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**Personalia**

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#### Personalia

- 2010 “Il Grande Tempio di Yéha (Etiopia) ed i Templi Minei di Barāqish (Yemen)”, in: F. MAZZEI – P. CARIOTI (a c.), *Oriente, Occidente e dintorni ... Scritti in onore di Adolfo Tamburello*, Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente, pp. 773–781.
- 2012 “Some new Considerations on the Great Temple of Yeha”, in: S. WENIG (Hrsg.), *In kaiserlichem Auftrag: Die Deutsche Aksum-Expedition 1906 unter Enno Littmann, II: Altertumskundliche Untersuchungen der DAE in Tigray/ Äthiopien* = *Forschungen zur Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen* 3/2, Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, pp. 183–202.

### In memoriam Arthur Kinloch Irvine (1935–2011)

DAVID L. APPLEYARD, Bath

Arthur Kinloch Irvine was a quiet and unassuming man, a scholar of “the old school”, whose name is perhaps not as well known to the world of Ethiopian Studies as it should be. In formal contexts he preferred to use only his initials and not specify his first names, but was of course always simply known as Arthur to close colleagues and friends. He was a member of faculty at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) from 1961 until 1998, throughout the 37 years of his academic career. He retired formally in 1992 as Reader in Semitic Languages, but continued to do some teaching for six more years. His teaching focused on Ethiopian Semitic, especially Amharic and Gəʿəz, but in his research he specialized in Ancient South Arabian languages and culture, including links with Ancient Ethiopia.

Born on 23 August 1935 in Glasgow, where his father was Professor of Music at the university, he received his secondary education at the famous Hutchesons’ Grammar School in the city and matriculated in 1952 in the Scottish Higher in Latin, Greek, Mathematics, English and History. From there he went to St. Andrews, where he read Classics. It was at university that he first studied Arabic, under Edward Ullendorff, who by then had been at St. Andrews for two years. They remained life-long friends and colleagues after Ullendorff, too, moved to SOAS in 1964 where Arthur was already Lecturer in Semitic Languages.

After graduating in 1956 he went on to St. John’s College, Oxford, where he worked for his doctorate on Old South Arabian, the group of languages that was to remain the principal focus of his research for the rest of his life. In those days supervisors were less a regular part of a research student’s life than they are now, but at St. John’s he was fortunate enough to work with the renowned Arabist and Old South Arabianist, Alfred Felix Landon Beeston.

David L. Appleyard

The subject of his thesis was a survey of Old South Arabian lexical materials connected with irrigation techniques, which was published by the Faculty of Oriental Studies in 1962–63. After Oxford he spent the year of 1959–60 in Tübingen conducting post-doctoral work, a time which he recalled with fondness, the mountains and forests of the Schwarzwald bringing to mind the north of Scotland. Although he was not a great traveller, and never for instance visited those countries whose languages, cultures and history occupied his scholarly interests, this period of his life in Germany along with the following year spent on military service in the British Navy on board a minesweeper, and in particular sailing within the Arctic Circle, remained experiences which he looked back on with nostalgia whenever he felt especially disillusioned with the daily round of academic life.

After this period of national service, Arthur joined SOAS in 1961 as Lecturer in Semitic Languages. With Ullendorff's arrival at SOAS three years later, he became more involved with Ethiopian Semitic languages and shared the teaching of Amharic after 1967 when the language was first taught as part of an undergraduate degree programme, and on occasion also taught Gəʿəz, when required. His principal field of research remained, however, Old South Arabian and it is fair to say that he became one of the two British experts in the field at the time alongside his teacher, A.F.L. Beeston, though he himself would never have conceded as much. He regularly corresponded and consulted with Beeston on a number of research questions, publishing jointly with him in 1967 an article on 'Homicide in Pre-Islamic South Arabia', and in 1988 an article on 'New evidence on the Qatabanian letter order'. The majority of his published articles also deals with South Arabian matters or the links between South Arabia and Ancient Ethiopia, in the latter instance notably his 1965 article 'On the identity of Ḥabashat in the South Arabian inscriptions', a seminal study which tackled the long-standing debate on the meaning of the term in its Arabian context. Similarly, one might also mention his studies of 'An Ethiopian Sabaeen inscription from Southern Tigre, Ethiopia', and 'The relationship of early Ethiopian Semitic to Old South Arabian', the latter stemming out of a small conference on Ethiopian origins held at SOAS. His profound knowledge of Ancient Arabia also made him the ideal person to write the chapter 'The Arabs and Ethiopians' in Wiseman's multi-authored volume *Peoples of Old Testament Times*. In this piece he provides a concise and insightful analysis of Ancient Arabian history, culture and language as relevant to Old Testament Studies, though in spite of the title of the chapter, unsurprisingly, the Ethiopians receive much less discussion.

