

Travel and tourism in Yemen is to exceed YR 1 trillion in 2015

From doom to boom

BY WALID AL-SAQAF
FOR YEMEN TIMES

There are several signs for a healthier travel and tourism sector in Yemen as the flow of tourists has increased steadily in 2005, consequently placing Yemen in the second rank after UAE among all Arab countries in terms of tourism growth; a recent report by Qabas International Economic Consultants (QIEC) revealed.

This comes in correlation with the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC) report released earlier this year, which estimated that the travel and tourism sector in Yemen will generate more than YR 300 billion (USD 1.5 billion) of economic activity in 2005, and will grow three folds to a staggering YR one trillion by 2015.

The UK-based international organization said that Yemen will become the second fastest growing Arab country with a 5.9% annualized real growth rate in travel and tourism during (2006-2015) just ahead of Egypt with a nominal difference of 0.1%.

The high growth rate is partially attributed to the relative security in the last few years, compared to the late 1990s when kidnapping of foreign tourists was a phenomenon causing a drop in the number of tourists coming to the country.

The report gave hope by reiterating the tourism growth potentials in the country, which it viewed as mostly unexploited: "Yemen appears poised to regain its long-term level of growth forecast for Travel and Tourism after suffering some disappointing results in 2004 especially for Visitor Exports, which posted a significant loss for the year," the report said.

Yemen in the Arab world

Although Yemen's tourism share in the Arab world is relatively insignificant, the potential and possibilities in this sector will give it an edge in conditional if the country continues to enjoy good political stability and security.

While other countries, such as Egypt and the UAE, have almost reached saturated levels of tourism compelling them to face significant challenges to keep this momentum growing without massive transformations in their infrastructure, Yemen has a tourism industry that is at its infancy, but which will require massive investments particularly in the infrastructure and building human resources capability aspects.

The Arab countries' share of international tourism is among the least in the world. According to the report released by QIEC, in 2002, Arab countries altogether represented a mere 5.3 per cent of international tourism. However, Yemen's growth prospects is expected to increase its share of tourism revenues in the Arab world, and potentially increase the overall

share of Arab countries as a whole.

The World Tourism Organization described Yemen as "a hospitable and attractive tourism destination that is unique in its culture, civilization and diversity of terrain, and in featuring the coastal, sport, marine, and mountainous tourism attractions."

Contribution to GDP

The WTTTC report said that Yemen's travel and tourism industry is expected to contribute 1.9% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2005 (YR 50.5 billion or USD 253.2 million), rising in nominal terms to YR 133.7 billion or USD 367.5 million (1.8% of total) by 2015. Hence the sector's economic contribution (percent of total) should rise from 8.5% (YR 223.5 billion or USD 1,120.6 million) to 10.3% (YR 747.8 billion or USD 2,055.8 million) in this same period.

The report estimated that Yemen's travel and tourism would provide 417,246 jobs in 2005, which constitutes 7.2% of total employment, or one in every 13.9 jobs. By 2015, this should total 688,223 jobs, 8.6% of total employment or one in every 11.6 jobs. The 96,431 industry jobs account for 1.7% of total employment in 2005 and are forecast to total 126,202 jobs or 1.6% of the total by 2015.

"In Yemen, exports make up a very important share of travel and tourism's contribution to GDP," the report noted. Of total Yemen exports, the sector is expected to generate 13% (YR 134 billion or USD 671 million) in 2005, increasing to YR 528 billion, or USD 1,452 million (11.7% of total), in 2015.

Major challenges ahead

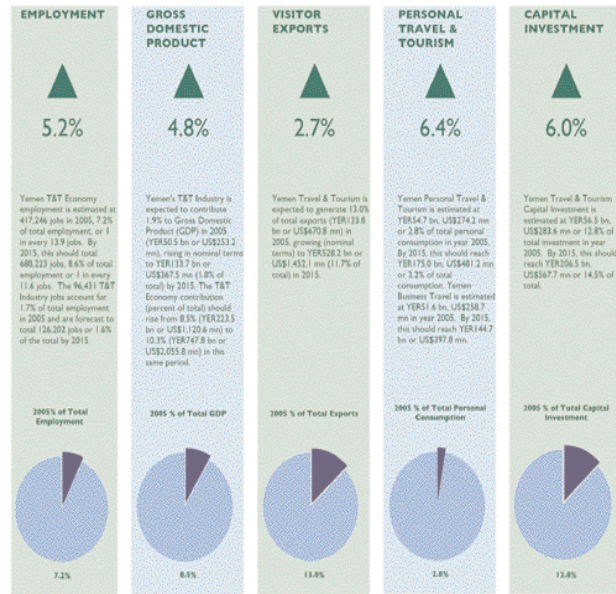
According to the governmental National Information Center, the major challenges facing Yemen are due to the weak infrastructure which cannot meet the growing demand in the tourism sector; the lack of qualified human capital which

aids in setting up the tourism industry and prepare the environment to become more tourism-friendly coupled with the lack of law enforcement particularly in regulating the carrying of weapons and lack of awareness of the importance of tourism are the most important challenges that lie ahead.

However, the Yemeni government is keen to address the importance of tourism and in fact called the year 2005, the year of tourism. Foreign Minister Dr. Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi told Asharq Al-Awsat regional daily in an interview published last week that the government is actively seeking foreign investments to develop the tourism sector. "Tourism can be developed in Yemen, for there are areas that have better tourist attractions than the places GCC tourists' visit," he said, noting that the revenues generated from tourism in Gulf countries could be matched and surpassed if the tourism industry in Yemen is developed properly.

Local tourism flourishing

Meanwhile, the local tourism has grown steadily in the last few years and in 2005 exceeded half a million tourists annually. Many of those tourists come from neighboring countries or are Yemenis residing abroad, while many are residents enjoying local tourism inside the



country; mainly the residents of inland cities visiting coastal areas to enjoy the Yemeni beaches and the pleasant weather; for example hotel rooms in the port Aden are usually fully booked weeks before the Eid vacation, causing inconvenience for many travelers who end up in tents or are forced to pay excessive fees for accommodation as a result of the shortage in supply.

Despite the positive contribution of local tourism to the national economy, economic experts believe that it is yet to be taken full advantage of and regulated to benefit a larger portion of the community. By facilitating investments in the tourism sector, limiting bureaucracy in movement of vehicles and people from and to the country, local tourism could double or triple in the coming years.

The National Information Center predicts by 2010, there will be more than 711,000 local tourists, while the number of foreign tourists may rise to about 150,000.

High court upholds death sentence of Jarallah's murderer

SANA'A- Oct.30- The High Court for Repeal, upheld the death sentence in the first instance on Ali Alsa'awani, murderer of Jarallah Omer, General Secretary of Yemeni Socialist Party. Sa'awani assassinated Jarallah after Jarallah had given his speech in the Conference hall during the third general conference of the Islah party on 28 December 2002.

Following the ruling announcement, at the end of the month of Ramadan, lawyer Dr. Mohamed Almikhlaifi, head of the follow up committee of Jarallah's assassination case, told the media that the high court had upheld the ruling of the first instance and appeal court. It ignored other requests that the lawyers of Jarallah have submitted. He added that it had even ignored the appeal court's instructions to interrogate the accused ones who were not questioned.

