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Author(s)	Sam Shain
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AL-YEMEN

(SILENT)

Produced by Mejrabpomfilm-Promethus expedition. Released by Amikino. Directed by Vladimir Shneiderov. Photographer, Ilya Toltschan. At the Cameo, N. Y., week beginning Jan. 9. Running time, 62 mins.

It may have been the German end of the expedition partnership as represented by Promethus, or it may have been due to the subject matter of this travelog of an Arabian peninsula that prevented Russe phenagling with titles or photography, but, considering the source of this picture's manufacture, there is a surprising lack of propaganda. Photography is okay and the travelog is worth commercial showings for arties in met centers. It's a museum film elsewhere and principally for schools.

From the meagre information generally current about Yemen, or its Arabian relationship, there is room for commendation for the film men in going up against the religious fanaticism of Bedouins and other Arabian tribes. Little doubt that the Mejrabpomfilm-Promethus expedition is the first to have made such a detailed photographic record and in moving celluloid. But there have been plenty of expeditions into Yemen before them.

Yemen is ancient, mysterious and ominous. The Queen of Sheba may have once ruled the kingdom. Once it also was the seat of an independent Hebrew kingdom, but the Yemenites date back from the Prophet days. In Arabic "yemen" means "right hand" or "to the right." It's similar in Hebrew though pronounced "yemin." May have come from the fact that the Yemen peninsula is "to the right" of Arabia. Descendents of Shem and Ishmael chew on ghat, which is a drug leaf, and smoke nargile, a somnambulist hyper. Only the native Jews do not. If the film records are correct Yemen is an independent Arabian State in the southwest corner of the Arabian peninsula. It's between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator. On one side is the Red Sea, on the other lies the Indian Ocean. Around 3,000,000 population composed of many different tribes—all Moslems except the 150,000 Jews.

Wide divergence in living between the latter and the native Arabs is clearly shown. The Jewish quarter is spic and their clothes are well made though in native style. A Hebrew school is shown and also a synagog service.

Terraced gardens are shown and palm tree huts where natives live. Also sheiks' castles and mosques.

There is a climax in a parade by the kingdom's riflemen which brings a laugh. The ghat leaves and the nargile smoking has them doing maneuvers cockeyed. As usual, it winds up with native war dances and two men do an athletic dagger dance, or something like it, that would be a sensation on a stage.

Scenic shots of the mountains and the villages, no roads and relics of buildings from early centuries are shown.

Arabian persecution has shifted many of the native Jews to Palestine and it may be there are not as many in Yemen as the film tries to state. It doesn't show or explain either.

But if Yemenite Arabs chew ghat and smoke nargile, as shown, there may be a reason when the heat keeps blazing away to keep this country at 135 degrees farenheit in the shade, and there isn't much of that shade.

Shan.

Jan. 14, '31