

THE ANCIENT AND MODERN INHABITANTS OF ARABIA

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THE Arabian peninsula, which lies at the southwestern extremity of Asia, has been inhabited from the earliest pre-historic period down to modern times.

The geographical position of this peninsula in relation to the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, naturally marks Arabia as a region through which migrating peoples must have passed from the earliest times. Furthermore, historical tradition lends its support to the fact that the "Garden of Eden" lay to the northeast of Arabia in the alluvial plain which extends between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and since the dawn of history, people have been drawn toward this spot, which is known as the "Fertile Crescent." Southwestern Asia, therefore, is of paramount importance from a geographical and anthropological standpoint.

Owing to its inaccessibility in modern times, combined with the hostile attitude of its inhabitants, who have until this century refused the influences of western civilization to a marked degree, Arabia has remained little known to the outside world. The opening up of the Near East during the past generation has been due primarily to the World War and its aftermath. The introduction of the airplane and the automobile, means of transportation which are independent of water holes, and the advent of travelers in search of oil and precious metals, as well as new methods of transportation for the pilgrims to and from Mecca, have all tended to change the life and customs of the people. Since we are here concerned primarily with the ancient and modern population of Arabia, we need not go into details regarding the changes which have influenced the character of the modern population beyond recalling that these and many other factors have been and are now at work.

Believing the French motto "*commençons au commencement*" to be correct in this instance, let us trace the evidence now available for the continuous inhabitation of Arabia from prehistoric man¹ down to the modern peoples.

¹For general description see my article entitled "The Antiquity of Man in Southwestern Asia," in a forthcoming number of the *American Anthropologist*.

Since environment plays an important rôle in the problem, it will be necessary to outline the climatic changes, which have occurred in this area during the past few thousand years. In prehistoric times the climate was very different from that of today. Owing to its low latitude and general aridity Arabia must be classed among the hot regions of the earth. Evidence has been obtained² to show that the North Arabian Desert was at one time fertile and well watered, and able to support a large semi-nomadic population. As an example of the change of climate, let us consider the Roman fortress of Qasr Burku, which was built in the fourth century³ by legionnaires, and which was the most eastern outpost of the Roman Empire. At this fort the water supply for the troops was drawn from a large catchment basin or reservoir, which had been faced with dressed basalt blocks. When we visited this fortress in 1928⁴ there was no trace of water, either in the reservoir or in the wells nearby, and our Solubbi (Sleyb) guide informed us that there had never been water in the basin during his lifetime and that the wells, which were cut deep into the limestone were often dry. This means that the climate had changed so markedly in fifteen hundred years that it would now be impossible to live at Qasr Burku unless water was brought from the nearest well at El Jidd, which lies some sixty miles to the east, although during the Roman occupation the water supply, combined with Roman engineering principles, was sufficient to support a legion^{4a} of armed men.

There are other evidences of the change of climate; and in explanation of the early fertility, it will suffice at this point to note that it is believed that the ice sheet never extended south of the great mountains in Asia Minor, so that Arabia was never made uninhabitable by glaciation. There is also abundant evidence that the *wadis*, dry stream beds, which today carry water only during the rainy season, must have flowed with water during the greater part, if not during the entire year. In ancient times, therefore, climatic conditions must have produced large areas having a genial temperature and an adequate water supply, whereas today Arabia

²Field Museum North Arabian Desert Expeditions, 1927-28.

³Prentice, W. K. "An Inscribed Door Lintel from Qasr Burku." *Am. Journ. of Archaeology*, Jan.-Mar., 1931.

⁴Field Museum North Arabian Desert Expeditions, April 18-19, 1928.

^{4a}Cf. At Qasr el Hallabat a Latin inscription, dated 214 A.D., states that the soldiers of the First Ulpian Cohort of Thracians, one thousand strong, built this fort.

