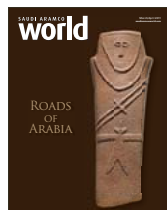


ROADS  
OF  
ARABIA







Sculpted at the dawn of the Bronze Age some 5000 years ago, this funerary stele found near Ha'il, Saudi Arabia, shows a man wearing a dagger in his waistband—a custom that can still be found in parts of the Arabian Peninsula today. Photo courtesy of SCTA.

**Publisher**

Aramco Services Company  
9009 West Loop South  
Houston, Texas 77096, USA

**President and  
Chief Executive Officer**  
Ali A. Abuali

**Director  
Public Affairs**  
Mae S. Mozaini

**ISSN**  
1530-5821

**Editor**  
Robert Arndt

**Managing Editor**  
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**Assistant Editor**  
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**Administration**

Karim Khalil  
Sarah Miller

**Circulation**

Edna Catchings

**Design and Production**  
Herring Design

**Printed in the USA**  
RR Donnelley/Wetmore

**Address editorial  
correspondence to:**  
The Editor  
Saudi Aramco World  
Post Office Box 2106  
Houston, Texas  
77252-2106 USA

**Back Cover**



Pigeon-raising is popular in the Cairo neighborhood of Imbaba, where some birds are raised for food, but many are groomed and bred for beauty, competition and trade. Photo by David Degner.

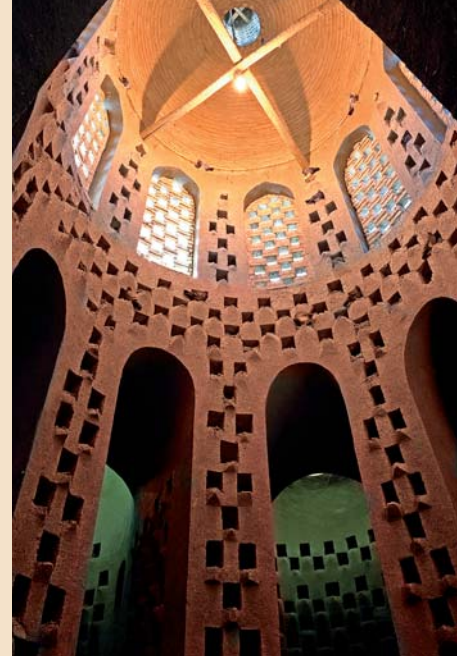
Saudi Aramco, the oil company born as an international enterprise more than seventy-five years ago, distributes *Saudi Aramco World* to increase cross-cultural understanding. The magazine's goal is to broaden knowledge of the cultures, history and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their connections with the West. *Saudi Aramco World* is distributed without charge, upon request, to a limited number of interested readers.



## Castles of the Fields 2

Written by Eric Hansen

Often rising 18 meters or more above the fields, elegant mud-brick pigeon towers near Isfahan were once sources of fertilizer as well as chemicals used in tanning and making gunpowder.



## 5 Cairo's Fancy Fliers

Photographed by David Degner  
Written by Andrew D. Blechman

No common "streeters" are these birds: Jacobins, Tumblers and Frillbacks are high fliers among more than 200 types of fancy pigeons bred in Cairo, where pigeon-keeping dates back to the time of the Pharaohs.

## 10 The Unread Masterpiece of Evliya Çelebi

Written by Louis Werner

This year marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of the world's least-known great traveler, who chronicled a lifetime of journeys throughout the Ottoman Empire in 10 "prolix, exuberant and playful" volumes penned in Ottoman Turkish, only a few of which have yet been translated into English.



First comes the Gate of the Maghrebis, a small gate opening to the south. It has been given this name because the Maghrebis conquered the city through this gate.... Going along the city wall, which has here no moat, and leaving this Gate of the Maghrebis in a western direction, it is 500 stretched paces to the vault of the Water Tower. From there, again upwards to the westernmost point, there are 1000 paces until one reaches the Gate of David, which also looks south. It is new and twelve cubits high. From here to the corner of the Flat Tower is 200 paces in a western direction. This site is one corner of the fortress.

*Old City, Jerusalem*



## Zanzibar: Cloves and Stone

Written and photographed by Charles O. Cecil

The sweet fragrance of the dried flower bud called clove—and the no less heady scent of the trading fortunes to be made from it—has led Persians, Arabs, Europeans and Americans to the East African island of Zanzibar, which, for a time, grew more of the spice than any other place in the world.



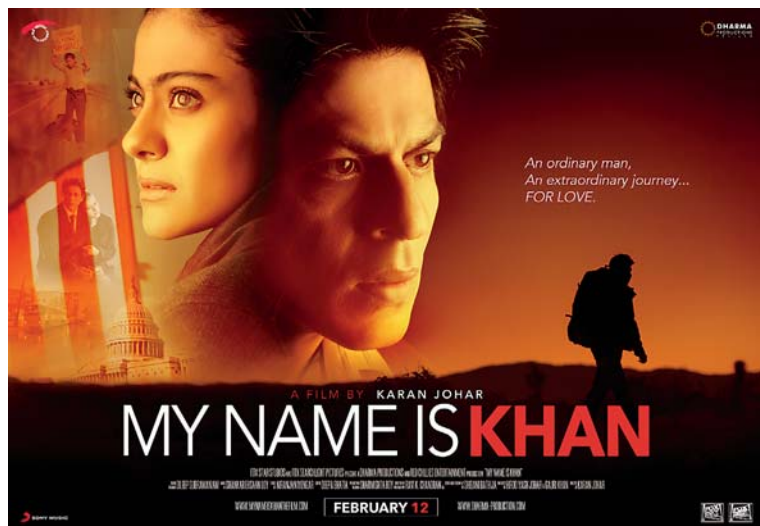
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## 24 Roads of Arabia

Written by Richard Covington

Photographs courtesy of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities

A mileage marker from a road to Makkah is one of 320 treasures in the first comprehensive international exhibition of historical artifacts from Saudi Arabia. Each one is a fragment of a little-known tale of civilizations that interwove arts and trade over thousands of years, with hybrid, yet locally distinctive, results.



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### Bollywood's Global Faces

Written by Susan Fry

Theaters in India sell three times as many tickets as American ones; India's top movie musician outsells the Rolling Stones; India's top movie star ranks among *Newsweek's* 50 most influential persons. Meet the new Bollywood: It's not just for Indians anymore.



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# CASTLES *of the Fields*

WRITTEN BY ERIC HANSEN

**A 17th-century traveler estimated there were more than 3000 pigeon towers near Isfahan, and today some 250 to 300 survive in various states of decay. Though many look alike, no two are precisely the same.**

Late one summer day, I was seated in a local bus as it rumbled through open fields and orchards on the outskirts of Isfahan, Iran. Lurching down the hot, dusty road, while my fellow passengers napped, I looked out the window and saw in the distance what appeared to be four or five ancient mud-brick watchtowers falling to ruin.

But as the bus drew closer, I noticed the towers didn't have crenellated battlements or loopholes in the upper walls for rifles. Moreover, open farmland seemed an oddly exposed placement for any sort of fortification. Standing nine to 12 meters high (30–40'), these plastered, dun-colored towers looked like giant chess pieces.

We drove into the city, leaving the towers behind, but I continued to wonder about their purpose. Were they ancient grain silos? Abandoned charcoal kilns? Or perhaps they had been built to catch cooling late-afternoon breezes and provide well-to-do landowners with shade and scenic views over parklands and lush gardens that no longer existed. My imagination went to work on other possibilities, but as it turned out, none of my far-flung guesses proved to be correct.

Only recently, after reading about the excellence of Persian melons and the elaborate gardens and fortifications of Isfahan in *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-Century Persia*, by the German scholar Adam Olearius, did I eventually discover that these structures were pigeon towers dating back to at least the Safavid Empire (1502–1736). Especially noteworthy are the towers built during the rule of Shah Abbas the Great (1571–1629), who made Isfahan his capital.

Though Olearius did not mention pigeon towers, his account led me to later observations by the Frenchman Jean Chardin in his *Voyages en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient*. Traveling in Persia from 1673 to 1677, Chardin described how the towers were built to attract huge flocks of wild pigeons, numbering in the thousands. He estimated there were more than 3000 pigeon towers in and around Isfahan. An earlier European traveler, Thomas Herbert, in his book *Travels in Persia 1627–29*, compared the sophistication of



pigeon-tower architecture to domestic household architecture in this way: "... their houses ... were in no wise comparable to their dove-houses for curious outsides."

Given the number of towers (called *kabutar khan* in Farsi) and their size and architectural sophistication at the time of Chardin's observations, it seemed reasonable to assume that the pigeon towers of Isfahan in fact considerably predated the Safavid Empire. Lending support to this theory, Hafiz-i Abru stated, in his 15th-century work *Majma' al-Tawarikh* (Compilation of History), that Ghazan Khan (1271-1303), the seventh ruler of the Ilkhanid Dynasty, "has banned hunting near the towers to protect the pigeons."

The typical pigeon tower of Isfahan is cylindrical outside, constructed of unfired mud brick, lime plaster and gypsum. Large towers range from 10 to 22 meters in diameter (33-72') and stand 18 or more meters high (60').

Pigeon towers are common in the fields surrounding Isfahan, but are very rarely seen in other parts of the Iranian plateau where conditions are less favorable for large populations of birds. Situated 1590 meters (5216') above sea level and with ample water from the Zayandeh-Rud River, which flows year-round out of the Zagros Mountains, the Isfahan oasis provided an ideal habitat for wild pigeons and large-scale agriculture.

I assumed the pigeons were kept for their meat, but this was apparently not the case. Marco Polo, the famous 13th-century traveler, claimed that the Persians didn't eat pigeons because they "... hold them in abhorrence." Herodotus, writing some 1700 years earlier, commented that Persians disliked the taste of the birds, though young pigeons—squabs—are well known to be delicious and succulent.

Another possible explanation of why the Persians abstained has to do with the belief that pigeons were held to be sacred because of their association with the Prophet Muhammad. During the earliest years of Islam, tradition has it that a fantail pigeon (*baba kooch*) perched and fed on the Prophet's shoulder as he

preached. In a similar vein, people of medieval Europe believed in the sacredness of doves and refrained from eating them because of their association with Christian tradition.

But still further research revealed the real purpose of the towers: They were designed to collect

pigeon dung, which has a high nitrogen content and is a boon for Isfahan's nitrogen-deficient soil. Pigeon droppings are also rich in phosphorus, another fertilizing agent. The dung was used to fertilize fruit trees, as well as the legendary cucumber and melon fields of Isfahan.

Chardin wrote that pigeon dung, when mixed with soil and ash, was *tehalgous*, or "enlivening," according to the Persians. The resulting combination of trace elements provided similar ratios of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium to those found in modern-day fertilizers. Applied at the standard rate of 900 grams (2 lbs) per fruit tree per year and approximately 1680 kilos per hectare (1500 lbs/acre) annually, the dung increased the harvest by as much as 50 percent.

By rough calculation, a large pigeon tower of that time may have contained 5000 to 7000 pigeonholes. On average, one pigeon produces 2750 grams (6 lbs) of dried dung per year, which translates into approximately 16,500 kilos (36,300 lbs) of high-quality fertilizer per large tower per year. Under optimal conditions, such a tower could thus provide enough fertilizer for more than 18,000 fruit trees or nearly 10 hectares (24 acres) of cropland, and was therefore a very valuable source of income for a village or the individuals who built and maintained it. Pigeon dung was in fact crucial to agricultural pro-

*A well-maintained pigeon tower could provide fertilizer for more than 18,000 fruit trees or nearly 10 hectares of cropland.*

duction and helped make it possible to feed the urban population of Isfahan, which numbered approximately 500,000 people at the time.

Pigeon dung was also used in the legendary leatherworking shops of Isfahan. Mixed with water, it becomes muriate of ammonia ( $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ ), which acts as an important softening agent in what is called "bating"—the final step before the actual tanning process.

**An abandoned tower shows a typically honeycombed interior that could house 5000 to 7000 pigeons. To the birds, the towers offered refuge from nocturnal predators.**





**Its elegance transcending its utilitarian purpose, this tower, right and below, is one of about 65 that have been listed as protected structures. The inward slant of the interior wall of pigeonholes ensured that the dung fell to the bottom of the tower for collection.**

More importantly, the dung was an essential ingredient in the manufacture of gunpowder, which consists of approximately 75 percent potassium nitrate (saltpeter), 10 percent sulfur and 15 percent carbon. The shah's army had no natural source of potassium nitrate, but was able to manufacture it using a mixture of pigeon dung, ash, lime and soil. The process of making gunpowder was widely known in the Middle East by 1280, when Hasan al-Rammah, a Syrian, provided 107 recipes for gunpowder and described how to purify saltpeter in *Kitab al-Furusiyyah w'al-Manasib al-Harbiyya* (*The Book of Military Horsemanship and Ingenious War Devices*).

The wild rock pigeon (*Columba livia*) was by far the most common pigeon inhabiting the towers. The birds were not captured and trained to occupy the towers—rather, they were instinctively attracted to them because they replicated the rocky ledges and crevices in which pigeons like to nest, mate and rear their young in the wild.

The birds were provided housing, but not food. The flocks of pigeons went out to seek water and to forage during the day. At night the birds would return to the pigeon towers where they were safe from raptors, mammals, snakes and other predators.

The birds were provided housing, but not food. The flocks of pigeons went out to seek water and to forage during the day. At night the birds would return to the pigeon towers where they were safe from raptors, mammals, snakes and other predators.

