

Sana'a University publishes a festschrift in honor of leading archeologists

Sana'a University has published "Sabaeen Studies," a host of archeological, epigraphical and historical essays written in Arabic, English, French and German, in honor of Prof. Yusuf M. Abdullah, Prof. Alessandro de Maigret and Prof. Christian Robin on the occasion of their 60th birthdays. A festival was held at Sana'a University on January 4, 2005, where the three celebrated scholars were honored and the book was released.

The celebration was in recognition of these scholars' plausible efforts and exertions they put into South Arabian studies.

Containing over eight hundred pages, the book was edited by Dr. Amida Sholan, Sabina Antonini and Dr. Mounir Arbach. Some 37 archeologists, scholars and researchers contributed to the festschrift (celebration publication) including Yemenis, Arabs and foreigners. The essays covered a variety of aspects related to Yemen's archeology and old history.

Worthwhile topics

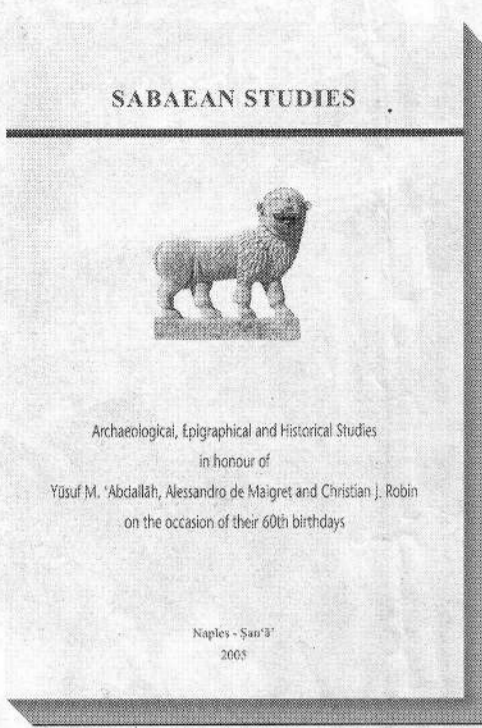
Printed in Italy at the expense of Sana'a University, the book contains a collection of interesting essays. It also includes many pictures and illustrations that help the understanding of the contents. One of the essays, written by Sabina Antonini, describes the first two campaigns at Hayd Ibn Aqil, the necropolis of Tamna'. The essay presents a preliminary outline of the scientific results obtained during two campaigns of excavations at Hayd Ibn Aqil, the necropolis located about two kilometers north of Tamna', the capital of the ancient kingdom of Qataban. The campaigns were carried out in 2003-2004. The expedition focused on investigating a number of tombs. It is noteworthy that this site had been investigated by an American mission in 1950.

Another essay, authored by Jean-Francois and Jean-Claude Roux,

reports new excavations in Shabwa, namely in the ancient inta-muros city, near al-Matna village, on the southern flank of al-Aqab range, some 100 meters east of the so-called main temple. Undertaken by the French Archeological mission, the excavation aimed at obtaining a new archeological sequence from the old city of Shabwa to complement the earlier sequence which lacked some chronological phases. One of the important discoveries was an original "massive earth structures" architecture. The excavation provided a preliminary sequence ranging from the 14th-12th centuries BC to the middle of the 3rd century AD.

Vittoria Buffa, member of the Italian Archeological Mission and German-Russian Archeological Mission to Lahj, Yemen, presented an essay titled "Cults, symbols, and rituals in the late prehistory of Ancient Yemen: Some questions from Sabr." The author states that the Sabr culture developed on the coast of the Gulf of Aden during the 3rd and 2nd millennium and ceased to exist in the first half of the 1st millennium BC. Excavations in the Wadi Tuban Delta and on the coast of the Gulf of Aden revealed that Sabr culture represented two subsistence modes: agricultural settlements - the most important one being the eponymous site of Sabr - and shell-middens, sites with a marine-oriented economy.

Paolo Costa's concise essay tackled the defenses of the city of Sana'a through the ages. The author mentions that the name Sana'a means "well-fortified." The writer describes the types of fortifications such as the "constructions designed to prevent entrance into the area by means of massive walls which were defensible from a sentry walk and could be entered only through a few gates, all of them of difficult bent access." Drawing on many sources, the



author describes Sana'a defenses in comparison to other Yemeni cities taking into account the historical political changes.

On the other hand, Barbara Davide and Roberto Petriaggi wrote an essay which confirms records of economic exchanges among the civilizations in the past by means of underwater archeological findings in the port of Qani'. The underwater excavations produced several ceramic artifacts originated in Mediterranean countries. The ancient ports of Yemen were Mouza and Okelis on the Red Sea and Aden, Qani' and Moscha on the Indian Ocean. Qani' and Moscha were called the ports of incense. Ships plied between them and India.