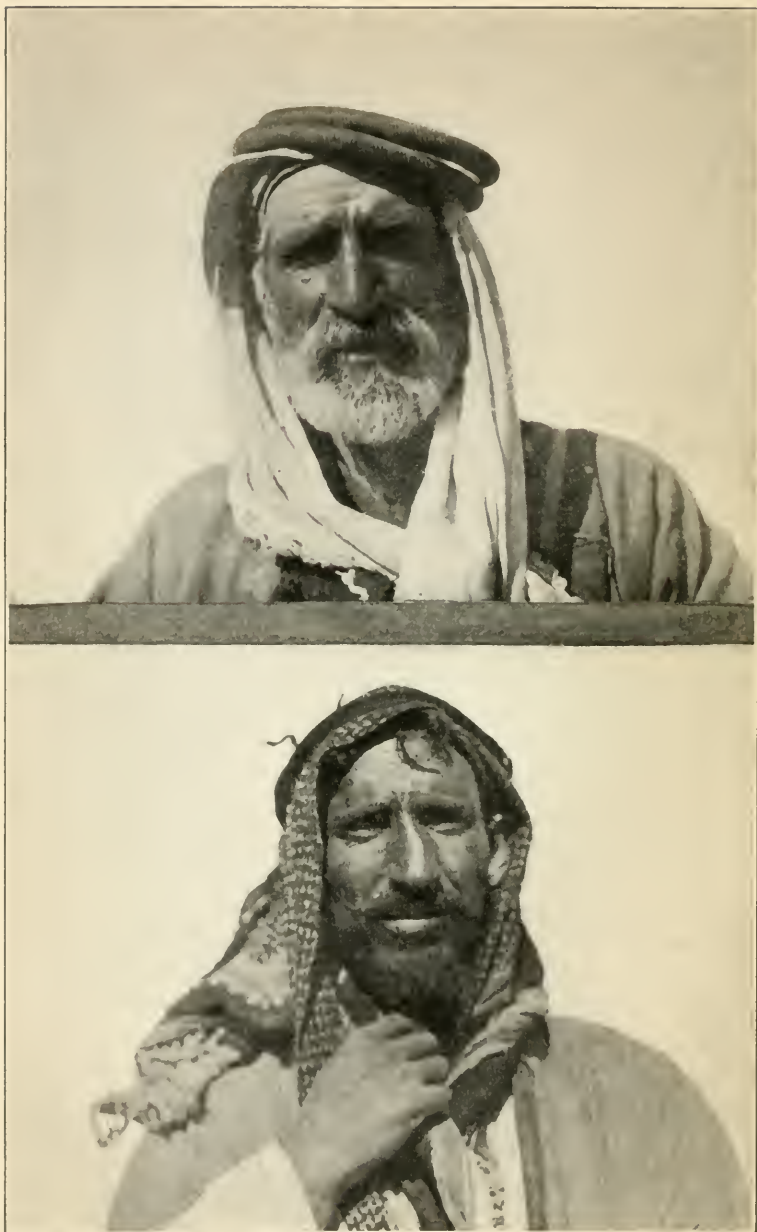
can support only a nomadic or semi-nomadic population, except in certain oases and along the peripheral region.

Let us now turn to the evidence left by man himself. Since this area is one of the least explored regions of Asia, it stands to reason that the study of the archaeology of Arabia must be less advanced than that of more accessible regions. In view of this fact, it will be desirable to state briefly the discoveries which have been made, and to attempt to outline a logical, though not necessarily proven, theory which will fit the facts as they are now known. The archaeological evidence from North Arabia indicates that man in various palaeolithic and neolithic phases of culture lived in this now inhospitable wilderness, which can today be inhabited only by the nomadic Beduins.

Hundreds of flint implements, as well as thousands of flakes and rejects, were collected by the Field Museum North Arabian Desert Expeditions⁵ during 1927 and 1928 in the area lying between the Hejaz Railway and Baghdad. With the exception of a few isolated sites the flint implements were found on the surface of the desert, and thus no stratigraphy was possible. The only method which could be employed for the determination of their age was to attempt to grade the specimens by means of the various shades of patination. This is an uncertain method, at best, since there are many chemical and mechanical agents which form patina, and the rate of discoloration varies very markedly within even a relatively small area. Furthermore, in a semi-desert region the effect of wind, which produces "desert varnish," "*dreikanter*," and an etched effect on the exposed surface of the flint cannot be a direct indication of the time of exposure. For example, in the Sinai desert, T. E. Lawrence found heavy patination on pieces of flint, whose fractured edges had been exposed to the vagaries of the climate for only about twenty years.

In one small area, however, it is plausible to estimate the relative age of a fractured surface by comparison with other pieces from this same locality. In other words, the darker the patination the older the fracture, although great caution must be exercised when this procedure is used. Fortunately, it will be possible to compare the flint implements from the surface of the high desert with those from the stratified deposits in the cave of Shukbah, on

⁵See "Early Man in North Arabia," *Natural History Magazine*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, 1929, pp. 33-44.



Courtesy of Field Museum of Natural History

MEMBERS OF THE RUWALLA TRIBE, NORTH ARABIAN DESERT

the pleasant slopes of Mount Carmel. This site has been excavated by Miss Dorothy Garrod and her associates and next spring she will write a report on the flints collected by the Field Museum North Arabian Desert Expeditions, comparing the various tools represented with the types excavated on Mount Carmel, where a Neanderthaloid⁶ family has been found.

The implements from the high desert include a typologically Upper Chellean *coup-de-poing*, which was found by the writer at a depth of eleven feet six inches below the surface of a gravel bed at Bayir Wells, which lie due east of Ma'an on the Hejaz Railway. This discovery proves the existence of man in a lower palaeolithic phase of culture in this region. I have found implements of this type in the Wadi Seir at Petra, also; as did Charles M. Doughty, the inspired writer of *Arabia Deserta*, some fifty years before.

The majority of the implements were upper palaeolithic in type, although tools of Mousterian technique were found in certain localities. There were also neolithic stations, although these were rare. In one locality⁷ t-shaped implements were found, suggesting a definite neolithic phase. The most modern tools were the rejects once used by Beduins as strike-a-lights. In the tents of the Howeitat⁸ I had the privilege of seeing Beduins make fire with such flints against steel. It is comparatively easy to recognize a reject of this nature. According to all Beduins interrogated, flint is never used as a knife, although they said that their ancestors used a stone knife, a practice which had been discarded for generations.

In attempting to date these implements it must be noted that typological comparisons by no means indicate a contemporaneous development with stratified sites in western Europe or any other area. It will be some time before general conclusions of this character can be safely drawn.

I suggest the following theory to explain the facts above outlined. Palaeolithic and neolithic man inhabited North Arabia, while the climate was genial and the region well watered. Some time before the historic period, the climate had changed to a marked degree and the inhabitants were forced to become nomads (such as the modern Beduins) or to migrate to water. Those who chose the

⁶Mousterian in culture, but not true Neanderthal in physical type.