They nested in a checkerboard pattern of closely spaced niches that covered the entire interior surface of the towers, which slanted inward slightly toward the top. The pigeonholes measured approximately 20 by 20 by 28 centimeters (8 x 8 x 11"), with a short projecting perch made of dried clay set at the opening of each one. The inward-slanting tower walls allowed pigeon dung to fall directly into a central collection pit at the foot of the tower, where it dried. The towers were opened once a year to harvest the dung that, in the 17th century, sold for a *bisti*, or four British pence, per 5.5-kilogram measure (12 lbs). A small tax was paid to the shah.

The checkerboard arrangement of pigeonholes made efficient use of space, maximizing the number of holes and keeping the weight

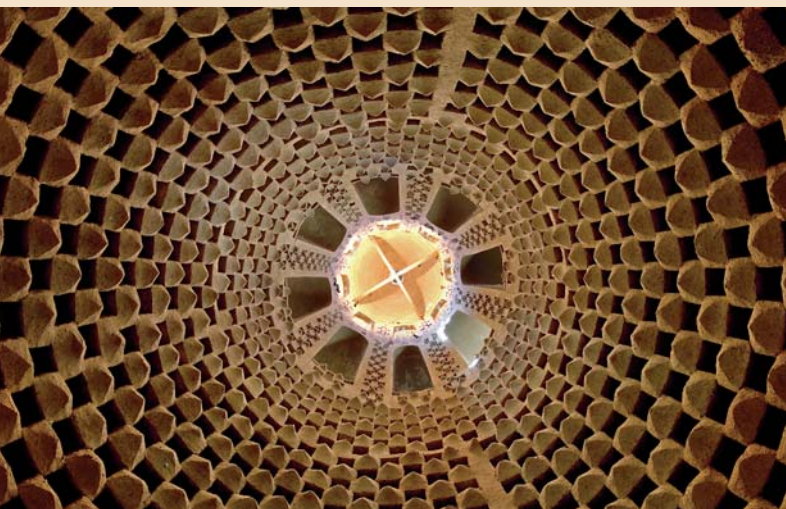


and the amount of building material used in the tower to a minimum. The interior walls were further strengthened with the multiple uses of interior arches, barrel-vaulted ceilings, circular staircases and both interior and exterior buttresses. Little if any wood was used in the construction of the towers and, despite the long tradition of building the towers, no two are exactly alike.

Modern-day chemicals used in fertilizers, leather tanning and the manufacture of gunpowder eventually made the use of pigeon dung, and thus the pigeon towers, obsolete. Today, perhaps 250 or 300 towers remain in and around Isfahan. Abandoned, they continue to deteriorate due to lack of maintenance. Sixty-five of them are now nominally protected by their inclusion on the National Heritage List.

Even in their tumbledown state, the pigeon towers that remain are still impressive to see. Small flocks of wild pigeons occasionally roost in the towers, despite collapsed ceilings and huge cracks in the walls that expose the roosts to the weather. The view upward from the bottom of a tower reveals a sculptural quality and haunting beauty that transcend its utilitarian purpose as a place to collect the dung of wild birds.

The pigeon towers are an important part of Iran's architectural heritage. Beyond the preindustrial mud-brick engineering that so efficiently solved complex structural problems with a perfect marriage of form and function, they remain as an enduring tribute to the ingenuity of unknown master builders who have left their unique creations for all to see, still standing on the fields of Isfahan. 🌐



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Dovecotes in Istanbul: J/F 89





# CAIRO'S *Fancy Fliers*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAVID DEGNER  
WRITTEN BY ANDREW D. BLECHMAN

*I*t's difficult for some to imagine the humble pigeon as a thing of beauty. Pigeons are often stereotyped as dirty street birds, but—as these fashionable fliers in Cairo demonstrate—they can be not only beautiful but even stunning. Take the Jacobins with their regal-looking mane of soft feathers, like Greta Garbo snuggled in a fur coat; Oriental Frills with reversed feathering on their regal chests that resembles a European cravat; or Frillbacks with their uncanny corkscrew-tight curled feathers.

Humankind has had a fascination with the pigeon since it was first domesticated about 10,000 years ago, shortly after our other best friend, the dog. In Mesopotamia, pigeons were worshiped as fertility goddesses. The ancient Egyptians used them to carry information about the Nile's flood levels. Pigeons delivered the results of the first Olympics in 776 BCE, and more than 2500 years later they brought news to London of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. King Solomon not only sang their praises, but also used them to deliver critical messages, as did Julius Caesar, Hannibal and Genghis Khan. Ancient Rome was aflutter with pigeons, but the Romans didn't seem to mind—they took great delight in the birds.

Until the invention of the telegraph in the mid-1800's, the fastest and most reliable way to get a message any distance was by pigeon. Julius Reuters built his newsgathering empire on the wings of pigeons. Not long after, Charles Darwin demonstrated his theory

**This English Longface is labeled a "Tumbler." Once known for mid-flight backflips, they were progressively bred for their rounded heads, and along the way they lost their distinctive aerobatic skill.**



of evolution using pigeons, which populate the entire first chapter of his *On the Origin of Species*. (His editor prodded him to drop all that evolution nonsense and expand on the topic of pigeon breeding, which was all the rage in Victorian England. Darwin declined, although he considered himself a devoted pigeon fancier.)

Coupled with this proud yet nearly forgotten history are the bird's unparalleled athletic abilities. Pigeons routinely fly 600-mile races without stopping, traveling from a place they've never been before and averaging nearly 100 kilometers an hour (60 mph). To put that into perspective, consider that the very best racehorses sprint at about 55 kph (35 mph) around a closed track for a little over a mile.

Like pigeon racers, pigeon breeders worldwide take great pride in their hobby, with many of them spending decades working to produce a "perfect" specimen in their backyard or rooftop aviaries. Success requires an impressive knowledge of genetics and animal husbandry, as well as incredible patience. And, unlike the dog breeders whose craft is publicized annually at the Westminster Kennel Club dog show, pigeon breeders must accept that theirs is a lonelier pursuit, with little or no media attention. But I've never met a breeder who much cared about fame: For them, it's about the birds. They know that pigeons—whether bred for show, racing or simply as a hobby—make wonderful companions. 🌐

**Right: Known for its feathered hood, the Jacobin Pigeon is named after the Jacobin monastic order, whose members wore cowls.**

**Below, right: The Polish Owl is one of 52 breeds of Polish pigeons, bred to be as small as possible, with precise posture.**

**Below: First bred in the us in the 1890's, the King Pigeon is a "utility" breed known for its large size, tasty meat and healthy broods of squabs.**



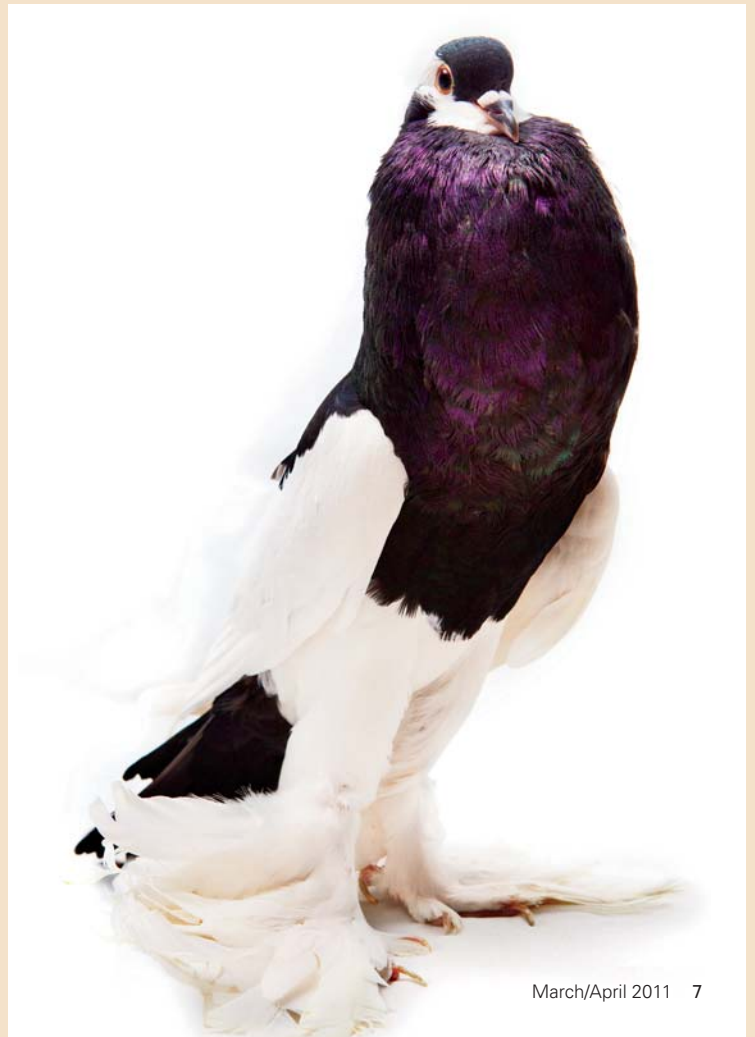




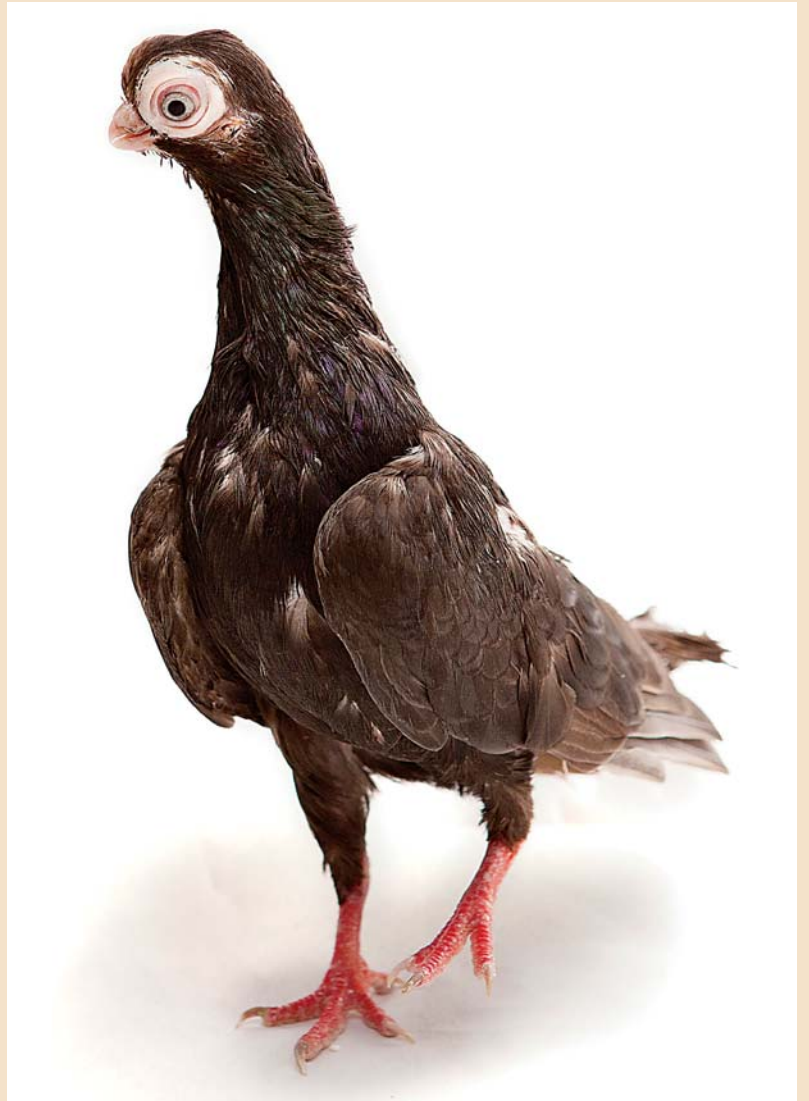
Left: The Crested Frill-back Pigeon has no clear country of origin, but in 1757 an explorer in Cairo saw pigeons "on which each and every feather was twisted or turned round."

Below, left: A black English Longface Tumbler.

Below: A well-trained English Pouter struts and shows off its inflated neck, a bit like a prancing horse. This breed dates from the 1730's.









Opposite, top: Bred in more than 50 colors and marking patterns, English Fantails were favorites of Charles Darwin's, who used them as examples in the first chapter of *On the Origin of Species*.

Opposite, lower left: Bred for a long neck and legs and a boxy shape, Maltese Pigeons originated in Italy near Modena. Drawings of the birds of that period resemble the dodo.

Opposite, lower right: In the early 1800's, breeders standardized the Buda Stork and Pest Stork. When the sister cities united to form today's Budapest, a breed known as the Budapest Short Face was created too.



*Breeding requires an impressive knowledge of genetics and animal husbandry, as well as incredible patience.*



**David Degner** (David@IncendiaryImage.com) lives in Cairo. He recently earned his master's degree in photojournalism from Western Kentucky University where he also majored in philosophy. His recent news photos from Cairo have been published in slide shows by the *Wall Street Journal*.



Award-winning journalist **Andrew D. Blechman** is currently managing editor of *Orion* magazine. His work has also appeared in *Smithsonian*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times* and *The International Herald Tribune*. More information about his first book, *Pigeons: The Fascinating Saga of the World's Most Revered and Reviled Bird*, is available at [www.andrewblechman.com](http://www.andrewblechman.com).

#### Acknowledgments

Photographer David Degner wishes to thank Mustafah and Mahmoud Hassan of Venus Farms ([egpigeon.com](http://egpigeon.com)) for their help in preparing their birds for this article.



