

# ŞAN‘Ā’ AN ARABIAN ISLAMIC CITY

*edited by R B Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock*



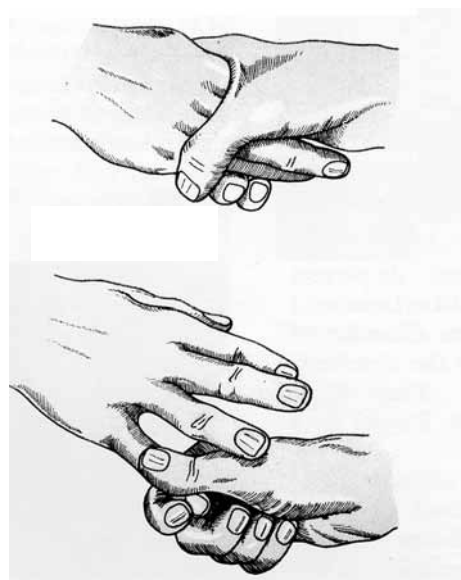
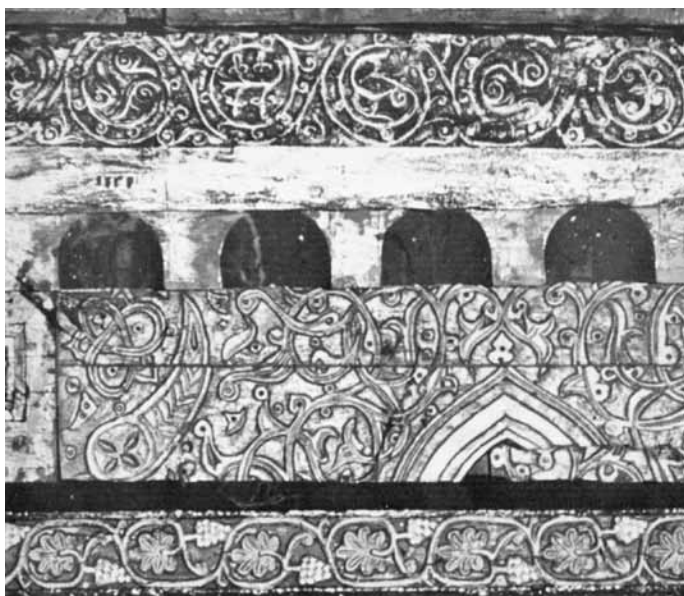
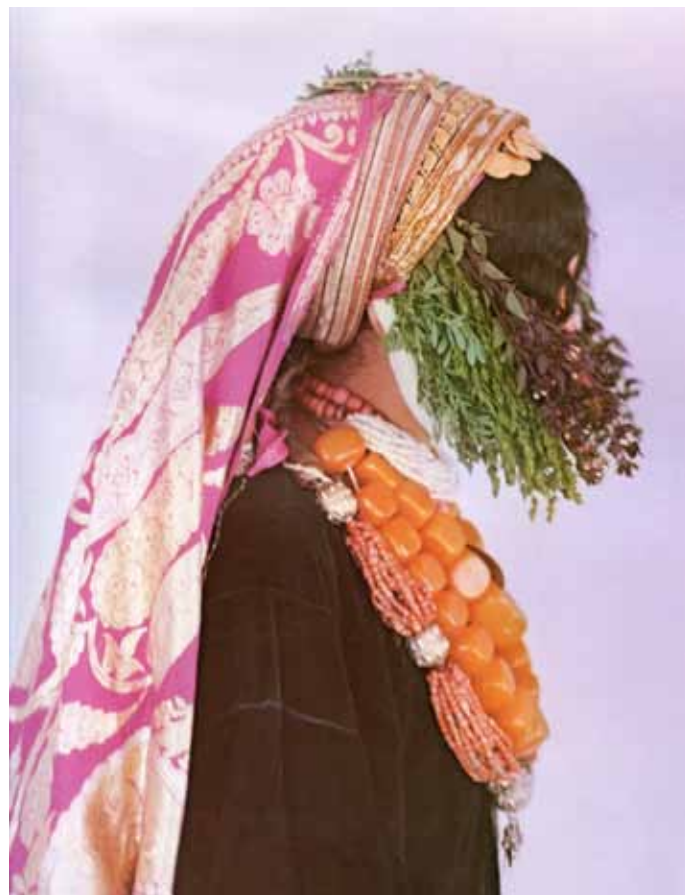
*This impressive and lavishly illustrated volume, now reprinted and published by Melisende UK Ltd, is the result of many years of research and careful planning. Led by Professor R. B. Serjeant and Dr Ronald Lewcock, a team of internationally acknowledged experts and academics here deals with specialised aspects of the city. This work is one of major scholastic importance in which the society—along with the complex religious, legal and mercantile setting—long history, crafts, arts, and religious and vernacular architecture of this traditional Islamic city of north Yemen are exhaustively described and analysed. A large number of both colour and black and white illustrations are used to show the function and form of the architecture and the living crafts, supported by many plans and line drawings, with maps to show the evolution of the city.*

