PROLOGUE

Qāt (*Catha edulis* Forsk.) is a psychoactive stimulant that is grown in many of the highland areas of Eastern Africa, ranging from the southern Sudan through Ethiopia and Kenya to Madagascar and the Transvaal. It is also grown across the Red Sea in Yemen's western highlands and in the 'Asīr and Jāzān mountains of Saudi Arabia.[1] While being considered a drug in most Arab states, as well as in many western countries, there is no viable legislation in Yemen today effectively controlling its cultivation, consumption or trade.[2]

The hardy tree that is famed by farmers for its drought resistance, is grown according to official statistics on 12% of Yemen's agricultural land, covering 153,500 hectares in 2009.[3] A number of leading Yemeni researchers however believe that the actual figure may be double.[4] In some of Yemen's highland districts over 90% of farmers are involved in *qāt* agriculture, growing the drug on over 80% of the cultivated land.[5] According to Yemen's 2003 agricultural census 494,000 landholders grow *qāt* in the mountain areas. This is 43.6% of the country's farmers and represents 3.9 million persons, considering average Yemeni farming family size of just below eight.[6] *Qāt* accounts for 6% of the country's GDP and for as much as one third of the agricultural GDP.[7] It accounts for an average of 10% of the expenditures of Yemeni families, but *qāt*-related spending may reach nearly 40% in poor households.[8] The *qāt* sector provides employment for one in every seven working Yemenis. In the capital Ṣan'ā' alone, some 13,000 persons are involved in the sale of the drug[9]. On average 72% of Yemeni men and 33% of women above the age of 12 chew the bitter leaves of the *qāt* plant. Some 42% of male consumers chew five to seven days per week and display compulsive habits.[10]

As the predominant cash crop and mainstay of the country's rural economy, the income *qāt* generates prevents people in many of Yemen's highland areas from drifting into the cities in order to seek work. The distribution network for *qāt* is undoubtedly the most advanced in the nation and few other economic sectors feature such a high level of organization. But *qāt* also depletes scarce water resources, contributes to soil degradation, and has crowded out production of essential food crops and agricultural exports. The area under *qāt* has expanded nearly 20-fold over the last four decades, displacing exportable coffee, fruits and vegetables, sorghum and wheat. Exports of cash crops such as coffee have been regressive while food imports have exploded due to the inroads made by *qāt* in the rural economy.[11]

Qāt consumption and *qāt*-related expenditure also contribute to corruption, poverty, malnutrition and the disintegration of families. For its producers and consumers alike, *qāt* is seen as one of the main health hazards in Yemen, mainly due to the unregulated use of pesticides in its cultivation. Given the economic importance of *qāt*, it is not surprising that taxes stemming from the production and sale of the plant are substantial and constitute the main source of local revenue for many governorate and district administrations. The *qāt* sector contributes to government revenue in four ways, by a religious tithe levied on *qāt* production (*zakāt*), a public cleaning tax for keeping *qāt* markets tidy, and finally by a *qāt* consumption tax and a youth & sports tax, both levied on *qāt* sales. While *zakāt* is imposed as a direct tax and collected at farm level by *zakāt* assessors, the other taxes are levied as indirect taxes at military checkpoints on the roads leading into the cities and in *qāt* markets. The *qāt* consumption tax alone amounted to 3.4 billion Yemeni riyāls in 2010 (US$ 16 million). *Qāt* is also smuggled across the mountains into Saudi Arabia where its consumption and trade are banned. This business is believed to award Yemen revenues of at least US$ 1 billion every year. The government has however no control over this illicit trade and it is believed that its proceeds help to finance the Ḥawthī insurgency in Yemen's northern Ṣa'da province.

Colonial government's in Aden and East Africa have issued repeated bans on *qāt*, to little avail. Also, the modernist revolutionary governments of North and South Yemen have since the late 1960s initiated a number of anti-*qāt* campaigns and even threatened to uproot the trees. With President 'Alī 'Abd Allāh Ṣāliḥ's ascent to power in 1978 the *qāt* issue became a taboo and the crop disappeared

from national statistics. At the same time, *qāt* production by highland tribes was promoted by countless exemptions and subsidies that triggered an unprecedented mining of groundwater resources. A diesel subsidy made *qāt* cultivation a highly profitable venture even in the desert-like eastern plateau and escarpment areas of Ṣan'ā', al-Jawf and Mārib governorates. Here limited rainfall had so far set narrow boundaries to agriculture. It seems that the toleration and promotion of the drug was part of a power bargain between the Ṣāliḥ regime and the restive tribes that, after the political turmoil of the late 1970s, has imparted highland Yemen several decades of relative stability. It would be nearly 20 years until renewed efforts against the spread of the drug were made and before *qāt* reappeared in Yemen's statistical yearbooks upon pressure of the country's international creditors.

