

ISA ONLINE RESEARCH FORUM

TRIBE, REGIME AND OPPOSITION IN NORTHERN HIGHLAND YEMEN

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC BIOGRAPHY

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This research project enquires into the life trajectory of a Yemeni shaykh (tribal leader) during the momentous decades from the 1962 Revolution to the Houthi expansions in the early 2000s. Naturally, no narrative of a single person can make manifest Yemen's recent historical processes in all their complexities and contradictions. The life of this Yemeni shaykh would hardly deserve the telling if it were not these extra-personal dimensions that come to light in it: his personal biography is inextricably linked to the political biography of his time, incorporating the discords, protests, anxieties, and hopes of the age in his own self to a remarkable degree. By retelling and discussing the memoirs of this shaykh, this project aims at illuminating a number of little studied aspects of Yemen's recent history "from within": The tribal dynamics of the 1960s civil war, the emergence of the tribal leftist axis in Northern Yemen in the 1970s and 1980s, the role of tribal dynamics in the post-1990 transition period and 1994 civil war and, later on, the Houthi conflict. The result is a profound and original insight into tribal life and the often turbulent relation between tribes and the state in 20th century Yemen.



Marieke Brandt is a researcher at the Institute for Social Anthropology (ISA) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. Her research focuses on tribalism, tribal genealogy and history, and tribe-state relations in Yemen. She was PhD fellow of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, DAAD fellow in Sana'a, Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow of the European Commission, and project leader of the New Frontiers Groups Programme (NFG) project "Deciphering Local Power Politics in Northern Yemen" funded by the Austrian National Foundation. She is the author of award-winning *Tribes and Politics in Yemen: A History of the Houthi Conflict* (Hurst/Oxford University Press 2017).

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