

groups, rather than single signs, are probably the foundation even of the Indian figures. Primitive man everywhere must have made use of counters, or, scratching their equivalent somewhere, one, two, three, and four strokes, with five as tally. In counting ballots we still closely adhere to one of the most primitive devices invented by the human mind, to express and record numbers. The earlier "tally" was, however, four, rather than five.

In the Arabic figures from one to three their origin is essentially the same, and only thinly disguised by their present standardized form. They still consist of one, two, and three strokes of the pen. In this respect these three figures do not differ from their supposed Indian prototypes. (I am merely speaking here of the *form* of these numerals, and not of the Indian system of notation, with its place values, and its wonderful use of the cipher, rightly celebrated as one of the most ingenious human inventions).

The oldest forms in which the first four Indian numerals appear are these:

1. One, two, three, and four vertical strokes respectively, in the Asoka inscriptions, 250 B. C.

2. St. Andrew's cross, an X, is substituted for the four strokes of four in the Saka inscriptions, of some two hundred years later, but the one, two, and three stroke groups for figures one to three respectively continue throughout the range of Indian inscriptions and down to the sixth century of our era. In other words, these groups of one, two, and three strokes, up to that time, were not grouped together in a single symbol each, like our present figures 1, 2, and 3.

When the Arabs, in the time of the Caliph al-Mamūn, brought from India the "*Algoritmi de Numero Indorum*," *algorism*, or what we call arithmetic now, came into use in its present modern form. I have a suspicion, however, that the exact *form* of the first four Arabic numerals, as they exist today, was derived from another than an Indian source. Abū 'Abdallāh Mohammed ibn Mūsā al-Khowārazmī (Al-Huwārizmī of later times), who intro-

duced the Algorithms to the learned, if he was of Arabic stock at all, was a native of Khowārezm, the present Khiva. He, with many other scholars of the golden age of Arabic civilization, clearly belonged in background and training, far more to Persia than to Arabia or Iraq. We shall probably have to look to Pehlevi antecedents for a good portion of the culture of the Abbasids. The very shape of both the modern Arabic letters and figures seems to point in that direction.

In cuneiform, the wedges used in writing figures are grouped in series of threes. The figure three is made up of three wedges standing vertically. Four has one wedge more below the three, six consists of two series of three wedges each, nine of three such rows, the most logical thing. Ten has an angle or wedge with apex to the left.

The grouping of the Pehlevi figures consists of sub-groups of threes and fours, four is either four curves in one figure, or consists of two twos, the five consists of two figures, of three and two curves respectively, the six of two threes, and eight of two fours, the nine of three threes, and the ten, as in cuneiform, has a single symbol of its own.

Going on up to the twenty, one could almost divide all the existent systems of numeration into two classes, those that have no separate single figure for the twenty, and those that do have one. It is notable that it was in India where a separate single symbol for the twenty was early devised, not merely a double ten. The Indo-Aryan numeral eight (*astau*) is clearly a dual form, meaning a double four, a fact also expressed in the form of the eight.

It would be easier to derive the first four Arabic figures from the Pehlevi forms, than from the medieval Indian forms. It is perhaps not too much to say that the whole cultural sphere of the Parthian period of Western Asiatic history has been strangely neglected. It was nearly always taken for granted that little of cultural value was produced during that epoch. That the Parthians themselves were not a highly cultured, artistic race is readily admitted. It is also to be remembered, however, that for these four or

five centuries the Persian genius did not lie dormant, no matter how sluggish the intellectual life of the Parthian overlords of the Persian people may have been. To the survival of the spirit of that innate intelligence, and that ingrained artistry, of the Persian race and culture, the later Moslem culture owed much of its brilliancy. Even in the transmission of the Greek classics, men of other blood than the Arab had perhaps the lion's share, Syrians, Persians and Jews; in other words, Christians, Fire-worshippers and Israelites, largely helped to rear that splendid fabric of Oriental culture in and before the days of Harun al-Rashid.