The 1990 unification with socialist South Yemen, where strict *qāt* regulations had been in place, did not impact the northern stance of *qāt*. Southern laws were repealed and the northern mantle of secrecy regarding *qāt* extended over the whole country. In the wake of the 1994 war of secession, tens of thousands of northern troops were stationed in every part of the former south. As most of these soldiers were confirmed *qāt* chewers, the distribution networks for the drug have been extended even to remote desert watch posts and Bedouin settlements on the Saudi and Omani borders. Growing consumption of *qāt* among the southern population has led over the past two decades to ever increasing financial transfers from this economically marginalized part of the country to the northern highlands.

Today, *qāt* chewing is an integral part of life all across Yemen and a generally accepted habit in all strata of society. Even afternoon sessions in ministries or in the country's consultative assembly are held in a setting of chewing. Also, Yemen's political and economic elite has during the past decades developed a vested interest in *qāt*. Many have invested in the *qāt* sector since the returns generated by *qāt* cultivation and trade are simply staggering. The highland tribes in whose territories the bulk of *qāt* is produced have greatly profited from the *laissez faire* approach of the government. Profits from the *qāt* sector have enabled them to maintain their autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state and build up true tribal armies equipped even with heavy weaponry. Any reduction in *qāt* production, let alone a ban of the crop or of its consumption would thus not only adversely affect the rural highland population, but is bound to arouse the resistance of the tribes and further destabilize the country making it perfectly ungovernable.

Factors constraining change in Yemen regarding *qāt* are foremost the government's fear of the tribes and of public unrest as well as the involvement of many members of the ruling class in *qāt* farming. Paired with the inability of authorities to enforce legislation in the cities – not to mention the tribal areas – this makes policymakers reluctant to speak out openly against *qāt*. This is exacerbated by a flagrant lack of alternative pastimes, the absence of other viable and profitable economic activities, and by the lack of markets for alternative high-value crops.

The second part of the 1980s saw the beginning of a transformation of the two Yemeni states from semi-rentiers heavily dependent on migrant remittances and unstable political rents into a politically unified oil rentier. Since then politics in Yemen have become tightly entangled with the windfalls from the oil sector and world market prices for oil. The revenues from the petroleum sector account for over 90% of Yemen's export earnings and for around 70% of government revenue. They have enabled the regime in the second part of the 1990s and early 2000s to considerably enlarge its network of patronage and extend its power over many areas of the countryside. During this period *qāt* politics has become more and more entangled with the revenue situation of the regime and has been employed increasingly as a means of rent-seeking during times of crisis. Despite the staunch resistance of *qāt* farmers and tribes, the government has since 1999 repeatedly embarked on anti-*qāt* campaigns with high audience appeal. These campaigns were often rather spontaneous and ill coordinated. Most of them were thus short-lived and laws enacted concerning *qāt* were never really enforced (e.g. the 2002 law proscribing chewing in government facilities). These campaigns have effectuated no change in terms of cultivation and consumption of the drug, but have succeeded in earning Yemen's policy makers the respect of their Arab counterparts and the benevolence of the donor community. Without compromising its grip on power, the regime has become the recipient of

increasing levels of development aid. *Qāt* policy has handsomely paid off, not the least in the promise of admitting Yemen to the Gulf Cooperation Council by 2016.

Qāt also played an important role during Yemen's 'Youth Revolution' of 2011. Often believed to be a drug engendering complacency, lethargy and inaction, *qāt* has helped to mobilize both the regime's supporters and anti-Ṣāliḥ protestors: Supporters of the regime erected their tents on Taḥrīr Square and attempted to sit out the protests while chewing *qāt* freely handed out by the regime. In 'Change Square' where the revolution was masterminded and where protesters had erected their tent city, a new visionary order for a post-Ṣāliḥ era was vividly discussed and elaborated while chewing *qāt*.

As Yemen heads towards the post oil era – with some analysts predicting a depletion of oil reserves as early as 2017 – it will be interesting to observe what role *qāt* and *qāt* revenue will play in this future polity. Will the regime be able to capitalize on the *qāt* sector? Will it succeed in tightening its grip on *qāt* markets and in streamlining *qāt* taxation to make up for lost revenue from oil? Or will the disintegrating network of patronage make the country perfectly ungovernable with *qāt* producing tribes gaining yet more autonomy and *qāt* becoming the true ruler of this society as it is in much of Somalia today?

Is *Qāt* a Drug?