*In its dramatic highland setting, Şan‘Ā’ had until recently avoided many of the problems and changes faced by the cities of Arabia. Such traditional cities of Islam evolved and function in a unique and fascinating manner; but their insular traditions and society are now being rapidly eroded in the face of modern economic and technological pressures. In a few years cities such as Şan‘Ā’ will have altered out of all recognition to their long and splendid histories. However, this major work preserves the city of Şan‘Ā’ for posterity.*

*This book will remain the standard work of reference on the subject.*



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‘This book presents an enormous mass of information, much of it new, and important for Arabists, historians, ethnographers, architectural historians, and many others. They must all be profoundly grateful, that, before more buildings were demolished, more manuscripts lost, more customs discarded, and more traditional learning forgotten, Ṣan‘ā’ was studied with such care by so learned and devoted a band of scholars. ... It can be said confidently that the publication of this book represents the greatest advance in our knowledge of south-west Arabia since the discoveries of the Danish expedition were given to the world by Niebuhr.’

C. F. Beckingham, *JRAS* (no. 2, 1983)

‘All together, this study is a truly remarkable achievement, probably the most significant book ever to appear on any aspect of South Arabia. ...

... But for the moment all lovers of South Arabia ... owe an immeasurable debt to the intrepid group of scholars responsible for this work, and not least to Professor Serjeant, to whom it must represent the crowning achievement of a lifetime’s devoted research.’

A. K. Irvine, *BSOAS* (vol. 53, no. 1)

After reading Oriental Languages at Edinburgh and Cambridge, the late R. B. Serjeant was appointed to a research post in South Arabian Dialects at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and went to Aden in 1940. He served there in the Aden Protectorate Government Guards but later joined the BBC and became editor of the *Arabic Listener*. Returning to London University he was appointed Colonial Research Fellow and worked in Ḥaḍramawt in the Eastern Aden Protectorate, subsequently spending long periods in both Protectorates. In 1964 he made his first journey in Royalist Yemen, visiting the Imām at al-Qārah. In 1969 he first visited the Yemen Arab Republic where he carried out field research during some half dozen visits. He has also travelled in the Arab states, East and West Africa, and visited Iran, India, Pakistan and Malaysia. He returned to Cambridge in 1964 where he was Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic. His publications included *Islamic textiles: a history, Prose and poetry from Ḥaḍramawt, The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt, The Portuguese off the South Arabian coast, South Arabian Hunt*, and he was co-editor with Dr Robin Bidwell of *Arabian Studies*. In 1974 the Royal Society for Asian Affairs presented him with the T. E. Lawrence Memorial Medal.

Ronald Lewcock was formerly Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Architecture at M.I.T. and a Fellow Of Clare Hall, Cambridge. He is author of major works on South African Dutch and British colonial architecture, on Yemeni, Kuwaiti and Sri Lankan traditional architectures, as well as many shorter books, chapters and articles on architectures from the Caribbean to Indonesia. For twenty years he was a consultant for UNESCO in the Middle East and Central Asia, and coordinator of a number of international campaigns. He is currently Honorary Professor of Architecture at the University of Queensland and Emeritus Professor of the Doctoral Program in Architecture at the Georgia Institute of Technology.



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