Kokomo, Indiana

G. L. SCHANZLIN.

THE ARABS OF OMAN

I.

When we speak of Arabia as a country, or of the Arabs as the inhabitants of that country, it is impossible to be all-inclusive and make any one statement, whether it be a religious, political, or social one, apply equally to all parts. Having an area of 1,200,000 square miles, the Peninsula is divided both geographically and politically into numerous provinces. A large and very important one is Oman, in the eastern and southeastern section of the Arabian peninsula.

Oman is by its very geographical contour isolated and separated from the rest of Arabia. Beginning with the great rocky formation at Ras el-Khaimah (latitude 26 degrees N.) and following this down to Ras el-Hadd (Latitude 22 degrees N.), we find a natural barrier between the desert of inland Arabia and the coastal plain. This coastal plain, along with the fertile and quite thickly populated sea coast, is the section commonly known as the territory of Muscat. This designation is political rather than geographical. Oman is the word used to designate a much greater expanse of territory. Geographically, Oman extends from the province of Qatar south and east to the Dhufar province, and includes all the mountainous regions lying between. In ancient times it was even larger. Muscat is the capital, chief port, and political center.

Oman has had a very unique history.¹ At times she has played a definite part in the foreign affairs of Persia, Portugal, France, England, and the United States. The great natural fortress of Muscat bears to this day the definite evidences of Portuguese domination four to five hundred years ago, in the form of huge forts guarding the entrance to the harbor.

¹ Cf. "The Persian Gulf," by Sir Arnold Wilson.

This part of Arabia is the most fertile. One section, Dhufar, belonging to Muscat politically, has an abundant rainfall and practically anything can be made to grow. There I have seen cotton, tobacco, all kinds of fruits and vegetables grow in profusion without much difficulty. As one leaves the coastal plain and climbs to the fertile plateau on the top of the Jebel Qara, one is amazed to find rolling meadows with grass growing knee-high, furnishing abundant pasturage for large herds of cattle. Travelling in and about the oases of Southeastern Arabia one cannot but realize that the soil is very productive, and that irrigation is the one essential need to increase its fruitfulness.

The date gardens along the Batinah coast are extensive and of the very finest. There are numerous springs throughout Oman, and enough water to produce a great deal more in agriculture if it were not for the indolence, ignorance and indifference of the Arab himself. The possibilities are there, but the incentive is lacking. To provide anything beyond today's needs is not a part of the philosophy of a Mohammedan mind. He is concerned chiefly with having enough for the present, and leaving everything in the future to fate.

From a linguistic point of view, the Arab of Oman is the same as the Arab of the other parts of Arabia, except that, due to the intermingling along the coast of Arabs, Beluchis, Banians, Persians and Negroes from Africa, as well as a certain number of Europeans, there have developed a great many dialects or "pigeon"-languages. However, Arabic is universal in Oman and is understood, if not spoken, by all the non-Arab population. Still there is one section, namely Dhufar, where the mountain tribes speak a language quite different from pure Arabic. It apparently has come down from the original masters of the land, whose origin is still an open question. This language, called Jebeliya, resembles some of the Indian languages more than it does Arabic, and is quite unintelligible even to the Arabs of this section.

The Omani is loyal. It is not a loyalty to a cause, or a loyalty to an ideal for the benefit of the group, but rather an individual loyalty of one man to another. It is best exemplified in an intense loyalty to one's leader. It may be seen in the loyalty of father to son, son to father, or tribesman to tribesman. If an Omani assumes a responsibility, he will carry it out regardless of cost. At one time when out on a caravan trail the camel-men revolted. Their demands were beyond reason or possibility. They were indeed a wild group of Bedouin. Things looked dark for a few minutes. My guide had assumed the responsibility of seeing me through the Mahra territory. He stood there alone defying the Bedouin, and exclaimed in no uncertain terms that if anything happened to the doctor or one of his helpers, it meant his life against theirs. His loyal stand made its impression, and we were taken on to our destination. It would have been easy for that guide to have agreed with the camel-men, but his loyalty to the one to whom he had pledged himself caused him to take not the easy natural course but the truly difficult and seemingly impossible one. When this loyalty is translated into a loyalty to Christ, what would not the resultant discipline accomplish in Christ-like living and example?