In Yemen *qāt* is not considered as a drug by authorities and even car insurance policies explicitly cover accidents caused while chewing *qāt* while driving (see annex 41). *Qāt* may or may not be a drug in the clinical sense, thus a drug causing physical addiction. The leaves of the *qāt* tree are certainly a social drug. Social life in most parts of Yemen circulates around *qāt* today and many Yemenis believe there would not be any social life at all, were there not *qāt*. Chewing the leaves creates delight, relaxes, and stimulates mutual understanding and companionship. It helps to create strong bonds between people and facilitates the mediation of Yemen's many tribal troubles. Not a mere few believe they cannot get up, let alone work, without *qāt* and thus start their day with chewing. *Qāt* gives them strength of the body and strength of will. Chewing *qāt* makes one forget despair and violence – be it just for a few hours – it makes one cope with the grievances of life and it gives hope in a country whose political and economic future looks so bleak. It makes one forget poverty and the hungry mouths to feed at home.

Yet many Yemenis – educated or not – would like to abstain from the use of the leaves from time to time, be it for financial, family or health reasons. But they feel compelled to chew by friends, neighbors or colleagues and fear exclusion from social circles and social life. Many fear the loss of respect, the loss of business opportunities, or simply the exclusion from information circulating in *qāt* chews. Over the years, I have observed how the chewing habit has proliferated in the Ḥaḍramawt and on the island of Socotra (areas that I first visited in 1993); how it took hold of the coastal population and then slowly crept up the *wādīs* to the herders of the highlands, how it spread from soldiers to fishermen, from traders to farmers, from adults to adolescents, and finally from husbands to wives. I watched a defenseless and desperate population – local councillors, shaykhs, fathers and spouses – fighting its spread with all means at hand. Without success. I watched how *qāt* ravaged these regions' unique culture and how it changed social customs and society, how traditional leisure pursuits disappeared and how values and ethics have become diluted.

I have known Yemen for almost twenty years, took part in innumerable *qāt* chews and interviewed several thousands of people on the *qāt* issue. For me, the leaves of the *qāt* tree are not a narcotic drug. However, I hold the firm belief that they are much more than the "*mild social stimulant*" to which literature so often refers. They are potent social drug, holding Yemen and Yemeni life firmly in its grip. They create a mental form of addiction that makes the plant as ravaging and certainly as dangerous as any narcotic drug.

Approach of the Study [12]

The literature on the habit of *qāt* chewing, its social role and the impact of *qāt* use on health is quite impressive. This book does not attempt to duplicate this and is focussing on the role of *qāt* in the politics of modern Yemen and of the wider region – a topic that has so far been entirely ignored. The review of *qāt* policies and economic events during the past decades will show how successive Yemeni governments have apprehended and used *qāt* increasingly as an instrument of politics. It will show that government action regarding the drug is less driven by a genuine desire for reform or by the interest of ridding Yemeni society of a social evil, but much rather by the need for mobilizing financial resources and by a desire for societal control and political stability. *Qāt* politics – the study suggests – has above all become part of a comprehensive strategy of rent-seeking, employed by the ruling elite in times of revenue crisis in order to uphold the state's monopoly of power and maintain its widespread network of patronage. *Qāt* politics is since the late 1970s part of a ruling bargain between the regime and the tribes, explaining the tolerant and often supportive stance of government towards the drug.

After a brief overview of the history and development of *qāt* consumption in Yemen as well as on the extent of the habit and its detrimental effects on health, both in chapter I, in chapter II the metamorphosis of Yemen during the 1970s from an agrarian into a semi-rentier state is documented, as well as its transformation from a country depending largely on worker remittances and political rents into an oil economy. The book then analyzes *qāt* politics in a regional retrospect (chapter III). This includes the struggle of colonial administrations against *qāt* in Yemen and Eastern Africa, the role of *qāt* during the reign of Yemen's last Imāms and the position of the League of Arab States *vis-à-vis* the drug. Here also the fruitless efforts of the Saudi Arabian government and of Saudi religious scholars against the crop are presented and an analysis of *qāt* politics in post-colonial Somalia given, where the drug has become one of the factors fueling the prolonged civil war. In chapter IV, the approach to *qāt* of Yemen's revolutionary governments in both South and North Yemen is described, whereupon in chapter V changes in *qāt* politics and the in development of *qāt* farming during the first two decades of the Ṣāliḥ regime are given a closer look. Chapter VI documents in great detail, how *qāt* has become an instrument of rent-seeking in times of financial and political crisis.

In chapter VII, the ups and downs of *qāt* politics following Yemen's First National Conference on *Qāt* are described and the *qāt* activism of the country's ruling class documented following the Gulf Cooperation Council's expression of intent to admit Yemen to the organization if it combats corruption, weapons and *qāt*. Here also interviews with a number of high-ranking Yemeni policy makers on the subject of *qāt* are echoed.

In chapter VIII, the role *qāt* plays for political stability, political control and for identity in a fragile state is analyzed. This chapter also reviews the role of *qāt* in the Ṣa'da war and in terrorism, in spreading northern hegemony over former South Yemen, and it discusses the role of *qāt* in Yemen's 2011 'Youth Revolution'. Further, the effects of *qāt* on corruption and the importance of *qāt* revenue for Yemen's decentralization process are examined. Also, the difficult task of civil society organizations and of religious communities fighting *qāt* is documented.

