstanding contribution to the British public’s understanding of the life, society, and culture of the Arab people. This recognition has led to important opportunities to publicize our work.

(Above) Taher Qassim at his MBE award ceremony in 2008 with his wife and daughters, and Ed Balls, then Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families
Ernst J. Grube (May 9 1932 - June 12 2011) was born in Austria and spent his youth in Berlin; he received a doctorate from the Freie Universität in 1955 and worked at the Art Library of the Berlin State Museums before he moved to the Islamic Museum. In 1958 he was offered a research-grant at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and in the following year he joined the Met’s Department of Near Eastern Art. In 1962 he was appointed curator of the newly-established Department of Islamic Art. During his American years he also taught Islamic Art History at Columbia University and at Hunter College. In 1972 he moved to Italy where he taught Islamic art history at the University of Padua and later at the Oriental Institute in Naples. In 1977 he was appointed to the Chair of Islamic Art History at the University of Venice which he kept until his retirement in 1988.

Ernst Grube was a very productive scholar. He wrote, either alone or with others, books including Muslim Miniature Painting from the XIII to the XIX Century from Collections in the United States and Canada (in English and Italian); The World of Islam, Landmarks of the World’s Art (in English, German, Dutch and Finnish); The Classical Style in Islamic Painting and Cobalt and Lustre; The first centuries of Islamic pottery; (a catalogue of pottery in the Nasser D Khalili Collection). His latest book, to which also Jeremy Johns contributed, The Painted Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina, was published in 2005. He also wrote 117 articles and 32 reviews and founded the journal Islamic Art of which he was the co-editor with his wife Eleanor Sims, herself an eminent Islamic art historian.

While his interests and publications covered all aspects of the Islamic decorative arts, the focus of Ernst Grube’s research was painting and pottery. More recently he worked on Fatimid rock crystal: he was to give the keynote address at the conference ‘Making things Speak’ in the Berlin’s Museum of Islamic Art, to celebrate the installation of the rock crystal ewer from the Edmund de Unger collection, but he died in hospital a couple of weeks earlier. Iconography was a prominent aspect of his approach and he was also renowned for his extensive bibliographies: the bibliography of the Cappella Palatina book is 200 pages long; he also compiled an annotated bibliography of the Iconography of Islamic art (2005). His passion for pottery was not only academic; he had a remarkable private collection that included not only Islamic but also various other, including contemporary, objects.

Ernst Grube was a prominent figure in the field of Islamic art history, and a charismatic speaker with a brilliant mind and remarkable culture. He kept to the last period of his life, and in spite of his illness, a youthful enthusiasm for all intellectual subjects, which made conversation with him a fascinating experience. He had style, was very generous and helpful and was not inclined to say negative things about others. He had many friends and will be missed by many colleagues and former students.

Doris Abouseif is Nasser D Khalili Professor of Islamic Art and Archaeology at SOAS
OCTOBER EVENTS

Saturday 1 October

9:30 am | The Shi'a in the 20th and 21st Centuries (Conference) Organised by: Centre for Academic Shi'a Studies and the London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Admission free. Al-Khoei Foundation, Chevening Road, London NW6 6TN. E info@shiaresearch.com W http://shiaresearch.com/conferences/CASS-LMEI.pdf

11:30 am | Discover Mesopotamia through Storytelling ZIPANG Day Out Organised by: The Enheduanna Society. Doors open at 10:30am. Storytelling workshop where you will hear a professional storyteller tell a Mesopotamian story and can have a go at telling the story yourself with live Iraqi music. Admission free. Poetry Café, 22 Betterton Street, Covent Garden WC2H 9BX. W www.zipang.org.uk

Sunday 2 October

3:00 pm | The Green Wave (Film) Organised by: Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). Also at 5:30pm & 7:45pm. Until 13 October. Dir Ali Samadi Ahadi (2010), Iran, 80 min. A moving account of Iran's Green Revolution, the film uses collage and illustration to tell the stories of the demonstrators as they fought for change and reform. Tickets: £10/£8 conc. ICA, The Mall, London SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7930 3647 W www.ica.org.uk

3:30 pm | Discover Mesopotamia through Storytelling ZIPANG Day Out Organised by: The Enheduanna Society. Doors open at 3:00pm. Storytelling workshop where you will hear a professional storyteller tell a Mesopotamian story and can have a go at telling the story yourself with live Iraqi music. Admission free. Poetry Café, 22 Betterton Street, Covent Garden WC2H 9BX. W www.zipang.org.uk

Monday 3 October

7:30 pm | Exiled Lit Café - Voices from the Arab Spring (Meeting/Reading) Organised by: Exiled Writers Ink.Monthly Meeting. An evening with poets, writers and musicians from Libya, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon. Presented by Fatihieh Saud, poet. Tickets: £4/£2 EWI members. Poetry Café, 22 Betterton Street, London WC2H 5BX. E jennifer@exiledwriters.fsnet.co.uk W www.exiledwriters.co.uk

Tuesday 4 October

10:30 am | Oriental and European Rugs & Carpets (Auction) Organised by: Christie's London. Also at 2:30pm. The sale features over 300 lots, led by one of the earliest Mamluk carpets to have survived, dating to Egypt in the second half of the 15th century. Admission free. Christie's London, 8 King Street, St James's, SW1Y 6QT. T 020 7389 2203 E dherbert@christies.com W www.christies.com

5:30 pm | Tripoli and Benghazi: a new future for the past (Lecture) Paul Bennett, Canterbury Archaeological Trust and the Society for Libyan Studies. Organised by: Society for Libyan Studies. Admission free. British Academy, 10-11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH. E shirleystrong@btconnect.com W www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/libya/


Wednesday 5 October

Dash Arabic Series Café Organised by: Dash Arts. A blend of Middle Eastern Song and Western Jazz with Hjaz. Admission free. Venue TBC. E info@dasharts.org.uk W www.dasharts.org.uk

7:30 pm | The Green Wave (Film) See listing for Saturday 1 October for details.