Mikhlaifi, head of the legal circle of the Socialist Party, considered the method with which the ruling was issued to be in compliance with the resolution of the

government. He pointed out that the resolution represents the government's efforts to hide the facts behind the assassination, which is known to all to have been politically motivated. There is an ongoing effort to conceal the organization that carried out the assassination.

It is worth mentioning that the ruling was surprised by the committees' methods. The prosecution was expecting the ruling during the month of Shaban. It has been issued at the end of Ramadan, close to the Eid vacation. He added that they were not notified with the outcome of the ruling and that the media did not cover it. This was also the case with the first instance and appeal ruling.

Almikhlaifi said that the avoidance of announcing the ruling through the media



Jarallah Omar

reflects the authority's desire to avoid reactions because of their attitude in considering the case as penal.

Alsa'awani assassinated the Socialist leader before 4000 representatives of the Islah Party and hundreds of their guests. This happened in the opening session of the conference in the presence of the party leaders and foreign and Arab diplomats.

The assassin admitted that he targeted Jarallah because he was the engineer of rapprochement between the Socialists and the Islah, the biggest parties in the Joint Meeting Parties, and former enemies.

He also confessed that he targeted the Islah because of their rapprochement with what he called the 'seculars'.

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Despite concerns Eid is an occasion of happiness

BY YASSER AL-MAYASI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

SANA'A- Oct.1- Eid is an important occasion for all Muslims; it is the religious occasion legislated by Allah for a variety of reasons, among which is getting rid of malice and envy among community members. Eid days are usually hard to forget, particularly on the part of children because mental images of the occasion remain in their memories. And among the elderly as well, as one can see the unforgettable meetings and the exchange of visits between relatives and friends, all dressed up in neat clothes carrying lovely smiles in their faces.

One can argue that the happiness of Eid used has shrunk more recently, as it has become confined to certain individuals and social classes who have good income. The economic conditions and the numerous requirements of living, as well as people being engaged in the search for subsistence makes them dislike this occasion due to the financial burden and constrains on limited budgets, as Eid is a demanding occasion with requirements should be met.

As the Eid day draws nearer, markets all over the Republic of Yemen become very crowded as people rush to buy what they need for Eid. The markets become flooded with imitated products and prices become prohibitive due to the absence of monitoring. Every trader free to conduct business as desired, for sellers the Eid is an occasion that should be exploited for making good profits.

Irrespective of the economic and financial concerns, there are several traditions and habits practiced during the days of Eid, however, they differ from one city to another. Yemen Times have toured markets and different locations to record the viewpoints of random individuals to comprehend what does Eid mean to them:

Ali Saif, a laborer, believes that Eid is an occasion of happiness, but in the old days, the happiness of Eid used to be better than now; today the economic conditions have become more difficult and the lack of the sources of income makes the days of Eid similar to the ordinary days. He confirmed that months of working before this religious occasion can not provided for the needs and requirements of Eid, and working during months preceding Eid can only cover the personal expenses. He asserted that his journey of struggle with life for subsistence started one year ago when he dropped out of school due to living conditions. "This case is applicable to many of my Yemeni friends whom I usually meet," he said. "The skyrocketing prices do not allow any person of lower income to bring about good condition for this occasion."

Rashid Abdullah, a guard working in Sana'a, confirmed that he prefers to stay in work for several reasons, among them the lack of money for traveling to his countryside, and his commitment to guarding the building. He indicated the expenses of traveling can be utilized for

buying clothes for his children. He prefers to buy clothes for his children and send them to his village to make his children happy. His salary is minimum wage and could not cover all his daily expenses but the need compelled him to stay in this work in the shadow of job scarcity. The problem of limited income laborers, he added, is enormous, particularly on the occasions of Eid and they feel sad for being unable to provide what is required for Eid. "The rich are no more concerned with sufferings of the poor", he said.

Abduljabbar, a university graduate working in the private sector, emphasized that Eid is a wonderful occasion, but with the existence of difficult conditions, it is not. He told he got a job in the private sector after huge effort ad he failed to get a job opportunity in the government. His salary, he added, can not cover his personal expenses, and when he remembers the pledges which have to be fulfilled, his agony is coupled with Eid: "the Eid liabilities changes happiness into misery". He believes the difficult living conditions and the rarity of job opportunities is the enemy of happiness, and the expenses of Eid increase, so the Yemeni human feels obliged to cope with life and attempts to invent happiness which is short-lived.

Abduljabbar confirmed that the happiness of Eid is never available except on the part of children who do not bear in mind the concerns of adults and the problems of living.

Tawfiq al-Humaidi, a government employee, ascertained that the current conditions compels one to work for more than one party to provide for a good living, and the salary given to him by the government does suffice for the needs of living. He said during the last period of time, he worked for a private sector company, in addition to his government job, and after great efforts he could meet the Eid's needs.

According to him, the Eid is a wonderful occasion that requires big expenditure and the market experience prohibitive prices due to the absence of monitoring by the concerned authorities. "Traders behave as they like in the absence of monitoring, and in the markets one can not differentiate between original and fraudulent products," he added. "The markets are flooded with smuggled commodities, particularly garments which people need on such occasions." He mentioned that life and its requirements necessitate great efforts to be exerted.

Through this investigation, it is made clear that Eid is an occasion of happiness requiring many things to be done, and these days, this happiness has become specific to people of good income. The economic conditions, the increase of living requirements and peoples being engaged in search of subsistence have their impacts on such an occasion. However, the majority of people hate such an occasion for its requirements, for them, Eid has become nothing but an ordinary day.

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Eid Celebration: Time for Yemeni raisins

By Cultural Editor
Yemen Times Staff

Visiting Sana'a's markets, one can see people gushing over commodities in the days before the Eid festival; Men, women, and children spend most of the time shopping, streets are crowded and all are seeking to buy various clothings, perfumes, confectionary, electronic devices, and the like. However everybody buys their share of Yemeni raisins. Yemeni raisins continue to compete fiercely in the realm of sweets. However eid without Yemeni raisins is considered to be tasteless and vapid. Raisins have become very associated with eid to the extent that eid won't be celebrated unless raisins are involved! In fact, Raisins are the common denominator among all social classes and is the essential part of any collection of sweets on the happy occasion of Eid.

Raisins are indispensable

We met with a number of consumers who were shopping in the market. One of them had bought several items and he was plodding among the crowd and bargaining with the raisin seller. When asked if it is necessary for him to buy raisins, he replied that he cannot dispense with it: "I buy raisin at all Eids, It is true that we have home-made cakes but raisins have a distinguished status on the Eid day," he said. Another shopper told me that something important would be missing if raisins are not bought. "On the day of Eid al-Fitr, each of us begins the morning breakfast with a handful of raisins. Of course there are also nuts besides."

Yet, buyers complained that prices of raisins are a bit higher this eid. However, Mohammed Saleh, a farmer and salesman, told me that at the commencement of the harvest time of raisins, there is always a slight rise in price which disappears as soon as the market is beefed up with the produce but this is not a sign of exploitation of the Eid time. "It is just that this year's beginning of raisin harvest time coincides with the approach of Eid. This



'Attar serves as a good accompaniment to raisins.

YT PHOTO

gives a mistaken impression of a manipulated higher price."