⁷Near landing-ground "K" on the Amman to Baghdad air route.

⁸At el Jafar east of Ma'an.

latter course moved eastwards to water and encamped beside the banks of the cool and refreshing Euphrates River. They were thus the first inhabitants of Mesopotamia, since in former times the Persian Gulf extended at least as far north as Baghdad. Furthermore, the earliest implements from just above virgin soil at Kish⁹ resemble closely the latest neolithic examples from the surface of the high desert. This theory awaits confirmation or disproof through additional research and excavation.

To summarize, let us state that flint implements of palaeolithic and neolithic types occur in quantity on the surface of the desert of North Arabia, including what is now part of the political divisions of Trans-Jordan, Syria, and western Iraq. There is no information regarding the antiquity of man in Central Arabia, although in historic times the Romans penetrated far into this territory. It is difficult to state whether similar worked tools occur to the south, since among the relatively small number of travelers who have been into that region, few have been interested or qualified to collect them.

In South Arabia the valiant efforts of Bertram Thomas, who was the first¹⁰ white man to cross or even to enter the "Empty Quarter" or Rub' al Khali, enabled him to record¹¹ a perfect flint arrowhead from the sands of Sanam, and he adds that the Beduins in this inhospitable waste of sand sometimes use flint strike-a-lights. H. St. J. Philby, who made a remarkable journey into the center of the Rub' al Khali during the early part of this year, brought back some flint implements¹² a description of which has not yet been published.

This, in brief, summarizes the information now available regarding the antiquity of man in Arabia, and we can now turn our attention to the modern inhabitants.

With regard to the living peoples of Arabia, there are many complicated factors which enter into the problem. As has been stated, Arabia lies at one of the focal points between Asia, Africa, and Europe, and this would to some extent account for the racial

⁹Field Museum-Oxford University Joint Expedition to Kish, Mesopotamia. Virgin soil was reached twenty meters below the surface of the mound in the Inghara complex.

¹⁰Early in 1931.

¹¹*Arabia Felix*, New York, 1932, p. 207.

¹²Now in the British Museum.



Courtesy of Field Museum of Natural History

A WAHHABI WHO HAD BECOME AN IRAQ DESERT POLICEMAN.

mixtures, which now comprise the modern population. The basic stocks are two-fold, consisting of the Mediterranean and Armenoid groups. Regarding the former, this appears to be a primitive Eur-African type possessing an extremely long-headed skull of small cranial capacity, generally accompanied by considerable development of the temporal muscles. On the other hand the Armenoids, who are considered to be an Asiatic branch of Alpine man, possess heads which are both short and high, with a flattened occiput. The nose is aquiline with wide tips and is usually described as the Armenoid nose. In southwestern Asia there is also a negroid element, since slaves have been imported into Arabia for many generations and these negroes have left their mark on the physical type. Among the tents of the great sheikhs of the North Arabian Desert, the writer¹³ has frequently seen negroes, who usually serve in the capacity of personal servants or bodyguard of the sheikh.

These three fundamental elements of the modern population, which can in no sense be called homogeneous, combined with racial admixture in historical times, result in a variety of ethnic groups. It is not possible here to give a detailed description of the small groups, which together form the modern population of Arabia. I must rather outline the main divisions, and discuss certain questions in connection with the various problems, which now await solution.

Anthropometric data on the Beduins of North Arabia is deplorably scarce, but from personal observation¹⁴ among the great tribes of the high desert, including the Howeitat (ibn Jazi and the Tayi), Shammar, Ruwala,¹⁵ and Sb'aa, I conclude that the average cephalic index of these tribesmen would place them in the long-headed group.¹⁶ These people belong to the great Mediterranean race and almost certainly are the direct descendants of the earliest inhabitants of the region, who chose to become nomads rather than to migrate to a more friendly climate.

¹³See "Among the Beduins of North Arabia," *Open Court*, vol. XLV, no. 905, October, 1931.

¹⁴As leader of the Field Museum North Arabian Desert Expeditions 1927-28.

¹⁵See the two examples on page 850.

¹⁶The cephalic index of 38 Ba'ij Beduins measured in 1928 between Kish and Jemdet Nasr places them in the dolicocephalic group. See *Arabia Felix*, appendix by Sir Arthur Keith & Dr. W. M. Krogman.

The word "Semite," which has come to have both linguistic and cultural significance, seems inapplicable to the precursors of the modern Beduins and I therefore suggest the term Proto-Mediterranean, which in its broadest sense includes the common ancestors of the entire Mediterranean group comprising the Eur-African, Brown race, and many other sub-groups.

To give an example of an interesting sub-group, there are the Solubbi, who claim a Christian origin and are despised by the Arabs as an inferior race. They are smiths by trade and are the best guides and the most skilful hunters in all North Arabia. From a physical point of view they appear to be racially distinct from the Beduins, since they do not possess the typical features of the desert nomad. They also seem to be smaller in stature and general physique than the Beduins, although they are capable of enduring great privations and hardships. The history, folklore, and physical characters of this group will well repay detailed study and investigation.

Although there are no anthropometric measurements on the peoples of Central Arabia, there is every reason to believe that the majority of the population are long-headed and belong to the Mediterranean group rather than to the enigmatic brachycephals of the south. The brachycephalic element as well as that of the negro has probably drifted in and mingled with the population to some extent. This will probably be more true the further south one goes to make observations.