Top: The narrow passageways of the pigeon market in Cairo's old cemetery offer the ordinary and the exotic, the trained and the untrained, for between \$3 and \$150. Middle: Pigeons are often raised in rooftop coops such as this one in the working-class neighborhood of Imbaba. Above: Caring for pigeons takes time at sunset every day, and often an extra hour or two in the morning, depending on how many birds one keeps.





# The Unread Masterpiece of Evliya Çelebi

WRITTEN BY LOUIS WERNER



HIS YEAR MARKS THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF THE WORLD'S LEAST-KNOWN GREAT TRAVELER, A MAN WHO VISITED THE ENDS OF THE EARTH FOR THE SHEER PLEASURE OF DOING SO. FOR EVLIYA ÇELEBI, COURT FAVORITE OF THE OTTOMAN SULTAN AND A NATIVE SON OF HIS BELOVED ISTANBUL, THE ENDS OF THE EARTH WERE THE WESTERN, EASTERN, SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN BOUNDARIES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, AND AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH, PROBABLY IN THE YEAR 1683, IT CAN BE SAID THAT HE EVEN SURPASSED THOSE LIMITS, HAVING VISITED—IF HE CAN BE TAKEN AT HIS WORD, WHICH WAS NOT ALWAYS RELIABLE—AMSTERDAM, PERSIA, ETHIOPIA AND RUSSIA.

Evliya's written legacy is the *Seyahatname*, or *Book of Travels*, comprising 10 volumes and thousands of pages composed in the highly recondite language of Ottoman Turkish. To date, only parts of it have been translated into English, by Robert Dankoff and Sooyong Kim, from whose book the quotations in this article are taken. As the translators note, their job was not easy, for Evliya's language is prolix, exuberant and playful, full of allusions to the Qur'an, folk proverbs in Arabic and Turkish, and classics such as Firdaws's *Shahnama* and Sa'di's *Gulistan*.

And, as things often went in the Ottoman Empire, it was due to the good offices of an unusual palace insider—in this case, Hacı Beşir Ağa, the Chief Black Eunuch—that Evliya's manuscript was plucked from obscurity in a Cairo library decades after his death and brought to Istanbul in 1742, where it was copied and widely read.

In the words of Dankoff, professor emeritus at the University of Chicago and a lifelong student of Evliya's work, it is "the longest and fullest travel account in Islamic literature, perhaps in world literature." Yet

it is also both less and more than this. Dankoff has compared the *Seyahatname* to a mine that can be dug into deeply here and there, but is rarely tunneled through from end to end. For Evliya, he wrote, "travel was not a diversion but rather an obsession. He had to see everything, and he had to record everything he saw."

And more: The *Seyahatname* is also full of fancies and dreams, accounts of imagined and idealized trips that Evliya never had the chance to take—a "romanced travelogue" of "invented itineraries" based on a "nonchalant use of sources," in the words of Ottoman historian Suraiya Faruqi.

Thus it often owes more to the tall tales of Herodotus than to the eyewitness testimony of Marco Polo, resembling the surrealist works of novelists



his is a most beneficial hot spring. Drinking the water wards off palpitations, dysentery and heart murmurs. Entering the water, however, is curative only if you know the proper procedure; otherwise it can give you pleurisy and in a single day can land you in the hospital or the graveyard. The procedure is as follows: Go to the edge of the pool. Perform a canonical ablution. Wash your head well first with the hot water, then pour it over your body so that you become gradually accustomed to it. Now you may put your feet in the pool, immerse your entire body, and enjoy it. But you must not stay immersed for very long.

*Eski Kaplica (Old Bath), Bursa*



Jorge Luis Borges and Italo Calvino as much as it follows the firmly grounded footsteps of geographers Strabo and Ptolemy. "Pious yet unconventional," Dankoff and Kim call Evliya the travel writer, who in the text most often calls himself *bu hakim*, meaning "this humble one" or "your humble servant."

Nonetheless, Ottoman architectural historian Machiel Kiel has cross-referenced Evliya's descriptions of Balkan mosques, public baths and Sufi lodges with the actual sites that still stand today, and he found Evliya to be highly accurate. Thus, as much as it is a fairy tale about the places he did not visit, but only heard about second-hand, the *Seyahatname* is also a reasonably trustworthy gazetteer, especially to the many Albanian, Macedonian and Montenegrin towns that he did see with his own eyes, including Shkodër (Scutari), Berat, Gjirokastër, Vlorë, Durrës, Elbasan, Ohrid, Budva, Bar, and Ulcinj.

Nobel Prize-winning Turkish author Orhan Pamuk, writing in his imagined-history novel *The White Castle* about an Italian captive in the Ottoman court who told a tale that might or might not be true, reciting it in the presence of Evliya himself, takes direct inspiration from the *Seyahatname*. That even Miguel de Cervantes makes a brief appearance in the *Seyahatname*, in the guise of a "one-armed Spanish slave," is no surprise. Just as Don Quixote dreamt dreams that seemed truer than life, so did Evliya.

At the age of 20, Evliya attests, his life of travel began with a dream in which he met not only the Prophet Muhammad, but also his Companions and the four first caliphs of Islam, along with a host of Islam's lesser personalities. Overwhelmed by their presence, he became tongue-tied, and instead of asking for *şefa'at* ("intercession") Evliya asked for *seyahat* ("travel")—and was granted both. As he was told later in the dream, "Thou shalt travel through the whole world and be a marvel among men. Of the countries through which you will pass, of their castles, strongholds, wonderful antiquities, eatables and drinkables ... the extent of their provinces and the length of the days there, draw up a description which will be a monument worthy of thee."

Evliya began his travels in Book 1 in his very own city, which he



his city has eighteen Muslim quarters, seventy quarters of Greeks, three of cranky Franks, one of Jews, and two of Armenians. No non-Muslims reside in the first castle, and none at all in the second castle as far as the Arab mosque—the inhabitants of the quarter possess a noble rescript from Mehmet the Conqueror according to which no infidel is allowed in.... The majority of these inhabitants are grief-stricken Mudejars who came from Spain, driven out in the time of Sultan Ahmet.

*Galata, Istanbul*



On top of the high hill, Süleyman Khan built a unique mosque overlooking the sea. How many thousands of master architects, builders, laborers, stonecutters and marble cutters from all the Ottoman dominions had he gathered! And for three whole years 3000 galley slaves, foot-bound in chains, would lay the foundation deep into the ground, so deep that the world-bearing bull at the bottom of the earth could hear the sound of their pickaxes.

*Süleymaniye Mosque, Istanbul*



lovingly called *İslambol* ("Islam-plenty"), walking its gated outer perimeter from sea wall to sea wall and counting each of his 30,000 paces. This first volume is a full inventory of the city's mosques, neighborhoods and history, starting with its apocryphal founding by the Old Testament prophet Solomon, passing through its capture by Mehmet the Conqueror in 1453 (at which Evliya's great-grandfather was the sultan's flag bearer), and ending with a detailed description of the grand procession ordered by Sultan Murat IV in 1638 before setting out to conquer Baghdad.

Evliya was impressed by Hagia Sophia, but even more by the Süleymaniye mosque, built by Süleyman the Magnificent's great architect Sinan on one of Istanbul's high hills. "Beyond all description beautiful," he called it. As he recounted, "The humble writer of these lines once saw ten Frank infidels, skillful in geometry and architecture, laid their finger on their mouth and each bit their finger with astonishment when they saw the minarets, but when they beheld the dome, they tossed up their hats and cried, Maryah!, Maryah!"

Of Sultan Murat's procession, a kind of pre-victory parade to celebrate an anticipated Ottoman defeat of the Safavids, Evliya wrote, "This procession of the imperial camp begins its march at dawn and continues the whole day until sunset and amounts to the number of 200,000 men all passing like a thundering sea,... during which the riot and confusion of the procession fills the town to a degree which is not to be expressed in language. Nowhere else has such a procession been seen or will be seen. Such is the crowd and population of that great capital Constantinople, which may God guard from all celestial and earthly mischief, and let her be inhabited until the end of the world. Amen!"

Evliya takes pleasure in enumerating the 1001 professional guilds and underworld groups that pass in the procession, telling how they dress and how they entertain the sultan, who watches from the Kiosk of the Procession outside the Topkapı Palace wall. He writes of mystics and furriers, pickpockets and prayer callers, horse dealers and beggars, booksellers and singers, executioners and grooms, dung collectors and gravediggers, soothsayers and corpse washers, insane-asylum keepers and pharmacists, pastry chefs and eaters of hallucinogenic nightshade, camel drivers and torch bearers, makers of stuffed vegetables and menders of broken cups, sponge divers and ship salvors, shepherds and bear handlers, lion tamers and sherbet makers.

Of the toy makers, he writes, "Some are dressed as children with bibs and hoods, some as nurses who care for them, while the bearded babies cry after playthings or amuse themselves with spinning cups or sounding little trumpets." Of the opium makers: "They pass at the public procession preparing opium, some stretching out their tongues like men hanged, some crying Hai and Hui and frightening them out of their sleep." And the circumcisers, who "adorn their shops with a great number of razors, pass circumcising some boys under the noise of drums."

Evliya began life on the tenth of the month of Muharram in the year 1020 of the Islamic calendar (March 25, 1611). He was the son of Dervish Mehmet Ağa, in his time a soldier, prayer leader and court jeweler, or *kuyumcubaşı*. As his son, Evliya had a privileged education, and he took his pen name from his favorite teacher, the court imam Evliya Mehmet Efendi, adding the gentlemanly Ottoman honorific *çelebi*. He caught the attention of Sultan Murat for his beautiful Qur'anic recitation one day in Hagia Sophia, and he entered the court school to study penmanship, song and grammar.



One of the sights is the polo grounds. In the middle of an open field are two lofty columns of juniper wood nailed together, at the apex of which a silver bowl has been affixed. On Fridays the servants of the Shah and of the Khan mount their wind-swift steeds and do sports, one of which is to shoot arrows at this bowl, as the love-struck spectators look on. On the Khwarizm-shah's New Year's Day in particular they stage a battle between horses that have been reared in darkened quarters for 40 or 50 days. It is a great spectacle. They also have combats between camels, buffaloes, rams, donkeys and dogs, as well as cockfights. These New Year's entertainments are peculiar to Persia.

### *Tabriz, Persia*

He gained the sultan's further favor with his improvised word-play and quick wit, which led to imperial permission to make his first short jaunts, described in Book 2, to Bursa and Ismet, then to Trabzon and through the Caucasus to the Sea of Azov in the Crimea. Returning by ship, he survived a wreck in a Black Sea storm. "We were tossed



about in a whirlpool of grief," he wrote, "the wind now before us, now behind us, not knowing in which direction we should go.... All the mariners turned pale and began to rub their hands.... Weeping and wailing arose as everyone despaired of life." Evliya and his friends were saved only by fleeing to the lifeboat and bailing with their turbans, and for the rest of his life Evliya forswore travel on the open sea.

Back in Istanbul, a place he once had called "that envy of kings, that celestial haven," he began to feel after only six months that the city had become a prison, and he embarked on his path of permanent travel. Throughout his life, Evliya never sought official court duties, fearing that he would be tied down. In time, he began to call himself simply a "world traveler."

Thus, as he wrote, by his life's end he was able to witness 22 battles, pass through the territories of 18 monarchs and hear 147 languages spoken. Among his experiences were attendance at a convention of tightrope walkers near Ankara, meeting with cat brokers in Ardabil, seeing oil wells in Baku and intriguing with the Kurdish warlord Abdal Khan of Bitlis, a town near Lake Van in eastern Anatolia, where he almost lost his life. Evliya first praised Abdal Khan as *hezar-fen*, master of 1000 skills—clockmaker, goldsmith, falconer, arrow maker—but finally had to flee him in the



y God's decree, the petroleum bubbles up out of the ground. But, in the manner of hot springs, pools of water are formed with the petroleum congealed on the surface like cream. There is a special agent who gets revenues for the Shah from these wells amounting to 7000 *tumans* of *akçe* per year. The agent's men wade into the pools, collect the petroleum with ladles, and fill goatskins with it, which the oil merchants take to various regions.

*Oil wells, Baku, Azerbaijan*



he Grand Architect Sinan son of Abdülmennan Ağa built this noteworthy bridge in the year [1566] at the command of Sultan Süleyman. It rises into the sky like a rainbow, spanning the water from one cliff to the other, a single arch like the Vault of Chosroes in Baghdad. The Neretva River flows beneath it in the middle of the city of Mostar. Each end of the bridge is a fortified castle, so it is impossible to pass from one side of the city to the other without crossing this bridge.

*The Bridge at Mostar,  
Bosnia-Herzegovina*

dead of winter through snow "as deep as a minaret."

Evliya, who had once rhapsodized about the Ottoman sultan's sumptuous private *hammam* in Topkapı Palace, was equally impressed with Abdal Khan's bath and its attendants:

In the middle of the hall there was a water basin from which 300 fountains were spurting water to the ceilings. The servants, all Circassian and Georgian slaves, were dressed and adorned with jewels. In their richly decorated belts, they had stuck precious daggers and knives. As footwear they wore wooden shoes with mother-of-pearl decorations. They looked like peacocks from paradise. Respectfully they were handing shoulder covers and wooden shoes decorated with mother-of-pearl to the bathing guests.

Dankoff notes that Evliya is usually non-judgmental of non-Muslims in terms of religion—despite his frequent use of such terms as "faithless Germans," "tricky Franks" and "shameless Mingrelians." One foreigner once said to him, "You have traveled so much in the land of the infidels that you have fallen in love with them." But he could also write disparagingly, as an Ottoman chauvinist, of "naked Arabs" and "bearded Persians," his co-religionists.