Finally, in chapter IX, conclusions are presented and an outlook for a Yemen after the conclusion of the oil era is given.

Peer Gatter, Frankfurt am Main, June 2012

www.qat-yemen.com

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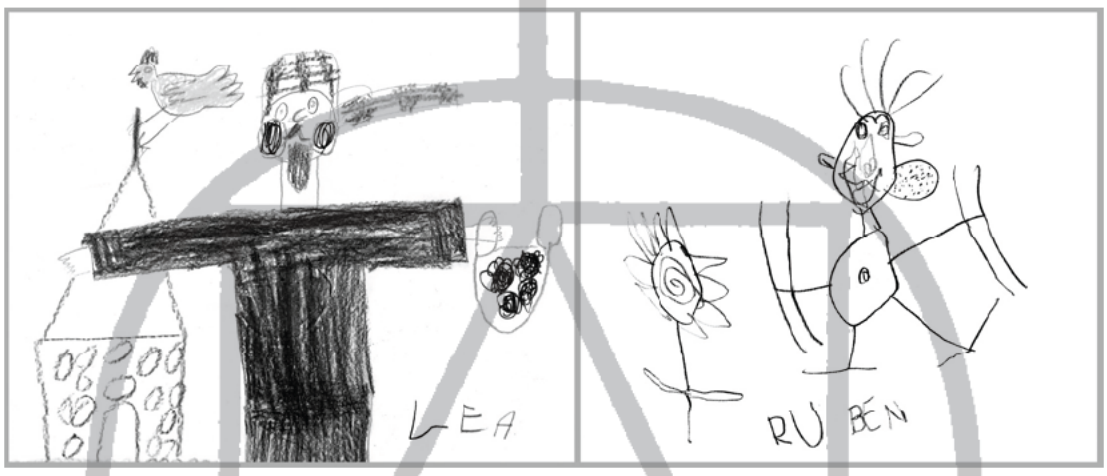

Pictures 1 & 2: Inspired by my interest in *qāt*, the plant and habit became a leitmotif in my children's early drawings.

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Picture 3: A family outing in the Jabl al-Ahnūm of ʻAmrān. Escorts soon became compulsory for many rural areas.

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Picture 4: With World Bank colleagues Gianni Brizzi and Muḥammad al-Ṣabbrī on a field visit in tribal 'Amrān.

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Pictures 5 & 6: Top: Discussing with Yaḥyā al-'Amrī, Governor of Dhamār (right), on his 2008 *qāt* uprooting campaign. On the far left is Ismā'īl Muḥarram, Chairman of the Agricultural Research and Extension Authority. Bottom: Field assessments such as a 2001 decentralization survey were important sources for this study. Here with my colleague Muḥammad al-Ḥizyazī (right) in the office of Matna's military commander whose staff display military preparedness.

An inestimable debt I also owe to the government of Yemen for letting me conduct my research freely on such a sensitive topic, for providing me with escorts into remote tribal areas and for putting at my service scores of soldiers who accompanied me on these field trips, curious and supportive of my work, many of whom shared my passion for *qāt*. I want to especially thank Governor Yaḥyā al-ʻAmrī of Dhamār who took me along on his 2009 *qāt* uprooting campaigns in the plain of Maʻbar and who on my return to Ṣanʻā' personally escorted me with 40 of his soldiers to Naqīl Yasliḥ, the border of his sphere of influence. Also to Governor ʻAbd al-Qādir ʻAlī Hilāl of Ibb I am indebted for inviting me to his *qāt* awareness days in 1999, for opulent meals, poetry readings, and beautiful *ʻūd* performances in his *mafraj*.

Grateful I am to Colonel Aḥmad BaWazīr, head of the Say'ūn Criminal Investigations Department for information on *qāt* marketing in the Wādī Ḥaḍramawt and the role of the military in the *qāt* trade. In 2009 he was assassinated by al-Qāʻida operatives. A special thanks goes to the tribes of Hamdān, Banī Maṭar, ʻIyāl Surayḥ, Arḥab, Banī Ḥushaysh, Sanḥān, Banī Bahlūl, Banī Ḍabyān, Khawlān, Nihm, Sufyān, Jahm, and their shaykhs for hospitality, much information, splendid *qāt*, tribal escorts and knowledgeable guides. Deeply grateful I am to Shaykh Mashāyikh Ḍulāʻ-Hamdān, Muḥammad ʻAlī ʻĀ'id, and to Shaykh Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Raṣīn of Bayt al-Qāḍī, Hamdān, for information shared on agricultural practices, irrigation patterns, profits generated by in the *qāt* sector, and for historical insights into *qāt* farming in Hamdān. Also to Aḥmad al-Maʻnūs go my warm thanks, guard of the *qāt* plantations of the Shaykh Mashāyikh Ḍulāʻ-Hamdān. On our first encounter he fired a volley of bullets at me, believing I was a *qāt* thief. When realizing his error he invited me for tea and supported me during my mapping of cropping patterns in the Wādī Shāhira in 2005. Innumerable farmers, agricultural laborers, guards of *qāt* fields, harvest hands, transporters, *qāt* sellers, market owners, *qāt* smugglers, tax officials, *zakāt* assessors, and at long last *qāt* chewers – and not to forget – those who staunchly opposed *qāt*, provided invaluable information over the years and have made this work possible.