The difference between the Arabs of the south and those of the north, who wander over the alluvial plain between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, is very marked from an anthropometric point of view. This fact, which has been proven by various small samplings of the population of South Arabia, is a considerable surprise to anthropologists, who would have predicted that these tribesmen and sedentary Arabs belonged to the great Mediterranean stock, which dominates the population of the north. Measurements show that the South Arabs are extremely round-headed and that their physical characters in general differentiate them from the North Arabs. The information at present available allies them with the inhabitants of northeastern Africa. The photographs of Hadramaut racial types, which illustrate the excellent article by van der



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A CHIEF FROM DHUFAR
Southwest Arabia

Meulen¹⁷ as well as a magnificent series taken recently by Hans Helfritz¹⁸ lend support to this theory.

There seems to have been a migratory barrier, which has caused this complete differentiation between the peoples of the north and the south. The answer lies in the existence of the great desert of Rub' al Khali, which has undoubtedly played a great part in separating the peoples of the two sections. As proof of this, only a dozen adventurous travelers have entered Central Arabia during the past two thousand years. Furthermore, the "Empty Quarter" had never been crossed by a white man until Bertram Thomas made his historic journey across this region in 1931. Philby also made a remarkable journey into the center of this desert during the early part of this year, and through the work of these two men during the past two years, a wealth of information has come to hand regarding the largest land surface in the world about which literally no details were previously known.

It will now be necessary to review the new material, which has come to light regarding the modern inhabitants. The South Arab¹⁹ is extremely round-headed with a small brain capacity; the hair is fuzzy, while on the face and body it may be almost absent, and the average complexion is very dark. While many of the characters resemble those found among the ancient and modern inhabitants of the region lying to the west of the Red Sea, there are other features which are Caucasian, Armenoid, Hamitic, or Dravidian, indicating an extremely hybrid origin, so that the problem still remains complex.

The Armenoid element is prevalent in Oman on the east and suggests a migratory connection with the home of the Armenoid type, which lies on a wide tract of Asia stretching from the Pamir to the countries washed by the eastern part of the Mediterranean.

Keith²⁰ puts forward a new theory to account for the apparent racial connections between the South Arabs and the peoples of Africa on the west and the inhabitants of India on the east. He suggests that at one time a proto-negroid belt crossed the ancient

¹⁷Meulen, D. van der, "Into Burning Hadramaut," *Nat. Geog. Mag.* Vol. LXII, No. 4, Washington, October, 1932.

¹⁸Privately shown to the writer by Mr. Helfritz in Berlin in October of this year.

¹⁹See illustrations on pages 856, 861, 865 and 872.

²⁰See appendix by Sir Arthur Keith and Dr. W. M. Krogman in *Arabia Felix* by Bertram Thomas, New York, 1931.

world, occupying all intermediate lands, Arabia, Baluchistan, India, Further India, the Philippines, and Malay Archipelago. Intermediate sections of this proto-negroid belt became transformed, giving rise to the Hamitic peoples of Africa and to their cousins the Dravidian and brown-skinned peoples of India. The Caucasian stock swept down into southwestern Asia in late pleistocene times, but before they reached the extreme south of the peninsula they had absorbed native Hamitic blood. This theory was advanced before Thomas' data was available²¹ but in conclusion Keith suggests that "the South Arabs represent a residue of Hamitic population which at one time occupied the whole of Arabia. To account for their round-headedness and certain Caucasian features we have had to postulate migration and miscegenation."

It is at present impossible to determine the probable physical characteristics of the aboriginal inhabitants of Arabia. Bertram Thomas believes²² that the earliest inhabitants were round-headed and that their descendants were driven back into the great southern territory in comparatively recent times. My own personal theory is that the Proto-Mediterraneans formed the aboriginal stock of Arabia and the brachycephals came in two streams into this territory, the one from Asia Minor or from the northeast down through the "Fertile Crescent"; the other from beyond its confines on the west via the straits of Bab el Mandeb. It would surprise me if prehistoric skulls found in the central region of South Arabia were discovered to be brachycephalic in type, since I should expect them to be racially akin and the direct ancestors of the modern Beduins of the North Arabian Desert.

Research, combined with the overwhelming desire for the advancement of knowledge at the cost of fearless personal hardship and the ever present element of chance, alone will produce the facts upon which the answer can be definitely decided.

It seems desirable to give a picture in silhouette of the life and customs of the peoples of Arabia, and rather than recapitulate descriptions of Beduin tribal life in the north, which has been so admirably portrayed by the inspired pen of Doughty, the poet who wrote poetry in prose, or by Lawrence, Musil, Philby, Thomas and

²¹*Anthropological Observations in South Arabia*, by Bertram Thomas, J.R.A.I. Vol. LXII, London, 1932.

²²During several discussions with the author in Chicago, March, 1932.

others, I shall quote the impressions of a traveler who has recently made a journey into the hinterland behind Aden. This traveler, who desires to remain anonymous, has sent to the writer a series of photographs of racial types (Pages 856, 861, 865 and 872), together with a sketch map (p. 868-9) and some notes on his journey.