The paper of Christopher Edens explores early agriculture in the highlands of Yemen. The author sheds light on the characteristics of the Bronze Age in Yemen's highland such as subsis-

tence activities, domestic arts, craft and trade and burial. His focal point, however, is the beginning of agriculture in Yemeni highland. He describes the patterns of traditional highland agriculture and the agricultural intensification.

Another essay draws attention to the Bronze Age sties in Bidbida, the northeastern highland of Yemen. Written by Abdu Ghaleb of Sana'a University, the essay describes a local team's visit to the Bidbida region, which is situated in the drier northeastern highlands of Yemen, between Sana'a to the west and Marib to the east. The main objective of the survey was to unearth and glean remains of the Bronze Age sties in this region. The mission documented some 20 archeological sites providing significant proof of an early settlement in Bidbida, dating back to the 3rd millennium BC.

Of these 20 sites, 12 were defined as settlement sites. They attested a remarkable culture, including circular, elliptical, rectangular, square and irregular structures with few associated stone artifacts and pottery shards.

Another interesting essay was about the rock-shelter painting in the Tihama foothills. Written by Edward Keall, the essay describes the painted rock-art in an area behind the city of Hays, in the immediate hills at the edge of the Tihama plain. With logical arguments, the author arrives at interesting conclusions.

There are many useful essays that focus on different aspects of the Yemeni archeology and Old Yemen's civilizations. The book can be described to be so much a gist of long years of research that it deserves to be read and, above all, to be a gesture of gratitude and appreciation towards three masters of archeology.

Archeologists' profiles

Yosuf Muhammad Abdullah



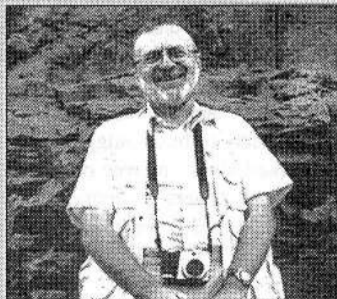
Yosuf Muhammad Abdullah was born on May 19, 1943 in Taiz province, Yemen. After gaining his high school certificate in Aden in 1962, he went to the American University in Beirut to study Arabic Language and Literature, obtaining his B.A. in 1967. For his M.A. (1970) Prof. Abdullah benefited from the supervision of Prof. Mahmud al-Gul assisted by both Prof. Ihsan Abbas and the well known British Professor Lancaster Harding. All three professors contributed to Abdullah's continued studies in the field of Semitic and ancient archeology, especially in those related to Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. Abdullah won a Ph.D. scholarship to study in Tubingen University in Germany with the help of Prof. Walter Muller, who is considered today one of the foremost authorities in Sabaeen studies. Abdullah specialized in Sabaeen and Islamic archeology and studies in 1975. In 1986 he was awarded the Alexander von Humboldt certificate for his post doctorate research in the field of epigraphy and archeology.

Yosuf Muhammad Abdullah's main research interest lies in the archeology of Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. He has made many journeys inside Yemen and is considered the leading expert in epigraphy from the area of al-Mi'sal and Hagar Qaniya. He discovered the first literary text in the form of a poem or religious hymn written in musnad (old Yemeni script) in 1977, deciphering its symbols, translating it into Arabic and publishing it. He was among the first to contribute to decoding the symbols of public al-zabur handwriting, found inscribed on wooden sticks in 1985. He also contributed to discovering and documenting a large number of Yemeni archeological locations and was head of the campaign that discovered the mummies in Shibam al-Ghiras in 1983.

Prof. Abdullah has taught in the University of Sana'a for nearly thirty years and still lectures on ancient Yemeni epigraphy and archeology. He has supervised many M.A. and Ph.D. theses and participated in M.A. and Ph.D. discussion committees at the King Sa'ud University in Saudi Arabia.

Prof. Abdullah has served in a member and trustee of many research and academic institutes. Moreover, he has been a board member for many journals and specialized books. He has been awarded many medals, including the medal in Literature and Science, first class in Yemen (1989) and the award of the Supreme Council for Literature and Arts in Kuwait (2001). He was appointed President of the General Organization for Antiquities, Museums and Manuscripts. Since 2004, Prof. Abdullah has been a consultant for the Minister of Culture and Tourism on museum and archeological affairs.

Christian Robin:



Christian Julien Robin, French national, was born on May 12, 1943. He is specialized in History of Arabia from the earliest times to the first years of Islam. He studied political science at the Institute d'etudes politiques de Paris as well as Arabic Language and Civilization.