The Omani is hospitable. He is that almost to a fault. It is an Arab trait to be generous to a guest, but the Omani goes even farther. A meal with an Arab friend in Oman is not a meal but a feast, and this applies to the poorest hovel as well as to the Sultan's palace. Everywhere in Arabia coffee is served as a sign of hospitality; but, not to be outdone, the Omani serves *helwa* (sweets) along with his coffee. I was on tour to an inland town. The Sheikhs welcomed me by serving sweets and coffee, sweets and coffee again, sweet vermicelli and coffee, dates and coffee, followed by a typical Oman meal of rice, mutton, dates and coffee. On another occasion my helper and I were entertained by an Arab Sheikh's wife, because of her husband's absence. She did everything possible for our comfort, and saw to it herself that her orders were

carried out. I know of no other part of Arabia where such a thing could take place.

Along with this hospitality is a friendliness which is likewise characteristic. The Omani is most friendly in a general way to everyone. The men's *majlises* (meeting places) are freer than elsewhere, and no great division of social standing exists. Often in a Sheikhs' *majlis* slaves and masters, bedouin camel-men and rich merchants meet on a common plane to have a friendly chat. This same picture can be found in other parts of Arabia, but in Oman there is more of a democratic spirit. This creates a fine type and spirit of community brotherhood.

The Arab is a great scout. How keen, alert and hardened to the cruelties of nature he becomes! The desert is a severe taskmaster. Its demands are life-taking, and only the strong survive. Hence, the Arab must be courageous and of an indefatigable nature. The Arab of Oman shares this feature with his brothers. Hour after hour, the camel-men will walk along the caravan path, never complaining of their lot. Finally we reach the camel-thorn grove, and will camp for the night. Before they think of themselves or their needs, they trot off and bring food for their camels. Every traveler of the desert admires the almost uncanny ability of the Arab Bedouin to read tracks in the desert sand, much as we do our guide book. These traits are truly phenomenal and are a cause of deep admiration to everyone familiar with desert life.

The Arab of Oman is very religious. He is not fanatical, however, in his religious attitude, as is his brother of the north. There is a much more tolerant spirit and open-mindedness. They talk more freely and frankly about religious matters. On the trek I have many times had the camel-men, while sitting around the camp-fire of an evening, ask in a very sane manner pertinent questions about the Christian Faith. The general attitude at a religious meeting is usually one of intense and real inquiry. However, he is bound by the chains of pride and self-conceit, both of which are direct products of his religion.

This arrogant and self-righteous spirit makes him seem almost impervious to the Gospel message. A missionary to Moslems soon realizes that only the power of the Holy Spirit can break down this pride and self conceit, and then his religious devotion will find its fullest development in fellowship with Christ.

From the point of view of possibilities, Oman stands high among the provinces of Arabia. There are real possibilities for agricultural expansion in the future. But in the matter of religious work progress is slow everywhere among Moslems. It is especially slow in Arabia, the very cradle of Islam. But in this matter also we have one of the most promising fields. The Omani's endurance, courage, religious fervor, hospitable nature, deep loyalty and friendly spirit make him most hopeful as a prospect. Every missionary in Oman visions the capacity for real discipleship that exists in his friends. As the light of Christ shines in, it will flood the darkness of their souls, and there will come forth for that Church of Christ in Arabia valiant soldiers of the Cross. Their real devotion and simple living will provide great lessons for all. Who knows but that they may in turn become missionaries to the West, at least in spirit if not in person, and show the West what it means to take up one's cross.

Muscat, Arabia

W. HAROLD STORM.

II.