Thursday 6 October

10:00 am | Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds (Auction) Organised by: Christie's London. Also at 2:30pm. Sale led by a recently discovered and previously unknown 8th century Umayyad sculpture of a deer in bronze with copper inlay from Iran along with other works of art dating from the 7th century through to the 20th century. Admission free. Christie's London, 8 King Street, St James's, SW1Y 6QT. T 020 7389 2372 E ecoward@christies.com W www.christies.com

1:15 pm | Object in context: the Royal Standard of Ur (Lecture) Dominique Collon, former British Museum. Organised by: BM. A lecture on the purpose, structure and meaning of the lapis lazuli and shell mosaic covered Royal Standard of Ur, originating from Ur in Southern Iraq, c. 2600-2400 BC. Admission free - Booking advised. Stevenson Lecture Theatre, Clore Education Centre, BM. T 020 7323 8000 / 020 7323 8181 E boxoffice@
Exploring Muslim Cultures

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Conducted over 4 weeks, this course explores the spiritual, legal and doctrinal traditions of Muslim history. Each session will offer an overview of the different historical and cultural aspects of Muslim people; and examine the ways in which experiences and insights from a major world civilisation bear upon questions faced by humanity today.

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5 November 2011

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Tel: +44 (0)20 7380 3865, Email: ismc.shortcourses@aku.edu, Web: www.aku.edu/ismc

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The MA in Muslim Cultures offers distinctive ways of approaching the cultures and societies of Muslim peoples. The MA Programme draws upon the theories and methods of the humanities and social sciences as a framework for study in order to encourage broad analytical and comparative perspectives. This requires that cultural manifestations such as art, poetry and architecture be examined alongside doctrine, law and religious practice. While the MA Programme endeavours to explore and understand Muslim cultures and societies as they have evolved over time, it also focuses on the complexities of contemporary issues.

Financial assistance available

Applications by 27 February 2012
For further details please visit: www.aku.edu/ismc
7:30 pm | **The Green Wave** (Film)  
See listing for Saturday 1 October for details.

**Saturday 8 October**

9:45 am | **Courts and Capitals 1815-1914: From Alexandria to Tokyo** (Conference) Organised by: The Society for Court Studies and The Victorian Society. Focusing on the Near and Far East, this conference will explore the role of royal patronage in refashioning some of the world’s great cities. Tickets: £60/£20 students. Art Workers Guild, 6 Queen Square London, WCIN 3AT. T 020 8747 5895 E events@victoriansociety.org.uk W www.courtstudies.org

12:00 pm | **Nour Souk** (Lecture)  
Organised by: Leighton House Museum. Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. To celebrate its annual Nour Festival of Arts, Leighton House is hosting the Nour Souk: a display and sale of contemporary design, fashion, foods and artisanal wares from the Middle East and North Africa. Admission free. Leighton House Museum, 12 Holland Park Road, London W14 8LZ. T 020 7602 3316 E museums@rbkc.gov.uk W www.nourfestival.co.uk

3:00 pm | **The Green Wave** (Film)  
Also at 3:30 pm & 7:45 pm. See listing for Saturday 1 October for details.

**Sunday 9 October**

3:30 pm | **The Green Wave** (Film)  
Also at 6:00 pm. See listing for Saturday 1 October for details.

**Monday 10 October**


**Tuesday 11 October**

5:45 pm | **Egypt: How far is it a revolution?** (Lecture) Maha Azzam, Chatham House. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Tea and biscuits available from 5:30pm. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4940 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.lmei.soas.ac.uk

6:00 pm | **The Egyptian Revolution of 2011: Civil Resistance and Power Politics** (Panel discussion) Chaired by Khaled Fahmy, American University in Cairo; Charles Tripp, SOAS; Timothy Garton Ash, Guardian and University of Oxford. Organised by: British Academy in partnership with the Oxford University Research Project on Civil Resistance and Power. A look at the Egyptian revolution, exploring the range of factors contributing to change. Admission free (Pre-registration required). British Academy, 10-11 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1. T 020 7969 5200 W www.britac.ac.uk

**Wednesday 12 October**

5:30 pm | **Saudi Arabia in the Region and in Itself** (Lecture) Sir Tom Phillips, British Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Organised by: Saudi-British Society. Admission free for Members/£5 guests. Arab-British Chamber of Commerce, 43 Upper Grosvenor Street, London W1K 2NJ. E ionisthompson@yahoo.co.uk W www.saudibritishsociety.org.uk

6:30 pm | **New Developments in Digital Documentation and Representation of Ancient Egyptian Material Culture: Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI)** (Lecture) Kathryn Pigquette. Organised by: The Egypt Exploration Society. Admission free (Pre-registration required). The Egypt Exploration Society, 3 Doughty Mews, London WCIN 2PG, T 020 7242 1880 E contact@ees.ac.uk W www.ees.ac.uk/events/index.html

7:00 pm | **A tapestry at Pwos Castle based on the Louvre’s ‘Reception of a Venetian Embassy in Damascus’** (Lecture) Helen Wyld, Paul Mellon Centre, the National Trust. Organised by: Islamic Art Circle at SOAS. Part of the Islamic Art Circle at SOAS Lecture Programme. Chaired by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, SOAS. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 0771 408 7480 E RosalindHaddon@aol.com W www.soas.ac.uk

7:30 pm | **The Green Wave** (Film)  
See listing for Saturday 1 October for details.

