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The Yemeni tradition of firing automatic weapons at weddings succumbs to public safety

By: Haley Sweetlands Edwards

SANA'A, Nov. 23 (MinnPost) - It's wedding season in Yemen and traditionally, that's meant three things: music, dancing and joyously firing an array of pistols, assault rifles, rocket-launchers, anti-aircraft mortars and grenade launchers into the air to celebrate the occasion.

But in the past few years, that last part has been nixed from the program.

In 2007, the Yemeni government began implementing an ambitious disarmament and weapons-registration campaign in Sanaa, the nation's capital, and in many other cities around the country. The upshot is that Yemenis can no longer carry, brandish or fire weapons of any sort in urban and semi-urban districts — even on their sons' wedding nights.

"People still [fire guns] in the villages. You'll see it all over out there," said Muammar Abdul Jaleel, who runs a wedding supplies store in Sanaa. He

mimes firing an AK-47 in large half-circles above in head and laughs out loud. "But in the cities? No, no, no. Not anymore."

For the most part, urban Yemenis are in favor of the disarmament campaign, and are willing to simply adapt their old traditions to a new, gun-less environment. Most urban weddings now feature deafening fireworks displays, which are said to sound remarkably similar to an assault rifle being unloaded into a cement wall. Most urban grooms now pose for pictures with an ornamental assault rifle instead of the real thing. (A least one particularly entrepreneurial vendor in Sanaa has begun renting out bedazzled, gold-inflected AK-47s for just that purpose, Jaleel, the store owner, said.)

"It's a lot better now — it's safer, at least. Before, people would sometimes get hit by bullets accidentally," said Mufudh Said, who sells bouquets of fake flowers for weddings from his small store in Sanaa. "It was terrible."

But a handful of Yemenis say the government's anti-gun campaigns are an affront to not only wedding traditions, but also to a deeply revered sense of autonomy among tribal and community leaders.

"Firing guns for celebrations has been a tradition passed on from father to son



Government anti-arms strategy is gradually inching its way despite the traditional barriers in which weapons represent pride and safety for many Yemeni families.

for generations," said Abdullah Hassan, who has lived in Sanaa for the last six years, but grew up in a small village, where owning a gun is a symbol of social status and manhood. "Guns are a part of being Yemeni," he said.

While there are no good statistics on how many guns are in Yemen today, a United Nations-sponsored study from 2007 indicated there are up to 17 million firearms in Yemen, a country of only 22

million people. Other internal studies and media reports put the number of guns around 50 million.

"Every man in Yemen has a gun. Every single man," said Mohammed Said, a student in Sanaa. "That will never go away."

But the government is doing its best to change that mentality, in part because of the growing strength of Al Qaeda in Yemen, and in part because of concerns over its own ability to effectively govern in vast regions of the country where tribal law dominates. In Saada Province, the government has been waging a war against heavily armed Shia rebels, called Houthis, since August. In YouTube videos, Houthis brandish an arsenal of weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades and anti-aircraft missiles.

"Of course the availability of arms in the hands of citizens provides a base for extremism and terrorism," said Sheikh Abdul-Rahman Al-Marwani, the president of Dar Al-Salam, a Sanaa-based organization that works to disarm

citizens and mediate armed tribal disputes in the Yemeni countryside.

In June, 35 people died in shoot-outs over land disputes, and an estimated 2,000 more die every year from gun-fueled arguments and long-standing tribal vendettas, according to the ministry of interior.

Al-Marwani said the massive proliferation of guns in Yemen is due in part to the fact that many Yemenis have no faith in the judicial system, and so turn to guns to defend themselves.

Other scholars attribute Yemen's pervasive gun culture to the succession of highly armed regimes — the Ottomans, the British and then the Soviets — that dominated Yemen throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and left their weapons behind when they split town. The problem was exacerbated when Yemen was divided into two warring countries during the Cold War — the Yemen Arab Republic in the north and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south — both of which were saturated with huge numbers of weapons from Soviet and American allies.

Yemeni officials have proposed two bills in the last four years — one in 2005

and one in 2007 — that would have restricted the sale of firearms or required licenses for existing firearms. Both were met with scathing opposition by tribal leaders in the Yemeni parliament. Neither passed.

The ministry of interior estimates it has confiscated roughly 300,000 weapons since 2007, and tens of thousands more after a 2005 campaign that allowed the government to "buy back" heavy artillery like rocket propelled grenades from tribal leaders.

With or without the celebratory spray of bullets, wedding season in Yemen is in no danger of slowing. One wedding shop owner in Sanaa estimated that there are a hundred weddings in Sanaa every week in the months after Ramadan, and judging by the cacophony of music, fireworks and women's ululations on the streets of Sanaa, he might be right.

"People shouldn't worry so much about guns or no guns," said Bilal Al-Gunade, who has been selling wedding paraphernalia to Sanaa residents for three years. "First, it's cheaper not to buy bullets. They are expensive, and fireworks are cheap. And second? Dancing is free."

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Words of Wisdom



Many countries hold elections. Even when these are not rigged, they tend to cement the old patron-clientele relations in a new grab. The reason is that the people in power use their connections (and state funds, media, bureaucracy, etc.) to achieve the election results they want. The result is that they create docile parliaments. Elections thus end up enabling those in power to hold on to it.

Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf, (1951 - 1999) Founder of Yemen Times



OUR OPINION

Cradle to Cradle

The life cycle of people starts with birth and ends with death. In Yemen, the productive process of people and projects usually ends with their demise. Other people who want to work on the same issues start from scratch, and if they are clever they try to synergize with others who are working on the same themes in parallel so at least people or projects that are happening in the same time have some expertise exchange.