In one ethnographically precise chapter, he compared Hungarians to Austrians, noting that the former were Lutherans and the latter Catholic, and described their different habits in warfare, ending with the quite bizarre observation that "Hungarians are more honorable and cleaner infidels. They do not wash their faces every morning with their urine as the Austrians do, but rather use water as Ottomans do." But he added, as if in apology, "It is their custom, so we cannot censure it."

Yet there is something about the Austrians, the Ottomans' sworn enemy, that Evliya could not let drop. Of the Habsburg royal house, he wrote, "By the will of God, all the emperors of this royal house are equally repulsive to look at. And in all their churches and houses, as on their coins, the emperor is represented with his ugly face, and certainly if any artist dared to draw him more handsomely, he would be executed, for people would think he had been defaced. Those emperors are proud of their hideousness."

Evliya reported some other grotesque customs he experienced firsthand such as, in the Circassian village of Bozodok, the burial of loved ones in hollow trees, so that honeybees would colonize the casket, proving beyond doubt that the deceased's soul had been saved. This custom, however, required the family, when they later



harvested and ate the honey, to spit out their relative's teeth and hair, which Evliya himself says he did without complaint.

He had a sharp eye for cultural refinement among the Empire's minorities, just as he looked down on the vulgarities of others. In Trabzon, he appreciated the easy life, noting that "because of its pleasant climate and its panoramic beauty, the majority of the people are especially fond of amusements.... Carefree and airy, they are tender lovers and faithful friends. The women are Abkhazian, Georgian and Circassian, each one a beauty in her own right."

Yet he disparaged Greek gypsies for their rude insults, of which he offered more than several increasingly off-color examples, and then assured his readers, "They have thousands of other such naughty expressions. For they are always quarrelling among themselves, day and night, and cursing each other with obscenities. They commit murder for the sake of a penny."

Evliya's curiosity for studying new languages matched that for tasting new food and drink. Always careful about what was proscribed and what was not under Islamic law, he happily nibbled giraffe meat on the Sudanese Nile, adding, "God willing, it is permitted. I have not found a discussion of it in the religious sources." He agreed with his patron, Sultan Murat, then campaigning to close Istanbul's taverns and coffeehouses, in his strong disapproval of intoxicants, even if at the same time he professed a suspiciously detailed knowledge of them.

"Since I was born," he wrote, "I never tasted in my life of fermented beverages or forbidden things, neither tobacco nor coffee, nor tea, nor pomegranate wine nor date wine, nor mulberry wine nor melon wine, nor cacao-nut wine nor..."—he goes on to list another 15 varieties of wine—"nor beer nor opium nor love pills.... It is through my friends that I learned the use of these opiates and fermented liquors, and God, whom I call as my witness without hypocrisy, knows that I never tasted any of them."

He was not, however, often a solo traveler. Many of Evliya's journeys were in the company of ambassadors and pashas, whom he served as secretary, prayer leader and divider of spoils following victory in battle. For this reason, Books 3 to 8 of the *Seyahatname* are often jumbled chronologically and geographically as he raced from one end of the Ottoman Empire to another to answer the next call of



fter one hour of traveling we arrived at the top of a hill. When one reaches this point and turns south one sees the orchards and gardens of Madinah and the dome of the Mosque of the Prophet reaching to the sky. From the gleam of the gilded pinnacle on the dome, the plain of Madinah becomes light upon light and one's eyes are dazzled. Here the sincere lover gets off his horse or camel or mule and says the following prayer: Peace and blessing be upon you, O Messenger of God; peace and blessing be upon you, O Beloved of God; peace and blessing be upon you, O lord of the first ones and the last ones; and peace be upon the apostles of God. This is a matter of love [i.e., not obligatory]. If the pilgrim feels strong enough, he proceeds from here as far as Madinah by foot, a five-hour downhill stroll. If he is handicapped or old, he remounts his horse or camel or mule or donkey and continues the journey, repeating again and again the noble blessings on the Prophet. There are many varieties of this prayer, but the following is short and practical: O God, bless Muhammad and his people! As soon as Madinah comes into view and one sees the dome of the Mosque of the Prophet, one should not neglect this prayer: **Intercession, O Messenger of God!**

### *Madinah, Arabia*



he watchmakers, goldsmiths, book-printers, barbers and tailors have shops that are decked out like Chinese picture galleries. And the shops are unequaled in the operation of wonderful objects and strange instruments. Alarm clocks, clocks marking prayer times, or the month and day, or the signs of the zodiac, clocks on a monthly or daily calendar, chiming wall clocks—all are functioning. And they make clocks in the form of various creatures, with moving eyes, hands, and feet, so the viewer thinks those animals are alive; whereas the master clock-makers made them move with wheel mechanisms.

### *Clockmakers in Vienna*

duty—but only when it suited him personally to hear it, for he was always looking for new destinations. To mention only a few places on Evliya's itinerary—Crimea in the early days of the Romanov dynasty, Vienna in the heyday of the Habsburgs, Dubrovnik during its rivalry with the Venetian Republic—is proof enough of his keen scent for history in the making.

He described battles lost, too, such as the battle of St. Gotthard in 1664, and sieges won, such as the siege of Uyvar, Hungary in 1663 and the siege of Candia, Crete in 1669. He recounts ambassadorial missions to Persia and punitive raids to Kurdistan, and lists the castles taken and usurpers defeated, often in vivid language. "In the night," as he wrote, "the white eunuchs cut their aḡa to pieces, threw the body out and suspended it by the feet."

Evliya told other clearly apocryphal tales, such as how he believed the New World had been discovered: Two priests, a Spaniard and a Portuguese,

had first come to Sultan Beyazit II in a dream, offering to show him the way across the sea. But Beyazit was busy with the subjugation of Makkah and turned them down. So instead the priests went to Spain to make the same offer to the Pope.

Evliya said he interviewed Native Americans in Rotterdam during the visit he claimed to have made there in 1663. It is unlikely that he actually did so, although his name does appear on a list of Ottoman delegates in the Habsburg archive in Vienna. The Indians, he says, "cursed those priests, saying, 'Our world used to be peaceful, but it has been filled by greedy people, men of this world [the Old World] who make war every year and shorten our lives.'" This gives the



impression that Evliya may have been looking at all the riches of the New World and wondering, “What if it had been Turks and not Spaniards who set sail in 1492?”

At the age of 60, after a dream in which his late father gave his permission, he set off in Book 9 on the pilgrimage to Makkah in 1671, returning with the Egyptian caravan to Cairo, where he lived until his death in 1683. Along with his visits to Alexandria, Ethiopia and Sudan (where, if he is to be believed, he met two fellow Turks, one riding a rhinoceros, the other an oryx), all recounted in Book 10, he gives the fullest account of Cairo since Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi described the city more than 200 years earlier.

He tells us, for instance, what the inside of the Great Pyramid smelled like, what the Coptic language sounded like, how it felt to be squeezed in the market by passing donkeys “so numerous that they have taken over the city,” with their “silver harness and velvet saddlecloth,” and how incredulous Cairenes reacted to seven straight days of snowfall, comparing it to cotton and cold fire.

Evliya’s exhaustive listing of Cairo’s guilds and trades, from snake-meat apothecaries and don-

nothing, and may he dance in the sand and never strike his foot on a stone.”

After returning from the Upper Nile, where he was frightened by crocodiles and amused by monkeys “as big as Merzifon [a town in Anatolia] donkeys,” Evliya ends his *Seyahatname* in typically modest and playful fashion: “My tale has been long,” he wrote, “like the tail



In short, there is no city in the entire world, let alone in the Ottoman Empire, that is such a sea of men and with such productive land as this. Cairo is called Mother of the World, because if the whole world is suffering dearth and famine, Egypt can feed it; but if, God forbid, Cairo suffers famine for a single day, not all the world’s crops could sustain it. For Cairo is a sea of men.... In Cairo, flocks of animals—horses and mules, camels, cows, water buffaloes, sheep and goats—roam about in the marketplace. And donkeys are so numerous that they have taken over the city. One can hardly pass through the streets because the donkey drivers are constantly shouting, “Behind you! On your side! In front of you! On your right! On your left!” Sometimes they pick out naïve Turks for abuse, crying, “Give way, Efendi!” and trample them with their donkeys.

*Cairo, Egypt*

## The “Evliya Çelebi Map”

There is today in the Vatican Library an unusual Ottoman-era map of the Nile River, extending from source to mouth, measuring 5½ meters (18') long with some 500 annotated place names and drawings. Its authorship has long been a mystery, for it contains more topographical detail than any other map of the time about lands south of the Ottoman line of control at Qasr Ibrim, in Lower Nubia, a fact that suggests first-hand reporting.

Professor Dankoff has recently examined the map, and he now believes that it was probably drawn in Cairo under Evliya’s supervision, or at least was based on Evliya’s journeys, to reflect his “mental geography” of the Nile’s climate, noteworthy sights and flora and fauna. If so, the map, with its share of what Dankoff calls “erroneous readings and misunderstandings,” also serves as a fitting illustration of Evliya’s perhaps inadvertent—or perhaps intentional—mixture of fact and fiction.

key shearers to camel-liver cooks and rat hunters, is a fitting match to his account in Book 1 of similar employments in Istanbul. Evliya apparently felt sufficiently comfortable in Cairo to end his travels there, seek employment with the Ottoman governor, Ibrahim Pasha, take up residence in an apartment in the Citadel and write his book. “There is no city in the entire world,” he wrote, “let alone the Ottoman Empire, that is such a sea of men and with such a productive land as this.”

Thus, in the sense that Cairo was at the edge of a sandy desert, the blessing that Evliya received in his dream at age 20 came true: “May he be present at many wars, may he be a dervish, may he fear

of a snake [yılan in Turkish], and you may think it is a tall tale [yalan], but, as God is my witness, this is the way it was.” He apologized for its “shameless detail,” yet asked paradoxically that, if readers found it incomplete, they forgive its shortcomings because of “the length of my travels.”

For a man who traveled as far, as fast and as often as did Evliya, he never once seemed to be alone or to feel loneliness. The *Seyahatname* is a celebration of new friendships as much as it is of new places. As Evliya said many times when he was far from his beloved Istanbul, he was perfectly happy to be a *nedim* (intimate fellow) to strangers, a *musahib* (boon companion) to other travelers and “a friend of all mankind.” And, as he wrote from his heart, “I gave thanks to God, mindful of the proverb, ‘First the companion, then the road.’”



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**An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels by Evliya Çelebi.** Robert Dankoff, Sooyong Kim, commentary and trans. 2010, Eland Books, 978-1-90601144-4, \$54.95 hb.





# ZANZIBAR: CLOVES





Opposite: Cloves are dried on mats in the sun, as they have been over more than 2000 years of cultivation, from their native habitat in the Moluccas to Indonesia, Madagascar and East Africa. They came to Zanzibar only in the early 19th century, when the Omani sultan Sa'id bin Sultan grew the island's production into the world's largest. He built the palaces and complexes now known as Stone Town, including this ruined palace (left) intended for his wives.

Something about the words *cloves*, *Zanzibar* and *Stone Town* piques the imagination, evoking images of a tropical paradise scented with the fragrance of its most famous export. I had been away from the island for 38 years, and arriving on a high-speed hydrofoil from Dar es Salaam on the African coast was a far cry from crossing on the dhows that, in the 1960's, had provided the primary link to the mainland for local travelers. But the hydrofoil, loaded with mostly European tourists, symbolized the welcoming atmosphere Zanzibar authorities now cultivate in their efforts to attract visitors to their historically fascinating, multicultural island.

September, October and November, before the "short" seasonal rains begin, are the prime months for harvesting cloves in Zanzibar. I arrived the last week in October, so I expected to find the island's roadsides lined with mats covered with cloves, drying in the tropical sun. Surprisingly, cloves were hard to find!

I soon learned that clove production on Zanzibar and its sister island Pemba, to the north, has declined considerably from earlier days. Since the 1964

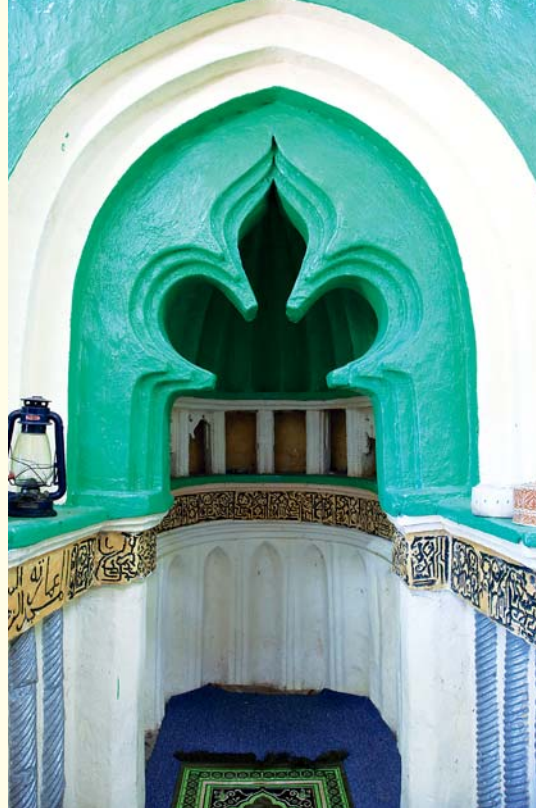
**Sweetly pungent, the dried flower buds of *Syzygium aromaticum* were once valued as breath fresheners, but more often as a food spice. Today, a large percentage of world production is burned in *kretek* cigarettes. Cloves continue to be harvested by hand.**

# AND STONE

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHARLES O. CECIL







revolution that overthrew Zanzibar's Arab sultan, the Zanzibar State Trading Corporation has maintained a monopoly on buying and exporting cloves. As a result, farmers receive only about half what they could get if they sold to private buyers on the mainland, removing the principal incentive to increase production. Zanzibar—now a semiautonomous part of Tanzania—and Pemba once led the world in clove production; today they supply eight percent of the world's total, a distant third behind Indonesia and Madagascar.

