



Why Yemen Matters

The Heritage of a Land in Crisis

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

5-6:30 pm

White-Levy Room

Institute for Advanced Study

Princeton, NJ

Why Yemen Matters: The Heritage of a Land in Crisis

Yemen's war and humanitarian crisis are in the news, but very little is known about the rich cultural heritage of the southwestern corner of Arabia throughout history. Also largely unknown are Yemen's geographic and economic diversity or their impact on recent events. Yemen's diversity owes much to conquest, trade, and migration between Yemen and Christian Ethiopia, Sassanian and Islamic Iran, Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt, Ottoman Turkey, the African coast and Southeast Asia. In this panel experts on different periods of Yemeni history and its diverse contemporary contexts probe beyond current politics to share their insights and discuss potentials for future scholarly research on Yemen.

This event is part of the Near Eastern Studies Workshops sponsored by Professor Sabine Schmidtke (IAS).

Program

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Sabine Schmidtke (Institute for Advanced Study)



Yemen and Antiquity

Glen W. Bowersock (Institute for Advanced Study) and
Christian Robin (Institute for Advanced Study and Centre
National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris)



The Diversity of Islam in Yemen

Daniel Varisco (Institute for Advanced Study and American
Institute for Yemeni Studies)



Yemen: Heritage, Diversity, and Conflicts

Hassan Ansari (Institute for Advanced Study)



Yemen's Diverse Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

Najwa Adra (Institute for Advanced Study)



Yemen's Biotic, Linguistic, and Cultural Heritage

Nathalie Peutz (Institute for Advanced Study and New York
University Abu Dhabi)



Discussion

The Speakers

Najwa Adra is a cultural anthropologist with long-term research and consulting experience in Yemen. In 1978-79, she lived in a rural tribal community in Yemen's Central Highlands while she conducted field research on the semiotics of dancing and tribal identity. Since then, she has conducted further research elsewhere in Yemen and has consulted with FAO, UNICEF, USAID, the World Bank and DFID. In 2000-2003 she piloted the highly successful Literacy through Poetry/Heritage, an adult literacy project in which learners' own oral traditions formed the texts from which they learned to read and write. Dr. Adra's academic publications include articles on heritage and sustainable development, tribalism, semiotics of dancing, women's oral poetry, and the impact of television on rural Yemen. Her development reports cover the topics of adult literacy, women in agriculture, and social exclusion in Yemen. She is currently completing a book on tribal dynamics and nation building in Yemen.

Hassan Ansari earned his doctorate at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) of the Sorbonne, Paris. He also studied at the Ḥawza 'Ilmiyya, Tehran and Qum, where his work focused on the study of philosophy, theology, canon law, and legal theory. He is currently a long-term member at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. His publications include *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfir*, eds. Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro, and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2015); *L'imamat et l'Occultation selon l'imamisme: Étude bibliographique et histoire des textes* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); and *Studies in Medieval Islamic Intellectual Traditions* (with Sabine Schmidtke; Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2017).

Glen W. Bowersock is an authority on Greek, Roman, and Near Eastern history and culture as well as the classical tradition in modern literature. He uses his exceptional knowledge of classical texts in many languages, together with inscriptions, coins,

mosaics, and archaeological remains, to illuminate the mingling of different cultures and to draw unexpected and revelatory conclusions. His research interests include the Greek East in the Roman Empire and late antiquity as well as pre-Islamic Arabia. He is the author of over 400 articles and a dozen books, including *Augustus and the Greek World* (1965), *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (1969), *Julian the Apostate* (1978), *Roman Arabia* (1983), *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (1990), *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (1994), *Martyrdom and Rome* (1995), *Mosaics as History: The Near East from Late Antiquity to Islam* (2006), *From Gibbon to Auden: Essays on the Classical Tradition* (2009), *The Throne of Adulis: Red Sea Wars on the Eve of Islam* (2013), and *The Crucible of Islam* (2017).