Since 1978 he has been a researcher at the Centre National de la recherche scientifique, and currently he is directeur de recherche de 1re classe.

He was the founder of the French Archeological Mission in the Yemen Arab Republic (1978) and founder of the Centre francais d'etudes Yemenites, currently Centre francais d'archeologie et de sciences sociales de Sana'a, he was the first Director of the above mentioned Centre (1982-1987).

Prof. Robin served as Director of the

Institute de recherches et d'etudes sur le monde arabe et musulman from 1997 to 2000, and Joint Director of the same center during 1994-1997.

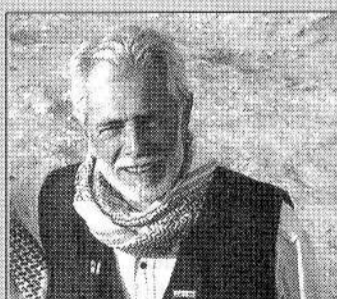
He was the Chairman of the Section 33 (Formation du monde moderne - Histoire moderne, Histoire contemporaine et Orientalisme) of the National Committee of the Scientific Research. (2000-2004)

Currently, Prof. Robin is the Director of the Laboratoire des etudes semitiques anciennes, UMR, Paris. He is also the Director of the French Archeological Mission in Hasi (Republic of Yemen).

He is the Editor of the Inventaire des inscriptions sudarabiques and Co-director of the Semitica, Arabia and Raydan journals.

Prof. Christian Robin was awarded corresponding member of the Academie des inscriptions et belles-lettres on October 31, 1997 and was awarded member of the same Academie on March 18, 2005.

Alessandro de Maigret



Alessandro de Maigret, Italian national, was born on August 14, 1943. He studied archeology of the Near East at the Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente in Rome University. On graduating in Classics (archeology) in 1971 and specializing in Eastern archeology in 1973, he spent several years excavating at Tell Mardikh/Ebla (1970-1976) with a team from Rome University directed by P. Matthiae as part of the Italian Archeological Mission in Syria.

In 1980, following his appointment as Associate Professor at the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples, he created the "Italian Archeological Mission in the Yemen Arab Republic," with funding from the Italian Foreign Ministry, the Ministry for the University and the National Council for Researches. This Mission, founded with the support of Sabatino Moscati and under the aegis of first the Istituto per l'Oriente of Rome

and subsequently, from 1983, of the Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (IsMEO), directed by Gherardo Gnoli, is still actively engaged in field work, having changed its name to the "Italian Archeological Mission in the Republic of Yemen."

In the years 1981-1985 the Mission carried out a preliminary recognition of the rich and multifarious prehistory of Yemen (investigated both on the tableland and in the desert and coastal plain). In 1981 it made the crucial discovery of the existence of a Bronze Age culture in Yemen (3rd-2nd millennium BC). More than fifty sites from this pre-Sabaeen phase were found in the mountainous region to the southeast of Sana'a. The data to emerge from the explorations and excavations carried out in 1984 and 1985 in four of the main settlements gave a first, quite complete picture of a culture showing clear affinities with the one that flourished in Palestine in the Early Bronze Age and which preceded the Southern Arabian civilization of the classic period.

In 1985 research into the Sabaeen period resulted in the discovery, on the eastern boundary of the desert, of a large, complex of ruins (Wadi Yala) which, after Marib, can be considered the most important Sabaeen site known in Yemen. An excavation conducted in the city (1987) provided essential data for clarifying the much debated chronology of Southern Arabian civilizations.

In the late 1980s the Italian Mission investigated a number of topics, including the types of necropolis located in the desert (turret tombs) and the tableland (hypogean tombs).

In 1990, A. de Maigret became full professor of Archeology and Art History of the Ancient Near East at the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples. The following year, he was elected President of "Arabia Antiqua (International Association for Studies of the Arabian Peninsula). This led in 1992 to his appointment by the Italian Foreign Ministry as Archeological Counsellor to the Italian Embassy in Riyadh.

He is a member of many institutes such as Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, Rome, and the Society for Arabian Studies, London. He is director of the series Repertorio Iconografico Sudarabico, co-director of the journal Arabia, and member of the scientific committees of other journals such as Arabian Epigraphy and Archeology (Copenhagen).