Substantial increase in volume of sold raisins

A few days prior to Eid, the Yemen Times reporter visited a couple of markets in the Capital City of Sana'a to have a first-hand experience of the situation. The starting point was the Old City of Sana'a, namely at Samsarat Azzabeeb (Raisin Caravanserai) which is the biggest and oldest raisin-selling market in the city. There, the visitor gets astonished by the piles of sacks of raisins. Although most of the time it is a wholesale center, Samsarat Azzabeeb's wholesalers turn at Eid time into retailers because of the huge number of people who want to buy raisins for their household consumption. For these traders, it is a very lucrative season as the average merchant of them sells ten times what he sells on other days.

"Shortly prior to Eid al-Fitr, I sell between 30-40 sacks of raisins both in wholesale and retail," said Abdul-Rahman Mutahar. He was sifting a quantity of raisins on a plastic sheet in a corner of Samsarat Azzabeeb, a one-storeyed arched building built under the Ottoman reign over a hundred years ago. It was first used as a customs house, later as a market for selling ghee and now it is designated for selling solely raisins.

Abdul-Rahman admits that during this season, he makes a good deal of profits and compensates the days of lower activity. However, he says that Yemeni raisins get always the attention of people particularly visitors throughout the year. Visitors of Yemen prefer to leave Yemen with bags of quality Yemeni raisins in their hands.

Ahmed Zayid, another salesman, said that he sells raisins at a price ranging between 7000-40,000 riyals per sack, or 50-1200 riyals per bushel. He told me of the way raisins are prepared.

"When grapes are picked, they are put in the sunlight to dry for a period ranging between half and one and a half months depending on the weather and heat of the sun," he said. He went on



A scene from Samsarat Azzabeeb, old city of Sana'a, where people are bargaining. Raisins are so lucrative a commodity at Eid time.

YT PHOTO

describing the process of drying raisins, "Wood posts are erected on concrete bricks. A small-holed net is then to be fitted on the tips of the posts. Grapes are to be put on the net and the second layer is made of vine leaves."

Grapes remain outdoors for a period of at least two weeks. When they are completely dried, they are taken to be stored in airtight barrels. Despite this method's being traditional, it has proved itself to be effective and reliable.

Various types of raisins

Ali Humaid, another salesman with a shop on Khawlan street, gave me an account of the different types of raisins. He said that they are as varied as the types of Yemeni grapes. "A layman may not count more than ten types of raisins. Yet, the types of raisins are as different as the number of grape types. You know that we have some sixty types of grapes in Yemen." He explained to me that prices of raisins differ according to quality and type: "Baiadh (whitish), an excellent seedless sort of raisin, is sold at high price because of its taste and purity." The list of raisins include others such as Aswad (black), 'Asimi, Raziqi, etc. Even Baiadh itself is of different grades depending on the rate of imperfections and the manner of drying.

"A bushel of Baiadh is sold between 500-1500 riyals. This shows how quality can determine the price even of one single sort of raisin. Yet, we sell another type of raisins as low as 50 riyals a bushel," he concluded.

Khaled Subaih, another seller, said that Yemeni raisins are procured from the rural areas of Sana'a, namely Khawlan and Bani Hushaish, but they are not the only sources.

"Although the bulk of the volume of raisins produced is brought into the different cities of the Republic of Yemen from the province of Sana'a, particularly from Bani Hushaish and Khawlan, raisins are also prepared from the grapes of Sa'adah plantations."

Saadah is a province to the north of Sana'a. It is famous for growing fruits such as pomegranates. He whispered to me that in Saadah there are types of grapes that are so special that they are not sold in the market.

"Farmers over there keep the very best raisins to offer as presents for the elite and their dear ones," he added. Some other salesmen told me that part of the excellent produce is transported across borders into neighboring rich Gulf States particularly adjacent Saudi Arabia.

Yemeni raisins affected by imported sorts

Despite the fame of the Yemeni raisins, they have been damaged by the imported ones. It is a fact that imported raisins pale into insignificance in comparison even to the modest quality Yemeni raisins. Such imported raisins come from countries such as Iran and China. Abdullah Mahdi, another raisin seller, confirmed to me that Yemeni raisin controls the market and that the imported raisins have only their attractive external shape while their taste

doesn't live up to that of the Yemeni counterpart. This makes some people buy them for the purpose of just decorating their sweets. Another factor that plays against the favor of the Yemeni raisin is that price of imported raisins is relatively lower and people usually tend to buy the cheaper.

Usages of raisins

Yemeni people are famous for their liking to raisins. They eat raisins directly, that is, without additions or as an ingredient in food dishes. Nevertheless, raisins can have other usages. For instance, they can be used as ingredients in cakes, pastries etc. and this is attributed to the spread of the culture of modern cookery. Moreover, many people like to drink raisin juice which is made by boiling and infusing raisins in water with the addition of sugar and certain spices. If you visit Bab al-Yemen (Yemen's Gate) in Sana'a, you will perceive shops that sell typical raisin juice. Such a tasty (non-alcoholic) juice is very popular and some people drink it while they are chewing qat claiming that it has a positive empowering effect.

Another significant observation about raisin is that it is most often bought along with 'Atar (tiny fried pea-like grains). It serves as an appropriate accompaniment to raisin because it mitigates the sweet taste of raisin producing a palatable effect.

Medical benefits of raisins

Part of the temptation of Yemeni raisin is imputed, not only to its won-

derful taste, but also to the medical properties it enjoys. Even in folk medicine, raisins are used for treating illnesses such as pneumonia and incontinence of urine.

In old Arab medical tradition, physicians prescribed raisins to treat gastric inflammations and to help the body relax and digest food. Not only that, some of them maintained that raisins could help improve memory and recommended them for students who wanted to learn Quran and other knowledge. Arab renowned scientist Ibn Sina described raisins as being "friend to stomach and liver," while Ibn al-Qayim al-Jawziah said it is useful in treating cough, kidney ache, bladder pain and in strengthening the stomach and softening the belly.

Similarly in the contemporary medical literature, experts recommend taking raisins. Besides fructose, raisins also contain vitamins like Vitamin C as well as antioxidants. They prevent heart troubles, help the body get rid of toxic materials, help in treating rheumatism as well as in coping with microbes and viruses.

More evidence comes from a recent research presented at the American Society for Microbiology's annual meeting in Atlanta, USA, which testified that raisins contain compounds that fight bacteria that cause cavities and gum diseases. This is an antithesis of the conventional belief that, because they contain sugar, raisins make teeth decay. It is almost no secret that raisins lower the amount of fat while adding the additional benefit of fiber.

Financial aid for Yemen

Draining money down the toilet

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Street beggars have become a sign of everyday life in Yemen, trying to survive from the very little charity they receive. It is a depressing depressed to see people having to feed their families only by spreading out their hands and accepting petty cash from richer, more successful members of the society, in a similar manner how our government needs financial aid from successful nations to aid its development. The Yemeni government has no dignity and shame as it continues to 'beg' from donor countries, in spite of having considerable wealth and sources of income that exceeds most other countries in the region.

Yet, many donor countries continue

their financial aid to Yemen in order to provide the Yemeni people with a number of basic life necessities, such as literacy education and water purification from the governments of the European Union, democratic development from the United States or even garbage trucks from the government of Japan to pick up our own garbage for gods sake! If we can't dispose our own garbage successfully and we need aid in that, what good is our existence to the global community? How low can we continue to degrade ourselves?