Picture 7: Ancient accessories of *qāt* chewing – incense burner, rosewater dispenser and spittoon.

THE STATE OF RESEARCH AND THE SOURCES OF THIS BOOK

The social habit and ritual of chewing have been described innumerable times since the epic travels of Carsten Niebuhr and Pehr Forskål to Yemen in the 1760s. Since the early 20th century the chemistry and pharmacology of *qāt* have been given increasing attention and with the help of the Narcotics Laboratory of the United Nations and the World Health Organization the chemical composition of the drug was deciphered in the 1970s. In the following decades its most active agents, *cathin* and *cathinone*, have been the subject of many medical and pharmacological studies, employing mainly animal experiments, but also studies with human test persons, in order to study their effects and possible addictiveness on animals and humans.

During the 1930s through 1950s, *qāt* became the focus of a number of governmental commissions in the former British colonies of Aden, Somalia and Kenya, and numerous attempts to ban the drug were made. The British also brought the subject to the attention to the League of Nations. The reports from this time are most valuable, as they document the important social and economic role that *qāt* already played at that time and bear witness to the helplessness of authorities. The Arab League commissioned a number of studies on *qāt* during the late 1960s and early 1970s and urged Yemen to follow the example of numerous other Arab States that had banned the drug. The focus of these reports were mostly socioeconomic and legal. This launched a public debate on *qāt* in Yemen that produced many songs and poems pro and contra *qāt*. A special issue of the journal *al-Yaman al-Jadīd* (1972) on *qāt* was published that analyzed foremost its history, social role and its role in Yemeni literature.

Since the late 1970s and especially during the 1980s, *qāt* became the focus of numerous field researches with a mainly socio-cultural, anthropological, medical or botanical approach. Among these are SCHOPEN (1978), BACH (1980), REVRI (1983), WEIR (1985), and KENNEDY (1987). Flagrant in a number of socio-cultural studies is the uncritical approach of the authors. *Qāt* is described as a formidable social habit, ages old and a very own expression of a Yemeni identity. The costs on public health, its role in poverty, and its contribution to Yemen's stunted development are entirely blinded out.

With the ascent to power of President Ṣāliḥ in 1978 the *qāt* issue disappeared from Yemen's public debate and became a taboo in politics. Until the late 1990s thus little was written on *qāt* in Yemen itself and even donor reports rarely touched upon the issue. During the mid and late 1990s the foreign donor community in Yemen re-discovered the topic and *qāt* has since then been included in many technical reports and described as a development problem. These are foremost reports by the World Bank, UNDP and FAO, as well as reports by projects funded by these agencies. At the same time and upon donor pressure the government of Yemen once again included *qāt* into national statistics in the late 1990s. This made for the first time countrywide statistics on *qāt* available and amply illustrated the role of *qāt* in the national economy. Often this data is however little coherent and much caution is needed in using these figures.