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam 11

Translated by Edward FitzGerald

Here with a loaf of bread
beneath the bough,
A flask of wine, a book of verse
-and thou
Beside me singing in the
wilderness -
The wilderness is paradise
enow

Short story: The Hidden Depression (part 2 of 2)

By: Salwa Yehia Al-Eryani

The Third Day

We thought Fun City might be a better place. It is more organized and people are fewer. Ticket prices are not cheap; therefore, people there are mostly those who have been abroad and know how one should behave in amusement parks and respect others. We all feel comfortable at Fun City. New games are always added and queues are arranged. Truthfully, what happened there was just a matter of bad luck. I wanted to write about it only to raise a topic for further discussion.

After our kids had fun playing several rounds of their favorite games, I lost my sister with whom I had come. I looked, but didn't find her. I called her on my mobile, but she didn't answer. She probably was either fighting with the kids to persuade them it was time to go or couldn't hear the mobile ringing due to the high volume of music playing. I remember it was Nancy Ajram's "Ah Wa Nos." I turned sideways to put the mobile in my handbag and at the same minute, I saw two of my friend. I hadn't seen them since university. We hugged each other warmly and asked about each other's lives.

I thought afterwards that in that moment, I hadn't put the mobile in my bag, but that it slipped outside the bag and fell on the floor. I couldn't hear it fall on the floor because of "Ah Wa Nos." Also, the kids around me were making an enormous racket, in addition to the laughter and shouts. After I left them, I found my sister. We walked toward the door to leave when I remembered my mobile. I looked, but couldn't find it. I threw my entire bag's contents on the floor, but found no mobile. I was so frustrated. We called my mobile using my sister's mobile, but no one answered, so we thought it still was on the floor somewhere. I went to the same place I'd met my friends, but didn't find it. I asked all the boys continually sweeping the floor. They smiled and said they didn't see anything.

We called my number again but this time, it was turned off, so we expected someone took it. We kept calling, but it was no use. I remembered my mobile's welcome note was "In Allah We Trust," so maybe when the person opened the mobile and read this note, he would feel guilty and give me back my mobile. I sent a message from my sister's mobile saying, "Please call this number +++. When you return the mobile, you will be rewarded an amount of money that will please you. Don't take what isn't yours. It is forbidden. The forbidden is punished through your health." As you may expect, I received no answer. People no longer fear what is forbidden or what doesn't belong to them. Or maybe people's health already is dreadful and stealing cannot make it any worse. At the Fun City entrance, I left a note to call my husband's number if anyone finds my mobile.

We left and all the pleasure I had felt

left me. I sighed and sighed, remembering how many numbers I had lost. I also was thinking how I can get new mobile. Honestly, I was hurt. In the car, we discussed why people lose their mobiles a lot. We decided it was a matter of bad luck or life's stresses that make people lose their concentration. Yet, what we couldn't explain was why people no longer fear the results of stealing others' belongings. Why don't people feel guilty when they steal? Why don't they care about punishment from Allah, from whom they know they can't escape, no matter where they hide? This is what I wanted to raise as a discussion topic.

The Final Day

We had had enough of Eid in Sana'a. The previous days made us feel, without any exaggeration, deeply depressed. We decided to go to Aden and enjoy the sun and sea. The next day, we were there. I was sitting on the beach watching my kids play and swim. I enjoyed myself simply seeing them enjoy themselves. My youngest son wasn't in the water but was building a sandcastle. I sighed, "Now this is real relaxation."

Suddenly, I saw a lady in black coming near my son. A young man followed her holding a small icebox. She was getting closer and closer to my son. She looked like a black fog. All of a sudden, I saw her grab my son. The young man behind her opened his box and gave her something that she tried to put in my son's mouth. My son was screaming and kicking.

I was so shocked that I didn't run to see what was happening to him until it seemed maybe a few minutes had passed. I was trying to determine whether it was a black fog or a nightmare or what. I ran to them and yelled at the woman, "Hey, what do you think you're doing?" She simply said she was giving him the vaccination for infantile paralysis. I lost my temper and shouted, "And do you just grab kids like that without asking them where their parents are? Without asking whether they just took this vaccination a few days ago or not? Without asking their names or who are the adults they came with?" My son was crying behind me. The woman answered that this was her duty and that any child under age 5 must take it. I agreed, but asked her to be sensible in implementing it. I looked sadly at my son's sandcastle. It was destroyed. He had crushed it while trying to escape this 'angel.'

We left the sun and sea to return to the hotel. The kids were very hungry, so we decided to eat in the hotel. We ordered fish, beefsteak, rice and French fries. An hour later, we all were vomiting and suffering diarrhea. It was very bad food poisoning. This lasted about a day and half, during which we spent the time in bed and in the toilet. The next day, as soon as we felt a little better, we got in the car and went back to Sana'a.

I am positive that the location is not the problem. We have a wonderful land and moderate weather. Our problem is the people in Yemen.