It is sad to see our government waiting for foreign aid to provide what is considered to be an essential part of civilized life, indeed, the government is willing to wait until foreign countries feel sorry for the Yemeni people having to go through what we go through, and then offer donations and financial aid.

It is a fact that Yemen is sitting on

considerable oil and gas reserves, resources which can fund giant leaps in economic and social development of the Yemeni people, yet, our government chooses to utilize these resources otherwise, with the primary of funding corruption in various governmental institutions and uphold the power of current regime through empowerment of its own self interest on the expense of development, hereby sustaining backwardness and an urgent need for foreign donations, similar to a beggar who chooses to use his own money for smoking, chewing Qat or even playing in the arcade and begs for his food and shelter.

Corruption from within governmental institutions is the reason for the current crisis. Through all of this backwardness, honest governance is what this country really needs; I think that Yemen's resources are better off unexploited and left for the betterment of

future generations, rather than blown away by this generation.

All governmental officials live in mansions and palaces costing the state millions of dollars, meanwhile, having personal servants and body guards by the dozens is an unlawfully given to them by our corrupted government. Even though they already have all of this, ironically, they still open their hands to donations given to them from donor countries as long as they have a cut of it or a personal interest in it.

The Capital city of Sana'a is in the mid of water crisis, so the logical decision to make by the Yemeni government was to beg countries to offer us financial assistance to improve Sana'a water supply, days later countries such The Netherlands and Germany answering our call and pledge to give millions of dollars to help solve our water crisis. Complaining of problems in the health sector? Nothing to worry about, the

government will just beg some more. What do you do when our environment is going bad? "Aah excuse me, we need a little help please". This phenomenon continues in long trails.

As an ally in the war on terrorism backed by the United States, Yemen receives substantial aid from the U.S. government such as the \$18 million paid in financial assistance during this month alone. Yemen's peace treaty with Saudi Arabia also allowed the government unimaginable financial support. These on going problems have slim chances of ending soon. Even with the raising of subsidies on products, and the government receiving much more from customs and taxes, the dilemma seems to only to grow. Therefore, we ask ourselves, where are our great numerous resources? What happened to all the promises that were given and were supposed to be accomplished by the present day? I would

like to remind officials that what they do really reflects on its citizens, and when the government loses pride and honor, the people will lose faith in the government as well.

Our government is looked upon as a mirror reflecting to the people of Yemen in the international community. Our country is not in need of financial support from other countries, what Yemen needs is a system for governance and utilization of assets and resources. Yemen is rich country in a natural resource but it lacks honest governance, and will always be looked down at by its neighboring countries as long as we continue to look down at ourselves through loans and financial aid. We have to change from within our mentality then slowly we will notice the world around us become brighter, furthermore offer us more opportunities for a better tomorrow.

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Words of Wisdom

The fall-out from technology advances, notably globalization, is clearly ahead of us. We need to grapple with this and the sooner we assess the issues and decide on what we need to do, the better prepared we will be. A main component of globalization is liberalization.



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

OUR OPINION

Eid al fitr holidays

During these days, Muslims around the world celebrate the religious holidays of Eid al-Fitr. It is the reward Muslims receive at the end of Ramadan, the fasting month in Islam. In which Muslims have abstained from drinking, eating, sexual desires, smoking and ill behaving. These constraints touch the various aspects of a human being body and soul, as it tames the human desires and controls temper and spreads kindness among the people. Ramadan is a month for Muslims to rebound with God, especially as he doubled the rewards for good deeds up to tenfold depending on the sincerity and the deed. This is why during this month charity and praying are practiced more often than other months around the year, ideally.

In spite of all that, unfortunately many Muslims do not take advantage of this month. It is such a shame that they do not because if they do then they would spiritually and mentally change drastically and within just one month become much better people. In fact, keeping fast is practiced by most religions around the world in a similar manner, such as lent in Christianity, Roja in Hinduism and Buddhism, Kabala ...etc. In fact, yoga itself is a kind of spiritual control for the mind over the body, it is a form of taming oneself and reminding ones' body and soul of the great power of a tamed human mind.

After one month of taming during Ramadan comes the Eid celebration in Islam, Islam teaches Muslims how to celebrate the Eid festivals; on these days Muslims dress in their neatest attire and start the Eid with a prayer celebrating God's Glory and Greatness. Apart from that Islam ensures that they do not forget the spiritual sentiments they have learnt during the month before and so there is Zakat al-Eid which is an amount of food or its equivalent in cash is taken out for the poor. Also even many Muslims celebrate Eid by having sharing this blessing with relatives, neighbors and others especially the poor.

After the prayers everyone goes home to have breakfast and then the celebrations begin. It is common for children to cash as gifts for Eid, amounts usually vary but average in the region of about \$3; everyone who visits the children or whom they visit gives them this gift of money, in large and extended families, with lots of friends, the children can end up with a small fortune!

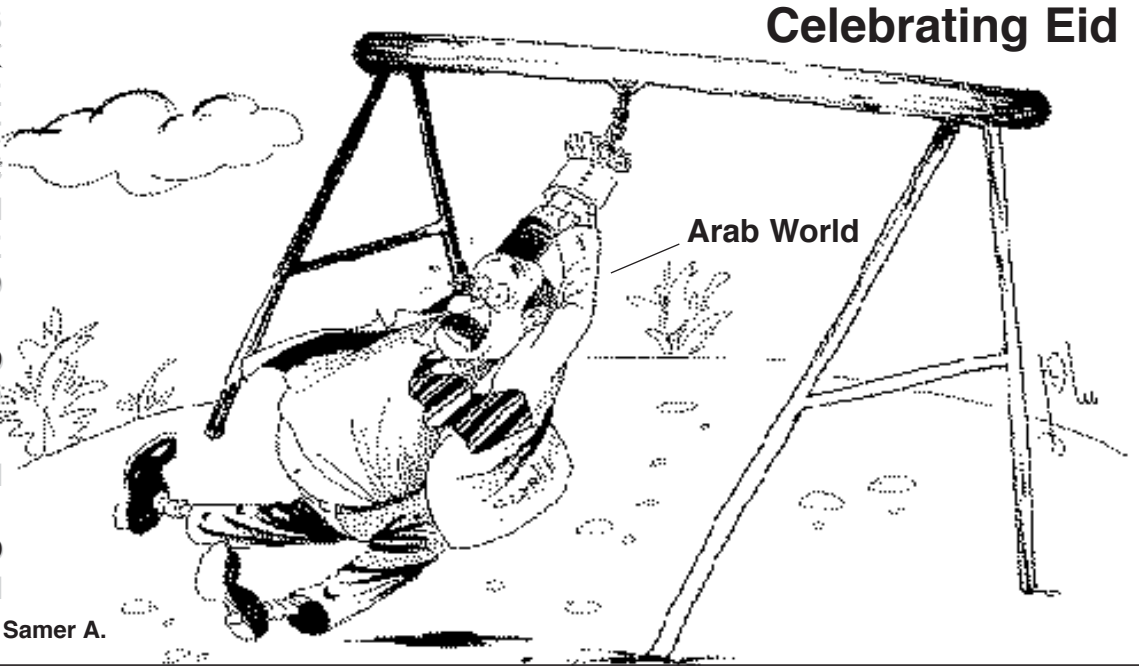
Sometime around midmorning people start move around visiting neighbors and friends in the morning, where they share Eid cakes and raisins, nuts and several sorts of sweets and the children receive their money. The visits are usually very short as there are plenty to make. Dinner is usually spent with the family; the traditional meal varies from country to country, the only standard thing being the special cakes. Each day of the holiday is spent with a different branch of the family, so that everyone gets visited. In the evening the visits start up again. This goes on for three days, but money is normally only given to the children on the first day of Eid.