The notion of cradle to cradle, or in other words a legacy that is passed and grown over the generations, does not exist. This is not only the issue with professional life and the development of projects. It also applies to traditional vocations kept in the family, such as carpenters, butchers, goldsmiths and so on. The children take over the family occupation without much renovation to it. They usually add a little here and there according to the circumstances, and this is why it takes a very long time for evolution to take place, and why the use of new technology, for example, is strongly resisted. "This is how we were taught to do things" is often the answer to why new generations do not improvise and express their individuality.

The national policies at a political level, and the family practices at a very local level all foster this lack of innovative independent thinking. This short sightedness does not allow for building up projects through generations. It does not encourage sustainability and wastes a lot of money, time and efforts.

Perhaps the only exception for this is some family businesses which actually prepare and train the next generations to take over the family business and carry on the legacy. The few Yemeni businesses that have grown and are today leading the local economy are successful because the attitude of the parents is to make their projects live on through their children.

We need this vision to be adopted by families and policy makers in all sectors of life. We need community leaders, heads of government projects, ministers, and everyone with authority to consider their work as a legacy that should be passed on to the new generations in order for the work to yield its fruit. Many managers actually do the opposite when they are either promoted, or leave for another job.

They control information and refuse to pass it on, fearing that if his or her successor will be good, then people will say that the new manager was better than the previous one.

The best interest of their business, or the country as a whole is not a point of consideration for them.

We need to rewire our brains, and think about everything we do, even if it is simply passing on books from one child to a sibling with notes on how this reference book can be used effectively. Building on each other's work will help speed up the development process and spare us a lot of time and disappointment. Let us think of the new generations whenever we do anything, or use our resources whether it is the environment, the public transport or even the toilet. Instead of thinking from cradle to grave, let our motto be from cradle to cradle for a better future for all the new cradles to come.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Don't confuse the Huthis with the Zaidis

By: Mshari Al-Zaydi

The biggest mistake that could be made with the Huthi crisis in Saudi Arabia is portraying these clashes as a confrontation between the Sunnis and the [Shiite] Zaidi sect.

In this article, I intend to speak about doctrinal and sectarian issues, rather than political issues, because the doctrinal or sectarian mentality is the mentality that dominates the Arab world. This issue should also be discussed because while it is not wrong to avoid broaching the subject of sectarian violence under the pretext of not inflaming the situation, the situation is already inflamed.

Therefore falling into the trap of initiating a Sunni - Zaidi conflict is exactly what those who have unleashed the Huthis wish to happen. The internal divisions in the [Shiite] Zaidi sect have escalated to the point that the Huthis have completely taken over the Zaidi structure that has existed in Yemen for centuries. The Zaidi sect has existed in Yemen since the Rassid Imamate, and the first Imam of Yemen, al-Hadi Yahya Bin al-Hussain Bin al-Qasim ar-Rassid, settled in Yemen in the 9th century AD. The Rassid Imam's were the descendants of Imam Zaid Bin Ali Bin al-Hussain Bin Ali Bin Abu Talib, whose lineage can be traced back to Caliph Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law.

What is happening now is that the Zaidi sect has been taken over by the Huthis, with secondary juristic views of the Zaidi doctrine being brought to public attention at the expense of the sect's more traditional features. Observers and researchers in Yemen are aware of this phenomenon, especially the Zaidi intellectuals.

As one of the Zaidi sects most notable figures, Mohamed Bin Ismail Bin al-Amir al-Sana'ani, explained many centuries ago, the Zaidi sect is not one that clings to its viewpoint, references, and traditions. It is a sect that is open to development

and improvement, and even encompasses [the ideas of] Salafist clerics, such as Sheikh Mohamed Ibn Abd-al-Wahab and Muhammad ash-Shawkani. The Zaidi sect also encompassed religious figures who took the Zaidi doctrine to the extreme, such as Imam Abdullah Bin Hamza who massacred a group of his subjects known as the "al-Mutrafeya" because they argued that it was not mandatory that a ruling imam be a descendant of Al-Hassan or Al-Hussein. The Zaidi sect also includes independent jurists and freethinkers, like Mohamed Bin Ibrahim Bin al-Wazir, who died in 1437, and who advocated freeing oneself from all sectarian and doctrinal attachments and solely embracing the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah. And so the Zaidi sect included freethinkers, as well as fanatics.

So the Zaidi doctrine is a flexible and wide-ranging one that contains the potential for progress and development in all directions. It's most fundamental belief is the adoption of the Mu'tazilli doctrine of favoring the 4th Caliph Ali Bin Abi Talib, over Islam's first two Caliphs, Abu Bark and Omar Ibn Al-Khattab. However the Zaidi sect does not sanction the abuse or insult of the first two Caliphs and disowns anybody that does so. Zaidi writings that date back to when Imam al-Hadi first settled in Yemen from Hijaz confirm this.

So where did former Huthi leader, Hussein Badreddin al-Huthi, who was killed in September 2004, get his [Shiite] Twelver doctrine regarding the Caliphs and the Prophet's Companions, especially in light of the fact that the traditional Zaidi position on this lies somewhere between the Sunni and Shiite position?

Why did Hussein al-Huthi move even further towards the Khomeinist trend, instead of just being content with the traditional [Shiite] Twelver doctrine? Before people begin to think that we are just theorizing, let me quote an excerpt from a series of booklets attributed to Hussein Badreddin al-Huthi and

sent to me by my friend, the Yemeni researcher Naguib Ghalab. This literature is comprised of transcripts of lectures and lessons given by Hussein al-Huthi to his followers in Sa'dah and elsewhere. Most of these booklets deal with interpretations of the Holy Quran, and this literature continues to be circulated on a small-scale.

In these lessons, Hussein al-Huthi expresses an extremist ideology that latches onto [Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah] Khomeini's radical vision of the world, but in an even more zealous manner.