When I visited the government warehouse where farmers are supposed to sell their cloves, I found only two bags totaling less than a hundred kilograms (220 lbs). Nearby, three employees sat on the floor picking twigs and pieces of leaves from perhaps five kilos (11 lbs) of cloves recently arrived. Zanzibar is now clearly much more focused on cultivating tourism than cloves; nevertheless, the island's history is inextricably linked with the clove trade.

When cloves came to Zanzibar from Madagascar in the early 19th century, they had already been a popular spice in Europe, northern Africa and Asia for centuries. The Chinese used cloves as a deodorant and a breath sweetener 2500 years ago, obtaining their supply from the Moluccas, the Indonesian archipelago where the tree originated. By

**European, Arab and South Asian designs blended to form Zanzibar's distinctive architecture.** Above, from left: **The recently restored 1890's Old Dispensary was built by an Indian merchant. Inscriptions in the 18th-century reconstruction of the 12th-century mosque in Kizimkazi attribute its founding to Persian traders. The mosque's door is styled like others from the Arabian Peninsula to India, inscribed in Arabic.** Opposite, top: **Decoration on a balcony of the Old Dispensary shows South Asian influence.** Right: **After Oman defeated the Portuguese at Mombasa in 1698, they consolidated their power on the African coast with this fort in Zanzibar. Opposite, right: A late afternoon walker on the beach at Shangani Point, on the westernmost tip of the island.**







the fourth century CE, cloves had been carried to the Mediterranean by Indian and Arab traders. By the 13th century, Venetian merchants, relying on provisions from Alexandria, Egypt, were the main suppliers of cloves to Europe. Eventually other European powers, especially the Portuguese and the Dutch, began to search for sea routes leading directly to cloves and other lucrative spices.

The Portuguese arrived first. When Vasco da Gama anchored off northern Mozambique in 1498, he found Arabic widely spoken and saw that he was among Muslims. Many Muslims, traders from India and the Arabian Peninsula, lived among the local people. Africa provided gold, ivory, ambergris (used as a perfume fixative), gum copal (a resin used to make varnishes), mangrove poles (used for roof construction in the traditional houses of the Arabian Gulf) and, as centuries progressed, slaves, in exchange for cotton cloth, copper, dates, pottery and other commodities.

Islam had arrived in the region in the eighth century, brought by traders riding

**Zanzibar's indigenous inhabitants refer to themselves as "Shirazis," claiming a historical link with traders from that Persian city.**

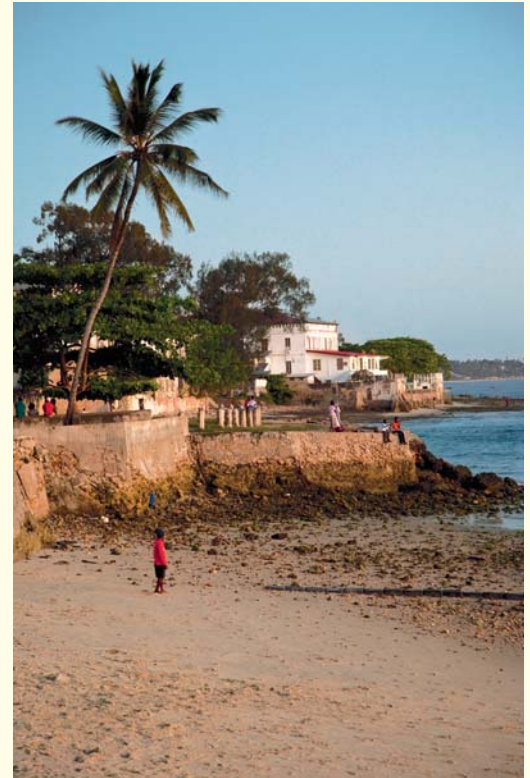
the seasonal monsoon winds south from the Arabian Peninsula. By the 10th century, Persians and Arabs were residing in many coastal settlements, providing the East African terminus of trading networks along the Indian Ocean littoral. Notably, Zanzibar's indigenous inhabitants refer to themselves as "Shirazis," claiming a historical link with traders from that Persian city. A mosque in the village of Kizimkazi has a *mihrab*, or prayer niche, with a kufic inscription dated AH 500 (1107 CE), which attributes the construction of the mosque to Persian settlers. Today's mosque is an 18th-century reconstruction, but it incorporates the original *mihrab*, considered to be the oldest example of Islamic architecture along the East African coast.

Trade inevitably generated cultural exchange. Since few traders brought their wives with them, many married local women. The Muslim community grew; so did a process of linguistic adaptation that eventually resulted in the language known as Swahili. In fact, Swahili—a word derived from the Arabic term for "coast"—reflects the augmentation of the local Bantu language with a rich infusion of Arabic.

Perhaps a third of the Swahili vocabulary today can easily be traced to Arabic, although the language has maintained its African Bantu grammatical structure. Swahili was written in Arabic script for hundreds of years, until European colonial and missionary schools introduced the Latin alphabet in the 19th century. (Still, I remember seeing Swahili words in Arabic script on public signs in Zanzibar's main market as late as 1970.) Although 10 percent of the population of Zanzibar and Pemba may consider themselves Arab, few now speak Arabic, the transition to Swahili being almost complete.

Swahili also incorporated Portuguese words (for *fort*, *flag*, *table*, *auction*, *hammock* and many card-playing terms, for example). Nevertheless, despite their presence in

the Indian Ocean for almost 300 years, the Portuguese had little long-term impact on East Africa north of Mozambique. They introduced maize, cassava and pineapples (bringing them from settlements in Brazil), but taught no improved agricultural techniques. Their desire to spread Christianity had little lasting effect. This is not surprising considering that north of Mozambique their only important settlements were at Mombasa and Zanzibar. It is doubtful that the Portuguese settlement in Zanzibar exceeded 20 families at any one time,





When Sultan Sa'id bin Sultan arrived in Zanzibar from Muscat in 1828, he found an American trader named Edmund Roberts there. Roberts, from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, had suffered a number of indignities at the hands of local officials, and within a week of Sa'id's installing himself at Mtoni palace he sent the sultan a letter of complaint that led to a meeting between the two.

Roberts said that there were many customs duties and other impediments to trade, and he proposed a treaty to boost commerce with the us. The sultan asked Roberts to convey his willingness to sign such a pact to Washington. On his return to America, Roberts worked with friends and relatives in the Senate and the administration of President Andrew Jackson to craft a treaty.

In 1833 Roberts arrived back in Muscat, where the sultan had returned, and quickly obtained his signature on the treaty. The Senate ratified it on June 30, 1834 and Richard Palmer Waters, of Salem, Massachusetts, was appointed us consul in Zanzibar, site of the first American consulate in Africa south of the Sahara, in March 1837.

Most imports into Zanzibar at that time came from India, cloth and beads in particular. Soon after the consulate opened, the cotton mills of Salem, Massachusetts, began to produce large quantities of cloth for the Zanzibar market made from cotton from the American South. These imports soon dominated the market, and a new Swahili word was coined: *marekani*, a term still used today for white, unbleached cloth, even though it no longer comes from America. In time, other us products entered the marketplace: copper and iron wire, crockery, shoes, muskets and gunpowder, and, later, household luxuries such as clocks that are still sometimes found as antiques in the local market.

To investigate trading opportunities for his side, Sultan Sa'id sent the vessel *Al-Sultanah* to New York City. Docking on May 2, 1840, after an 87-day voyage from Zanzibar, she was the first Arab ship to visit American shores on an official mission; she also carried the first Arab diplomat to set foot in the us, the sultan's confidential private secretary Ahmad bin Na'aman. (Bin Na'aman was not the first Muslim *emissary* to the us, however. The first envoy of that faith, Sidi Soliman Mellimelli, a Turk, was sent by the Bey of Tunis in 1805.) Though no further Omani voyages took place, an increasing number of American vessels traveled from the east coast of America to the east coast of Africa, returning with cargoes of gum copal, copra, ivory and, of course, cloves.

The us closed its consulate in Zanzibar in 1915 in the face of declining commerce, and American representation in the region was transferred to Mombasa. In 1961, having found that Zanzibar was located favorably both for countering regional Soviet-bloc influence and for tracking its new Project Mercury space program, the us opened the Zanzibar consulate again, then closed it in 1979, though maintaining a small information center staffed by Zanzibaris. Today, rather than diplomats or traders, it is the thousands of American tourists who come to Zanzibar annually who are the new us emissaries on the island.



Blending Arab and western instruments with Swahili lyrics, the *taraab* musicians of Zanzibar's Cultural Music Club keep tradition alive.

although a papal bull in 1612 refers to a priest on the island.

One curious example of possible cultural transmission is that bullfighting is still practiced on Pemba today, where some Portuguese were known to live in the late 1500's. Not all authorities accept this custom as having a Portuguese origin, but it is curious that in the Pemba fights, as in Portugal, the bull is not killed.

Of all the Indian Ocean trading states, only the Sultanate of Oman had the power to challenge the Portuguese in the region. Omanis, like other Arabs from the Arabian Gulf, had been trading with East Africa for centuries, but Oman was larger, and had greater ambitions, than the other Gulf states, according to Dr. Abdul Sheriff, an internationally known Zanzibari historian of East Africa and the author of *Dhow Cultures of the Indian Ocean*.

When Fort Jesus, Portugal's primary base in Mombasa, fell to Oman in 1698, the Portuguese gave up their dominant position in Indian Ocean commerce. Shortly after capturing Fort Jesus, the Omanis gained control of Zanzibar, ending the nearly two-century Portuguese presence there. To

consolidate their position, they quickly built a fort on the island's western tip, finishing it in 1701. From that time on, Oman was an Indian Ocean power to be reckoned with.

Omani interest in East Africa assumed a new dimension with the Busaidi family's accession to power in Oman in 1749, and it increased substantially during the 50-year reign of Sultan Sa'id bin Sultan, which began in 1806. After consolidating his position in Oman, Sa'id turned his interest toward East Africa. He paid his first visit to Zanzibar in 1828, and with each successive trip his stay on the island lengthened.

Dr. Sheriff succinctly summed up Sa'id bin Sultan's interest in the area. "Kuwait and the other states of the Gulf came only as traders," he said. "They were rather small city-states, rather weak, with no ambition to develop states as such. Oman was different. It was a kingdom, with a large hinterland. Sa'id would not have come only for good weather; he came for trade."

As the head of a state whose fortunes were built on commerce, the sultan appreciated the economic potential of the clove trade. He quickly took steps to cultivate clove trees in Zanzibar, adding to the





wealth already being obtained from the trade in ivory and slaves from the mainland. In fact, he ordered his subjects to plant clove trees or face confiscation of their property. By 1850, Zanzibar and Pemba were the world's biggest clove producers. Cloves became even more important economically as Britain pressured the sultan to end the slave trade and slavery itself throughout the 19th century.

The sultan's presence on Zanzibar led to the growth of a permanent settlement, now called Stone Town. It spread over the westernmost point of the island, adjacent to the fort. Most of Stone Town's buildings today date from the 19th century, as do the ruins of several former royal palaces on the island and several baths built for the sultan's wives or for the public.

When Sultan Saïd died in 1856, his two sons split the empire between them, Majid taking the East African dominions and Thuwaini taking Oman. Although Majid got the better deal in the 19th century, the discovery of oil in Oman in the 20th century has caused the pendulum of prosperity to swing in favor of Thuwaini's descendants. It was Majid's unlucky



Left: The language of Zanzibar is Swahili, which formed from the infusion of Arabic into the local Bantu language. Above, left: A government official wears both a traditional robe (*kanzu*) and a western sport coat. Above: In Stone Town, children ride through a narrow street.



descendant Jamshid who was overthrown by Zanzibar's African majority in 1964. That happened just a month after England ended its 74-year protectorate over the island and restored to the Busaidis the control they had enjoyed before the British arrived.

Though many Arabs—who had been about 20 percent of the population—left after the revolution, the island remains well over 90 percent Muslim. Christians, Hindus and Parsees are free to practice their religions, as has always been the case. Such tolerance was characteristic of the Indian Ocean littoral, said Dr. Sheriff. Prior to the coming of the Portuguese, the Indian Ocean “was dominated by the logic of trade,” he explained. “What do traders want? They want to sell their goods.... So the buyers and the sellers had no interest in practicing intolerance, or cultural intolerance. In fact, quite the opposite. They needed to encourage all sorts of people to come and trade, ... whether they are Chinese, Jews, Hindus, Christians, or anybody.”

Sultan Sa'id and his successors practiced and encouraged this traditional tolerance. The multicultural character

of Zanzibar is readily apparent today in the island's music, religious practices, food, dress and architecture.

A fusion of Arab, Indian and African musical traditions has produced a style of music called *taarab*. Originating as court music played in the palace of the sultan, *taarab* is carried on today primarily by two groups, the Nadi Ikhwan Safaa and the Culture Musical Club, which has toured in Europe, the US and Arab countries.