As there is little known about this region and the habits and customs of the inhabitants, it will be of interest to quote at some length the impressions of this traveler, which were as follows:

"We found ourselves at Nisab, one of the larger Aulāqi towns of the Aden Protectorate. Nearby lives the Upper Aulāqi Sultan, who is an old man with six fine sons. A very large concourse of people were standing waiting to greet us and drums were being beaten with a steady tap. The Sultan wearing a highly colored turban, was dressed in white, mottled with indigo stains, surrounded by his own entourage, waited in the center of the front rank. We advanced in a rather irregular line to within about one hundred yards of the Sultan and his people, who were about two hundred in number, chanting the greeting song.

"Verses were compiled and sung, and poetry recited. The long columns of men in twos wheeled round and round the space between us. At the same time the old Sultan and his sons did the *mahuff*. This adds color to the ceremony, although in itself it is not very exciting. It consists in showing off on horseback; the riders, by dint of much use of rein and spur, start around the enclosed space at a fast canter, a wild uncollected gallop, the horses at one moment being urged forward and then next being violently wheeled. The horsemen carry rifles in their right hands and every now and then discharge them into the air, usually directly in front of the guests. On some occasions camels are used in the *mahuff*. After the last volley had been fired and we had shaken hands with the Sultan, the ceremony was over.

"The principal characteristics of Nisab are smells and sand. It lies in a flat, sandy plain and the slightest breath of wind lifts the tops off the sand dunes. The plain is ringed with low, black hills and the general effect of the scenery is desolate. In the early morning, after the hour of prayer, which is not too regularly observed by the Aulāqi, the women come out and collect firewood, pick cotton from the sparse cotton bushes, and draw water from one of the seven wells in and outside of the town. A few men stroll

out and water camels and sheep. The majority of the women are veiled, but those whose faces are visible, are made up in a sickly sort of yellow tinge, most unattractive, although, no doubt the design was the opposite. White women go to the extreme of burning in the sun and apply unhealthy cosmetics in order to become brown; the brown woman paints her face a lighter tinge; while it is obvious to the least critical observer that they are better either left as they are or veiled entirely! The men appear to do little but graze camels.

"Like most Arabian towns of the interior, the bazaar is a closed one, that is, if you wish to buy something you must hammer on the door of the person who makes it. The local manufactures are principally indigo dye, long strips of carpet, camel-saddles, ornaments of silver and a few *jambiyas*. The silver ornaments are interesting, since a large number of these are not made locally, but are found in one of the main Himyaritic ruins in this region.

"If Nisab, the largest town of this district, were deserted tomorrow, how long would traces of it remain? It would disappear in a short time. Yet, half buried in sand, pillaged for building material and washed by many floods, the outline of Himyaritic ruins remains clear to the eye, and their carved inscriptions almost as clear as the day that they were made.

"We were to follow along the old Himyaritic caravan route towards Beihan. There are two main tribes in Northern Beihan, the Musabein and the Balharith. Our Aulaqi escort were to hand us over to them at the border. We set off on trotting camels, with a mounted escort from the Hamami sub-tribe, who inhabit the desert between Nisab and the Ahl Karab (the latter are a lawless lot of free-booters). We moved along at a good swinging trot, singing the camel-trotting song. They differ from the marching songs in that they have the steady rhythm of the camel pace. Great use is made of a wide range of scale and the effect is more tuneful and inspiring than the songs of the hillmen. Only one white man, Mr. Wyman Bury, had ever before been to Beihan district, and he traveled along this very route thirty years ago. From his description of this track we had been prepared for a real desert journey, with no water on the way, wild Beduin raiding right and left, terrible heat and blinding sand-storms. The heat was almost unbearable, but the escort insured us from attack, the wind spared



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AHMED HASSAN NAKHAI (MISHAL),
A RELATIVE OF THE NAKHAI SULTAN
Southwest Arabia

us the sand, and there was a water hole on the way with water fit for the camels to drink.