In this literature, al-Huthi states that the Sunnis have been defeated throughout history because they failed to support Ali Ibn Abi Talib. In the booklet on the interpretation of Surat al-Maeda, Hussein al-Huthi said "It would be foolish to bind ourselves to them [the Sunnis] or even think that it is possible to unite with them. If we wanted to unite with them, they would ask us to go under their banner. They would never accept anybody from Ahl al-Bayt [descendants of the Prophet]."

Later on in this same booklet, al-Huthi describes the evolution of Iran, and Khomeini's role during the reign of the Shah. He then specifies the ideal characteristics of a ruler, favourably comparing them with Khomeini and saying "Whoever holds these divine characteristics and qualities must be a man who can build a great nation. Those who possess such attributes... can build great nations. Today Iran is poles apart from the Iran of the pre-Islamic revolution era, although only a relatively short amount of time has passed since the revolution, an amount of time no longer than the reign of any of the Kings who ruled the country prior to the revolution."

Al-Huthi added "The Muslim community will not succeed, and will not be rescued from the humiliations that it is suffering, unless it returns to them" by which he means Ahl al-Bayt.

I have scanned through many other similar booklets attributed to Hussein al-Huthi, and many of them include very extremist

ideology. Just for the record, these texts were taught by the Huthis, and as we can see, they contain evidence of the Huthi rebels' devotion to the Khomeinist revolutionary project.

Hussein al-Huthi's father was the Islamic cleric Badreddin al-Huthi, who was one of the senior religious scholars of Sa'dah. Badreddin al-Huthi himself was an ambitious man who sought to revive Imamate rule in Yemen.

In an interview with the media, Yemeni politician and intellectual Dr. Qasim Salam said "Badreddin al-Huthi previously claimed the position of Imam during the reign of Imam Yahya Muhammad Hamid ed-Din (assassinated 1948). He received pledges of allegiance but was later imprisoned. Following the 26 September [1962] revolution, Badreddin al-Huthi claimed the position of Imam once again and fought against the Yemen Arab Republic in Sa'dah, but was defeated. What is happening now is a continuation of what happened before, but what is new is that this has entered a new phase with the [Huthi] leaders no longer claiming the title of Imam in the traditional sense, but rather they want to transform Sa'dah into a base for the Safavid doctrine."

Badreddin al-Huthi was not sympathetic to the Sana'a government during the 1994 war, and instead sided with the southern separatists. He did this not because he supported the socialists, but rather due to his hatred of the government in Sana'a which had broken away from Imamate rule and allied itself with the Salafists who - according to Badreddin al-Huthi - are the enemies of Ahl al-Bayt. Badreddin al-Huthi also was involved in fierce conflict with Yemeni Salafist clerics, such as Sheikh Muqbal al-Wade'ei, who was a Salafist preacher in Sa'dah itself.

The Huthis are an extremist version of the Zaidi sect, and some researchers believe they are an extension of a well-known Zaidi offshoot, the al-Jarodiah sect. According to Yemeni researcher Zaid al-Wazir, who published an article entitled on this subject in the Yemeni magazine "Al-Masser" which is published by the Yemeni Heritage and Research Centre, the al-Jarodiah sect differ from the Zaidi sect in not stipulating that the ruling Imam must be a descendant of Al-Hassan or Al-Hussein. Al-Wazir also indicated that the al-Jarodiah sect contends that secret documents were provided to ensure that Ali Ibn Abi Talib became the first Caliph following the death of Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] but that Abu Bark and Omar Ibn Al-Khattab covered this up.

Zaid al-Wazir examined the circumstances surrounding the rise of the al-Jarodiah sect, whose emergence coincided with the

emergence of the Zaidi sect. Al-Jaroud Al-Abdi who was a disciple of Imam Zaid Bin Ali, and who the al-Jarodiah sect is named after, was not actually a Zaidi. In fact Al-Jaroud Al-Abdi and his followers formed a separate sect which infiltrated the Zaidi sect and remained a part of it. Some Zaidi sheikhs, jurists, and rulers utilize the al-Jarodiah doctrine during critical moments. For example, Imam Abdullah Bin Hamza utilized this in order to establish the Imamate rule of the Alawite dynasty, whilst Zaidi jurists used the al-Jarodiah doctrine when engaging in fierce conflict with Sunni rivals, as the Huthi insurgents are doing now.