Nathalie Peutz is a cultural anthropologist who has conducted wide-ranging, ethnographic research in Yemen, Djibouti, and Somaliland. She is the author of *Islands of Heritage: Conservation and Transformation in Yemen* (Stanford University Press, 2018) and co-editor of *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement* (with Nicholas De Genova, Duke University Press, 2010). Peutz' research explores shifting forms of sovereignty and governance in the Western Indian Ocean region. She is interested in the effects of international regulatory regimes (migration regimes, environmental governance) on the marginalized communities they intend to protect, including refugees, migrants, and ethnic or linguistic minorities. As her research demonstrates, insights into the lived experience of deportation or the constraints of development and humanitarian aid in this strategically vital region contributes to a better understanding of how these regimes produce new forms of mobility and immobility globally. Peutz' latest book, *Islands of Heritage: Conservation and Transformation in Yemen*, examines the impact of environmental conservation, development, and heritage projects in prewar Yemen by tracing their intersections in Soqatra, the largest island of Yemen's Soqatra Archipelago and one of the most biologically diverse places in the world. Currently a member of the Princeton

IAS (AY 2019–2020), Nathalie Peutz is writing a book on Yemeni refugees and Ethiopian migrants in the Horn of Africa.

Tentatively titled, *Gate of Tears: Migration and Impasse in Yemen and the Horn of Africa*, this work evaluates the impact of the UNHCR's new Global Compact on Refugees in Djibouti, one of the pilot countries for the UN's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

Christian Robin a member of Institut de France (Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres) and emeritus Directeur de recherche, classe exceptionnelle at CNRS, where he served as Documentalist, Researcher since 1970. His research interest is History of Arabia since ancient times to the early centuries of Islam. He is a member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres since 2005, and was honored to receive a *Festschrift Sabaeen Studies* in the same year. He is Fellow of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (Berlin) and ex-Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (Rome) and received the decoration of the Légion d'honneur on 2008. Prof. Robin is the founder and Director of the French Center of Research in Sanaa "Centre français d'Études yéménites" (Yemen, 1982-1986). He directed several more research institutions: Institut de Recherches et d'Études sur le Monde arabe et musulman (CNRS, Aix-Marseille, 1997-2000), Laboratoire des Études sémitiques anciennes (CNRS, Aix-Marseille I, II & III, 2001-2006), Orient & Méditerranée (CNRS, Paris IV, Paris I, EPHE and Collège de France 2006-2010), as well as Research Programs: Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions (10th Century BC — 10th Century AD, INTAS, (Russian, British, French and Italian teams, 1994-1996), Incense Long Distance Trade, Pre-Islamic Inscriptions and Antiquities of Hadramawt, INTAS (Russian, French German and Italian teams, 2001-2004), De l'Antiquité à l'Islam, DATI, French Research Agency (ANR, 2005-2009), *Coranica*, French ANR and German DFG, 2011-2014 (CNRS-BBAW, 2011-2014). He also led and directed two Archaeological teams: the French archaeological Mission in Yemen (1978-2008), the French archaeological Mission in Najrân, Saudi Arabia (since 2006).

Sabine Schmidtke is a scholar of Islamic intellectual history whose pioneering research has transformed perspectives on the interrelations and connections among different strands of intellectual inquiry, across time, place, religions, and schools of thought. Schmidtke has applied rigorous study to the edition and critical analysis of manuscripts in Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, and Persian, and her work extends from Arabic-speaking countries to Iran, Russia, and Turkey. Schmidtke is currently working on the history of Islamic thought in the post-classical period, with a focus on reconstructing the textual heritage and the intellectual import of the Islamic intellectual world, from Iran and Central Asia to Turkey and Yemen. She is also engaged in a comprehensive study of the Muslim reception of the Bible, a topic on which she has published extensively over the past years.

Daniel Varisco is an anthropologist and historian who has worked in and on Yemen since 1978, as well as carrying out historical research and development consulting in Egypt and Qatar. He is currently President of the American Institute for Yemeni Studies and a member at the IAS, School of Historical Studies (AY 2019-2020). Daniel is former editor of *Contemporary Islam* and Editor-in-Chief of *CyberOrient* (cyberorient.net), moderator of the academic blog *Tabsir* (tabsir.net), former head of the Middle East Section of the American Anthropological Association, retired Professor of Anthropology at Hofstra University (1991-2014), and Research Professor and Coordinator of Social Science Research at Qatar University (2014-2017). He has published *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (2007), *Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation* (2005), *Medieval Folk Astronomy and Agriculture in Arabia and the Yemen* (1997), *Medieval Agriculture and Islamic Science: The Almanac of a Yemeni Sultan* (1994) and numerous articles and book reviews.