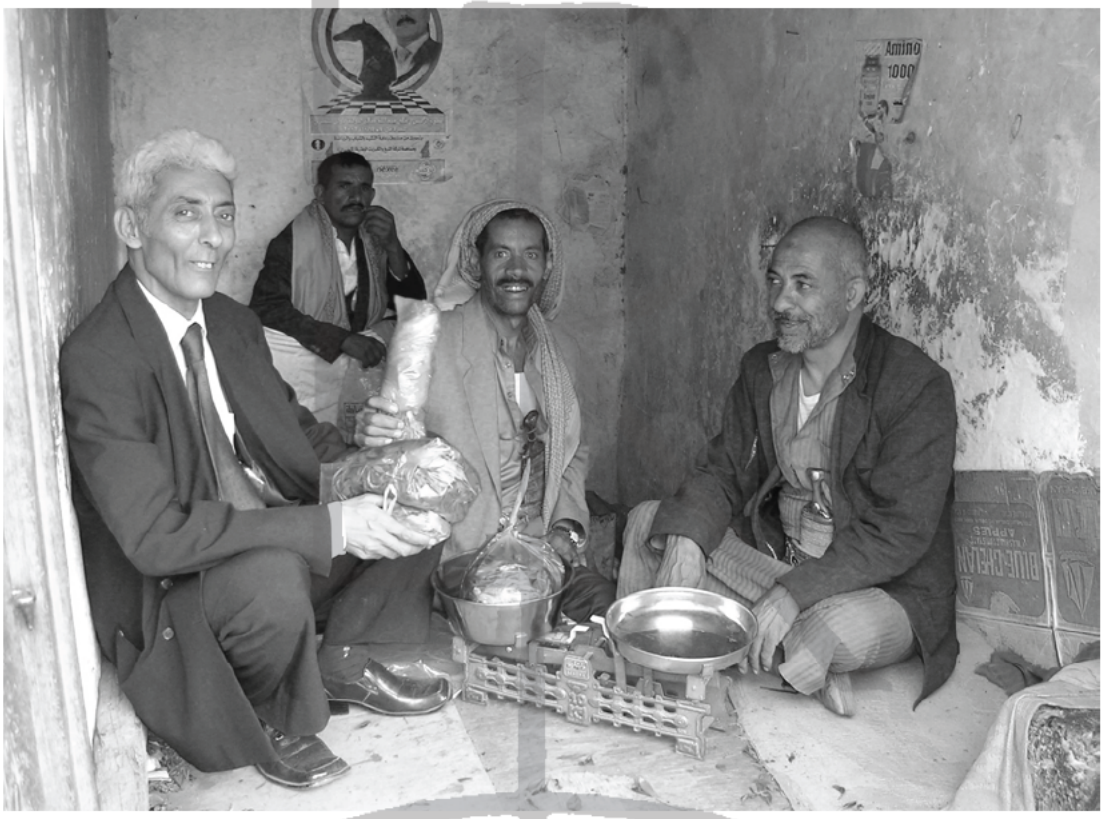
President Ṣāliḥ's 1999 surprise campaign against *qāt* led to the holding of the First National Conference on *Qāt* in 2002. This gave an enormous boost to the research on the topic of *qāt* in Yemen. The compendium of studies presented at the conference (GATTER ET AL. 2002) provided an overview of different facets of *qāt*, from the role of *qāt* in society, economy and agriculture, to its detrimental effects on health, water resources and environment. The lifting of the *qāt* taboo by President Ṣāliḥ and the public debate that emerged with the *qāt* conference triggered a number of important Yemeni studies on *qāt* during the 2000s, they are of a mostly medical, socio-cultural and agricultural nature. Important examples are the books by ʻAbd Allāh al-Zalab (2001), Ismāʻīl Muḥarram (2003), and Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍrānī (2007), and the 2003 article on *qāt* published in the Encyclopedia of Yemen (*al-mawsūʻa al-yamaniyya*), a compendium edited by the al-ʻAfīf Cultural Foundation.[13]

Also a number of other national and international conferences thematized the issue of *qāt* during the past decades. The most recent of these was a conference held in 2009 in Linköping, Sweden, under the title "*The Changing Use and Misuse of Catha Edulis (Khat) in a Changing World: Tradition, Trade and Tragedy*". Important conferences on the issue were also held during 1983 in Madagascar and Somalia (SHAHANDEH ET AL. and SHEIKH, both 1983). During the past years, the topic of *qāt* gained more attention also in the greater region and in Europe. GEBISSA (2004) analyzed the impact of *qāt* on agricultural transformation in Ethiopia, CARRIER (2007) investigated the *qāt* trade in Kenya, and ANDERSON ET AL. (2007) examined the role of *qāt* chewing in eastern Africa and its impact on African immigrant communities in Europe.

Blatantly clear in reviewing the rich literature on *qāt* is that only very few studies touch upon the role *qāt* plays in the agriculture and economy of Yemen. Many of these are beset with errors or are merely descriptive, rather than being based on statistics or field study. This is most peculiar, as the cultivation and marketing of the drug represents one of the most important economic activities in Yemen, surpassed in its importance only by the petroleum sector. Analysis of the role of *qāt* in Yemeni politics is entirely missing – also quite surprising as the links between *qāt* and politics are obvious and *qāt* is one of the centerpieces of a ruling bargain struck in the late 1970s between the Ṣāliḥ regime and the tribes. The present study attempts to fill this gap.

To compensate the lack of secondary literature on the topic of *qāt* politics, the author collected and translated various laws and government decrees, political speeches, government development plans and strategies. Different statistical sources were evaluated such as Yemen's statistical yearbooks, published by the Central Planning Organization (as of 1990 renamed in Central Statistical Organization), diverse household budget surveys, budgets of local administrations, tax statistics, and most importantly, Yemen's agricultural censuses of 1979, 1985, 1989, and 2003. Statistical analysis and historical analysis of data is often hampered by the fact that with unification between north and

Picture 8: Farmer interviews provided important data on the *qāt* phenomenon and the economic importance of the crop – here in Bayt al-Qāḍī in Hamdān district.