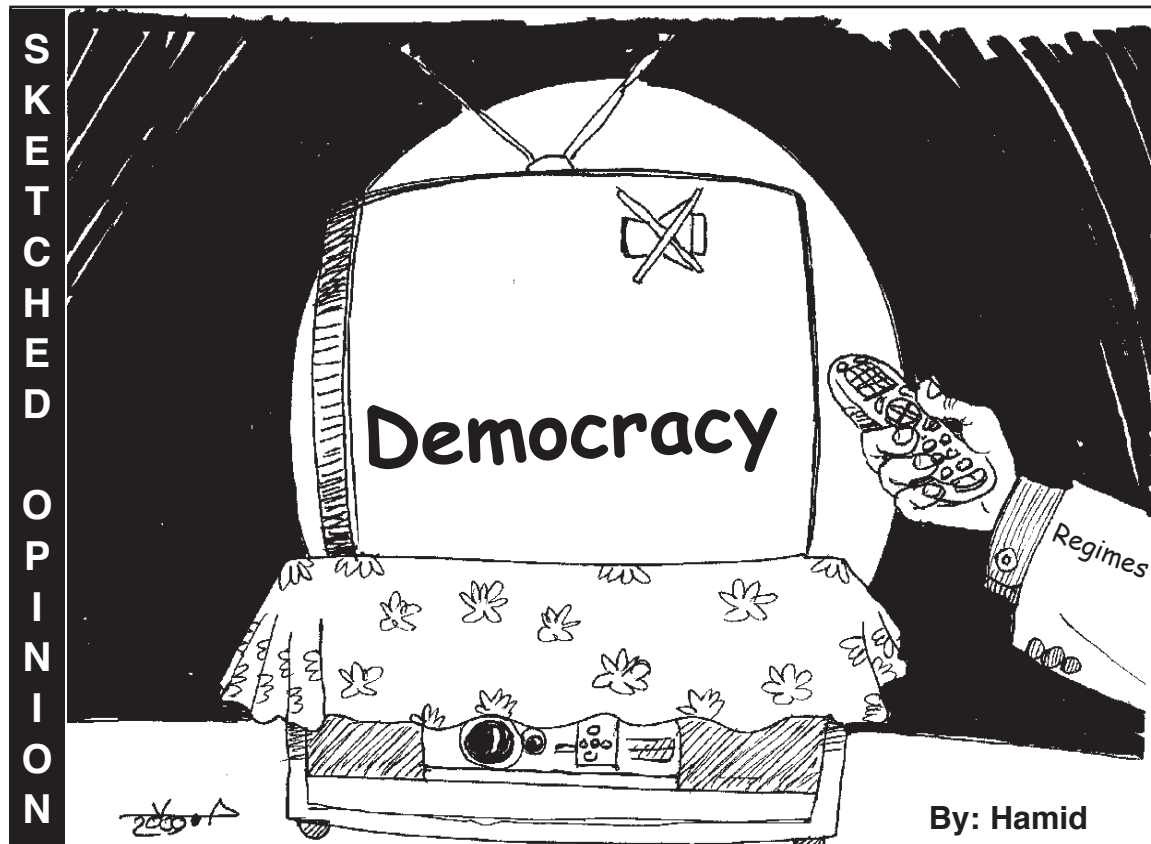
Iran's cunning lies in its ability to cast its political influence on this sub-group within the Zaidi sect, stoking their anger, until they have taken over the entire sect itself. Iran also practiced this same policy of entangling neutral groups [in regional issues] with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

It is well-known that Lebanon's Shiite community is originally from the traditional Shiite sect that follows the great Shiite jurist Mohsen al-Amali. They traditionally followed their own doctrine, and did not embrace Khomeini's Wilayah al-Faqih [Guardianship of the Jurists]. However after Hezbollah had been established by Khomeini's Iran, the party took over its [Shiite] opposition in Lebanon to become the symbol of the Lebanese Shiite community, and objections to the Wilayah al-Faqih decreased.

There is now fear that the Yemeni Huthis will be portrayed as Zaidis due to the public's lack of knowledge on the differences between them. Examples of this can clearly be seen in the mistakes made by some media who described the Huthis as Zaidis, or who believe that all Zaidis are Twelver Shiites, or who assume that all Twelver Shiites embrace the Khomeini doctrine. This reflects ridiculous misconceptions and is completely ignorant [of the reality], such mistakes serve to increase sectarian tensions which are fundamentally based upon ignorance and hatred.

This is a complex subject, and research experts, especially from Yemen, have a lot to say about this. This article is nothing but a signpost on the road, an attempt to ensure that we do not ignore what is happening and take the wrong path and insult an ancient Yemeni culture by being ignorant of the truth. We must help those who are not aware of the Iranian Mullah's plans to tear the Zaidis away from their Arab surroundings. We must look for the Khomeinist finger-prints in everything that is happening in the Shiite [international] community, including the politicization and exploitation of certain issues, just as the Muslim Brotherhood have done in a Sunni-framework

Mshari Al-Zaydi is a Saudi journalist and expert on Islamic movements and Islamic fundamentalism as well as Saudi affairs



By: Hamid

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JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE CAPITAL (7)

A football match every day, maybe

By: Judith Spiegel
For the Yemen Times

Every day, before or after school, they are playing on the dusty terrain near my house in the Old City. Some of them wear t-shirts with "Ronaldinho" or "Eto'o" on their backs. The little football players are not bothered by the parked cars. The cars that pass by are not bothered by them. Every second day a ball is driven over. The boys continue to play with a flat ball. Nothing can keep them from playing their favourite game.

Near Bab al Jemen there is a small place that sells chips. The name of the shop is Liverpool. In a barbershop not far from the FC Liverpool chips, FC Barcelona towels decorate the walls. In Wadi Dahr I meet a boy wearing an FC Ajax shirt. In a shisha-café I see a big poster of Zinedine Zidane. Admittedly, both Zinedine Zidane and Ajax have seen better years, but it is the sign of



love for football I am interested in. I check some guide books and indeed, they all say that the Yemeni are great football lovers.

Does this mean watching FC Barcelona against Real Madrid at home? Or do they go by the thousands to the stadium and watch their favourite local team as well? I would love to join them one day, so let's ask around.

Thursday 22 October, 4 PM

Mohammed: "Maybe there is a match in the Tahrir-stadium on Friday"

Murad: "My friend says that there maybe is a match on Friday in the Tahrir-stadium"

The "maybe" requires a visit to the stadium, to find out the details about tomorrow's match. There, just off Tahrir square, a training session is taking place. The coach is counting the times the ball is played between the group without the guy in the middle being able to catch it. A handful of men is watching this from the concrete steps on the west side of the stadium. Enjoying the smell of grass

and sunflower seeds I join them for a while. I ask the man who's sitting next to me about tomorrow's match. He replies: "No, no match, no match". Maybe he did not understand me, so let's double check. The guard of the stadium, while putting wedding invitations into envelopes, helpfully explains: "There is no match on Friday, only on Thursdays, but not today". A shopkeeper opposite the Tahrir-stadium believes otherwise: "Of course there is a match, every Friday, at 4 or 5 PM". The laundry man next door: "A match? Tomorrow? I don't think so. Maybe".

Friday 23 October, 4 PM.