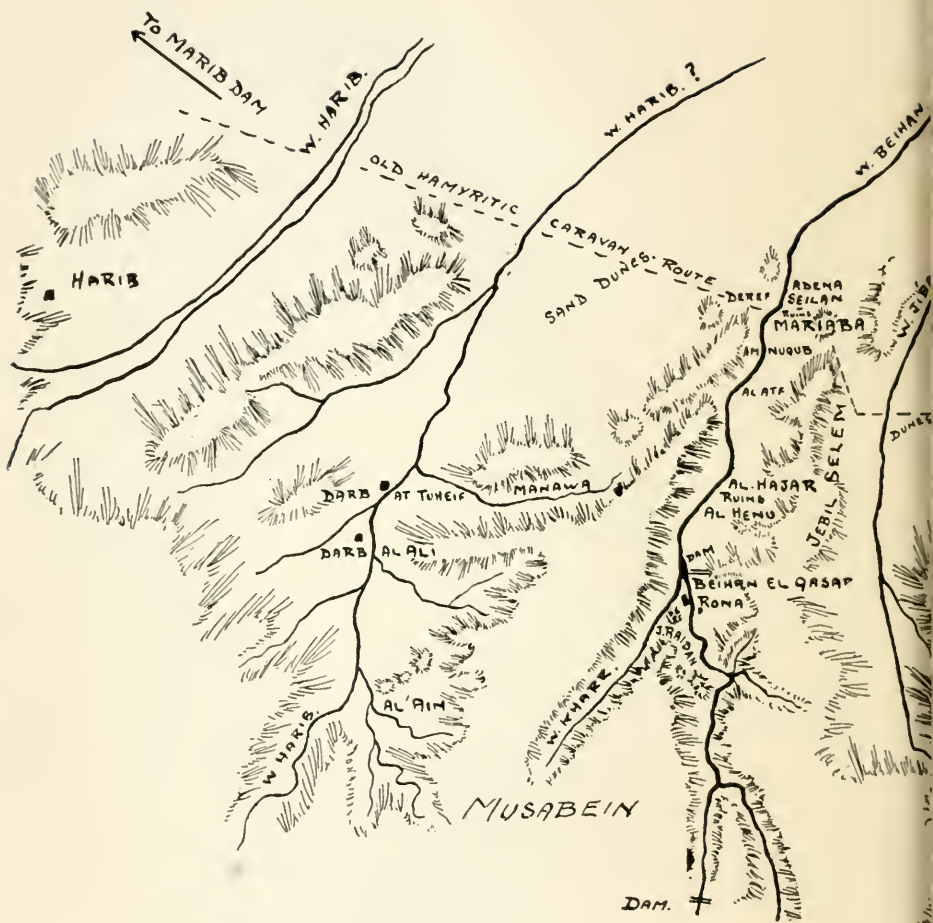
"The first part of the journey is over a flat plain, reddish in color, intersected by bare, black hills. Maps, it is perhaps needless to say, of this region are of very little use. We passed by the northern edge of the high mountainous district of Jebel en Nisiyin, which the track follows most of the way, and whose sides come down to the red sands like a cliff. The rocks are black and from it, into the desert, run a series of small *wadis*, whose presence is marked by lines of low trees and bushes. These lines of vegetation run into the desert for about eight hundred yards, after which there is nothing but gravel and sand. At last we reached the Musabein tribal border at the large well of Bir Jifar. Here we halted for a little, then moved out to greet our new escort, a combined party some two hundred strong, of the Musabein and Balharith tribes. We had left Jebel en Nisiyin behind the previous day. The Beihani party were drawn up in a long line, some on foot, the majority on camels and a few sheikhs on ponies. Our Aulqi escort formed a line facing them. A large concourse of people was raising the sand. The greeting ceremony started. As the Beihanis moved forward in double ranks of about eight men, they came straight for the center of the line, a gap of about ten yards between each group of two ranks, wheeled right and fired their rifles as they passed us.

"We were now out of the indigo country. The Beihani wears a few more clothes and uses less dye, in this respect, approaching nearer to the Arab of the northern desert. They passed us and saluted about three times, while the sheikhs rode around them in a wild *mahuff*, discharging their silver-decorated rifles as they galloped past. The Aulqi then responded. It was altogether a very good show, but a special number was in store because, when the ceremony should have closed, out came a party of about twenty Balharith, who threw an old skin on the ground and proceeded to blow it to pieces by firing their rifles at this target. It was an amusing sight to watch and was keenly appreciated by the spectators, although the performers, capering around in a circle, springing into the air and firing their rifles from all directions at the skin, obviously enjoyed it more than anyone else. To complete the picture of Arabs at play, around this mob of lunatics and almost knocking some of them down, rode a wild looking gentleman on a frenzied

gray pony. We shook hands with our hosts—it was quite pleasant to find after this that one's hand was not stained with indigo—and adjourned to have lunch and pay off our old escort.

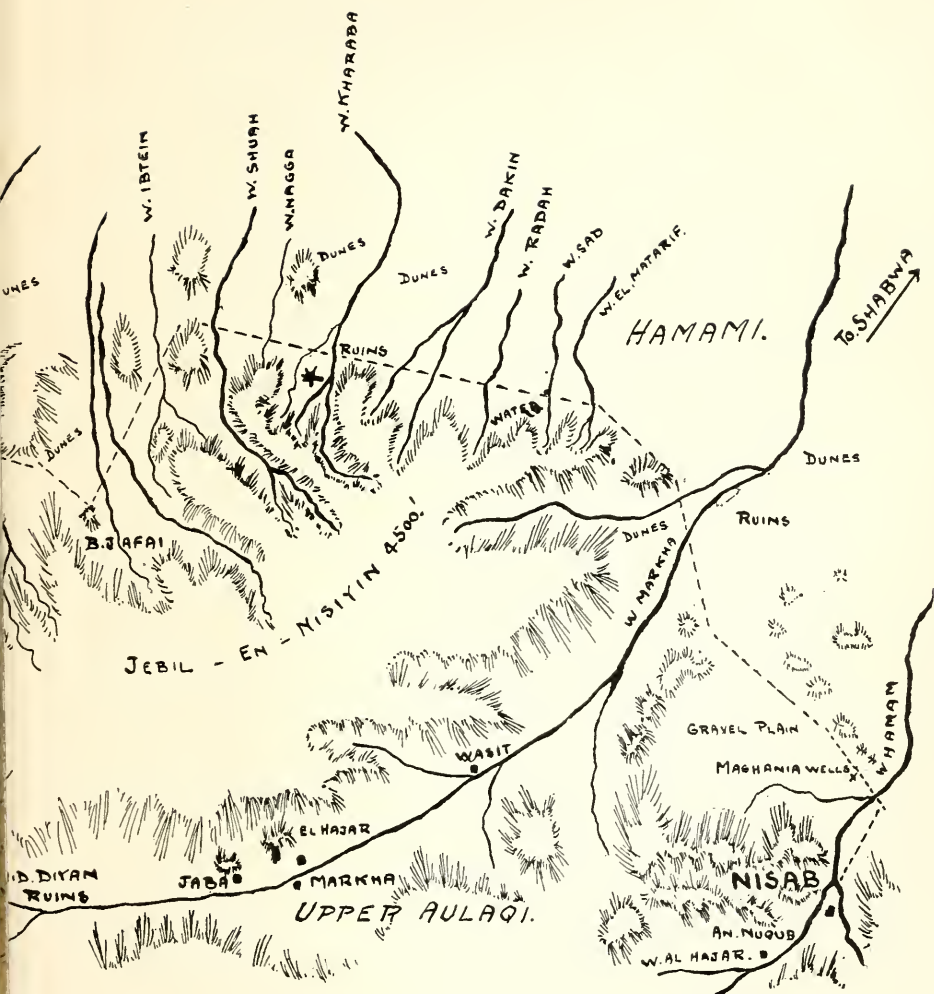
“The Beihani people are most picturesque, and this ride with them was unforgettable. Moving in a ragged line, we soon crossed a series of sand dunes. Twenty men dropped behind to look after the baggage caravan. From the top of the hill we had a wild ride down to the camping place. Those in the rear would start a song and would carry those in front with them, the pace increasing all the time. A new song would start, be roared out for a little and give place to another. A verse of poetry would be shouted and lost in the beginning of another, or drowned in a high-pitched war-cry. Camp was made, and by the light of big fires the caravan came in. The sound of their songs preceded them. Camels were unloaded and the outposts put out. After supper we were entertained by an interesting ceremony with which the Beihani precedes turning in for the night. The actual words were not fully understood even by our Arab cook, but the gist of them was as follows: a man out on the flank shouted out a long sentence which meant “Are you ready for war?” and the affirmative answer was roared out by those sitting round the fires and by the outposts. There was then a long silence, after which the man on the flank shouted “Load your rifles!” which was followed by a shout and a rattle of bolts going home.

