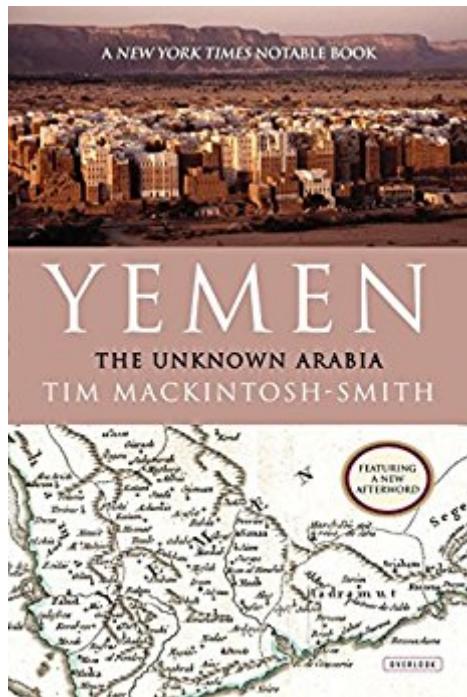


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# Yemen: The Unknown Arabia



## **Synopsis**

Arguably the most fascinating and least understood country in the Arab world, Yemen has a way of attracting comment that ranges from the superficial to the wildly fantastic. A country long regarded by classical geographers as a fabulous land where flying serpents guarded sacred incense groves, while medieval Arab visitors told tales of disappearing islands and menstruating mountains. Our current ideas of this country at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula have been hijacked by images of the terrorist strongholds, drone attacks, and diplomatic tensions. But, as Mackintosh-Smith reminds us in this newly updated book, there is another Arabia. Yemen may be a part of Arabia, but it is like no place on earth.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Often times reviled throughout history as a backwater, often backward, author Tim Mackintosh-Smith does a wonderful job in showing Yemen as an intriguing land, an unknown section of Arabia, bringing to the reader some of the history, culture, people, and geography of this much neglected corner of the Middle East. Mackintosh-Smith provides an excellent primer of Yemni history. Yemen we find out once hosted powerful pre-Islamic civilizations, South Arabian states like

Saba, Ma'in (whose massive and expertly produced stone works later overawed the Romans), Qaban, and Hadramawt, wealthy merchant kingdoms that grew rich on their tight control of aromatic gums - particularly frankincense and myrrh as well as cinnamon brought from India - in great demand among the Pharaonic Egyptians for medicine and for the process of mummification, by the Assyrians, by the Greeks, the Romans, the ancient kingdoms growing rich on spices rather than oil. Many of the lands were cultivated thanks to the Marib Dam - a massive structure that finally collapsed in the sixth century, that according to legend was destroyed by a rat with iron teeth - or to very impressive irrigation works, via stone tunnels cut into the living rocks of the mountains, some tunnels 150 yards long and big enough to drive a car through and still used to supply water to highland villages over 2000 years after they were built. With the collapse of this civilization - linked by many to the collapse of the Marib Dam - there was a Yemeni diaspora of sorts, as many Yemenis were in the vanguard of the early conquering armies of Islam, spreading throughout the Arab world as far as East Africa, Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, and even Spain.

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