In between visiting, people usually make trips out into the streets. Many streets have a sort of fair and carnivals going on, with music, dancing, fireworks, kids' games and much more. Here the children get to spend their money. They buy candy, soft drinks, toys and fireworks. Everyone has great fun, and the children are always disappointed when Eid is over. But The adults, on the other hand, are usually worn out and glad of the rest!

Nadia Al-Sakkaf Editor-in-Chief

SKETCHED OPINION

By Samer A.



Islam and Respect of Humanity (2/2)

By DR. MANEA H. AL-HAZMI

Equality among people in Islam is highly respected. The rich and the poor, the leaders and the workers, the men and the women, the white and the black are treated equally in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH said [All of you are from Adam and Adam was created out of dust. There is neither credit for Arabs over Non-Arabs nor for Non-Arabs over Arabs except in Tagwa] (i.e. piety, righteousness, and fear of Allah). Islam holds no discrimination of color, wealth, sex, origin, or language. It is only the piety or righteousness that makes people different in the sight of Allah in this life and in the hereafter. Allah states in Qura'n [Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed Allah is Knowing and Acquainted] (Qura'n 49:13). But all people are equal in humanity; Muslims gather in mosques to perform prayers five times a day in lines, where the rich stands besides the poor and the white stands besides the black and the leaders stands besides the workers. When the poor and black people come to mosques first, they take the first lines and when the rich and white people come last, they stay in the last lines. Also

when Muslims from different nationalities with different colors and wealth gather during pilgrimage in Makkah wearing the same clothes, they reflect the superior equality in Islam. Such daily and yearly environment of equality does not exist in other places in the world today except in Islam.

Respect of Human Freedom

Islam respects and maintains human freedom as long as it does not violate the principles of Islam and it does not bring any harm to people or to life in general. Also truth is the condition of practicing freedom. Almighty Allah states in Qura'n [And do not overlay the truth with falsehood, and do not knowingly suppress the truth] (2:42). For example Freedom of religion and freedom of expression and information are practiced in Islam. Allah ordered Muhammad PBUH in the Holly Qura'n to call people in to Islam with kindness: [Invite unto the way of your Lord (to the religion of Allah) with wisdom and good advice]. But he did not force people to embrace Islam because there is no compulsion in religion. Allah states in the Holly Qura'n [No compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path] [Indeed the prophets and messenger were sent to clarify the truth from the false].

Celebrating Eid

Arab World



COMMON SENSE

By Hassan Al-Haifi

How much should Sana'a grow?

The crater like site of the City of Sana'a is fast approaching full capacity and pretty soon the "No Vacancy" sign will rise above Jabal Nuqum (the magnificent mountain overlooking the city in the Eastern Periphery). It dawned upon this observer while reflecting on the visit of the Turkish Prime Minister to the Old City of Sana'a that indeed the city has gone far beyond the borders of the Old City at a remarkable speed and rate of absorption, for which the Capital Secretariat has not even fully provided the necessary infrastructure. In fact, until the coming of the present Mayor of Sana'a, Mr. Ahmed Al-Kuhlani, the city lacked any semblance of urban planning and municipal services to speak of for decades. Yet the city continued to grow by leaps and bounds. The rigid centralized structure of government and the influx of large numbers of Yemeni émigrés from outside the country as well as the relative neglect suffered by the rural countryside has led to a rapid settlement and growth of the population in the cities. Sana'a bore the brunt of this sudden demographic transformation of life in Yemen and it is not exactly sure when this will end. Needless to say, for environmental and strategic reasons, this growth, at least as far as Sana'a is concerned needs to be controlled and limited as much as possible. For one thing, the awesome traffic jams, one has experienced over the pre-holiday and holiday hiatus surely does not provide room for comfort. The increase in the use of diesel engines to drive autos and mini buses, in addition to the increase of truck traffic has created a relative air pollution nightmare in the city, which just a few decades ago prided on having the cleanest air of any city in the world. The number of cars in the city in 1961 did not exceed the number of fingers on both hands and the total population of the city did not exceed 50,000. At that time, almost every household had their own domestic water supply - a well built into each house almost and municipal sanitation was neatly provided by the gardens that interlaced the city with a rather neat town planning scheme that harmonized nature with urban flair, albeit of another time period in the history of man.

But now, the city of peace and quiet has turned into a nightmare of hustle and bustle and congestion and as one indigenous Sana'ani recently said to this observer, "I feel like a foreigner in my own town. What happened to the Sana'a we knew, in which every one knew all his neighbors and every event in the city was bound to cross the grapevine in a matter of minutes?"

The Old City of Sana'a and the Bir Al-Azab (Albonia Street, the former Jewish Quarter and the western periphery of the Liberation Square) area all that amounted to the area of the city. Hadda, Rawdhah and Wadi Dhahr were considered summer resorts for the well to do in Sana'a and the latter two were producers of the finest white grapes in the world. Military installations and adjoining housing schemes as well as rapid urbanization swallowed up most of the very fertile and irreplaceable cultivable area there and all around the rich grounds of the Sana'a crater and in a relatively short time, we can declare Rawdhah grapes to be extinct to be soon followed by the Al-Qariah, or Wadi Dhahr grapes. But then the agricultural nature of the country and the abundance of the harvests provided for a nice balance between urban and rural habitats and each area of the country managed to keep its own separate relatively sustainable way of life, with no complaints from either side.

While no one is against progress, it goes without saying that there was a lot of the peaceful climate and clean atmosphere that was worthy of conserving and some of the urban planning genius of the Old City should have spilled over into areas like Al-Jiraf Section and Hayel Street, to name just a couple of the sprawling new areas that have become an ugly labyrinth of stone and cement with narrow streets and a cold mundane cosmopolitan panorama that has killed some of the heretofore phenomenal beauty that the Old City of Sana'a enjoyed for centuries, if not millennia.

Having said that, it is imperative to point out that for practical reasons, Sana'a cannot simply take any further growth, at the rates witnessed especially from 1990 to the present and there are eminent signs of danger that further growth is bound to lead to a serious water supply crisis that will be an ongoing nightmare for the Capital Secretariat. We need to reflect on this eminence and we need to provide for alternatives in dealing with the inescapable possibility that Sana'a Basin will simply be incapable of providing the water needs of a population that transformed overnight from 50,000 to 1.5 million.

Happy Eid Al-Fitr to all Yemenis everywhere and to their Moslem brothers throughout the world and many happy returns from the City of Sam.

Eid Al-Fitr 1426 AH

Eid challenge in the west

By SARA BAKER

There are two dilemmas facing a Muslim living in the west today. The first is how to have a feast when every day is a feast. The point of Eid is feasting after fasting. We enjoy the abundance of food at Eid after the frugality of Ramadan. For a day or so we are encouraged to enjoy some of the special luxuries whilst the norm for the rest of the year is moderation and the pattern for Ramadan is extra restraint.