The gate is closed. There is no match at Tahrir-stadium today, that much is clear. The only football one can find on this Friday is at the Military museum. Besides guns, plaques from befriended countries, stuffed animals from befriended countries, and Cadillacs, there are pictures galore of the Yemeni army in football outfits. Not actually playing football, but at least marching on a football field, in red shorts, blue socks and blue shirts, all 70's style. The army seems to have won some cups in table tennis as well. But it is not table

tennis I am after. Let's ask around one more time. What does the juice seller next to the stadium say about it? He has this enormous illuminated display of a football stadium above his shop so he will know. And he does: "There is a match on Saturday, at 3 PM".

Saturday 24 October, 3 PM

On my way to the stadium I hear sounds of people, yelling people, many people. There must be a match! This appears to be wishful haring. What I heard were just the sounds of the streets of Sana'a. The gates of the stadium are as closed as they were yesterday. Now, around the stadium there are many sport shops selling all kinds of football necessities. They will certainly know when there is a match.

Sport shopkeeper 1: "Every two or three days there is a match."

Sport shopkeeper 2 takes one of his sport newspapers: "No, no match today. This week no match. Maybe after one week. Perhaps you like other sports?"

Sport shopkeeper 3: "I do not know".

My mind is now set on a plan B, a trip to the Ali Muhsin Al-Muriasi stadium in Hasaba in order to ask around there. Suddenly, I see two guys in football outfits getting into a bus outside Tahrir-stadium that actually looks like a player's bus. What a nice coincidence. Although the driver is in some kind of hurry, I manage to ask one of the guys about the by now mythical match. "When and where will your team play a match?" He smiles and then gives me a rather discouraging answer: "never".

Sunday 25 October

Gates closed, no match.

Monday 26 October

No match.

Tuesday 27 October

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No match, how many more days shall I do the walk to the stadium? Over a meal of fool near the stadium my friend Mohammed, probably thinking that he has never met such an idiot before, suggests the easier way. He tells me that I should not go to the stadium, I should go to www.kooora.com.

Wednesday 28 October

I did. And yes, there is some information about the Yemeni football competition. Actually, it seems not to have been started yet. But according to the website it will. On Sunday 15 November. In Tahrir stadium? No. In Ali Muhsin Al-Muriasi stadium? No. Both Sana'a teams, Al Ahli and Al

Wahda, play an away match. In Ibb and Aden, respectively.

Friday 13 November

After two weeks ignoring people who swore they saw a match played in Sana'a on TV the night before, I meet the Tanzanian national team at a hotel. How lucky I am. They must be here for a reason and that reason must be football. Let's ask one of the guys in the cool track suits. "Yes, we are here for football. For a friendly game against the Yemeni's. When we play? Yesterday and the day before. We fly back in three hours". Right.

To be continued.



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Chapter Six – A Tough Decision

Written by Cathy Sewell
Illustrated by Blaise Sewell
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The newspaper team hears about a new story. They're hesitant to write about it in the Journal, because it is bad news.

After debating the topic, Matty announced his vote. "I say we run the story. Everyone is always more interested in bad news than good news."

"While that may be true, Matty," Cindy said softly, "I really don't want us to be the ones telling everyone bad news all of the time."

"Well, I think that as long as we report both good news and bad news, then we're doing our jobs!" José said proudly. "News is news. And as long as we report the truth, I believe we should report it all."

"Let's take a vote," Jake said to the team. "Who says we should run the new story? Raise your hand."

Slowly the bugs started to raise their hands. First Matty, which was really no surprise, then Jake and José lifted their hands up high. Everyone held their breath as Rocko lifted all of his arms. But there was no injury this time. Then Ricky and the troops all raised their hands. Cindy was the last to vote "yes," to make it unanimous.

"OK, that's it then," Jake said. "We have decided that we will report all the news from now on," and he finished his statement with such confidence that the Fly on the Wall Journal team all started clapping. Cindy grabbed her first-aid kit and headed to Rocko, just in case.

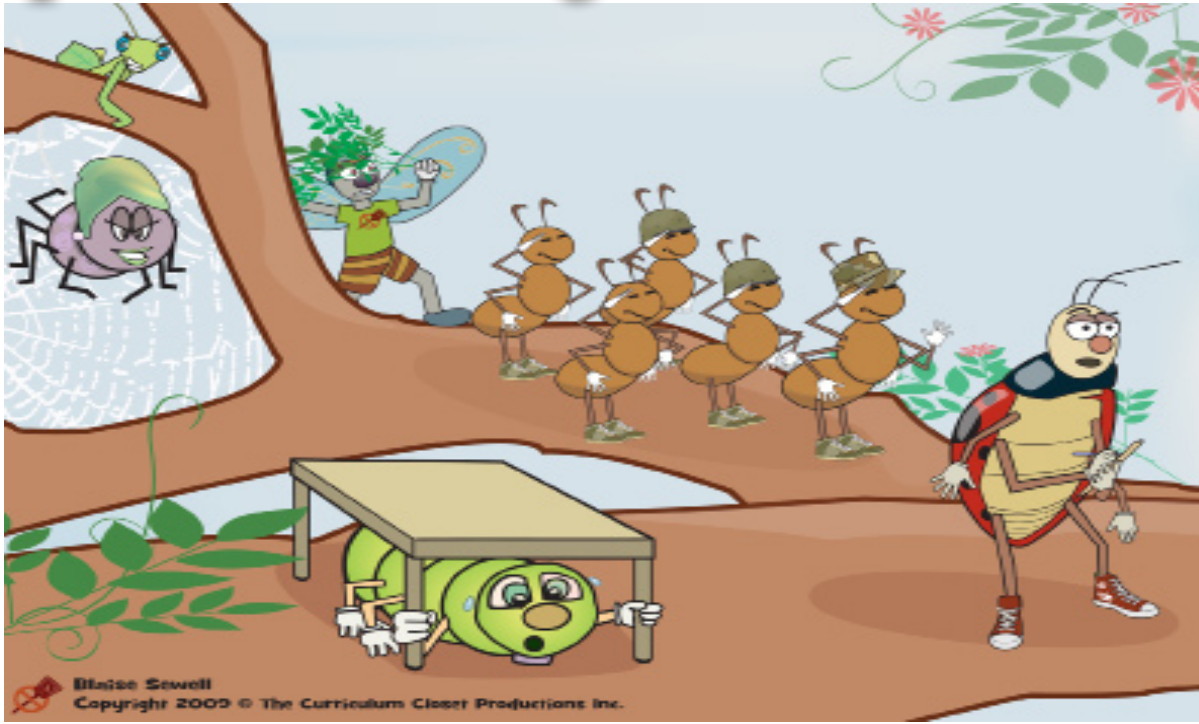
"I've been thinking," Jake said, as everyone quieted down. "Why don't we put other things in the Journal, along with our news stories?"