“The next day was a short ride to Nuqub, the home of the Sherif of Beihan. This is not a village, but a *dar* with a well and small outhouses. From the top of the *dar* flew two Union Jacks, while below was gathered a large crowd surrounding the Sherif and his three sons. The town band, carrying umbrellas, consisted of two pipers, three drummers, and several others—presumably vocalists—who were getting ready for action by banging on their drums. The usual greeting ceremony followed, except for the town band, who stayed in front of us until they were assured that they would be tipped later, and also a cheerful gentleman, who kept things going by shooting off Chinese crackers. We went forward and met the Sherif, who was a middle-aged man strikingly handsome with a white beard, and the manners of a Victorian country squire. He was dressed in a long gray and yellow kilt, a large embroidered turban and a white coat. In his hand he held a long silver-bound spear. He shook hands with us and led us to our



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A DETAILED SKETCH MAP



quarters. The next day we moved south down the *wadi* sixteen miles to Beihan el Qasab, the home of the Musabein Sheikh, under the shadow of Jebel Raidan, a hill about eight hundred feet high, and a famous place of historical pilgrimage, although its interest has been extremely exaggerated by hearsay reports.

"Wadi Beihan is full of Himyaritic ruins. Walking down the *wadi* from Nuqub to Qasab, the traveler comes upon them slowly, and it is difficult to get a picture of them as they must have looked when they were inhabited, and far harder to describe them here. Hagar al Hamyr is now a high, raised mound of broken stones, through which shapes of the houses and walls appear. In Wadi Beihan there is very little left of the dam Al Qernan, which was not more than forty yards across, and its function was to deflect the *wadi* from the buildings on its northern side. The dam was so successful that the *wadi* bed is now fixed at this point and the small ruins north of the dam appear to be on high ground.

"This district has the attraction of all places with historical background. Along the Wadi Beihan are streets of ruins between Seilan, Hagar al Hamyr and Beihan el Qasab, ruins of houses in great profusion and remains of garrisons and watch towers on every hilltop. There are two ruined forts overlooking Beihan el Qasab, one being on Jebel Raidan. A track leads up to the southeast side and stops at the ruins of what must have been soldiers' quarters in Himyaritic times. There are many of these small square buildings, often in good repair; a cement wall encloses the side of a big boulder, which the Arabs agreed might have been used as a lavatory. The houses with a ground plan about fifteen feet square are all similar in construction and opening on to each other. From there a track goes up to the base of a precipitous top, where what was a natural way of ingress has been stepped and shored up with a high wall. From there it was necessary to scramble around a narrow slope of rock with an out-jutting rock above it. Turning to the left of a narrow cat-walk, there is a cement passage-way, still in excellent repair, without which it would be impossible to proceed further. There are no inscriptions, but near the summit there is a deep chimney in the rock.

"After heavy rains when the *wadis* come down in spate, the Arabs find ornaments, tablets and images, usually in bas-relief. The majority of these are found on the surface, but there is little doubt



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A CHIEF FROM DHUFAR

that a careful excavation would more than repay the work involved. The reason for this is to be found in the bursting of the great dam at Marib, and the tremendous exodus which must have followed this disaster. It seems plausible to suggest that if it were possible to excavate the ruins of Jasha Dezan, which only a few Beduin have seen, similar conditions to those of Pompeii would be found. These ruins, which are half covered with sand, are more extensive than those at Seilan, which cover an area of about five acres. The sudden cutting off of the water supply must indeed have occasioned a very rapid flight, if not absolute extinction. With little imagination, one can appreciate the dreadful predicament of this town and of the others, which were doubtless similarly situated when they found that the news of the breaking of the great dam was true, and that they were faced with a dry march of fifty miles for young and old alike. It would, indeed, be most surprising if they did not leave behind their statues and most of their treasures.