Picture 9: Discussions with government counterparts on *qāt* were enriching and essential to this study. Here during a *qāt* market survey with Khālid Muḥammad Sa'īd (left), General Director in the Ministry of Planning.

south in 1990, several governorates were modified in their borders and a number of new governorates were being carved out over the past two decades (e.g. 'Amrān, al-Ḍāli', Rayma). This makes the interpretation and comparison of regional and governorate data often difficult and treacherous.

Also wide press reviews were made. Evaluated sources included the *Saba News Agency*, the Arabic newspapers *26 September*, *al-Thawra*, *al-Ayyām*, *al-Ḥaqq* and *al-Ṭarīq*, as well as the English papers *Yemen Times* and *Yemen Observer*. Their web portals with searchable databases proved extremely valuable. Also more recent additions to Yemen's online press proved valuable such as *National Yemen*, *Yemen Post* and *Mareb Press*. Also countless interviews with politicians were conducted and informal conversations held with them on the topic. Many technical staff members in different ministries and government agencies were interviewed and were important sources of this book (the most important are listed in the acknowledgements section). Notably the ministers and the staff of the Ministries of Planning & International Cooperation, Agriculture & Irrigation, Water & Environment, and Local Administration were valuable sources for this book. The same applies to the Social Fund for Development (SFD), the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), the National Water Resources Authority (NWRA), the Agricultural Research and Extension Authority (AREA), the Central Statistical Organization (CSO), the Tax Authority and within it the General Department of *Qāt* Taxation, and last but not least, the *Qāt* Research Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation.

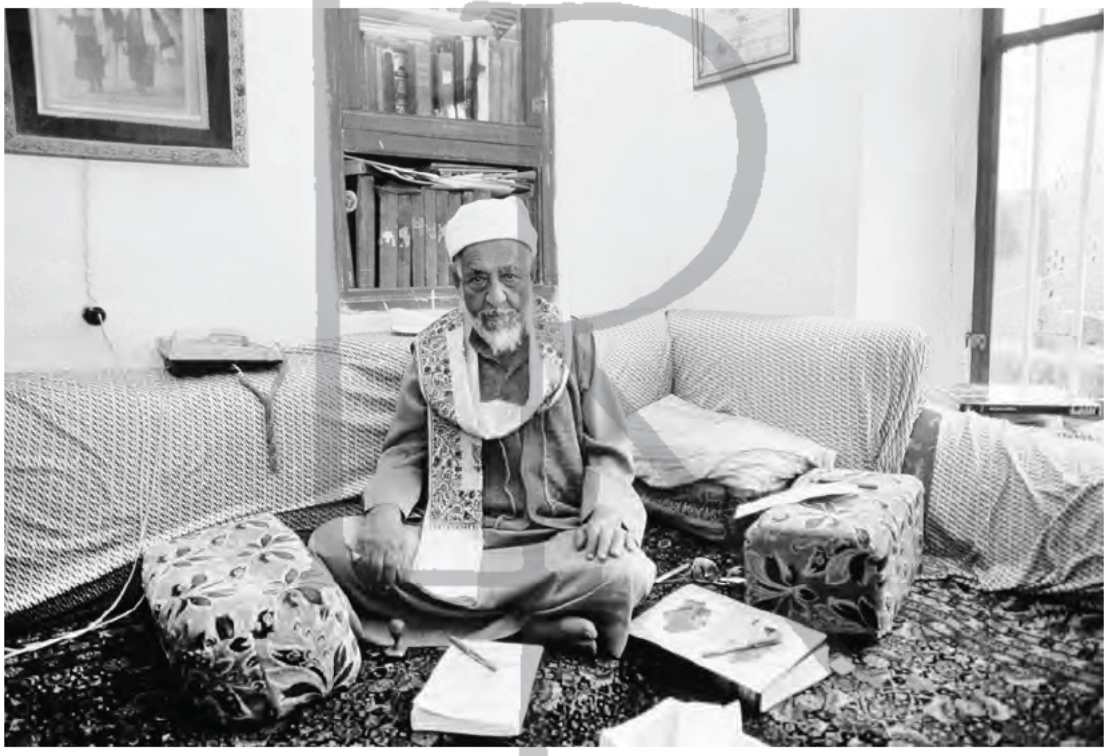
The important oral sources of this study are also the conversations with the Grand Muftī of Yemen, the late Aḥmad bin Muḥammad Zabāra, with whom I had met on several occasions in 1999. He gave me a deep insight into the role of *qāt* in the early 20th century. His recollections of his childhood during the last Ottoman occupation of Yemen and his *qāt* chews at the courts of Imām

Yaḥyā and Imām Aḥmad were most valuable. Zabāra, who was born in al-Kibs, came from a prominent Zaydī family. His judgment had great importance in Yemen. To use his power against *qāt*, he refused. *Qāt* was for him a very personal matter on which each Yemeni had to decide on his own. After Zabāra's death, the government split the office of Grand Muftī among several contenders in order to weaken this rival authority within the state. Countless interviews were also conducted with *qāt* merchants, most notably with Yaḥyā Ḥamūd al-Bāshā, headman of the *qāt* market in the old city of Ṣan'ā'.