Taarab music incorporates the *'ud*, *qanun*, violin, cello and bass, as well as the accordion and a variety of percussion instruments, backing up Swahili lyrics that are often about love, longing and courtship rivalries. Visitors are welcome to attend nightly rehearsals, and performances can be found in several of Stone Town's hotels or restaurants.

Calls to prayer from the minarets, Hindu temple bells, and Catholic and Anglican

**A rural house, lower, sprouts a 21st-century satellite dish, while in town, right, a conical minaret has a loudspeaker set into the window built for the muezzin, or caller to prayer.**





church bells are all part of Stone Town's daily soundscape. Ibadhi, Sunni, Bokhara and Ithnasheri Shia Muslims maintain their separate mosques. There is a small Parsee community. Some cultural ties remain with the Arab world, but political leaders no longer seek to participate in Arab councils or look to the Arab world for political support and validation. Evidence of the island's political integration into mainland Africa is best demonstrated by the fact that a Zanzibari, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, was elected president of Tanzania in 1985 and served for 10 years.

Restaurants offer curries and other dishes of South Asian inspiration, but I also found *ugali*, a cornmeal paste common on the mainland. (Rice is the preferred Zanzibari staple.) Openness to foreign culinary traditions has long been characteristic of the island. In her autobiography, *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess From Zanzibar*, Princess Salme bint Sa'id, a daughter of the sultan, writing in the mid-19th century, said "... at Bet il Mtoni ... the meals were cooked in the Arab as well as in the Persian and Turkish manner." The tourist influx of the last 10 to 15 years has led to new creations, such as "Zanzibari pizza," a mixture of egg and chopped vegetables wrapped in pastry, offered by vendors each evening in the town's Forodhani Gardens in a bustling scene reminiscent of a late afternoon in Marrakesh's Djemaa el-Fna.

Examples of South Asian architectural influence can be seen by walking the streets of Stone Town, notably the Old Dispensary, originally built in the 1890's as a private residence by an Ismaili Indian merchant. Following the revolution of 1964, Zanzibar's unique architectural treasures began to crumble as the implementation of strict socialism halted investment, impoverished the economy and led to the departure of educated and entrepreneurial Zanzibaris. In the early 1990's, however, the government began to allow private investment initiatives, and a more open political atmosphere prevailed. UNESCO provided a

**Today, Zanzibar's maritime traffic includes both freighters bearing imported goods and the traditional lateen-sailed boats, which often belong to fishermen.**

major boost in 2000 when it placed Stone Town on its list of World Heritage Sites as "an outstanding material manifestation of cultural fusion and harmonization" of African, Arab and Indian architectural and cultural traditions.

Thanks to UNESCO and to several major projects funded by the Aga Khan Charitable Trust, a number of important structures, including the Old Dispensary, have been restored, and Zanzibar's architectural heritage is being preserved. Far more tourists come today to see the narrow alleyways of Stone Town than to inspect the clove plantations. Indeed, nearly 150,000 tourists visited the island in 2007, the record number to date.

Most come to enjoy Zanzibar's beautiful white-sand beaches and to snorkel and scuba dive. Massive foreign investment has fueled the construction of many resort hotels, some luxurious, some modest. Some Stone Town structures are being restored as boutique hotels. Income from tourism seems likely to encourage further preservation of Zanzibar's heritage in stone.

Although obviously in decline, cloves are still the top agricultural money-earner in Zanzibar and remain an important source of foreign exchange, behind tourism. Zanzibar's new, more liberal economic policy may yet revive the industry. Replying to a question from a member of the island's House of Representatives in June 2010, the deputy minister of agriculture said the government was distributing free clove seedlings to farmers in a bid to boost production.

Meanwhile, Seif Sharif Hamad, leader of the main opposition party in presidential


**Although in decline, cloves remain Zanzibar's top agricultural money-earner—and an important source of foreign exchange, behind tourism.**




elections last October, called for privatizing the clove industry. Although Hamad now holds the post of Zanzibar's first vice president, such changes are unlikely to happen overnight. However, if farmers are allowed to profit from full participation in the global market, the image of Zanzibar as the island of cloves and stone will be not a memory, but once again a foundation upon which today's multicultural society can thrive. 🌐



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# ROADS OF ARABIA

WRITTEN BY RICHARD COVINGTON

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE SAUDI COMMISSION  
FOR TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES

**N**early 13 years ago, under the heat of a summer sun, archeologists were working in a trench excavated in a mound on the outskirts of the ancient town of Thaj, in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. So far, they had unearthed only pottery fragments and ashes. Prospects seemed dim.

Suddenly, a few more scrapes with the trowel opened a hole. Burrowing further, Abdulhameed Al-Hashash and his crew from the Dammam Museum uncovered a burial chamber. A few days later, they found the grave goods: a small mask, a glove, a belt and several necklaces—all of pure gold—as well as other exquisite jewelry that adorned the crumbled remains of what turned out to be a six-year-old girl buried nearly 2000 years ago.

Delicately crafted in repoussé to show a tight mouth, long nose and slitted eyes, the “Thaj mask” is reminiscent of the so-called Mask of Agamemnon, discovered in 1876 at the second millennium BCE site of Mycenae. The Thaj mask and its companion objects are just a few of the remarkable displays in the exhibition “Roads of Arabia,” which showed at the Louvre in Paris from July to September of last year.

What is perhaps most remarkable of all, however, is that “Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia” is the first-ever comprehensive international exhibition of Saudi Arabia’s historical artifacts. With 320 objects ambitiously spanning more than a million years, from the Paleolithic to the 1932 birth of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it turns out to be a veritable parade of virtually unknown treasures, each one a fragment of a tale from the





civilizations that, over millennia, interwove their arts and their trade far more extensively than even scholars had previously believed.

This historic assemblage, which was exhibited in Barcelona through February and will visit St. Petersburg, Berlin and Chicago through 2013, situates the Arabian Peninsula not on the periphery of the ancient world, but squarely within a far-reaching network of trade and pilgrimage routes linking India and China to the Mediterranean and Egypt, Yemen and East Africa to Syria, Iran and Mesopotamia. It makes clear that while

**Five arrowheads from Saudi Arabia's Central Province, shown here approximately life size, date from Neolithic times. Other arrowheads and stone tools are evidence of human habitation in the Arabian Peninsula that dates back an estimated one million years.**

absorbing influences from surrounding empires and kingdoms, the early Arabians crafted their own, often regionally distinctive, ceramics, jewelry, painting and sculpture.

Beyond the Thaj gold, some of the most eye-catching and culturally significant works include a trio of male statues, each slightly larger than life-size, dating from the fourth to third centuries BCE and representing monarchs from the little-known north Arabian kingdom of Lihyān. There are also remarkably well-preserved wall paintings, luminous alabaster heads and Hellenistic bronzes





Qaryat al-Faw at the edge of the Rub' al-Khali (Empty Quarter). From eastern Arabia there are soapstone vessels found on Tarut Island that depict entwined snakes and figures. There are stone monuments with writing in Aramaic, South Arabian, North Arabian and Arabic—the earliest known use of that language. The most elegant writing appears near the exhibition's end and comes from Makkah, carved on an evocative series of tombstones that offer vignettes of the lives of individual pilgrims from all over the Muslim world between the ninth and 16th centuries CE.

Drawing principally from collections in the National Museum in Riyadh, "Roads" is supplemented with key pieces from the kingdom's regional and university museums, libraries and foundations. There are also textiles from the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris, ceramic plaques depicting Makkah and Madinah from the Louvre and 18th-century engravings of the Holy Cities from the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. A rarely seen map of the Hijaz railway, which was built by the Ottoman Turks in the early 20th century, is on loan from the Royal Geographic Society in London.

Critics have greeted the show with unabashed wonder. Writing in the Parisian daily *Le Figaro*, Eric Biétry-Rivierre marveled at the discovery of "a brilliant and prosperous past, almost completely unknown in our latitudes." *International Herald Tribune* art critic Souren

Melikian remarked that "the revelations to be found in hundreds of artifacts never before seen outside Saudi Arabia are startling."

Experts have been equally effusive. "It is fantastic to show the world what a wealth of archeological treasures exists in the kingdom," commented Daniel Potts, professor of Middle Eastern archeology at the University of Sydney. He is one of more than three dozen scholars to contribute articles to the exhibition's 600-page catalogue. "Saudi Arabia remains the least explored and obviously the largest piece of the puzzle that is ancient Arabia," he continued. "This exhibition should do a great deal to encourage scholars to look more seriously at the region."



The genesis of this museological coup dates back to April 2004, when the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) signed a cooperation agreement with the Louvre. The first fruit of the exchange was the survey exhibition of 150 items entitled "Masterpieces from the Louvre's Islamic Arts Collection" that opened in the Saudi National Museum in the spring of 2006. (In a separate venture, the Louvre is constructing, with multinational financing, its own new wing devoted to Islamic art, slated to open in 2012.)

Ali Al-Ghabban, vice president of antiquities and museums at the SCTA and co-curator of "Roads," explains that the reciprocal show is "part of our long-term strategy





Numerous small soapstone cups, bowls and vases, such as these at left and lower left, have been found on Tarut Island, on the eastern shore of the Peninsula, where many date to the third millennium BCE. Widely traded, such items have also been found from Mesopotamia to Iran. Lower: Notable for its thin walls—indicative of high craftsmanship—this ceramic bowl is from Tayma, in northwestern Arabia. It dates from between 1000 and 500 BCE and measures 22 centimeters (8½") in height. Opposite, lower: Sculpted from the same period, but his squarish legs and knobby knees resemble effigies from the Indus Valley. At nearly a meter (39") tall, he is the largest such statue discovered to date.



to use antiquities to promote the country and build tourism. It will also help the Saudis to be proud of their heritage."

The show's catalogue, he continues, was published in French, English and Arabic. "It's more than an exhibition catalogue," contends Al-Ghabban. "It's a scientific document that details how numerous civilizations have contributed to Saudi Arabia's history."

The affable archeologist, a professor at Riyadh's King Saud University who earned his doctorate at the University of Aix-en-Provence, is a veteran of archeological surveys and key discoveries over more than three decades. He took time out from a day of meetings at the Louvre to be my guide through the show and later discuss it over a Moroccan fish couscous in the food court adjoining the museum.

"Most westerners believe that Saudi Arabia is only a desert land with oil wells," he explained with an indulgent smile. "They don't know that the country was a bridge between the East and the West. We played this role in the fourth millennium BCE, and we continue to play it. In the outside world, we should correct the wrong image of our country. And within Saudi Arabia, too, we need to educate people about their heritage. We would like to show everyone—both foreigners and Saudis—how we have participated in the history of humanity, not only in the Islamic period, but even before Islam."

At the Louvre, for Béatrice André-Salvini, co-curator of the show with Al-Ghabban and director of the Louvre's Ancient Near East department, "Roads" has been "a highlight of my career," she says. "The whole process of putting together the exhibition has been something very passionate for me." With Al-Ghabban and others,

she says, the curators sought to balance beauty to modern eyes with "pieces that demonstrate turning points."

Because many westerners imagine the Peninsula as little more than endless sand, the exhibit emphasizes the diversity of Arabian geography with wall-sized black-and-white panoramas by Brazilian photographer Humberto da Silveira, who has spent years in the kingdom. "Before each section, we want visitors to understand that people live in oases and mountainous regions, and that there were important urban centers," the curator observes. "We want to change perceptions of the country."

Even though she is an expert, André-Salvini admits that she too was staggered by the variety and the wealth of the finds. "The history of Saudi Arabia is made from contact with surrounding civilizations," she explains. "But in spite of these foreign influences, everything from outside was absorbed and reinterpreted in an unmistakably original fashion."

Just how original becomes evident in the first gallery as the ancient meets modernity: Three sublime anthropomorphic sandstone grave markers look as if they might have been crafted by an abstract sculptor of the 20th century—yet they are more than 5000 years old. Among them, a diminutive torso with seemingly doleful eyes and a hand poignantly held over its heart stands out for its extraordinary expressiveness, achieved with a few sparsely etched lines that adroitly captured the collarbone, hands and arms, quizzical mouth and odd, knob-like ears.

"I dubbed him 'the suffering man,'" André-Salvini recalls with a





This statue of a king of Lihyan, slightly larger than life-size and among three displayed in “Roads of Arabia,” shows the local character of the Lihyanite sculpture school with influences from Egypt. Traces of paint show the statues were all originally colored.

laugh, and the name stuck. The enigmatic character soon became a star of the show, singled out as the literal “poster boy” of the event to become a ubiquitous visual presence on banners inside the museum and on the front cover of the French edition of the catalogue.

Found near Ha'il in the north-central region of the country, the statue had been erected in an open-air sanctuary, according to André-Salvini. Based on similarities to other stelae excavated in Yemen with skeletal human remains carbon-dated between 3500 and 3100 BCE, she concludes that the “suffering man” was produced in the same era.

By the middle of the third millennium BCE—around 4500 years ago—as the Arabian Peninsula's climate grew hotter and drier, trade emerged in the Gulf region. The exhibition showcases an abundance of objects from this period that were uncovered in 1966 on Tarut Island, on the Peninsula's east coast, during the construction of the causeway that today links Tarut to the mainland.

The hoard includes gray and black soapstone jars, bowls and fragments, many carved with snakes, leopard-like cats, lion-headed eagles and other mythic figures. In a catalogue essay, archeologist Potts contends that Tarut was the main port—and probably the capital—of the early Dilmun civilization, and that only later, around 2200 BCE, did Dilmun move south and east to the island that is today Bahrain.

Similar soapstone vessels, in what archeologists call the intercultural style, were widely traded from the Levant to Central Asia. They turn up in Syria, Mesopotamia, Iran and as far east as the Ferghana Valley in present-day Uzbekistan.