**Thursday 13 October**

7:30 pm | **The Green Wave** (Film)  
See listing for Saturday 1 October for details.

**Friday 14 October**

1:15 pm | **Ceramics and society: pottery from the Late Neolithic in the Middle East** (Gallery Talk) Organised by: BM. A talk by Michela Spataro and Alexandra Fletcher, British Museum. Admission free. Room 56, BM. T 020 7323 8000 W www.britishmuseum.org

6:45 pm | **Launch Event/Party - ’Screen a Smile’** (Film) Organised in collaboration with ‘Draw a Smile’ and in association with the London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Launch of The London MENA (Middle East & North Africa) Film Festival: Friday 14 October - Tuesday 18 October. The Festival opens with the screening of Just Like Us, Dir Ahmed Ahmed (2010), US, 72 min. Followed by post screening nibbles and a photography exhibition by Dubai One TV’s Hermoine Macura. Tickets: £15. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E tickets@menafilmfest.com W www.menafilmfest.com

7:00 pm | **Exploring Arabic hip-hop** (Lecture) Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. Doors open 6:30pm. Music theorist Randa Safieh considers the place of Arab inspired hip-hop today accompanied by performances by the rapper Master Minz (Myriam Bouchentouf). Admission free - Booking required T 020 7471 9153. See listing for Saturday 8 October for venue and contact details.

8:00 pm | **Under The Sun** (Performance) Organised by: Arabian Dance Theatre. Also on Saturday 15 October. Dance show telling a modern story about a young Bedouin girl who challenges her traditions and follows her dream to become a dancer in Cairo. Tickets: £15 advance/£17 on the door T 020 8341 4421 W www.jacksonslane.org.uk. Jacksons Lane Theatre,
Saturday 15 October

6:30 pm | Mourning (Film) Part of the 55th BFI London Film Festival: 12 - 27 October. Dir Morteza Farshbaf (2011), Iran, 84 min. An Iranian boy goes on a road trip with his deaf relatives after his own parents mysteriously leave in the middle of the night and are killed in an accident. Various ticket prices.ICA, The Mall, London SW1Y 5AH. W www.bfi.org.uk/lff/


Tuesday 18 October

6:30 pm | A Saudi Spring of Sand Storms: signs of domestic turbulence (Lecture) Madawi Al-Rasheed, King's College London. Organised by: Middle East Centre, LSE. Part of the Middle East Centre Arab Uprisings lecture series. Saudi Arabia has so far avoided a major show of discontent but there are signs of domestic turbulence on the horizon. Admission free. Wolfson Theatre, New Academic Building, LSE. T 020 7959 6198 E d.c.akkad@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk

5:45 pm | feMENA - Double Bill (Film) Part of the London MENA (Middle East & North Africa) Film Festival: Friday 14 October - Tuesday 18 October. Henna Night, Dir Sally El Hosaini (2010), UK, 12 min. and London in a Headscarf, Dir Mariam Al Sarkal (2011), UK, 23 min. Followed by an extended Q&A with the directors. Tickets: £10. St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. E tickets@menafilmfest.com W www.menafilmfest.com


Monday 17 October

6:15 pm | Where Do We Go Now? (Film) Part of the 55th BFI London Film Festival: 12 - 27 October. Dir Nadine Labaki (2011), France, Lebanon, Italy, Egypt, 100 min. A story of female solidarity crossing religious divides. In a remote Middle Eastern village, Christians and Muslims have lived side by side all their lives, largely in harmony despite the odd outbursts of rage between the menfolk. Various ticket prices. Vue West End, 3 Cranbourn Street, London WC2H 7AL. W www.bfi.org.uk/lff/

5:45 pm | The Middle East in London » The Middle East in London » 'Rise of Gulf Cinema' A series of ten short films that tell the story of male solidarity crossing religious divides. Various ticket prices. NFT2, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. W www.bfi.org.uk/lff/

6:30 pm | Where Do We Go Now? (Film) Part of the 55th BFI London Film Festival: 12 - 27 October. Dir Mariam Al Sorkal (2011), Egypt, 118 min. Followed by an extended Q&A with the Egyptian director and the alleged culprit for the body of a woman found in a room. Various ticket prices. Vue West End, 3 Cranbourn Street, London WC2H 7AL. W www.bfi.org.uk/lff/

8:45 pm | Mourning (Film) Part of the 55th BFI London Film Festival: 12 - 27 October. See listing for Saturday 15 October for film details. Various ticket prices. NFT2, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. W www.bfi.org.uk/lff/

Tuesday 18 October

3:15 pm | Where Do We Go Now? (Film) Part of the 55th BFI London Film Festival: 12 - 27 October. See listing for Sunday 16 October for film, venue and contact details.

