

## Horniman Museum: Tuareg Artefacts, Yemeni Photos

By: Karen Dabrowska

Until the end of February 2011, the first floor of south-east London's Horniman Museum is devoted to a photographic exploration of Yemen's relationship with Britain. Tuareg clothes and artefacts are also on display, some worn by life size models.

Abdul Ila in Melah



Britain's Yemenis comprise the country's oldest Muslim community. Yemeni sailors travelled the world for 150 years and many settled in the countries where their ships' berth. Large

Yemeni communities, several generations strong, are now living in many British cities, especially Sheffield.

The “Coal, Frankincense and Myrrh: Yemen and British Yemenis” exhibition explains how and why Yemeni people came to Britain, and how their migration is linked to Yemen’s ancient role as a trading nation as well as its close

relationship with Britain.


First we are introduced to Yemeni characters – men who have spent their working life in Britain and retired happily to their native land. There is Ali Attia who travelled back and forth to Madagascar before joining the British navy. He arrived in Middlesbrough in 1958 and worked in a factory in Warrington before setting up a




**Horniman Museum**

**Photographer Tim Smith**





**Shopping for wedding dress**



grocery store in Walton, Liverpool. In 1975 he returned to Malah and began farming qat.

Fayed Ali Al-Ahmed photographed in Taiz in 2007 first arrived in Britain in 1948 and lived in Cardiff and Newport. He worked for British Rail on the Swansea-Cardiff-Newberry line and retired to Yemen in 1993.

The portraits are not confined to the old fokes. America-Yemeni rapper Hagage Al Masaed, one of

the first artists to combine Arab music and language with rap is pictured with other young men. The coal mines, where Yemenis were given many of the dirtiest and most poorly paid jobs are turned into works of art. A little girl praying with her eyes closed, smiling curiously endears all who see it.

During his travels to Yemen, photographer Tim Smith walked the streets of Sana'a photographing

the lives of Yemenis. The mirrors for sale in the old city make an interesting image. In Aden, Little Ben dominates the skyline of Steamer Point – a relic of Victorian Britain. There are also photographs of the British graveyard in Silent Valley in the desert nearby. The British left Aden in 1967 after a vicious armed struggle against their rule. The Aden graveyard was too dangerous to bury the

victims as it was overlooked by snipers and a desert graveyard was established. Photos of Marib, Yemen's oldest city and Shibam with its mud-brick architecture create additional insights into Yemeni life.

Yorkshire-based, freelance photographer Tim Smith set up and ran the photographic department of the Bradford Heritage Recording Unit. His

### Many identities



### The old city of Sana'a



## Museum Conservatory



## Traditional Tuareg dress

«Bradford Book» shows photos taken during the past 15 years to explore life in this cosmopolitan city. The «Moving Stones» solo exhibition explored the history of the Asian communities in Britain. Between 1984-86- he taught photography at the Impressions Gallery in New York.

The «Tuareg: People of the Veil» exhibition also on the first floor gallery of the Horniman Museum,

provides a fascinating insight into the culture of the Tuareg people through the exploration of clothing and jewellery. Ornate amulets, veils and slippers are set within their social and historical context to illuminate their significance to Tuareg culture.

Also on display are leather saddle bags, swords, daggers, knives, head dresses, embroidery, protections against the evil eye

and jewellery including the Agadez cross which takes 21 different forms. Gold is seen as an investment and women remake their gold jewellery in up-to-date designs.

The Tuareg are a diverse group of people from north west Africa, spread across Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. Despite regional difference they share the same language, religious

beliefs and a similar mode of dress. The important role dress plays in Tuareg identity is demonstrated by one of the names the Tuareg call themselves: Kel Tagelmust - People of the Veil.

The Horniman, through its collections and related exhibitions and events, seeks to encourage a wider appreciation of the world, its peoples and their cultures, and its environments. Victorian tea trader





Tuareg musicians

## Old Marib

Frederick John Horniman began collecting specimens and artefacts from around the world in the 1860>s. Horniman>s key mission was to bring the world to Forest Hill and he opened part of his family house to the public so they could view the riches he had collected. As the collections increased they outgrew the family home and in 1898 Horniman commissioned Charles Harrison

Townsend to design a new Museum.

The Museum opened in 1901 and was dedicated with the surrounding land as a free gift to the people of London by Frederick Horniman. The original collections comprised natural history specimens, cultural artefacts and musical instruments. Over the last 100 years the museum has added significantly

to the original bequest with Horniman's original collections comprising only 10 per cent of current ethnography and musical instrument holdings.

Further buildings were added to the original during the course of the last century notably in 1911

when a new building was donated by Frederick's son Emslie. In 1999 the Museum demolished some of the later additions and embarked on a Centenary Development to create a new extension and several associated spaces. It opened in June 2002.

### People of the veil



### Turags with their camels