Why do we open a Men's Hospital in Oman when the Mission's resources are not sufficient for the work already in hand? It is a natural question. Those who have been there know why. I shall not soon forget a steamy night when Ajman enjoyed a Turkish bath, and I suppose all the rest of Oman with us. We were sitting around stripped to the waist, longing to be packed in ice like mackerel, when we heard groans and calls for help. These came nearer and continued outside our door. Obviously someone was in serious trouble. We opened the door and found a man lying in the sand, stark naked, writhing in

pain. His hernia had strangulated two days before and he had been riding a donkey more or less continuously since that time in an effort to get to us for relief. He had started out dressed like other Arabs but his garments had dropped off, one after another during the last few hours of his trip when the pain was driving him almost insane. The last mile more or less was completed on his hands and knees, doubtless because falling from his donkey, he was not able to get back. Four men were deputed to carry him down to the sea and dip him a few times to take off his sand underwear. By the time they came back preparations for the operation were well under way and in a few minutes he was entirely relieved. His excellent recovery was one of those things that made a year's medical work worth while. A desperate, impossible, obstetrical case, on that same trip, we tried to relieve by means of a Caesarean section, unfortunately with a very different result. Such cases are frequent. God willing, they will not be so common after this.

Preventive medicine is the goal of every doctor, but the day of an adequate public health program would seem to be far distant. However, the Oman Arab has lots of good sense. He already segregates his lepers in a little town not a great distance from Sharga. Once we have an established hospital, it is quite within the realm of possibility that government cooperation can be secured and measures taken to eradicate the disease. Granted perseverance in treatment, the outlook for the leper is by no means hopeless. Once on a trip into the mountain country behind Jebel Achdhar we were able to nip a cholera epidemic in the bud. Men were dying in dozens. "If you will boil everything you drink, and cook everything you eat, the plague will disappear." It is hard to realize how preposterous and impossible such a statement seems to an inland Arab, but this sheikh was a man of unusual intelligence and much energy. Word went out that everything must be boiled or cooked before it was eaten, and the epidemic abruptly stopped. Months afterward a messenger arrived on a fast

camel. He carried a letter from that sheikh. "A bad epidemic of measles has broken out. What shall we do to stop that?"

But the greatest call of Oman is not her physical needs. Half a million Arabs live in those mountains and valleys. They include the fuzziest Bedouins and the most urbane and hospitable cosmopolitans. Their religious earnestness is splendid. Probably no cities in the Gulf fast and pray so faithfully as do Muscat and Debai. But they are willing to listen to a presentation of Christ's message, and their interest is more than mere courtesy. I have never seen an audience in Arabia or at home so keen to ask questions afterward about the meaning and implications of what they have heard, as the little company of perhaps fifty who listen each Sunday afternoon to a simple Gospel talk in Matrah. Oman is a district which forbids the use of tobacco just as Nejd does, but Oman is a land of tolerance and courtesy, which can hardly be said of Nejd. The visiting doctor is not an infidel and the son of a dog simply because he is a Christian. The religious faculty seems fresher and less hardened here than anywhere else in the whole of Arabia.

Tragedy is everywhere. Oman is a nest of slavery, though to be sure not in Muscat, where the British rule. One day in an inland town a splendid youngster came to a crowded clinic. "What is your name?" "Boniface." It was like a whiff of some childhood fragrance. "And where are you from?" It appeared he was a product of Catholic schools in Africa, and, kidnapped from there, is now a nominal Moslem in Arabia. He needed no medicine; what he wanted was help in running away. I have never seen him since. It was another of that race who at the end of a hard day came to ask whether there would be time after supper to read some more parables to him. He was an old man and his face had on it the marks of a long and a hard and a patient life. His simple sincerity made a great impression. The soul locked up in that prison had very few windows to let in the sunshine. A pathetic apprecia-

tion of the simple parables of Jesus may seem a slim basis for any hope of eternal life, but when I remember that humble, earnest, faithful old man, I like to remember that Lazarus gained a place in Abraham's bosom on the basis of his uncomplaining patience through a hard life.