4:30 pm | Anatomy of an oil-based welfare state: Rent distribution in Kuwait (Seminar) Laura El-Katiri, Oxford Institute for Energy
Studies and SOAS. Organised by: The Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States, LSE. A seminar on Kuwait’s distributive efforts, their effectiveness and their impact on the population and the economy. Admission free. Graham Wallas Room, Old Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6639 E i.sinclair@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk

6:30 pm | Turkey as a Model of Democracy and Islam (Lecture) Sami Zubaida, Birkbeck. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre, Contemporary Turkish Studies. Admission free. Venue TBA. T 020 7955 6198 E d.c.akkad@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre

7:00 pm | Damascus with Love (Film) Organised by: Leighton House Museum. Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. See listing for Saturday 8 October for venue and contact details.

Thursday 20 October

7:45 am | Khaled al Khamissi, Ahmed Mourad & Ahmed Khaled Towfi k (Reading/Discussion) Organised by: Southbank Centre. Three leading authors from Egypt discuss their work and offer fascinating insights into a country at the heart of geopolitical events in 2011. Chaired by Paul Blezard. Tickets: £8/conc. 50% off (limited availability). Level 5 Function Room, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Friday 21 October

3:30 pm | Policeman (Film) Part of the 55th BFI London Film Festival: 12 - 27 October. See listing for Thursday 20 October for details.

7:00 pm | Quarantina (Film) Organised by: Leighton House Museum. See listing for Saturday 8 October for venue and contact details.
and refreshments). Zartoshty Brothers Hall, Zoroastrian Centre for Europe, 440 Alexandra Avenue, Harrow HA2 9TL. T 020 8866 0765 E secretary@ztfe.com W www.ztfe.com

12:00 pm | Waves of protest: from Tunisia to Toxteth (Lecture) Organised by: BM. A day of documentaries and discussion. The ‘Jasmine’ revolution started in Tunisia and spread across the region as the Arab Spring while the Toxteth race riots, Liverpool 1981, followed earlier demonstrations in Brixton. A look at what characterises a wave of protest and what happens afterwards. Tickets: £3, BP Lecture Theatre, BM. T 020 7323 8000 W www.britishmuseum.org

2:00 pm | The Nightingale in the Garden of Love: The poetry of Üftade (Seminar) Adam Dupré, Beshara School. Organised by: The Beshara Trust. A seminar on Üftade (1490-1580), one of the greatest Ottoman Sufi masters. Admission free - Donations welcome. October Gallery, 24 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AL. T 020 8300 7928 E london@beshara.org W www.beshara.org

6:00 pm | Gothic Egypt Trail (Lecture) Organised by: Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology. Part of the Bloomberg Festival. Gothic Egypt considers some of the myths and stories used in late 19th century and early 20th century horror; stories that led to The Mummy in 1932 and numerous films since. Admission free. Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, Malet Place, London WC1. T 020 7679 4138 E events.petrie@ucl.ac.uk W www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/petrie

Sunday 23 October

10:00 am | 150 years of Zoroastrian Studies (Two-Day Conference: Saturday 22 – Sunday 23 October) See listing for Saturday 22 October for details.

2:00 pm | Pot Jigsaw: Family Activity Organised by: Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology. Part of the Bloomberg Festival. Try your hand at reconstructing some broken pots and record their intricate designs. Admission free. Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, Malet Place, London WC1. T 020 7679 4138 E events.petrie@ucl.ac.uk W www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/petrie

Monday 24 October

7:00 pm | Title TBC (Film) Organised by: Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS. Part of the Centre's monthly film screenings. £2 payable on the door. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/iranianstudies

Tuesday 25 October

12:45 pm | Goodbye (Film) Part of the 55th BFI London Film Festival: 12 - 27 October. See listing for Sunday 23 October for film, venue and contact details.

5:45 pm | Effects of Political Changes on Economic Policy and Business (Lecture) David Butter, Economist Intelligence Unit. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Part of the LMEI's Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Tea and biscuits available from 5:30pm. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.lmei.soas.ac.uk

6:30 pm | Life After Death: Al-Qaeda and the US War on Terror? (Lecture) Fawaz Gerges, LSE. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Admission free. Sheikh Zayed Theatre, New Academic Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6198 E d.c.akkad@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk

9:00 pm | Asmaa (Film) Part of the 55th BFI London Film Festival: 12 - 27 October. Dir Amir Salama. A powerful and inspiring real-life story about an Egyptian widow with HIV who battles to overcome society's prejudices and receive proper treatment. Various ticket prices. BFI Southbank, Belvédère Road, South Bank, London, SE1 8XT. W www.bfi.org.uk/lff/

Wednesday 26 October

1:15 pm | Asmaa (Film) Part of the 55th BFI London Film Festival: 12 - 27 October. See listing for Tuesday 25 October for details.