But what if chocolates and sweets are no longer treats but have become everyday food for children in this part of the world? What if people have come to expect cakes and biscuits at iftar as a reward for fasting? What is the thrill of roasted meat when a family eats meat at suhoor and meat at iftar all through the holy month? We all know the principle that the more you get the more you want, so what is the thrill for a child when daddy produces a bag of sweets just like you've had every day of the year? He would have to buy up the sweet shop to impress today's children.

In a land where a pair of shoes can be bought for a couple of pounds and worn out and thrown out with the household refuse, what is the excitement of shiny new shoes? In a place where people chuck clothes into their trolley with the supermarket shop what is the thrill of the prospect of a new outfit? The dilemma - what to give the Muslim who has everything? How to make the indulged child satisfied?

Well, we have a secret weapon. As we know, by the grace of Allah few of us in this part of the world are wanting for clothes and food but what we crave is the company of good people. That's what many of the Muslims here are losing caught up in the hurly burly of trying to amass material wealth. So Eid is a chance for many branches of a family to gather and spend time together. For some Muslims here, it's the only chance they get to see the inside of a mosque and to meet their co-religionists. Though many ignore the advice of the Imam who every year lectures about proper dress on Eid, especially for ladies because he always give that advice before Eid, the newcomers can feel a particular pride at being part of this well dressed, sweet smelling congregation who have undergone the rigors of Ramadan and now stand in disciplined rows before Allah. It's true that the women often get ticked off for talking through the khutbah (sermon)

but it is usually because they are often placed in a room sealed off from the main congregation and have to contend with a fuzzy sound system. They are usually bursting with pleasure at greeting old friends and marveling at how great people look in their Eid best.

When children grow up and you ask them what they remember about Eid, it will be these gatherings they will remember: the presence of beloved grandparents, aunts and uncles and their presents.

The second dilemma for Muslims in the west is how to compete with the Christmas scene. This has been particularly obvious in the past few years when Eid and Christmas have fallen around the same time. The Christmas celebrations no longer bear much relation to Christian teachings but they include elaborate, meticulous decorations, catchy songs, well organized parties and dinners, Santa and his grotto and the prospect of all the toys you ever wanted and if children are allowed to watch local TV they will see it. Schoolchildren are drilled in the nativity rites from early November. Some Muslim parents ask for their children to be excused whilst others don't want little Hassan to be left out. The teachers are greatly concerned that Muslim children will miss out on the fun because Christmas has become a kind of multicultural knees-up which welcomes people of all religions and none. They are not reassured when we say, 'it's OK we have our Eid'. So if little Hassan is exposed to the full regalia of Christmas festivities who can blame him if when Eid comes and faced with the prospect of a disorganized party in a tatty hall, he is less than over-awed?

It has taken Muslim communities a long time to get their party organizing genes into gear and the professionalism of Eid arrangements has improved. This is because when set against Christmas they have a lot to live up to. For parents brought up in the Muslim world, a little toy would have meant a lot. For their children they would have to produce two or three presents from the catalogue. The parents of their non-Muslim pals will have been saving all year to get their children all the latest toys. Who can blame the Muslim children for being materialistic when for many of them their parents or grandparents came to the west to improve their standard of living? Well, here it all is in abundance. For those brought up with all the luxuries in the west, the challenge is what to resist. 'Eid is all about family Hamza'. 'Yea right Mum. Now this is the video game I was talking

about'.

Many of the older or newcomer Muslims living in the UK today did not have a tradition of organizing public events and doing it properly. It takes planning and plenty of help. Very hard in a community where everyone wants to be the mudir (manager) and no one wants to sweep the floor or shift the tables. On the 28th of Ramadan it dawned on someone. 'Oh we'd better get something organized for Eid!' The Christmas committees will have planned and practiced for at least a month to put on their pageants, concerts and parties.

But things are getting better. As the generation of Muslims born here are becoming parents themselves, we have learnt from Muslims in the US for example and we can run our own show a bit better. The openness of Muslim hospitality provides a welcome refuge for the lonely and disenfranchised non-Muslims who have no family to go to. Even the government are endorsing our Eid. This year we are graced with greetings from the Prime Minister himself in a glossy magazine given out containing Eid listings. The shine is rather taken off the gesture by the fact that the publication comes complete with entreaties to Muslims to join the Navy or the Raf. Incidentally, the Raf accepts anyone regardless of nationality, religion, etc. and regardless of gender, except that is, if you are a woman. In the small print it says: 'for reasons of combat effectiveness women cannot join the Raf regiment'. What a disappointment we hear the Muslim women cry and there we were ready to join up after Eid! God help us! Every one knows that the best Eid present the Prime Minister could give us would be to get his armies off our people's backs and to stop arming people who love to kill Muslims. That's really the limit, eh! Eid in the West. Eid Mubarak to you all and excuse us while we bomb the living daylight out of you.

It remains for me to pray that Allah accepts our fasting and our prayers.

This year I pray that Allah helps us turn our du'a' tears into actions so that future Eids will be a time of joy for all the Ummah and there will never be children who face Eid morning with the same sense of dread as every other day of the year.

We are blessed. We are in the best religion.

Eid Mubarak wa alhamdulillah Rabbi alameen.

Courtesy of IslamOnline.net

Yemen Times advertisement containing contact information, branches, and regional distributors.

The olive: A health-giving plant

One of the foods to which attention is drawn in the Qur'an is the olive. Research in recent years has revealed that the olive is not just a delicious food but also represents an important source of good health. In addition to the olive itself, olive oil is also an important source of nutrition. Attention is drawn to the oil of the olive tree in these terms in the Qur'an:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The metaphor of His Light is that of a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, the glass like a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, its oil all but giving off light even if no fire touches it. Light upon Light. Allah guides to His Light whoever He wills and Allah makes metaphors for mankind and Allah has knowledge of all things. (Qur'an, 24:35)

The expression "mubarakatin zaytoonatin" in the above verse describes the olive as being "plentiful, sacred, auspicious, providing countless blessings." Olive oil, referred to in the term "zaytuha," is known as one of the most highly recommended types of oil by all experts, especially for coronary and arterial health. Its health benefits may be summarised as follows:

• Benefits for Coronary and Arterial Health:

Most of the fatty acids in olives and olive oil are mono-unsaturated. Mono-unsaturated fatty acids do not contain cholesterol. Therefore, olive oil does not raise cholesterol levels but instead keeps them under control. Olive oil also contains omega-6 linoleic acid (EFA: essen-

good health thanks to olive oil. The American Heart Association suggests that in order to reduce the risk of heart disease high mono-unsaturated fats can be an alternative to a 30% reduced fat diet.⁶

• Cancer Prevention

One study, published by *The Archives of Internal Medicine*, showed that women who consume high levels of mono-unsaturated fat have a lower risk of developing breast cancer.⁷ Another study by scientists at the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York demonstrated that b-sitosterol, a fat found in vegetable oils such as olive oil, helps prevent the formation of prostate cancer cells. The researchers concluded that b-sitosterol strengthens the internal communication system of the cell that issues the command for the cells to divide and that cancer can thus be prevented before cell division reaches an uncontrollable level.