## “EVERYTHING FROM OUTSIDE WAS ABSORBED AND REINTERPRETED IN AN UNMISTAKABLY ORIGINAL FASHION.”

Although Al-Ghabban believes that the show's particular objects were fashioned on Tarut using local stone, other scholars, including Potts and André-Salvini, lean toward origins in southeastern Iran.

There's no dispute, however, that the limestone statue of a man, who is probably shown praying, was sculpted on Tarut. With his clasped hands, round head, protuberant eyes and triple-belted waistband, he resembles Sumerian models from the same period around 2500 BCE. But his squarish legs and knobby knees are similar to Indus Valley effigies, too. More curiously still, at nearly a meter (39") tall, he is the largest Mesopotamian-style statue discovered to date, notes André-Salvini—considerably larger than any unearthed in the Tigris-Euphrates region itself. The sculptor appears to have drawn from both Mesopotamian and Indus Valley examples to create his own esthetic, she says.

Around 1200 to 1000 BCE, the rise of camel transport revolutionized Arabian commerce. With the accompanying emergence of sprawling caravanserais, the oasis at Tayma, in the northwest of today's Saudi Arabia, became an early, vibrant crossroads on the frankincense route from Yemen north to Mesopotamia and the Levant. Thousands of



merchants, joined on the caravans by scribes and armed guards, flocked to this vast palm grove, parts of which were enclosed by a six-meter-high (19') wall.

As a whole, Arabia grew rich on this trade. "Each station on the caravan route was like an oil well nowadays," quips Al-Ghabban, noting that merchants paid the caravanserais owners handsomely for accommodation and food, grazing for their animals, and security. Tayma, and also Dedan (now al-Ula, 120 kilometers [75 mi] south and west), are mentioned several times in the Bible's Old Testament.

Tayma's prosperity attracted the covetous eyes of Babylonian rulers. In the sixth century BCE, King Nabonidus went so far as to leave his capital city, Babylon, and occupy Tayma to control the traffic in incense, myrrh, spices, metals and precious stones. He brought his gods with him: A weather-beaten sandstone stele shows faint depictions of the king and Babylonian deities with a cuneiform inscription about a temple dedication.

A more vivid illustration of Tayma's patchwork of assimilated cultures is epitomized by another sculpture, the so-called "al-Hamra cube," named for the sanctuary where it was found, and chiseled around a century after Nabonidus, in the fifth or fourth century BCE. André-Salvini ticks off its syncretic elements: a "thoroughly Babylonian" priest standing before an altar to the Egyptian bull-god Apis, set against a background of winged emblems and an eight-pointed star that is probably derived from Anatolian civilization. "Despite borrowing imagery from other cultures, the art is totally unique," she explains. "It possesses a seminal Arabic identity that's neither Mesopotamian nor Egyptian nor Syrian."

Around the same time that Nabonidus was occupying Tayma, Dedan was emerging in the fertile al-Ula valley of fruit orchards, irrigated crops and pastures as the capital of one of the Peninsula's least-known major ancient powers: Lihyan. Although the city's ruins were partially excavated in the early 20th century by the French priests Antonin Jaussen and Raphaël Savignac, it is only in the past six years that archeologists from King Saud University have uncovered the full extent of a site that extends some 300 meters (960') long and 200 meters (640') wide across a rocky plain, according to Said Al-Said, the dean of the university's faculty of tourism and archeology.

Lihyan, declares Al-Ghabban, "was just as big and important as the [later] Nabataean kingdom, even though we know far less about it." The first-century Roman historian Pliny the Elder makes only a brief reference to it when he calls the Gulf of Aqaba the "Gulf of Lihyan."



Top: Showing a moment of emotion rare in 5000-year-old sculpture, the "suffering man" is among stelae excavated near Ha'il, in northwestern Saudi Arabia. Above: The sandstone "al-Hamra cube" dates from the fifth or fourth century BCE, and is replete with syncretic imagery. "It possesses a seminal Arabic identity that's neither Mesopotamian nor Egyptian nor Syrian," says co-curator Béatrice André-Salvini.

But Lihyan covered much the same territory that was later ruled by the Nabataeans—and more, Al-Ghabban points out: from Aqaba south to present-day Madinah. For some 400 years, until their territory was conquered by the Nabataeans in the second century BCE, the Lihyanites controlled the trade routes from China, India and Yemen to Mesopotamia, Syria and Egypt.

Among the spectacular Lihyanite finds of the King Saud University team are three colossal red sandstone statues, unearthed in 2007 near the Kuraybah temple sanctuary north of al-Ula. Depicting kings, each of the statues in the "Roads" exhibition stands more than two meters (6'5") tall. With stiff arms held close to their sides, the figures strike heiratic poses that hark back to Egyptian models. But the naturalistic depiction of their muscular torsos points to Greek influence. While inventing their own hybrid school of art, the Lihyanite sculptors drew inspiration from their Egyptian and Greek predecessors.

By the first century CE, Mada'in Salih, 22 kilometers (35 mi) north of al-Ula, became the southern outpost of the Nabataean kingdom and its center for domination of the Arabian caravan routes. The exhibition continues with photographs of elaborate Nabataean tombs cut into honey-hued cliffs and crags. The tomb façades show an eclectic mix of Egyptian cornices, Assyrian bas-relief crenellations and Greco-Roman triangular tympanums. The Romans occupied the region in the early second century, and a stone plaque, unearthed in 2003 by archeologist Daifallah Al-Talhi, attests to the restoration of the city's ramparts during the reign of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius. One of the rare Latin inscriptions found in the Arabian Peninsula, the text credits the local citizens for paying the Roman legionnaires ordered to carry out the construction.

Some 1000 kilometers (620 mi) south of Mada'in Salih, on the western edge of the Rub' al-Khali ("Empty Quarter") desert, there thrived another commercial hub, Qaryat al-Faw. For more than 600 years, from the third century BCE to the fourth century of our era, it was an oasis of red-clay palaces, temples, markets, an extensive necropolis and at least 120 wells. It was a city of farmers and herders of sheep, cattle and camels that became "a staging point for travelers, merchants and pilgrims from the different kingdoms of Arabia," according to Abdulrahman Al-Ansari, the veteran archeologist, in charge of excavations there from 1971 until 1995, who wrote about Qaryat al-Faw for the exhibition catalog. As the capital of the Kinda kingdom, Qaryat al-Faw was, he wrote, "an economic, religious, political and cultural center at the heart of the peninsula."



The principal market of Qaryat al-Faw—the name means “village of the gap”—was erected using limestone blocks and bricks in three stories surrounded by seven storage towers. Three temples and a separate limestone altar are evidence of diversity in Qaryat al-Faw’s religious life.

Homes rose two stories, supported by stone walls nearly two meters (6') thick and boasting such amenities as water-supply systems and second-floor latrines. One eye-catching mural faintly depicts a multi-story tower house with figures in the windows: Its design resembles similar dwellings today in Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia.

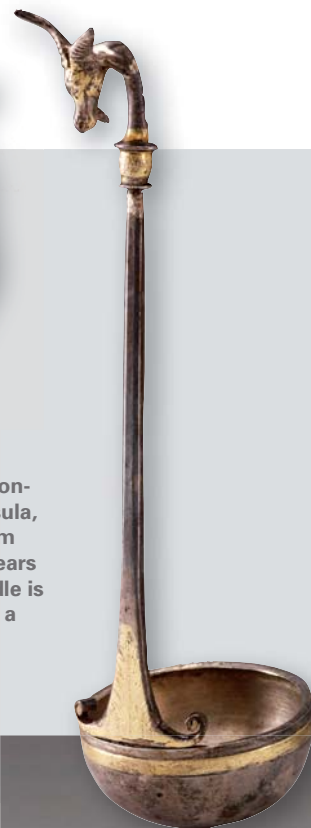
In the exhibition, incense altars from Yemen, bronze statuettes of the Hellenistic god Harpocrates brought from Egypt (where he had once been worshipped as Horus), Roman-style wall paintings and Nabataean ceramics all dramatically illustrate the long reach of Qaryat al-Faw’s mercantile network.

There are personal touches, too. In a mural fragment dated to the first or second century CE, a man—likely the wealthy patron of the mural—resembles a South Arabian Dionysus, with his thick black curls, drooping pencil-thin mustache and wide eyes. He is depicted alongside his toga-clad servant amid vine tendrils and bunches of

Lower: Now a major desert archaeological site, the once-thriving oasis of Qaryat al-Faw has yielded some of the exhibition’s most beautiful objects. Below: Date-shaped glass flask blown in a mould. Right: Life-size head of a man in cast bronze.



Above: Camel transport, which began around 1000 BCE, revolutionized trade in the Arabian Peninsula, and this hand-size statuette from Qaryat al-Faw is 1800 to 2200 years old. Right: A silver, partly gilt ladle is beautifully crafted, topped with a delicate ibex head.





# THE WRITTEN WORD

Many of the recent scientific questions raised in part by objects in “Roads of Arabia” involve the evolution of languages and writing. What experts call the “epigraphic evidence” (that is, writing on stone, bronze and, more rarely, wood) is almost always there for a practical purpose: protecting a tomb, honoring gods and rulers, specifying rituals or defining contracts. In the exhibition’s catalogue, Christian Robin, a noted epigrapher and historian at France’s National Center for Scientific Research, explains that—while a smattering of sixth-century pre-Islamic poetry is known—no stories, myths or documents about agriculture, water management or other technical operations have survived. Indeed, it is an open question whether such sources ever existed, he adds.

Nonetheless, language studies reveal the emerging complexity of Arabia’s cultural history. The oldest writing in the Arabian Peninsula is early Sinitic script from around 2000 to 1500 BCE. By 1000 BCE, there were two language families, Ancient North Arabian and Old South Arabian. Pre-classical Arabic, the precursor of Qur’anic and, ultimately, modern Arabic, began to develop around the first century BCE.

In the “Roads” display, a mid-sixth-century-BCE stele from Tayma has cuneiform lettering that hints it was probably inscribed on orders from Nabonidus, the Babylonian king who occupied the oasis at the time. According to Robin, the Babylonians also introduced Aramaic, a language that was prevalent throughout the Near East, to the area; it can be found on the fourth-century-BCE stone monument known as the “al-Hamra stele,” named for the sanctuary in Tayma where it was found.

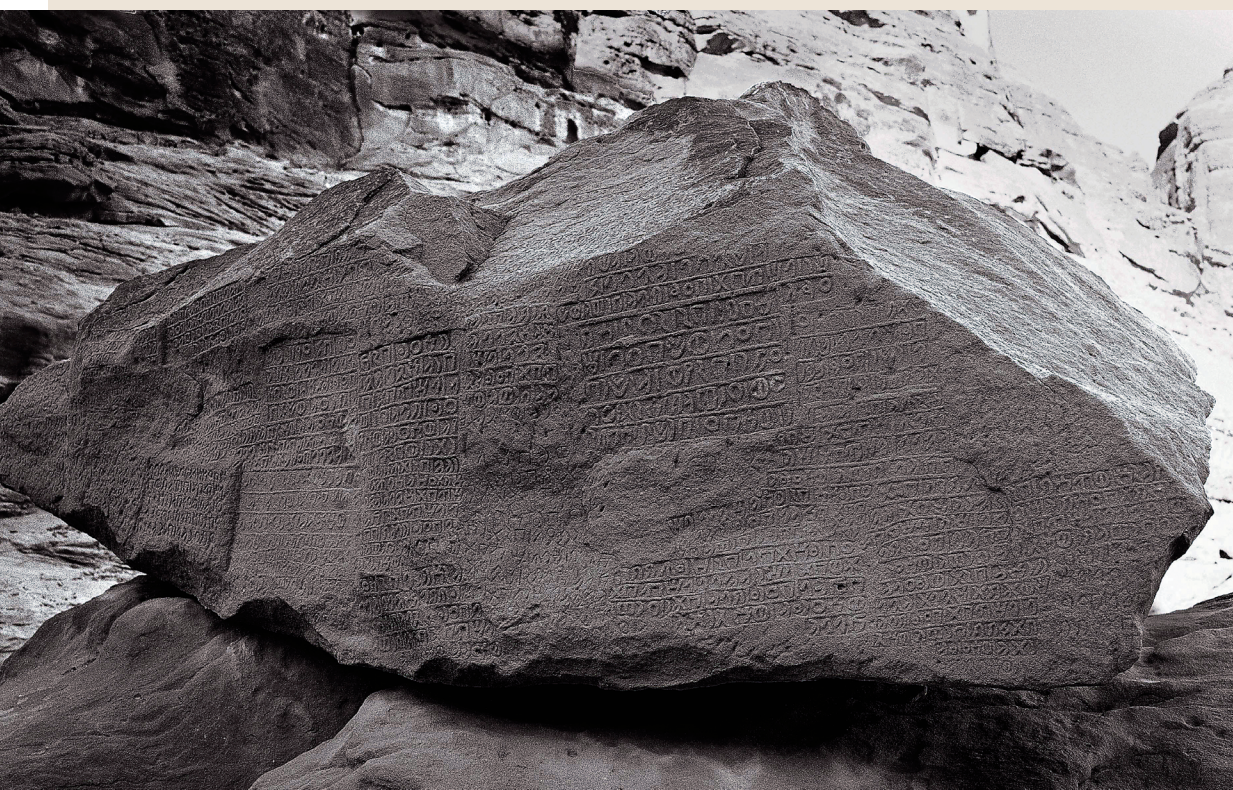
At al-‘Ula (ancient Dedan), one finds inscriptions both in the Minean script and in the Ancient North Arabian that developed under the Lihyanites. Among the latter, epigraphers have deciphered records of annual tithes paid by worshipers of local deities, punishments for crimes, and descriptions of the realm’s geographic frontiers. “It was clear from the inscriptions that Dedan was not only the capital of the Lihyanite kingdom, but also a site of religious pilgrimage and a juridical center,” observed Said Al-Said, dean of the faculty of tourism and archeology at King Saudi University in Riyadh.

