

EDITORIAL

This past December I received a letter from the University of Leeds, the school in which I earned my postgraduate degree back in 1966. The letter includes the 2013 calendar, and each month of the year has a thematic reminiscent question, reminding one of the most important events throughout the year. One indeed cannot describe what feelings and cherished memories those questions summoned. They run as follows:

January: Do You remember ... the cold?

February : Do you remember ... having lots of fun?

March : Do you remember ... the Otley Run?

April : Do you remember ... the hard work?

May : Do you remember ... the campus?

June : Do you remember ... the beautiful countryside around Leeds?

July : Do you remember ... saying goodbye?

August : Do you remember ... anxiously waiting for your A-level results?

September : Do you remember ... first arriving at Leeds?

October : Do you remember ... your student digs?

November : Do you remember ... the city?

December : Do you remember ... the friends you made?

These questions rekindled my longing to those days I spent at the University of Leeds and brought back memories of the exhibitions we used to showcase at the University Hall, especially those we had on Arab and Islamic civilization. Permission to launch those shows was never a problem; nor had we ever felt aggrieved. Instead, we felt exuberant with what we were doing, and enjoyed the throngs of visitors as we introduced them to the monuments of our civilization. I was then the head of the Islamic Society. On looking back, I have nothing but to say that the active experience at Leeds was both enriching and edifying.

By contrast, I spent four years at Cairo University, and left it with the “beats” of its Clock resounding in my mind. Still, whenever I hear those “beats,” I yearn to the university and to those days. Yet, in terms of activities, were the two schools (Cairo



and Leeds) equal? The answer goes without saying. With the University of Cairo, graduation was a terminal end. So too was the experience. At the time, we were a group of colleagues (Arabs, Egyptians, and Muslims); I still remember some. Yet I am saddened that we forever parted without knowing anything about one another.

The obvious difference between the two is fundamental; it is a difference between togetherness and separation. The University of Leeds promotes integration and sustained involvement and belonging. Had the University of Cairo done the same, its effect would have been strongly resonating throughout the Arab world. After all, the great services it offered the Arab world are inestimable. And the sense of belonging is rather natural; for never had we felt foreigners on the soil of Egypt. Such important factors could have bred and maintained the strongest sense of belonging. Unfortunately, ties with the university were severed completely. A lesson must be learned.

Had each Arab University only followed the lead of the University of Leeds, it would have cultivated a group that had always promoted its reputation and held it high in estimation. This is surely what Arab universities need. They have no active alumni offices whereas in European and US schools these offices are integral components of each university.

I wish to throw in a few things about the Kingdom of Lihyan; the topic of this Kingdom does not seem to leave my mind. Such thoughts may attract the interest

of others. I have maintained that the Lihyanite Kingdom originated in Tayma; then its domination and activities expanded to 'Ula and there about. I also have thought about the inscriptions written by the people of 'Ula; perhaps it is enough to call those Dadanian inscriptions. After all, in Tayma the Lihyanites wrote in the Aramaic script, and never used the other Dadanian script.

Perhaps Masoud the "Astray King" (I do compare him to Imru' al-Qais) did also insist on using the Aramaic script (the inscriptions used the Nabataean script which was an Aramaic branch). He was perhaps the last Lihyanite King of the Lihyanite Kingdom which originated in Tayma and expanded to 'Ula. And perhaps the Gulf of Lihyan was also under its control. The Lihyanites worked hard to expand until they reached the Red Sea and occupied the port which took the Lihyanite's name. This is consistent with the tradition of all northern States. Each had a port on its sea, and Lihyan should not be an exception. Only naturally it should have had its port on the Red Sea.

Editor -in-Chief