"Like what?" José asked.
"Well, I think it would be fun to include some kind of game or puzzle in our newspaper," Jake continued. "Like a maze or word puzzle, what do you guys think?"

"I LOVE that idea!" Cindy could not contain her excitement. "I could create something in my web, and Rocko could copy it into the Journal."

"Sounds lame to me," Matty said, yawning loudly and trying to look bored.

"But Matty, I was hoping you would



help me figure out how to get it onto the paper," Rocko said.

"Uh, Did I s... say lame?" Matty stammered. "I meant to say... uh... I meant to say 'sounds like a fabulous idea,'" Matty said, and everyone just grinned at each other. Not one of them could remember seeing Matty this excited about anything. Matty and Cindy immediately started working on their puzzle.

"I think it should be a maze," Cindy said, as she leaned forward on her folded front legs.

"What if we make our first puzzle about the newspaper?" Matty offered. He was trying to stay close to Cindy without getting stuck in her web. "I was thinking that at one end of the puzzle would be José and at the other end, he's trying to get to the news story."

"Perfect!" Cindy shouted, which startled the mantis. Matty had to grab onto the side of the branch or he would have fallen off.

As she danced across the web, Cindy created the challenging maze with Matty making suggestions.

José and Jake were on the other side of the branch discussing the next Fly on the Wall edition. Ricky and the troops waited for a new assignment. The green

blob in the corner was... well, it was still just hanging there.

"What's that?" Rocko whispered. Everyone just looked at him. He was the first to hear the noise.

It started off as a quiet hum, then it sounded a little like a whistle and by the time the rest of the newspaper team heard it, the sound became a roaring buzz. Rocko's knees knocked loudly and the leaves on the tree shook wildly.

The sound grew louder and louder. Bzzzz Bzzzz BZZZZZZZZZZ!!

Matty immediately disappeared into his background. Cindy crawled into the corner of her web. The ant troop stood bravely in a row. Rocko hid under his worktable. José did his best to blend into the tree branch saying, "I am the tree. I am the tree." Jake was stuck standing out in the open waiting for the enemy to arrive.

Reading Comprehension Questions & Activities:

1. A common newspaper phrase is "Bad news sells more newspapers than good news." What do you think this means? Explain this concept in your own words.
2. Create your own maze based on what Matty described in the story.
3. Who first heard the noise?
4. What do you think is making the noise?

Insect World:

How is Cindy able to walk across her web without getting stuck? Research to find out how this works. Draw a spider web to explain your findings.

Newspaper Connection:

Look for a puzzle in your newspaper to complete. If there isn't one, create your own puzzle using today's newspaper, or one of the chapters from the story.

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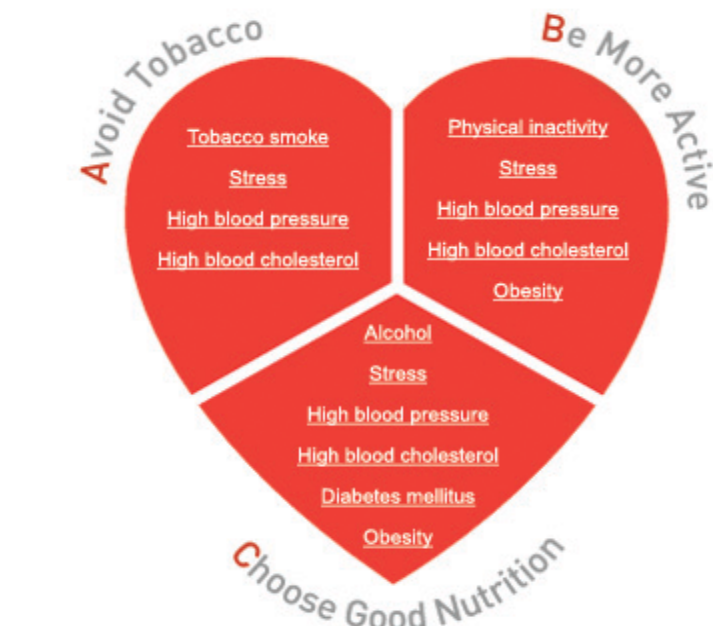


Prevent heart attack at an early age

Last week it was Faisal who visited me with chest pain. This week, it was Mohammed's turn to knock at my door. Mohammed staggered into my room assisted by his friends. It seems he and his friends had been to Foqm, a fishing village in the evening; all were sitting and chewing qat, when Mohammed developed a sharp pain in his chest. He gulped a cup of 'kawa' thinking that it would ease his pain. But the pain persisted and became severe. His friends decided to bring him to hospital. It took about half an hour to reach the hospital.

Mohammed was 36 years old, married with three sweet children. I know him as a fun loving, mostly seen chewing qat or smoking, even while working. He had a passion for eating, especially 'haneen'. Earlier this year, Mohammed's father passed away, succumbing to a third heart attack. I knew his father too and he was a chain smoker.