7:00 pm | Women in Resistance: Female Participation in the Nationalist movement in South Arabia, 1937-67 (Lecture) Thanos Petouris. Organised by: British Foundation for the Study of Arabia, London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI) and British-Yemeni Society. Drawing from interviews with female members of the NLF and FLOSEY, the lecture will explain how female anti-colonial activities helped shape a South Yemeni national identity and changed the social and political role of South Yemeni women. Admission free. Venue G3, SOAS. E ionisthompson@yahoo.co.uk W www.societyforarabianstudies.org


7:30 pm | Israel, the Arab Spring and Me (Lecture) Linda Muishin, columnist and commentator. Organised by: Spiro Ark in collaboration with Harif and the Sephardi Centre.Tickets: £10. The Sephardi Centre, 2 Ashworth Road, London W9 1JY. T 020 7723 9991 E education@spiroark.org W www.spiroark.org

Thursday 27 October

1:15 pm | Scientific aspects of the...
Bronze Age tomb furniture from Jericho (Gallery Talk) Caroline Cartwright, British Museum. Organised by: BM. Admission free. Room 58, BM. T 020 7323 8000 W www.britishmuseum.org

Friday 28 October

1:00 pm | Persian Postal History Across Two Centuries (Exhibition & Lecture) A rare opportunity to view an award winning collection of Persia’s postal history during the Qajar period, followed by a lecture by the collector Björn Sohrne on the subject. Tickets: £10 - Booking required. The Royal Philatelic Society, 41 Devonshire Place, London W1G 6JY. T 020 7493 4766 E info@iranheritage.org W www.iranheritage.org

8:00 pm | The Secret Concert (Lecture) Organised by: Ed Emery. A programme of Greek, Turkish and Kurdish songs and instrumental music performed by the SOAS Rebetiko Band. Tickets: £10. Arcola Tent, 2 Ashwin Street, Dalston, London E8 3DL. T 020 7503 1646 W www.arcolatheatre.com

Saturday 29 October

1:15 pm | Single slab to full-scale cartoon: changing styles in Assyrian art (Gallery Talk) Lorna Oakes, independent speaker. Organised by: BM. Admission free. Room 6, BM. T 020 7323 8000 W www.britishmuseum.org

7:00 pm | Saudi Arabia at the Venice Biennale (Talk) Organised by: Leighton House Museum. Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. In 2011 Saudi Arabia took part for the very first time in the Venice Biennale and was represented by two female artists, the sisters, Shadia and Raja Alem. This event brings the two artists to London House along with one of the co-curators of their exhibition, Robin Start. Tickets: £8/£6 conc. - Booking required T 020 7471 9153 W www.lotegotickets.com/LeightonHouseMuseum. See listing for Saturday 8 October for venue and contact details.

Monday 31 October

6:30 pm | The Federalization of Iraq and the Break-up of Sudan (Lecture) Brendan O’Leary, University of Pennsylvania. Organised by: Conflict Research Group, LSE. O’Leary compares how federalism has maintained state integrity in Iraq with the secessionism by consent of Southern Sudan. Chaired by James Hughes. Admission free. New Theatre, East Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6043 E events@lse.ac.uk W www2lse.ac.uk

EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON

Friday 14 October

2:45 pm | Persepolis (Three-Day Conference: Friday 14 - Sunday 16 October) Organised by: University of Edinburgh. An international conference that will assess the history, archaeology, and reception of the palace of Persepolis. Tickets: £50/£25 students and the unwaged. Meadows Lecture Theatre, University of Edinburgh, Medical Building, Teviot Place, Edinburgh EH8 9AG. W www.shc.ed.ac.uk/classics/PersepolisConference.htm

Saturday 15 October

9:00 am | Persepolis (Three-Day Conference: Friday 14 - Sunday 16 October) See listing for Friday 14 October for details.

Sunday 16 October

9:30 am | Persepolis (Three-Day Conference: Friday 14 - Sunday 16 October) See listing for Friday 14 October for details.

Friday 21 October

7:00 pm | The Secret Concert (Concert) Organised by: Ed Emery. A programme of Greek, Turkish and Kurdish songs and instrumental music performed by the SOAS Rebetiko Band. Tickets: £10/£7 conc. Friends of Peterhouse Theatre, Peterhouse, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RD. E events.santur@yahoo.com W www.thesantur.com

Sunday 23 October

1:00 pm | International Prize for Arabic Fiction Discussion Part of the Manchester Literature Festival: 10 - 23 October. Past winners Raja Alem (2011) from Saudi Arabia, Bahaa Taher (2008) from Egypt, and former judge Paul Starkey, University of Durham, discuss the importance of the prize and the role fiction can play in promoting cultural understanding. Chaired by Margaret Obank, Banipal. Tickets: £5/£3 conc. International Anthony Burgess Foundation, Engine House, Chorlton Mill, 3 Cambridge Street, Manchester M1 5BY. T 0843 208 0500 W www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk

Saturday 29 October

1:00 pm | Egypt under The Ramesseid Kings (Study Day) Various ticket prices. Manchester Conference Centre/Days Inn Hotel, Weston Building, Sackville Street, Manchester M1 3BB. T 020 7242 2268 E contact@ees.ac.uk W www.ees.ac.uk/events/index.html

Sunday 30 October

7:00 pm | The Voice of Santur (Concert) Organised by: Peyman Heydarian. A multicultural concert of Persian, Kurdish, Greek and French music. Tickets: £10/£7 conc. Holywell Street, Oxford OX1 3SU. E events.santur@yahoo.com W www.thesantur.com

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Tuesday 1 November

5:45 pm | Tunisia: revolutionary realities? (Lecture) George Joffé, Cambridge University. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East, The Middle East in Transition: a new social economic and political landscape? Tea and biscuits available from 5:30pm. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.lmei.soas.ac.uk

Wednesday 2 November

7:00 pm | Emerging Arab Voices: Peter Clark in conversation (Lecture) Organised by: Leighton House Museum. Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. In November 2009, the International Prize for Arabic Fiction organised a workshop for eight critically acclaimed writers from Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The result was eight new pieces of writing, which have been brought together in Emerging Arab Voices. Admission free - Booking required T 020 7471 9153. See listing for Saturday 8 October for venue and contact details.