The work ahead of us is enormous. "Yes," said a thoughtful dignified sheikh to me as I sat in his *mejlis*, "I have the Gospel, too. One of your missionaries gave me a copy twenty years ago. I frequently get it down and try to read it, but its Arabic is so strange that I understand nothing." The Arabic of the standard translation is doubtless excellent Arabic for Syria, but a tragedy of that sort can have but one reply. Somebody must burn the midnight oil, gallons of it, so that we can get the Gospel, not simply into men's hands where it does no good, but into their hearts where to some at least it will bring eternal life.

And so now of all times, "brethren pray for us." The Mission opens medical work in Matrah not because she has excess resources of money and men, but because the need is extreme and the opportunity great. We say sometimes that our responsibility ceases with the proclamation of the message. We are here to bring Christ to the Arab. That is an incomplete and unsatisfactory statement. We have been sent here to bring the Arabs to Christ. He has many sheep in this land and He wants to save them. No one can doubt that. Moreover, they are blessed with a spiritual perception and receptiveness far beyond the common run of men, and they have not been seared and branded by contact with western civilization.

Here are men who can travel the seven seas to wrest a slender livelihood from the penurious earth or from the treacherous ocean, men who prize their independence above everything else on earth. Debai, Oman's financial capital, bows the knee to no external power, commercial or political. Fifteen years ago when Great Britain stopped the nefarious arms traffic, the whole interior revolted and has been independent ever since. Debai wants her slaves, and Muscat longs for her old arms trade. No Christian can approve

of the things that these men fight for, but the caliber that this struggle demonstrates is one of the greatest arguments for carrying the Gospel into this country.

For the one thing that the Kingdom of God in Arabia needs now, is a few men who can defy greater adversaries than earthly governments. It is not an easy thing to be a Christian in Arabia. No one will give a day's employment to such a man. He may sit in no reception room in the whole city. No one will give his daughter to be such a man's wife. Who can be a Christian in such a country? We have some men here who can do it, the gaunt tough Arabs who dive for pearls in Ceylon and Sokotra, the grizzled old veterans in whose eyes and voice fire kindles as they tell how Debai has kept out all intruders for decades, men like a benignant patriarch from the desert country behind Ajman. He had my own father's twinkly brown eyes and a superb long white beard. I refused to believe it when told that he belonged to a notorious tribe of bandits, but he repudiated most emphatically the imputation of more peaceable habits. "But," I persisted, still unwilling to classify this living image of Abraham and Moses with Jesse James, "Aren't you afraid that you will be killed some day?" "Yes," said the gentle old man, "I hope so. I certainly do not want to die lying sick in a bed."

A few of those men with Christ in their hearts could be the salvation of Arabia. The numbers that would gather around them might surprise us. But we who have never been hungry in our lives, who have never since we were born faced danger or even hardship, soft children of a soft and luxurious age, how can we call hard and hungry men to be hard, relentless, fanatics for Christ, to bring to Him all their happy-go-lucky endurance of hunger and fatigue and heat and cold, to lay at His feet their cheerful cold bloodedness that would rather be shot than not. We can never do it, but Christ can. Brethren, pray for us.

PAUL W. HARRISON.

THE MISSION TO MOSLEMS IN CAPETOWN

A visitor walking in the streets of Capetown would immediately notice men wearing a bright red or black fez instead of a hat, and women with colored scarves on their heads. A few of the women would be completely veiled except for the eyes. They are the Moslems of the Cape, generally called the Malays.

In 1654, the Dutch East Indian Company began to introduce slaves and convicts from Batavia into South Africa, and set them to work in and around Capetown. In 1694, a party of political prisoners were brought over and settled near the village of Stellenbosch. Their leader was a remarkable man, named Sheikh Yusuf. He was quickly recognised as the leader of the few Moslems in the Colony, and his tomb is revered to this day as a place of pilgrimage. A book written by a civil servant tells us that in 1822 the Moslems had increased to "nearly three thousand." The masters did not encourage their slaves to become Christians, and when they acquired their freedom, it was natural that they should desire to practice some religion. This accounts for many of them becoming Moslems between 1820 and 1830. They are still called "Malays," but the descendants of these slaves and political prisoners have so intermarried with the Cape Colored people, the descendants of unions between European men and Hottentot women, that there are now few pure Malay families left.