Mohammed was very apprehensive and could hardly speak. He was retching, breathing heavily and sweating profusely. There was panic in his eyes. His pulse was feeble; his heart beat around 40-45 times a minute. The nurse at the emergency room had difficulty recording his blood pressure. He had all the tell tale signs of a 'heart attack'. After administering a shot of morphine, we shifted him to the ICU of the medical ward where our team started working swiftly. The physician administered drips and drugs to increase his blood pressure. Oxygen was given to help him breathe easily and he was connected to a cardiac monitor. A nurse



took his ECG which revealed a massive heart attack with left bundle branch block. The physician administered 'Metalyse' in the drip to prevent any further blood clot inside his coronaries. At about 10.00 PM Mohammed went into ventricular fibrillation and before midnight he breathed his last.

I did not have any courage to look at his pregnant wife who was crying inconsolably. When a 70- or 80-year-old succumbs, he gets little attention — but Mohammed was only 36; too young to die due to a heart attack.

Why do some young men have heart attacks? And what does it tell us about heart disease in middle age and beyond?

Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) is very rare in young males. Though it was

thought to be a disease of senior citizens; 4% to 10% of all heart attacks occur before age 45, and most of these strike men. It's a reminder that men should not ignore warning signals just because they are "too young" to have heart disease. And since 'atherosclerosis' (fat deposition in the blood vessels) can start in youth, prevention should start early in life before problems develop.

What causes heart attack in young men?

In older men, nearly all heart attacks are caused by 'atherosclerotic blockages' in coronary arteries. CAD can occur in young adults also. About 60% of these young patients have disease of just one coronary artery, while older patients are more likely to have disease in two or

three arteries. Young patients can have abnormalities in the coronary artery leading to its spasm and block.

Each of these problems is tragic in its own right. But because it's both common and preventable, atherosclerosis is the greatest tragedy of all.

Smoking is the villain!

The lion's share of heart disease in young adults is caused by the same risk factors that cause coronary artery disease in older men. The risks include a family history of heart disease, smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, overweight, diabetes, lack of exercise and a lazy lifestyle. A man who is free of all these risks has a remarkably low chance of developing cardiovascular disease.

At all ages, smoking is the most powerful single contributor to atherosclerosis, and research continues to add to the evidence that exposure to secondhand smoke is also an important culprit.

It is shocking to note that 60-65% of people above 20 years smoke; 60% smoke up to 20 cigarettes daily and 35% smoke more than a pack. People tend to smoke more when they chew qat. 35-40% of the smokers smoke inside their houses also, seldom knowing that passive smoking can harm their pregnant wives and children. Passive smoking in women when they are pregnant leads to low birth weight babies. Low birth weight increases the risk of heart disease and stroke, later in life! Babies born small also have an increased risk of developing high blood pressure, insulin resistance, and high cholesterol in childhood. Obesity in

infancy and childhood adds to the risk.

How to turn the tide?

Here are some valuable guidelines to young people:

1. Don't smoke or chew qat.
2. Exercise at least an hour every day.
3. Eat a healthy diet rich in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits. Avoid fried food and fast food. Limit your meat intake.
4. Maintain a healthy weight.
6. Do relaxation exercises. Build a strong social network.
7. Visit your doctor regularly.

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Universal Children's Day



By Resolution 836 (IX) in

December 1954, the UN General Assembly recommended that all countries institute a Universal Children's Day, to be observed as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children all over the world, and to promote the protection, welfare and education of children.

The UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child on Nov. 20, 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Nov. 20,

1989.

The 1990 World Summit for Children in Copenhagen, Denmark, set standards aimed at boosting children's health and education. In May 2002, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children adopted an outcome document, "A World Fit for Children," which focused on four key priorities: promoting healthy lives, providing education, protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS.

However, about 9.7 million chil-

dren died in 2006 before their fifth birthday, mostly from treatable diseases such as malaria and pneumonia. More than half of the deaths were caused by malnutrition, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

About 42.5 million children do not have access to clean water, and 1.5 million children under five die each year due to the lack of clean water and basic hygiene facilities. About 2.5 million under 15 have been infected with HIV/AIDS.

The "Progress for Children: A

Report Card on Child Protection" report,

released by UNICEF, estimated that some 218 million children between five and 17 are working outside and 126 million are working in poor conditions.

More than 300,000 children around the world are forced to fight in wars, 2 million children are believed to be exploited through prostitution and pornography, 1.2 million are trafficked every year, and 40 million below the age of 15 suffer from abuse and neglect, the report says.



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Poor children face life's struggles with strong will

In some corners of the world, some children are enjoying their heavenly life, while others are suffering bitterness. But a strong will lightens the load of those suffering children and gives them hope.

Ugandan orphan feeds for siblings

With tears gushing from his eyes, which are irritated by cooking smoke, Denis Opoka keeps mixing maize flour in a saucepan while his younger sister and brother are waiting quietly.

Opoka, 14, has been running the family in a remote Ugandan village for several years after their parents were killed by a notorious Ugandan rebel group.

Living in a mud hut, Opoka always tried to come up with a way to keep his nine-year-old sister Innocent Apio and 12-year-old brother Samuel Onen fed and educated.

They dug up several small patches of farmland around the hut, planting maize, sweet potatoes and beans. The harvest, however, could barely sustain them after drought ruined the first season's crops earlier this year.

From time to time, Opoka works in the neighbor's garden in exchange for a little money to buy soap, candles or salt.

Opoka has to walk barefoot 5 km to Omoti Hill Primary School every morning. He is sitting in Primary Seven, for the second year, after he

failed to raise about 150,000 Ugandan shillings (about 85 U.S. dollars) for Senior One, although he passed the exams with a grade average of B.

His siblings are luckier: they are being educated at a nearby school, only five minutes' walk from their home.

Only when the sun starts setting can Opoka and his family get together again as they cook and eat supper. After that, the older brother sometimes corrects Apio's and Onen's homework and exam papers.