Thursday 3 November

7:30 pm | Mourid Barghouti (Lecture) Organised by: Southbank Centre. Mourid Barghouti reflects upon life in Palestine to mark the publication of his second volume of memoirs, I Was Born There, I Was Here. Tickets: £15/£12/conc. 50% off (limited availability). Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Friday 4 November

2:00 pm | Persian Culture as a World Culture (Panel Discussion & Concert) Organised by: Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS and the Soudavar Memorial Foundation. Event to mark the tenth anniversary of the Soudavar Memorial Foundation. Panel chaired by Abolala Soudavar. Speakers: Philip Kreyenbroek, Farhang Jahangour, Elaheh Kheirandish, Gül Russell, Robert Hillenbrand. With a concert of Persian music followed by a reception at 7.00pm. Admission free. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/iranianstudies/

Saturday 5 November

11:30 am | Discover Mesopotamia through Storytelling on a ZI-PANG Day Out Also at 3.30pm. Monthly event. See listing for Saturday 1 October for details.
Thursday 10 November
4:00 pm | **War, Politics and Trade in the Roman Red Sea** (Lecture) Dario Nappo, Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona. Organised by: Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF). Admission free. Stevenson Lecture Theatre, Clere Education Centre, BM. T 020 7935 5379 E admin@pef.org.uk W www.pef.org.uk

6:00 pm | **Painted Embroideries: Intertwoven Threads in the Orientalist Images of John Frederick Lewis** (Lecture) Briony Llewellyn, Independent Scholar. Organised by: The Royal Asiatic Society. Admission free. The Royal Asiatic Society, 14 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD. T 020 7388 4539 E cl@royalasiaticsoociety.org W www.royalasiaticsoociety.org

Friday 11 November
6:00 pm | **A celebration of the religion and culture of the Ahl-e Haqq, also know as Yaresan or Kaka’i, the People of Truth** (Lecture) Gol-Morad Moradi, Heidelberg University. Organised by: Gulian. With HE the former KRG Minister Of Culture, Mr Falakadeen Kakeyi. Admission free. St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. T 020 7351 6212 E sarah@gulan.org.uk W www.gulan.org.uk

Saturday 12 November
7:30 pm | **Riyad Nicolas** (Concert) Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. Syrian pianist and composer Riyad Nicolas performs a repertoire by contemporary Arab composers such as Jabri, Al Succari, Wadi and Al Hajjar. Tickets: £10/£8 conc. Booking required T 020 7471 9153 W www.vegottickets.com/ LeightonHouseMuseum. See listing for Saturday 8 October for venue and contact details.

Sunday 13 November
7:45 pm | **Kayhan Kalhor** (Concert) Organised by: Southbank Centre in association with Nava Arts UK. Internationally acclaimed master of the kemancheh (the Persian spiked fiddle) Kayhan Kalhor.

**Monday 14 November**
6:00 pm | **Herod the Great as Ruler and Builder** (Panel Discussion) David Jacobson, UCL; Nikos Kokkinos, UCL; Tessa Rajak, University of Oxford. Organised by: Institute of Jewish Studies, UCL with the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society (AIAS). A discussion in memory of Ehud Netzer (1934-2010). Admission free. Stevenson lecture theatre, Clere Education Centre, BM. T 020 7679 3520 / 020 8349 5754 E ijs@ucl.ac.uk W www.ucl.ac.uk/ ijs / www.aias.org.uk

6:30 pm | **European Questions – Turkish Angles: Europe’s nation states** (Lecture) John Breuilly, LSE; Francis Jacobs, King’s College London; Umut Ozkirimli, Bilgi University, Istanbul. Organised by: Forum for European Philosophy, LSE with the LSE Chair in Contemporary Turkish Studies. Part of a series of events exploring how our understanding of Europe’s identity can be developed by taking in a distinctively Turkish perspective. Chaired by Simon Glendinning. Admission free. Wollson Theatre, New Academic Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6043 E events@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk

6:30 pm | **Dangers and Demon(izer)s of Democratization in Egypt: Through an Indonesian Glass, Darkly** (Lecture) John Sidel, LSE. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Admission free. Clement House Room 202, LSE. T 020 7955 6198 E d.c.akkad@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre

7:00 pm | **New Light on Ottoman Goldsmiths’ Work** (Lecture) Michael Rogers, Khalili Collection, London. Organised by: Islamic Art Circle at SOAS. Part of the Islamic Art Circle at SOAS Lecture Programme. Chaired by Doris Behrens-Abouseif. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 0771 408 7480 E RosalindHadden@aol.com W www.soas.ac.uk

7:00 pm | **Songs From Two Continents** (Lecture) Organised by: Leighton House Museum. Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. Moris Farhi, the prize-winning poet in conversation with Mitchell Albert, the freelance book and magazine editor. Admission free - Booking required T 020 7471 9153. See listing for Saturday 8 October for venue and contact details.
Thursday 17 November

Time TBC | Current work at Babylon (Lecture) Michael Seymour. Organised by: The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (Gertrude Bell Memorial). A unique opportunity to hear about current work at Babylon. Admission free (Pre-registration required). The British Academy, 10-11 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7969 5274 E bisi@britac.ac.uk W www.bisi.ac.uk

