

ISA INTERNATIONAL GUEST LECTURE

Tribal Mediation in Yemen and its Implications to Development

Najwa Adra

Thursday, 7th of October 2010, 16.00 pm [s.t.]

ÖAW Building Wohllebengasse, Seminar room 1
A-1040 Vienna, Wohllebengasse 12-14

As in many other countries, most Yemenis continue to resolve their conflicts through mediation and other traditional mechanisms of customary law. This lecture will present case studies of tribal mediation collected during field research in Yemen between 1978 and 2005. These examples will be used to illustrate the ways in which principles that help define Yemeni tribalism are recreated through practice and adapted to changing socio-economic conditions. The lecture will conclude with a discussion of the implications of tribalism to development: is Yemeni tribalism detrimental to development and state formation? How does customary law coexist with state and religious law? How do women fare in Yemeni tribal contexts?



Dr. Najwa Adra is a cultural anthropologist with long-term experience in research and consulting in Yemen. Her initial research, conducted in a highland community NW of Sanaa in 1978-79, explored tribalism and customary law, and led to her doctoral dissertation, *Qabyala: The Tribal Concept in the Central Highlands of the Yemen Arab Republic*. Since then she has interviewed tribal leaders from most of Yemen's diverse regions. In 2005, she revisited her initial field site to examine changes in the ways tribalism and tribal identity are perceived. Her consulting experience spans 25 years and includes informal-formal linkages with DFID's Yemen Security and Justice Sector Reform, gender issues, adult literacy and intangible heritage.

Recent Publications :

- In Press: Poetry and Dancing as Metaphors of Tribalism in Yemen. In: *Yosef Tobi Jubilee Volume*. Ayelet Oettinger and Danny Bar-Maqqz, eds. Haifa.
- 2010: Literacy through Poetry/Heritage. *Anthropology News*, 51(4):40-41.
- 2009: Literacy Programme through Teaching Traditional Oral Poetry: The Case of Rural Women in Yemen. Fact Sheet. *Information Kit on Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris: UNESCO.
- 2009: Steps to an Ethnography of Dance. In: *Viewpoints: Visual Anthropologists at Work*. Mary Strong and Laena Wilder, eds. Austin: University of Texas Press.