A recent study by doctors at the University of Oxford has shown that olive oil has a protective effect against intestinal cancer. The doctors discovered that olive oil enters into a reaction with stomach acid in order to prevent intestinal cancer from beginning. At the same time, the University of Oxford researchers also established that olive oil reduces the level of bile and raises that of DAO (the enzyme diamine oxidase), thus protecting against abnormal cell growth and cancer.⁸

• Prevention of Arthritis

According to researchers' reports, people who consume large quantities of olive oil and cooked vegetables can have a reduced risk of rheumatic arthritis, a chronic inflammatory disease of the joints.

• Olive Oil Assists Bone Development

The vitamins E, A, D and K contained in olive oil are particularly important from the point of view of assisting bone development in adults and children, and in strengthening the bones by fixing calcium. It is also recommended for the elderly as it is easily digested and through its minerals, it assists with the use of vitamins in the body. It also prevents calcium loss by stimulating bone mineralisation.⁹ Bones are the organism's mineral structure storehouses and an absence of mineral accumulation in the bones can lead to serious complications such as bone softening. Olive oil has a most beneficial effect on the skeleton in this regard.

**Whoever is not merciful towards people,
will not be treated mercifully by Allah.**

(Ahmad)

• Prevention of Aging

Since the vitamins contained in olive oil have a cell renewing effect they are also employed in the treatment of the elderly, as well as nourishing and protecting the skin. As foodstuffs are transformed into energy in our bodies, certain substances known as oxidants are formed. With the high levels of anti-oxidants it contains, olive oil prevents damage by harmful substances, renews our cells and delays aging in the tissues and organs. Olive oil is also rich in vitamin E, which suppresses the free radicals that destroy the cells in our bodies and cause aging.

• Contribution to Child Development

Due to the linoleic acid (omega-6 fatty acid) contained in olives and olive oil, these are a most healthy food for newborn babies and growing children. A deficiency in linoleic acid leads to the emergence of a retardation of development in babyhood and various skin disorders.



By HARUN YAHYA
www.harunyahya.com

Olive oil contains anti-oxidant elements that prevent the destructive effects of harmful substances in our bodies, and fatty acids of great importance to human health. These support the hormones and assist in cell membrane formation.

Olive oil possesses a balanced polyunsaturated compound at a similar level to that in human milk. Olive oil is a sufficient source of these fatty acids, which cannot be obtained from the human body but which are of the most essential importance to it. These factors make olive oil very important for new-born babies.

Since it contributes to the natural development of the baby's brain and nervous system before and after birth, olive oil is the only oil recommended for mothers by experts. As well as containing similar levels of linoleic acid to those of mother's milk, when olive oil is added to fatless cow's milk, it becomes as natural a food source as mother's milk itself.

• Blood Pressure Reduction

One study published in the 27 March 2000 edition of *Archives of Internal Medicine* once more stressed the beneficial effect of olive oil on high blood pressure. Medicines to reduce high blood pressure are also made from olive leaves.

• Benefits for the Internal Organs

Whether consumed hot or cold, olive oil protects the stomach against diseases such as gastritis and ulcers by reducing gastric acid levels.¹⁰ In addition to this, by activating the bile, it makes it perfect. It regulates the discharge of the gall bladder and reduces the risk of bile stone formation.¹¹ Moreover, thanks to the chloride it contains, it also assists the functioning of the liver and thus helps the body eliminate waste products. In addition, it also has a beneficial effect on the brain arteries.¹²

A great many scientists today think that an olive oil-based diet constitutes the ideal nutritional model. It is stated that on account of these properties, olives and olive oil should be the fundamental constituents of every meal in one's daily nutrition programme. The benefits of the olive plant, emphasised by Allah in many verses of the Qur'an, have been discovered in parallel to the advances made by medical science.

It is He Who sends down water from the sky. From it you drink and from it come the shrubs among which you graze your herds. And by it He makes crops grow for you and olives and dates and grapes and fruit of every

kind. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who reflect. (Qur'an, 16:10-11)

To purchase the works of Harun Yahya, please visit
www.bookglobal.net

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- 2 *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, April 2002, 56: 114-120.
- 3 *Archives of Internal Medicine* 1998; 158: 1181-1187.
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- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Muammer Kayahan, "Saglikli Yasam ve Zeytinyagi," (*Healthy Life and Olive Oil*) *Bilim Teknik Dergisi (Journal of Science and Technology)*, April 1995, 48.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*



Thi al-Sufal: A town of monuments

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

In spite of long history and cultural importance, Thi al-sufal remains a neglected town, therefore this article is to provide a glimpse of this archeological town to you, dear reader.

Thi al-sufal lies at the foot of Ta'akar Mountain, at the top of Dhaba valley, 43 km south of the town of Ibb in the Yemeni Midlands. Thi al-sufal lies about in a large area containing a number of districts and villages, such as Nakhlan, Wadi-Dhaba, Al-wuhs, Shawait, Alashraf, Alsaif and Al-hod.

The mention of Thi al-sufal is limited to a few historical sources, in which the name is articulation of the name is discussed along with the biographies of some of its prominent clerics. The eldest of these references that mentions Thi al-Sufal is the famous geographical encyclopedia of Yagoot Alhamawy. He mentions it as one of the important villages of Yemen at the time.

Thi al-sufal is thought to be established in the late first and early second Hijri century (6th century). There are no definite historical references that mention the exact date. It is presumably that it was established as a town by Prince Ali Bin Alqamah in the era of the Sulaihi State, and became famous as a town for education in the third hijri century.

Dr. Abdurhman Jarallah, professor of Islamic architecture in Sana'a University, wrote in his book 'Thi al-sufal town of Islamic archeology' that the choice of the position of Thi al-sufal coincides with the requirements of good living at the time, such as abundance of food, grazing areas potable water and temperate climate. There are many water sources in the town. A spring called 'Almanbi' runs on the rocks all the year round. The town was supplied with water from this spring in 550h or 1155 AC. It was carried by channels that were running along side the mountain, across Dhaba valley. Other sources of clean water are the rain waters that are collected in Wadi Dhaba. They were used in agriculture irrigation. As for food, Thi al-sufal is famous for its fertile soil and the abundance of food.

Alhigary mentions in his book: 'Tribes and regions of Yemen' that Thi al-sufal is full of fine agricultural products, among its products are the coffee, corn, barley bananas and others. It is also famous for being a green land all year, with its grazing fields and temperate climate.

Another factor for the town is the fortification. This could be natural or by man-made walls. Thi al-sufal enjoys natural fortifications because it is surrounded by high mountains from the north, east, west and part of the southern direction. The southern part of the town is also famous for its plateaus, which are natural barriers against invaders, saving the people of the town who also enjoyed the protection of the neighboring tribes because it used to be the valley's hub of education.

Dr. Jarrallah says that the town contains several religious establishments and prominent landmarks such as the market and the central mosque, the mosque is in the town center with easy accessibility, through making all the roads in the town leading to the central mosque. All the roads start from the mosque and run to all directions.

There are two kinds of markets, the permanent market is near the mosque and extends to the south through two opposite lines of shops. The other market is the weekly bazaar, held in an open area in the town. People gather on the market day to sell their agricultural products and live-



The minaret of the Grand Mosque in Thi al-Sufal. Photo by Dr. Jarallah

stock.