Friday 18 November

7:30 pm | A Concert of Greek & Turkish Music (Concert) Organised by: Ed Emery. With the SOAS Rebetiko Band. Tickets TBC. St Etheldburga’s Centre, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. E events.santur@yahoo.com W www.santur.com

Saturday 19 November

3:00 pm | Roads of Arabia – Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Lecture) Geoffrey King. SOAS. Organised by: Leighton House Museum. Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. In 2010 the Louvre held a groundbreaking exhibition titled ‘Roads of Arabia’ on recent archaeological discoveries from pre-Islamic and Islamic Saudi Arabia. In this talk King discusses the implications that these new finds pose to cultural studies in the Kingdom and across the Middle East. Admission free - Booking required T 020 7471 9153. See listing for Saturday 8 October for venue and contact details.

Tuesday 22 November

5:45 pm | Afghanistan/Iran a contemporary cultural and media perspective (Lecture) Baqer Moin. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Tea and biscuits available from 5:30pm. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk


Thursday 24 November

6:30 pm | Media Coverage of the Arab Uprisings (Lecture) Brian Whitaker, Guardian; Roger Hardy, BBC World; Marwan Bishara, Al Jazeera. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Admission free. Clement House Room 302, LSE. T 020 7955 6198 E d.c.akkad@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre

Friday 25 November

9:30 am | Middle East and Central Asia Music Forum (Study Day) Organised by: University of London - School of Advanced Study Institute of Musical Research. Speakers include: Rachel Beckles Willson, Royal Holloway; Felicity Lawrence, University of Newcastle; Carolyn Landau, King’s College London; and Jacob Olley, SOAS. With Peyman Yazdian, film music composer from Iran and London-based Iraqi oud player Khayam Allami (SOAS). Tickets: £10/free for students and the unwaged. Room ST274/5, Stewart House (adjacent to Senate House), 32 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DN. T 020 7664 4865 E music@sas.ac.uk W http://music.sas.ac.uk/research-groups/middle-east-and-central-asia-music-forum.html#c1448

Saturday 26 November

11:00 am | The City of Naukratis: Multiculturalism in the Ancient World (Seminar) Alexandra Villing, British Museum and leader of the Naukratis Project; Marianne Bergeron, Naukratis Project; Patricia Spencer, EES; Ross Thomas, Naukratis Project. Organised by: The Egypt Exploration Society. The ancient city of Naukratis was well known from classical accounts as the only place in Egypt where early Greek traders were allowed to work and live. However, 130 years later, the site and its history remain little understood. Various ticket prices. The Egypt Exploration Society, 3 Doughty Mews, London WCIN 2PG. T 020 7242 1880 E contact@ees.ac.uk W www.ees.ac.uk/events/index.html

Monday 28 November

6:30 pm | Arab Nationalism, Islamism and the Arab Uprising (Lecture) Sadik Al-Azm, University of Damascus. Organised by: Middle East Centre, LSE. Part of the Middle East Centre Arab Uprisings lecture series. Al-Azm will reflect on the effects of the Arab uprisings on Arab nationalism and Islamist movements. Admission free. Sheikh Zayed Theatre, New Academic Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6043 E events@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk

Tuesday 29 November

5:45 pm | Algeria in the Shadow of Revolution (Lecture) James McDougall, Oxford. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Tea and biscuits available from 5:30pm. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk

Wednesday 30 November

7:00 pm | Yalda – An Iranian Celebration of the Winter Solstice (Lecture) Organised by:...
Leighton House Museum. Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. Leighton house will be sharing the rituals of Shah-e-Yalda with an evening of fine delicacies complimented by music and the prophetic poetry of Hafez. Admission free. See listing for Saturday 8 October for venue and contact details.

EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON

Friday 4 November

6:45 pm | Banipal Magazine (Talk)
Organised by: The Poetry Trust. Part of the Aldeburgh Poetry Festival: 4 - 6 November. Two of banipal magazine’s founding editors, Margaret Obank and Amjad Nasser, talk about Banipal’s work over the years. Tickets: £6. Cinema Gallery, Aldeburgh Cinema, 51 High Street, Aldeburgh, Suffolk IP15 5AU. T 01986 835950 E info@thepoetrytrust.org W www.thepoetrytrust.org

Saturday 5 November

7:30 pm | Fergus Allen, Amjad Nasser, Kay Ryan (Reading)
Organised by: The Poetry Trust. Amjad Nasser joins Fergus Allen and Kay Ryan for an evening of readings and discussion. Amjad will speak about the ongoing experience of exile from his native Jordan. Tickets: £14. Jubilee Hall, Crabble Street, Aldeburgh, Suffolk IP15 5BN. T 01986 835950 E info@thepoetrytrust.org W www.thepoetrytrust.org

Sunday 6 November

7:00 pm | The Voice of Santur (Concert) Organised by: Peyman Heydarian. A multicultural concert of Persian, Kurdish, Greek and French music. Tickets: £10/£7 conc. Emmanuel United Reformed Church, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RR. E events.santor@yahoo.com W www.santasur.com

Sunday 27 November

7:00 pm | The Secret Concert (Concert) Organised by: Ed Emery. A programme of Greek, Turkish and Kurdish songs and instrumental music performed by the SOAS Rebetiko Band. Tickets: £10/£7 conc. Holywell Music Room, Holywell Street, Oxford OX1 3SU. E events.santor@yahoo.com W www.santasur.com