"At el Qasab, after another greeting ceremony, we entered the *dar* of the Ahl Musabein Sheikh, which had been given over to our use. An unpleasant ceremony always takes place on these occasions, consisting of the slaughter of animals in front of the doorstep. It is polite to do this just as the guest is about to enter. In this case, and similarly at Nuqub, three oxen were waiting in charge of six men. As we approached, they seized the wretched beasts, hamstringing them, not without a little struggle, and, pulling their heads back, cut their throats, drenching the sand with blood. It makes one sick to see it, but it is hard to keep the eyes away the first time—subsequent times it is quite easy. A horrid ceremony that ill accords with the dignity of the Arab.

"Afterwards we went to lunch with Sheikh Alowi, who lives in Beihan Suq, the market town. We entered an evil-smelling courtyard—the Arab does not understand or care about even the most elementary drainage—climbed some noisome stairs and sat around a dark room. Of necessity the windows in Arab houses are small. They have three functions, which they fulfil, as loopholes, ventilators, or spittoons; their usual size is about a foot by nine inches, and they are placed at the height of the shoulder of a man sitting. A carpet of native manufacture lay on the floor and sheep-skin rugs were placed, rolled up against the wall, against which to lean or rest one's back. A water pipe and a bag of tobacco were brought in, lit

with red-hot tinder, and placed in front of us. Our host was exactly as one would have pictured Ali Baba to have been. He was broad and round and wore the billowy flowing clothes of the desert Arab, and a tremendous turban of many colors.

“He was now becoming rapidly hysterical with joy at the approaching feast, standing in the doorway, giggling, gesticulating and making us welcome a hundred times. We drank quantities of coffee, and smoked pipe after pipe. The first course was brought in. We had by this time become used to eating raisins from San’a, clearing off flies with an outward sweep of the hand, and collecting the raisins on the return journey, but we were not prepared for what followed. Two slaves brought in three enormous flat baskets, on which reposed the mortal remains of the bullock that had, an hour and a quarter previously, been killed in front of us on the doorstep. I am not expert on the anatomy of bullocks, but I should say that most of him was there, including his internal machinery, and the flies had known all about it for some time.

“One learns self-control, however, and, having swallowed once or twice, we rapidly seized a piece of leg—rapidly because one must forestall the extra polite host, who will attempt to give one the greatest delicacy of all, the eye. We ate slowly and, to give honor where honor is due, the cook had done his job well and the meat was tender and well flavored. Also we were getting the very best that our now completely hysterical host could give us, and that makes all the difference.

“The surrounding sheikhs ate as only Arabs can, of course, no knives and forks other than razor-edged *jambiyas*. They seized a leg, cut off half a pound with a sweep of the knife, pulled a likely bit of fat with a sweep of the hand, and ate both pieces simultaneously with a couple of chews and a swallow. The bullock’s remains disappeared in a surprisingly short space of time. We wiped our hands on our shorts, heaved a sigh of relief and waited for the next course with bated breath. Then in came a large bowl, with a pyramid of stiff porridge in it weighing about twenty pounds; then another and one more exclusively for us, over which was poured some thick yellow liquid, a combination of ghee and animal fat. Bowls were brought in and hiccough-hour had arrived. You do not stint yourself in hiccoughs in Arabia, nor do you attempt to conceal them, or say “Pardon” or anything like that, you let them have



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ABDULLAH IBN OTHMAN FADHI,
NEPHEW OF FADHI SULTAN
Southwest Arabia

their own way and they are considered complimentary to your host: only after a tremendous, soul-shaking one, you piously ejaculate "*Al Hamdu Lillah*" ("Praise be to God"). There were many such ejaculations.

"When the time came to go, our stout host bounded down the stairs in front of us, in the greatest of high spirits—the banquet had been an unqualified success, and he knew it. He was laughing, talking, and hiccupping all in the same breath, quite incomprehensible, with a faraway look of complete happiness in his rolling eyes. He bounded off his doorstep, trod with his bare right foot on an enormous camel thorn, hiccupped, lifted up his foot, withdrew the offending thorn, picked his teeth with it, and with a broad grin on his face shouted "*Al Hamdu Lillah*."

"Thus we left Sheikh Alowi outside his house in Beihan Suq."

In this article I have reviewed the evidence available for the antiquity of man in Arabia, together with a general statement of the ethnic problems concerning the modern inhabitants. It has also been my privilege to include a picture of the life and customs of the tribesmen in southwestern Arabia as described by a recent traveler in this region.

Statistical information in the form of large series of anthropometric data on the living peoples, as well as scientific excavation on a generous scale, will probably not be undertaken for some time, since apart from native hostility, financial crises retard pure research work of this nature. However, several schemes have recently been proposed for detailed studies of the anthropological and archaeological problems in Arabia, and it is to be hoped that the necessary financial support will be obtained so that the secrets, which now lie buried above and below the sands of Arabia may, before long, be added to the sum of man's knowledge of himself and his ancestors.

Let us in conclusion recall the well-chosen words of Pope: "The proper study of mankind is Man."

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