The most important historical site is the Grand Mosque in Thi al-sufal. Its exact building dates back to the era of Khalif Omer Bin Abdulaziz in the first Hijri century. The first mosque that was built is thought to be a simple building with no ornaments. The present mosque is a rectangular building with irregular sides which has undergone 9 stages of building; its dimensions are 18, 15, 40 by 40 meters. There is a hall for prayer, and the inside constitutes a number of different historical periods. A roofless building overlooks the mosque, its architecture is similar to that of Thulla and Ibb grand mosques. Stones were used in building most of the parts of the mosque, particularly Dibsh Hard rocks were used in building the basements, which usually have irregular shapes. Above them basalt (black stones) are used. The upper walls are built from grey igneous stones. Bricks are used in building the mosque's minaret. Wood was used in making the doorsteps and the southern roof of the prayer hall. Mud is used to cement the sides of the mosque.

The tops of the mosque tombs were covered with the water-resistant Qadad, which is white material used as cement. The inner prayer hall is rectangular in shape, extending from south to north. Its dimensions are 18.6 by 16.45 meters. The prayer hall is divided into two the northern and southern sections. The northern part consists of a rectangular of 16.4 by 5.8 meters, overlooking the platform, followed by a big tomb. The tomb is surrounded by two western and eastern wings covered with small tombs. All the tombs stand on eight pillars. The pillars carry 17 pointed beams which have two centers.

The southern part is rectangular with an area of 16.6 by 12.6 meters. It has two lines of stone pillars with three pillars in each side. They are carrying three semi circular beams. The beams and the pillars are supporting a flat wooden roof consisting of wooden posts extending from south to north.

The platform lies to the right of the hollow of the mihrab (prayer niche) parallel to the wall. It is made up of wooden frame that is made of strong wooden strips that form the base for the staircase of the platform. There are beautiful ornaments on the platform.

The court yard is to the south of the prayer hall. It is bordered by the pool in the south, and the residential room in the east. The room is over the western gate of the eastern toilets. The western border is the mosque's wall. The court yard is a north east rectangular area of 12.95 by 2.9 meters dimensions. The floor is covered with black (habash) stone.

The mosque's minaret is in the southern corner of the prayer area. It is made of an octave shaped base. There is another octave short stone part over it. Above it is another octave brick part, which is longer than the previous one. There is another cylindrical part. An ornamented part is on top of the tomb. On top of the minaret is a small square tomb.

There are other mosques in Thi al-sufal, such as the Alsied mosque and women tomb. Thi al-sufal is also famous for its schools which were built in the time of the Aiobian and Rasoli dynasties which ruled the valley thereafter.

The town of Thi al-Sufal and the surrounding area cherish many other mosques, schools and historical landmarks that will be covered in future articles.



A stone bridge over a water course outside Thi al-Sufal town.

Photo by Dr. Jarallah

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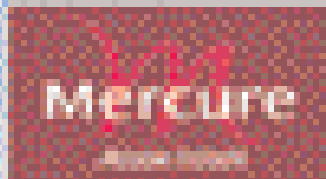
H.E President Ali Abdullah Saleh

and to all the great population of Yemen

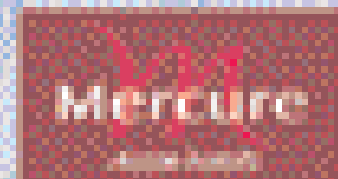
On the Eid Al-Fitr Al- Mubarak
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IBB: Magic of the green land



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Ibb, 192 km to the south of Sana'a, and 2300 m above sea level, is the evergreen city in Yemen. It is surrounded by the Ba'dan Mountain, which is considered a real beauty and charm as an evergreen environment.

Ibb is considered as one of the best archeological and ancient cities in Yemen. It appeared as an Islamic city in the Islamic period, but it did not mention in any kind of news or arts until the tenth century A.D.

Old Ibb city is considered as one of the most historical sites in Ibb and one of the most interesting fortified Yemeni cities. It is surrounded by a wall with five entrances, which are Bab Al-Kabeer (The great gate), Bab Al-Nasser (The victory gate), Bab Al-Rakezah, Bab Soonbi, and Bab Al-Jadeed (The New gate).

The wall of the city has a number of towers that still remain; these towers were used to defend the city against the military attacks during previous ages.

The nature of the green land is mixed with the buildings and mosques designs' influences. The visitors of this magic land will note the marvelous outer designs of these buildings, which are used in

the design of the forts and citadels (fortresses). Amongst the elements of Islamic architecture to be noted are the windows, arches, stairs, vaults, and domes.

Touristic and archeological places in the Green Land:

Ibb has a group of ancient archeological forts, Islamic historical mosques, and beautiful historical areas.

It is distinguished for its unique architecture designs, which are drawn in the frontages of its lofty buildings. No wonder that some friezes and windows with a circular ships, cover the marble that makes the frontages of these buildings extremely magnificent.

Dhafar:

Dhafar is 17 km from Yareem city; it was the capital of ancient Hymiarate state, founded on Mount Dhu-Raidan. Dhafar ceased being the capital, but it still retains its' life, as its remains are housed now in the Dhafar museum.

Djiblah:

Tourism in Djiblah is known to last throughout the year, consequently it makes the city a forum for and main direction of, the visitors.

Djiblah is the city of information, knowledge and beauty. It is a small city to the southwest of Ibb. It was the capital of the Sulaihy State, which flourished at the age of Queen Arwa Bint Ahmed Al-

Sulaihy, who successfully unified Yemen. Arwa was the second woman to rule Yemen after Queen Bilqis.

The town is not only known for its mosques and religious buildings however, but also for its bridges. Near the entrance, there were several semi-circled bridges, five of which still stand today to signify the magnificence of the architectural designing and art of Yemeni architecture.

These arch-type bridges, with their upper portions comprised of even shapes, facilitate the arrival of Djiblah citizens and tourists to Djiblah city, which is placed on the peak of a mountain.

In Arabic, Djiblah means the solid-state of the ground, as the city was built upon the very hard rocks of a mountain. This meant that the peak level was an even surface and ideal for the purposes of residential dwellings.

Al-Udein:

It is an area, lying at 40 km from Ibb, famous for coffee agriculture.

The Great Mosque:

It is located in the middle of Old Ibb city, and dates back to the first decade of the Hegira. It is situated on the level of a high knoll; and the only way to reach it is by using a flight of steps, which go through the knoll.

This mosque is built in a style similar to the Prophet Mohammed's

Mosque. It consists of a courtyard that is surrounded by four porticos, the most deep of these is called Al-Kiblah portico.

The Great Mosque has three entrances in its west wall, and high minaret at its southeastern side, which ends with a veranda crowned by a dome. It is written on the base of this minaret that it dates back to the Rasulean State period in 685 A.H.

Other evidence of Islamic architecture touches and designs are represented in the Great Mosque roof, which is decorated by very beautiful Islamic patterns and ornaments with some inscribed writings.

Sumara Citadel:

This citadel is placed on the summit of Mount Sumara and is 2800 m above sea level.

Bana Valley:

An area known for having numerous pure water fountains, and mountain-sulfated hot water.

Al-Manar Fort:

It was one among the important strongholds of the ancient Hymiarate state. It is located at Mount Badam, and is accessible by a road leading to the summit where there are some remains of the citadel, and water reservoirs engraved in the rocks.



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