EXHIBITIONS

Saturday 1 October

Until 1 October | Emerging Arabic Artists Showcase at Hampstead Gallery
The Lahd Gallery is celebrating its first year in London with a review exhibition showcasing artworks from Sudan, Kuwait, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates. Admission free. Lahd Gallery, 92 Heath Street, London NW3 1DP. T 020 7453 7323 E info@lahdgallery.com W www.lahdgallery.com

Until 6 October | Shapeshifters & Aliens
A chance to see the work of four contemporary Iranian artists in a range of media including sculpture, photography, painting and drawing. Admission free. Rossi & Rossi Gallery, 16 Clifford Street, London W1 3DG. T 020 7734 6487 E info@rossirossi.com W www.rossirossi.com

Until 28 October | Tree of Life: Visions from Gardens of Eden
Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon (APEAL) and the Royal College of Art. Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. Guided tour of the first comprehensive show in London of contemporary Lebanese art with curator Juliana Khalaf. Admission free - Booking required T 020 7471 9153. Meeting point: Royal College of Art (entrance hall). T 020 7602 3316 E museums@rbc.gov.uk W www.nourfestival.co.uk

Friday 14 October

Until 17 November | Their Past, Your Future – The Bani Hamida Weaving Project, Makawir, Jordan
Opening reception for an exhibition (exhibitions runs from Tuesday 18 October) by Dr Sue Jones reflecting on a 25 year relationship with a group of Bedouin women in Jordan who have been involved since 1985 in a rug weaving project. A seminar, Material Matters, to accompany the exhibition will take place earlier in the day. Admission free. Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles, Goldsmiths, University of London, Deptford Town Hall Building, New Cross Road, London SE14 6LZ. T 020 7317 2210 E cconitex@gold.ac.uk W www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/constance-howard

Thursday 20 October

Until 8 November | Arabic Calligraphy: The Art of the Written Word
Featuring works from six artists and showcasing a range of unique and modern perspectives on the ancient Arabic script. Admission free. Lahd Gallery, 92 Heath Street, London NW3. T 020 7475 7323 E info@lahdgallery.com W www.lahdgallery.com

Monday 31 October

Until 5 November | The Bird Ghost at the Zaouia – an 8-channel sound art installation by Seth Ayyaz
Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. Drawing on his background in neurosciences, Ayyaz’s work is concerned with embodied perception and how this resonates across psychological and social spaces. Tickets: Museum admission applies. Leighton House Museum, 12 Holland Park Road, London W14 8LZ. T 020 7602 3316 E museums@rbc.gov.uk W www.nourfestival.co.uk

Saturday 5 November

3:00 pm | Private Exhibition Tour: ‘Subtitled: With Naratives from Lebanon’ Organised by: Leighton House Museum with The Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon (APEAL) and the Royal College of Art. Part of the Nour Festival of Arts: October – November 2011. Guided tour of the first comprehensive show in London of contemporary Lebanese art with curator Juliana Khalaf. Admission free - Booking required T 020 7471 9153. Meeting point: Royal College of Art (entrance hall). T 020 7602 3316 E museums@rbc.gov.uk W www.nourfestival.co.uk

The Green Wave (See October Events, pages 29 and 31)
The Middle East in Transition: a new social, economic and political landscape?

4 October
The Gulf Arab States and the Political Economy of the Middle East: a moment of change?
Adam Hanieh, SOAS
Launch of Hanieh’s book Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States (2011, Palgrave-Macmillan)

11 October
Egypt: how far is it a revolution?
Maha Azzam, Chatham House

18 October
Covering Islam, Covering the Middle East: confessions of a practising journalist
Roger Hardy, BBC World

25 October
Effects of Political Changes on Economic Policy and Business
David Butter, Economist Intelligence Unit

1 November
Tunisia: revolutionary realities?
George Joffé, University of Cambridge

READING WEEK

15 November
Western interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq in relation to recent developments in the Middle East
Jack Fairweather, former Baghdad correspondent, Telegraph
Launch of Fairweather’s book A War of Choice (2011, Jonathan Cape)

22 November
Afghanistan/Iran a contemporary cultural and media perspective
Baqer Moin

29 November
Algeria in the Shadow of Revolution
James McDougall, University of Oxford

6 December
TBC

5.45pm, Khalili Lecture Theatre, Main Building, SOAS

Admission Free - All Welcome

Tea and biscuits are available from 5.30pm

For further information contact:
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Persian Culture as a World Culture

Panel discussion followed by a concert to mark the 10th anniversary of the Soudavar Memorial Foundation

Friday 4th November 2011
Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS

2-4.30pm: Panel Discussion
Chaired by Abolala Soudavar

Pre-Islamic Heritage Prof. Philip Kreyenbroek
Literary Heritage Dr Farhang Jahanpour
Scientific Heritage Dr Elaheh Kheirandish
The Influence of Persian Medicine on Medical Science Prof. Gül Russell
Artistic Heritage Prof. Robert Hillenbrand

4.30pm: Tea

7.00pm: Concert of Persian Music

8.00pm: Reception in the Brunei Suite

For more information: www.soas.ac.uk/iranianstudies

Organised by: Centre for Iranian Studies, LMEI, SOAS and the Soudavar Memorial Foundation