Looking at a list of his publications, however, it is immediately evident that his greatest scholarly contribution is by far in the area of academic book reviews, a task to which he brought the same care, perspicacity and

rigour that he applied to all his writing. A rough count yields around 140 book reviews, written mostly between 1963 and 1996, almost a hundred of which appeared in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (*BSOAS*) with most of the rest in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, and others in the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, the *Journal of Arabian Studies*, and *Africa*, to name but the most obvious. The fields covered by his reviews range, of course, from South Arabian philology and archaeology, to various other areas of Semitic linguistics and philology, and the linguistic and historical spheres of Ethiopian Studies and Islamic Studies, especially relating to the Arabian peninsula. On the subject of his publications, one should not overlook contributions to encyclopedias, such as the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) and the first volume of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, as well as the semi-popular encyclopedia of mythology, religion and the supernatural *Man, Myth & Magic*. Another major reference volume in which he was involved is Routledge's *Atlas of the World's Languages* (1<sup>st</sup> edition), for which he was editor of the section on the Middle East and North Africa. He was an assiduous writer of obituaries for colleagues in his field – one thinks of those he wrote for H.J. Polotsky in *The Times*, J. Ryckmans in *BSOAS*, and of course for his teacher A.F.L. Beeston also in *BSOAS* – and once when a colleague casually asked him, who was going to write his obituary, he replied that he had already written it himself. That may well have been an example of his wry sense of humour, but if ever such a draft does come to light one can be sure it will be more insightful than the present writer's effort.

Arthur's academic achievements were wide-ranging, but the modest and very private man that he was, he never advertised or spoke much of them. His name may not be frequent in bibliographies precisely because much of what he achieved was "behind the scenes". He was for instance active in the editorial aspect of scholarly journals. In addition to having a close involvement with *BSOAS* over many years, for much longer than the six years he served on the Editorial Board from 1981 to 1986, he was also a fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society from 1966, serving on Council from 1969 to around 1976, for the last three years of which he was editor of the Society's journal, continuing to serve on the Publications Committee till 1999. He was joint editor of the 1988 memorial volume for his former colleague, the British South-Arabianist Tom Johnstone, co-edited in 1992 with Ullendorff and Yoram Bronowski a volume of the letters of H.J. Polotsky and also acted as English-language proofreader of the first two volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, between 2000 and 2004. Lastly, for many years he was Chief Examiner for the British General Certificate of Education (O-level) in Classical Arabic, a job that brought him a great deal of often tedious work but to which he unfailingly gave his sense of rigour and fairness.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to know Arthur remember him as a quiet, unassuming, even shy man. He would, for example, typically eschew the regular group photographs of academic staff that were a feature of university life. Students found in him a gifted teacher whose knowledge, expertise and, indeed, patience were highly regarded by students and colleagues alike. Though he must at times have been tried, he was never known to raise his voice or openly lose his calm. Throughout the late 1960s and the 1970s much of his teaching focused on Amharic and Gəʿəz, and the present writer recalls Amharic classes with him, conducted in his smoke-filled office at the time on the top floor of an annexe away from the SOAS main building, a context reminiscent of his own description of supervision sessions with A.F.L. Beeston some twelve or so years earlier. Like Beeston, Arthur was something of a chain smoker in those days. He managed seemingly effortlessly to coax in us an understanding of the most abstruse Amharic and Gəʿəz texts without a word of exasperation. As the 1980s advanced he concentrated more on teaching Classical Arabic texts. Though he officially retired in 1992, he returned to teach at SOAS on a part-time basis across the next six years. His commitment to his chosen fields was tireless, though he may at times have half jokingly complained of the more humdrum sides of an academic's job.

Outside his academic achievements, there are some unexpected accomplishments, too. Most people who knew Arthur are aware that amongst his interests numismatics took first place and he was immensely proud of his extensive coin collection. To call this a "hobby" seems inadequate. He was on one occasion, at least, able to bring his numismatic expertise into his academic writing in his 1964 article 'Some notes on Old South Arabian monetary terminology'. Many colleagues knew he had a great love for music and indeed was very knowledgeable on classical music. He had a liking for the operas of Richard Wagner and had a particular penchant for modern classical composers, though there were limits even here, as he confided in one colleague that he could not, for instance, assess the genius of John Cage since he could not hear a note of the score when it was played. His musical expertise also extended to playing several instruments, notably the piano and, somewhat more unusually, the bagpipes, an accomplishment that he claimed owed much to his father's insistence.

Arthur lived for around forty years in Loughton, Essex, at first with his wife, Verity, whom he had met whilst she was a research student at SOAS and whom he married in 1970, and he continued to live in the area after their marriage came to an end. The later years of his life were dogged by ill-health, and he died in Loughton at the age of 76, after a long and debilitating illness, on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011. He is survived by his ex-wife, Verity, and their two sons, William and Hugh.

## Personalia

### Literature

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### In memoriam Səbḥat Gäbrä-Əgzi'abəḥer (1936–2012)

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Səbḥat Gäbrä-Əgzi'abəḥer died on Monday, 20 February 2012; he would have turned 76 years old on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May this year. Like that the hedonistic and bohemian life of an author and journalist came to an end, someone who had both obtained popularity and managed to make himself very controversial, even obnoxious to some. It was his writing through which he became familiar to many Ethiopians, though he was "more of a reader than a writer", as he said – and many therefore blamed him for not having written enough – an artist in living and of life, by his own definition. Whenever I met him, he made a point of stressing how good life was. It was perhaps him instead of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz who should have written about this as "the best of all worlds", and while Leibniz may have written it as a spoof (to flatter or please adoring followers), it seems that Səbḥat actually meant it. "If I had believed in God, I would have said that He had made all for the best", he once told me. But he did not long believe in God, although his clerical father in Təgray had tried his best