A paraffin lamp, the only thing that can extend their study time after sunset, was stolen recently, leaving them depending on candles borrowed from a neighbor.

At night, Opoka and his brother share a blanket, which doubles as a cover and a mat, while Apio uses a torn bed sheet.

Opoka hopes to join a vocational technical institute "so that I can get a job to pay school fees for my brother and sister."

Cairo boy dreaming to be a doctor
In Cairo, in a bustling street, a driver stopped his car to buy cigarettes.

A boy rushed to wipe the car skillfully, while nimbly dodging other cars racing past, his hands running a dust cloth from the window to the door.

He was paid 0.25 Egyptian pounds (0.05 U.S. dollars). This sum can buy almost nothing in Egypt. "It's better

than nothing," Ahmad said with a smile.

Ahmad, a six-grade boy, spent all his time outside of class on the streets earning some pocket money for his mother, who has been the backbone of the family with four children since their father died of illness last year.

Ahmed, 12, never visited Cairo's world-renowned pyramid across the Nile River.

Poverty kept him from crossing the river, but could not hold him back from dreaming to be a doctor. "I wish to be a doctor, and I can cure the diseases of my family members and the poor people," the boy declared.

Cameroon girl, breadwinner of family

Compared with Opoka and Ahmed, Josyane Quemajoux is fortunate since both of her parents are still alive. Nevertheless, the Cameroon girl cannot lead a life of leisure.

Her father had been a taxi driver before his car broke down two years ago. Now he is jobless.

The 11-year-old girl, together with her mother, are the family's only breadwinners.

Each afternoon after class, Josyane hurries to the Mokolo market in the capital city of Yaounde, where her mother owns a fruit stall.

Josyane stays there until dark while her mother goes back home to take



Denis Opoka, 14 years old, his younger sister Innocent Apio, nine years old, and his 12-year-old brother Samuel Owen live at Ajulu village, Patiko sub-county in the war-ravaged Gulu district, about 350 kilometers off Kampala, capital of Uganda. Denis Opoka runs the family after they lost their parents to the Lord Resistance Army, a Ugandan rebel group.

care of her younger siblings.

"A hundred CFA francs (0.2 dollars) for the large (orange), 60 for the small," Josyane told a customer while quickly picking up an orange and then deftly peeling it.

"Such a stall can bring us 1,000 francs every day, almost the same with selling bananas, ..., grilled fish can earn more, but its cost is high; mom does not have so much money," Josyane, an astute little businesswoman, explained.

The West African girl assumes the responsibility for her family, but has no future plans of her own. "Many of my classmates are just like me. I don't know what the life will be in the future."

Tale of reading boy in Germany

By: Xinhua writer Wu Liming

Tjark Nentwig, a 14-year-old boy, might be the only boy in the whole of Germany who has read "On Practice," a well-known article written by late Chinese leader Mao Zedong.

Reading Mao's works was not, by any means, an outburst of fever for Tjark.

Actually, his affection for reading has been cultivated by his family. Tjark's father, Ingo Nentwig, is a Sinologist and ethnologist with rich expertise on Chinese ethnic groups. His mother, Mareile Flitsch, is a professor at Zurich University in Switzerland. Both speak Mandarin fluently.

However, this choice of reading is still very rare for a 14-year-old boy. Tjark, who spends four to eight hours a day reading, is a reading boy in the true sense of the word.

Tjark and his family live in Roedinghausen, a small village near the northern German city of Hanover. During most of the week, Tjark's parents are out of town working while Tjark stays with his grandparents.

The three-storey house of Tjark's family is like a library. In each bedroom, sitting room, and in the study, of course, there are huge book shelves. The shelves were made by Tjark's



A child plays trombone at the Klingendes Museum in Berlin, Germany, Nov. 12, 2009. The museum is aimed at enlightening children in music world, giving them a chance to play varied instruments.

grandfather, a self-taught carpenter. However, the family has more books than the shelves can accommodate. So

quite a lot of books have to be kept in corners or in storage rooms. The majority of the books belong to

Tjark's father, and most of them are about China or were published in China.

"It's a pity I can't read most of them," Tjark sighed. In his own bedroom, there are two shelves full of books for juveniles.

Tjark said his favorite was "The Dwarves" by German writer Markus Heitz. The book series has been a major success in Germany and has long been a bestseller in the German-speaking world. In 2006, Heitz won a German prize for fantasy literature.

Tjark told Xinhua he used to love reading "The Lord of the Rings," adding that he regarded "The Dwarves" as a continuation of "The Lord of the Rings" since both tell exciting stories about the fantasy world.

But a big surprise was waiting on Tjark's desk: The German editions of "On Practice," "On Contradiction" and "On the Correct Handling of Contradiction Among the People," three renowned articles written by Mao Zedong.

Tjark said his father, who started to read Mao's works at the age of 16, had asked him to try to read Mao's articles.

Although Tjark just read a few pages of "On Practice," he said that the article tells people "not to rashly trust what is written in books; a written theory has to be proven by practice."

When he said these words, Tjark sounded like an adult. But he admitted that he did not fully understand the

articles. "I want to try; I believe one day I will read through them."

Tjark has cultivated a habit of reading at least one hour before going to sleep. He even spends four to eight hours reading when he is free.

"Of course it depends on my mood. Sometimes when I am free for a whole day and in no mood for computer, I often read for a whole day," he said.

When asked would he play computer or read a book if he had one-hour free time, Tjark said: "That would depend on my mood again. Sometimes I would dwell on the computer when I get a new game. But if there is nothing new, I would prefer reading."

Looking back, Tjark recalled he was drawn to Harry Potter when he was seven years old. Since then, he had been "addicted" to the fantasy series.

To Tjark, a book is the best vehicle to tell stories.

"Reading is the best way to make you feel on the scene of the story," he said.

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