The number of Moslems in the Union of South Africa is estimated by the Government at about 50,000, of whom 25,000 live in the Cape Province. Capetown itself has twenty-five small mosques. In spite of many exceptions, the Moslems are for the most part neat and clean, law-

abiding, respectable, friendly and sober members of the Colored community of the Cape. While the Colored Christian faces the West, the outlook of the Moslem is East. The majority of the Moslems are largely ignorant. They understand English, but use an odd sort of Afrikaans at home. Some are able to read the Arabic sounds from the Koran, which they learn by heart in "Malay Schools," but very few can understand the language. If the middle-aged are unlettered, the youths and girls have had an elementary education in the Christian Mission Schools. Thousands of Moslems owe all their education to the Christian Church, through the schools, and they are generally grateful. Now, although there are still many Moslems in our Mission Schools, the Moslems themselves have, throughout the Union, opened twelve small elementary schools of their own, with Government paid teachers, where the Koran takes the place of "Scripture" in the Religious Knowledge period. The old rigid orthodoxy often fails to hold the young, and several of the few really educated Moslems (graduates and doctors) have drifted into secularism and agnosticism. Islam has failed them, and they naturally think that all religion is intellectually bankrupt. They do not become Christians, because their living depends upon their remaining at least nominally Moslem.

In business the Moslem is the trader of the Colored community. When we see the multitude of small provision stores scattered all over the Cape Peninsula, all run by Jews or Indian Moslems from Bombay, we marvel at the lack of business initiative among the Colored Christians. The Moslem is often a small property owner and stands in his own shop. He has his own trade as tailor, carpenter, or mason, and seems to do all the hawking. This gives him a strong sense of economic superiority and independence. Owing to the prohibition of strong drink in Islam, the Moslems, on the whole, are sober members of society.

Religiously the Moslem is proud of belonging to an organization 230,000,000 strong in the world, and although there are many "splits" among them, the Christian Colored

people (who belong to a Church more than twice as large in numbers), would do well to cultivate their sense of solidarity. This pride in the Moslems, from whatever reason, hinders their acceptance of the Gospel more than anything else. They are essentially self-satisfied.

Through the influence of foreigners from North and East Africa, Arabia and Syria, a temporary revival has resulted in the greater use of the veil by some women, and night classes in some of the mosques. Though many do not attend the mosques, most Moslems (but by no means all) try to keep the fast in the month of Ramadan. Capetown stands only second to Java in the high proportion of Moslems who make the pilgrimage to Mecca, and who return with a heightened sense of the greatness of their religion. There is no prostration for prayer in the streets or public places. For the most part the believers are old-fashioned, orthodox followers of the Sunna or custom of the Prophet, in so far as they know it, but the few who desire a spiritual religion are mystics. Most have only one wife, but there are many who, "by Malay rite" (Moslem marriage, not recognized by law unless it is registered), have two or even three wives. As a result of the regulated divorce permitted by the Koran, there are those who have a succession of wives. It is here that the danger comes when a Moslem man takes a fancy to a Christian girl, and promises that he will always be true to her alone.

Efforts have been made by the modernist sect of Ahmadiya, from the headquarters in Woking, England, to introduce their doctrines into the Cape. The old Imams have stoutly opposed it, but Ahmadiya literature and its anti-Christian arguments are often met with.

Now we come to the great problem. Christians and Moslems live next door to each other and often rent rooms in the same house. They grow up from childhood mixed up together. So many Moslems are inoculated with a mild form of Christianity that ignorant and ill-instructed Colored Christians often fail to see the vital difference and the contradictions of Islam against the Christian Faith.