

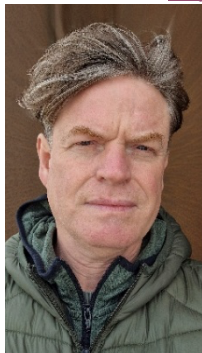
JOHN P COOPER

**'EMBARK IN THE NAME OF ALLAH': RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR MEANING IN THE 'DECORATIVE'
PRACTICES OF YEMENI BOATBUILDERS**

Monday Majlis Online on the 5th of October, 17:00-18:30 (UK time)

[Centre for the Study of Islam](#), Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter

Register please on this link: <https://Universityofexeter.zoom.us/meeting/register/zwiawURxR2-0zVYBR-Ck5Q>



Bio: John P Cooper is Visiting Professor at his doctoral and magisterial *alma mater*, the Centre for Maritime Archaeology of the University of Southampton. Previously Associate Professor at the Institute of Arab & Islamic Studies of the University of Exeter, his work adopts multidisciplinary approaches—archaeological, ethnographic, textual—to understanding the material cultures, technologies and lived experiences of maritime communities in the Islamicate World and wider Indian Ocean in the medieval and modern eras. His earlier work explored how medieval Arabic and European textual sources could inform our understanding of the navigational landscape of the Egyptian Nile. Later work on boatbuilding traditions has taken him to East Africa, the Southern Red Sea, the Sudanese Nile, the Arabian-Persian Gulf and South Asia, where he has applied diverse ethnographic and documentation methods in recording tradition, praxis and change, and exploring the values of such traditions in wider heritage discourse.

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John-Cooper-23>



A newly constructed zaruq at al-Ghureira, Yemen, 2007. Credit: John P. Cooper.

Abstract: The wooden watercraft of Yemen are unusually richly decorated—normally with paint and, on some vessels, with carving. Fieldwork conducted by the author (with colleagues Dionisius A Agius and Chiara Zazzaro) in 2008–2009 around the coast of Yemen and neighbouring countries documented through photography a wide range of painted and carved schemas on 'traditional' watercraft. Analysis by Cooper has, so far in a largely descriptive manner, characterised the principal features of these schemas: large painted triangles at bow and stern; stripes along the hull; intricate friezes carved and painted around the upper stern quarters incorporating figurative and abstract imagery; Qur'anic verses in the superstructure. Given the impossibility of returning to Yemen to consult the creative communities who produced these schemas, this presentation asks the extent to which we as outsiders can successfully infer meaning and define space from the photographic record of the fieldwork. As a work in progress, it solicits the views of its audience.

In the spirit of the label 'Majlis' and also to make the talks even more interesting, our speakers present the topic discussed as embedded in their own journey.

You can watch the previous Majlises here

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8YRkUahFi_81oJzCSDLTx4kVQOgeHLC-

However, we don't record the Q&A in order to keep the discussion free.

Please come and enjoy the talks and the discussions :) If you'd like to be included in the CSI (Centre for the Study of Islam, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter) mailing list, please write to me

[\(I.T.Kristo-Nagy@ex.ac.uk\)](mailto:I.T.Kristo-Nagy@ex.ac.uk).

We'll be happy to welcome you!

István T Kristó-Nagy <https://experts.exeter.ac.uk/4333-istv%C3%A1n-t-krist%C3%B3nagy>