Much information was of course gathered during *qāt* sessions. In this setting it is however important to pick the right moments for asking questions. If the time when *qāt* is stimulating discussions is over, if the so called "*sā'a sulaymāniyya*" or "hour of wisdom" has passed, it is unwise to continue asking questions. At this point *qāt* chewers like to sit undisturbed and retreat to their inner thoughts and become lethargic due to the after-effects of *qāt*. The mornings are after all the better time for interviews in Yemen, also since a *qāt* filled cheek can make the comprehension of Arabic in the afternoons quite challenging.

Picture 10: *Qāt* chews proved to be important places for gathering information. Here members of the Akhdām community in the Samsara Abū 'Amir, an ancient *qāt* market at Bāb al-Sabāḥ of old Ṣan'ā'.

To compensate the lack of statistical data on the *qāt* phenomenon in Yemen, the author also carried out a number of field studies during the past years. These included market surveys in Ṣan'ā' (2000 and 2005), Rayda (2005), the Tihāma coastal plain (2003), the Ḥaḍramawt and Aden (1999, 2001 and 2005). Additionally, a survey on *qāt* consumption among the poor was carried out (LENAERS & GATTER 2000), a long term study on *qāt* chewing among Ṣan'ā' taxi drivers (2000-2005), a survey on the role of *qāt* in the rural economy (1999), an agro-geographic survey of crop distribution on the al-Ḥudayda – Ṣan'ā' – Mārib transect from coastal Yemen through the highlands to the eastern desert (2003), a survey of cropping patterns in Hamdān (2004-2005), and a *qāt* consumption survey in seven governorates with over 4,000 respondents (GATTER 2006). Its results were published by the World Bank in 2007 under the title "*Yemen – Towards Qat Demand Reduction*".



Picture 11: Policy makers and religious leaders were important sources of this book, among them Yemen's Grand Muftī Aḥmad bin Muḥammad Zabāra – here in his home office in 1999.

NOTES FOR THE INTRODUCTORY SECTION

1 Part of the prologue section is based on *Gatter* 2007b, p. 71-72.
2 In the author's native Germany *qāt* is a controlled substance since the enactment of the 10th decree regulating narcotic drug use (Betäubungsmittelrechts-Änderungsverordnung of Jan. 20, 1998 (BtMÄndV, Article 1e).
3 *Central Statistical Organization* 2010, Statistical Yearbook for 2009, p. 154.
4 Personal communications with Dr. Ismā'īl Muḥarram, Chairman of the Agricultural Research and Extension Authority (AREA), Ṣan'ā', June 29, 2008 and with Dr. 'Alī Nu'mān 'Abd Allāh, Director of the *Qāt* Research Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Ṣan'ā', May 11, 2006.
5 E.g. al-Madān district of 'Amrān governorate. *CSO* 2005, Final Results of the 2002-2005 Agricultural Census, unpublished district tables on crops and land holdings. Department for Agricultural Statistics, Ṣan'ā'.
6 According to Yemen's 2003 agricultural census 493,906 landholders/households in Yemen grow *qāt*, representing 3,916,675 persons (average Yemeni land holder family size is 7.93 persons). *CSO* 2005, Final Results of the 2002-2005 Agricultural Census. For land holder family size see *Marliani* 2005, p. 35).
7 *Gatter* 2006, p. 36 and *World Bank* 2007a, p. ii.
8 *Lenaers & Gatter* 2000, p. 13.
9 Unpublished 2005 *qāt* market survey by the author.
10 *Gatter* 2006, p. 18.
11 *Gatter* 2006, p. 3-5 and *World Bank* 2007a, p. ii.
12 During the past decade of *qāt* research the author has contributed to a number of studies and publications on the subject. In part, these texts are republished in this monograph and marked with their respective sources.
13 *Mu'assasat al-'afīf al-thaqāfiyya* 2003, p. 2305-2333.

Picture 12: Tree shape and leaf size can vary considerably from one *qāt* cultivar to another. While in the Ṣan'ā' highlands *qāt* plants grow into slender trees of over 10 meters in height with small longish and tender leaves (e.g. Hamdānī *qāt* on the right), in the valleys of 'Ans south of Dhamār, *qāt* is generally grown in tea-like bushes that produce large roundish leaves with a linoleum-like texture.