Qaryat al-Faw has yielded a first-century-BCE limestone stele, on display in “Roads,” that is the oldest known Arabic-language text, although it is actually written in a pre-classical dialect that uses South

Arabian script. Of similar age is a bronze plaque in Minean that recounts a trade expedition to Seleucia, near Baghdad. Inscriptions in both Lihyanite and Nabataean have also been found at Qaryat al-Faw, indicating not only trade but also settlement by peoples whose origins lay 1000 kilometers (620 mi) to the north.

Drawing from both Nabataean and Aramaic scripts, the Arabic alphabet was first used in the early sixth century CE, according to Robin. What the French epigrapher terms its “birth certificate” is a trilingual dedication in Greek,

Syriac and Arabic commemorating the construction of a Christian sanctuary near Aleppo in 512. This new Arabic alphabet represented a distinct break from earlier Arabic and Aramaic. In little more than 100 years it had become the language of Islam.



Left: Lihyanite inscriptions cover this rock near Ikma. Above: This limestone funerary inscription from the late first millennium BCE is the first evidence of the Arabic language, though it is written using South Arabian script.



grapes in a scene that would not appear out of place in a Roman or Ptolemaic villa on the Mediterranean coast. Similarly, a life-size head, cast in bronze, sports the same coiffure of tight curls—a trendy Roman fashion statement adopted by a previously little-known Arabian elite. But according to André-Salvini, the piece was indeed made by an artisan in Qaryat al-Faw, where bronze manufacture was more developed than in Rome or Greece at the time.

Also from a local workshop is an exquisitely proportioned, long-handled, silver and gilt ladle topped with a delicate ibex head. Other crafts were mixtures of homegrown productions from glass ateliers and ceramic kilns, and luxury imports, like the blue-and-white ribbed bowl and matching beaker from Italy. Qaryat al-Faw may have grown up on the edge of one of the world's most forbidding deserts, but its elite indulged refined tastes and embraced Hellenistic vogues.

"There was a great freedom in the culture, drawing influences from everywhere," Al-Ghabban explains. "As the exhibition demonstrates, this openness of the Arabian peoples is not a new thing. It has existed for centuries and centuries."

During the same period that Qaryat al-Faw prospered in the west, in the east the kingdom of Gerrha grew affluent from both maritime and caravan trade in incense, perfumes, pearls, spices, ivory and Chinese silk.



Found in Thaj in 1998, this first-century-CE necklace of gold, pearls, turquoises and rubies shows a carved face in its center. Right: More famous still is the "Thaj mask" of hammered gold, 17.5 cm (6¾") high.



"The people of Gerrha were masters of overland and sea transport due to their skill in shipbuilding and their knowledge of the seasonal winds," notes 'Awad bin Ali Al-Sibali Al-Zahrani, Saudi Arabia's director of museums. "They also reaped the benefits of the rich pearl harvests in this region of the Arabian Gulf and levied customs duties on goods transiting through their country," he observes in his catalog essay about the kingdom.

Known across the ancient world, the Gerrhans occupied large residences decorated with ivory, pearls and precious stones, ate with gold and silver utensils and slept on gilt beds, according to first-century accounts by Pliny the Elder and the Greek geographer Strabo. But despite its history of more than 600 years, from roughly 300 BCE to 300 CE, Gerrha then disappeared without a trace, becoming a kind of Atlantis of the sands whose location has tantalized and frustrated archeologists for years.



Frustrated, that is, perhaps until the gold mask, the gem-studded gold necklaces with rubies, pearls and turquoises and the gold foil stamped with Hellenistic images of Zeus and Artemis were discovered in Thaj in 1998, says Al-Zahrani. Since then, palaces, houses and public buildings have been unearthed alongside an impressive wall 335 meters (1100') long and nearly five meters (16') thick. Based on the substantial mounds of ash and debris that have been detected, archeologists have concluded that Thaj was a major center for pottery-making—and ceramic figurines, incense burners and coins point to the likely existence of temples not yet located, Al-Zahrani adds. The evidence is leading scholars, including Al-Zahrani and Al-Ghabban, to believe the site is Gerrha's capital.

A little more than one-third of the exhibition is devoted to the Islamic period that began in the early seventh century CE, where the exhibit highlights the routes used by pilgrims to and from

Right: This statuette served as the leg of a bed in Thaj, where later excavations have uncovered numerous buildings and houses. Far right: This large earthenware jar is from al-Rabadha, a leading site along the roads connecting Makkah and Madinah with Iraq. It dates from between the seventh and 10th centuries CE.



caliphs—the latter including Al-Mansur, Al-Mahdi and Al-Rashid (who passed through it nine times). Not unlike Gerrha, al-Rabadha too was eclipsed into near-total obscurity when the pilgrimage route shifted in the 10th century. Its location was only confirmed through excavations that began in 1979.

Among the finest objects recovered from al-Rabadha is a large green Iraqi vase with well-preserved decorations. Alongside it are samples of fine lusterware bowls, also from Iraq. A ninth-century wall fragment bearing an inscription in black kufic script, set against a red and yellow-ochre background, resembles similar murals in Iraq, writes Louvre curator Carine Juvin, a scientific advisor with the museum's Islamic department.

## THE EVIDENCE IS LEADING SCHOLARS TO BELIEVE THAT THE THAJ SITE IS THE LOST CAPITAL OF GERRHA.



Makkah and Madinah over some 13 centuries. Throughout this better-known, more recent historic period, "Roads" offers no fewer surprises: For example, on the pilgrimage route from Egypt, Al-Ghabban personally uncovered a pristine 12th-century lintel at the Red Sea port of al-Hawra'. Its floral inscription, in Arabic, quotes part of the "Throne Verse" from the Qur'an, and the graceful letters suggest palm fronds or swans.

The route to the Holy Cities from Iraq was known from the eighth century as the Darb Zubayda, in honor of the improvements to the road financed by the wife of Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid. Some 200 kilometers (125 mi) northeast of Madinah, the town of al-Rabadha was a major stop along the Darb Zubayda. A center of religious teaching, equipped with mosques, palaces, numerous wells and extensive pastures for grazing camels and horses, the city became a favorite resting spot for pilgrims, from commoners to

But the most dramatic impact of the Islamic section of "Roads" comes in the dim hall of funerary stelae. Illuminated by subdued spotlights and dating from the ninth to the 16th centuries, recovered from the al-Ma'la cemetery north of Makkah, a row of elegantly inscribed red, purple and gray basalt stones bear names, tribes, lands of origin and occasionally the professions of the dead—and, more exceptionally, the names of the craftsmen who carved the stones.

These are "historical and sociological documents that offer a mirror of Makkan society," Juvin explains. In addition to the families of the Prophet and his Companions, the memorials commemorate pilgrims from all over the Muslim world, from Andalusia to Iran, Iraq, Syria, Central Asia and India.



# TEACHING WITH A TROWEL

Sometimes archeologists get lucky.

In early 2010, a Dhahran property-owner started digging the foundation for his house and noticed some ceramic shards. He alerted local archeological authorities. When the team from the Dammam Regional Museum showed up, its members were astonished.

"It's a fantastic site," declares Ali Al-Ghabban, vice president of antiquities and museums with the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA). "In 12 meters of stratigraphy, we uncovered three separate layers of occupation going back to the second century BCE," as well as more than 80 objects, he says. But even more promising was an entire house from the second or third century CE, complete with grain-storage chambers.

"After we finish analyzing the material, we'll have a much more thorough picture of ancient Dhahran," Al-Ghabban continues. "But this accidental discovery showed us that once we locate a potential site, we have to act very quickly. Otherwise there's a risk of losing it to development."

According to Dhaifallah Al-Talhi, former head of research for SCTA, there are in Saudi Arabia some 4000 known archeological sites, in addition to thousands of examples of rock art.

Throughout the country, the SCTA and provincial authorities are campaigning to raise awareness about the kingdom's rich archeological heritage. "It's not enough to protect sites with laws," contends Al-Ghabban. "We need to encourage each citizen to become a guardian of his culture." He notes that the education ministry is now teaching students about archeological resources, and local museums and archeological monuments are being developed for cultural tourism. Seven new regional museums are under construction. Centerpieces like the cliff tombs at Mada'in Salih, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008, and al-Dir'iyah, the mud-brick city that was the 18th-century capital of the first Saudi kingdom, are being restored and spruced up as tourist destinations. Ancient villages are being rehabilitated to allow visitors to stay in traditional houses outfitted with modern amenities. "We're looking at archeology as a sector of development," he explains.

In the field, Saudi archeologists are currently cooperating with 14 international teams from the US, France, Germany, the UK, Italy and Australia on excavations across the country. Increasing numbers of students are training in archeology. According to Al-Ghabban, SCTA is also collaborating with Saudi Aramco on a detailed inventory of the kingdom's archeological and historical assets. The SCTA's website is being redesigned, and it continues to publish *Atfal*, the scholarly journal that documents discoveries around the country.

"Roads" exhibition co-curator Béatrice André-Salvini, director of the Louvre's Ancient Near East department, compliments *Atfal*. "Saudi Arabia is among the few countries that make such research and interpretation freely available," she observes. "At the same time, they are appealing to foreign teams to help them. It's a very courageous policy."



Although the existence of more than 600 such stelae, most of which belong to the National Museum in Riyadh or the Qasr Khozam Museum in Jiddah, has been well-known, the first catalogue of them was published only in 2004, in Arabic. Juvin combed through the encyclopedic volume of all 600 inscriptions to select the 18 on display.

To trace the evolution of ornamental and calligraphic styles, she explains, she chose examples from successive eras. Early monuments were inscribed in angular kufic script, notes Juvin, but by the 12th century, a more supple form of writing, the cursive *nashk* characters, predominated.

Sifting through the inscriptions, Juvin encountered a trove of information about rich and poor, famous personalities and obscure pilgrims from distant lands. One modest, 10th-century stele cites a prestigious genealogy going back nine generations. Another marker from the ninth century pays homage to a slave woman as the mother of her master's son. Incised with the image of a mosque lamp beneath a pointed dome, one pyramid-shaped monument was erected at the grave of a 12th-century imam from Meknes in Morocco. An unusual circular inscription memorializes a judge from the Caspian Sea region of Tabaristan; he migrated to Makkah in the 1170's and founded a dynasty of celebrated judges. Most touching of all is perhaps the 12th-century stele dedicated to a father and his daughter who both died during their pilgrimage. According to Juvin, they probably came from Morocco.

Some stelae were re-used: One has a 10th- or 11th-century epitaph for "Ali, perfume-maker by profession," on one side; on the reverse, framed so as to evoke the shape of a *mihrab*, or prayer niche, is a mournful elegy from the 12th century for an Andalusian youth.





Selected from among some 600 mostly basalt tombstones from the cemetery at al-Ma'la near Makkah, the stelae near the end of the "Roads of Arabia" exhibition show stylistic variations from the ninth to the 16th centuries. From opposite, left: Ninth century; late ninth or early 10th century; 11th century; early 13th century.


His parents grieve for their boy with a quotation from the 10th-century Spanish poet and mystic Ibn Abi-Zamanin:

Each day death unfurls its shroud  
and yet we persist, heedless of what awaits us....  
Where are the ones who were our comfort?  
Death made them drink the impure cup  
They have become captives under the heaped ground.


The final two galleries of objects are stunning: a resplendent, scarlet-red silk cloth and a monumental, hammered silver-and-gilt door, both donated by Ottoman sultans to adorn the Ka'bah; ceramic plaques and paintings of the Holy Cities; and a portrait photograph of King 'Abd al 'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, the founder of Saudi Arabia, along with his sword and cloak. Nonetheless, I found that it was the funerary stelae that lingered most deeply in my memory. Though in a literal sense they marked the end of the road for those they commemorate, their texts and their artistry transcend their original purpose, making them poignant milestones along the much larger network of roads that not only connected the lands of a very busy ancient world, but also connect that world with our own. 🌐



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 **Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.** Ali Al-Gabban et al. 2010, Somogy Art Publishers, 978-2-7572-0395-8, \$69.95, €42.75 hb.



WRITTEN BY SUSAN FRY

# BOLLYWOOD'S GLOBAL FACES

It's an overcast October day in Berlin, and 150 people are waiting on the steps of the Friedrichstadtpalast Theater. They're bundled up against the cold in overcoats, stamping their feet to stay warm. At last the doors swing open, and a slender man with a brush of unruly, jet-black hair emerges. The crowd rushes forward, straining against the arms of the bodyguards, shouting greetings in German, English and Hindi.

Shah Rukh Khan, Bollywood megastar, is in town filming "Don 2."

Kerstin Bergelt, an editor at [www.asian-outlook.com](http://www.asian-outlook.com), traveled from Munich just to watch part of the six-week shoot. Bergelt fell

in love with Bollywood—the affectionate term for the movies made by the buzzing Mumbai film industry—five years ago, when she saw "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" ("Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sadness"). "I was so fascinated by the way they told the story—the emotions, the music and the colors," Bergelt says.

In India, theaters sell an estimated three billion tickets a year—twice as many as US cinemas. On top of that, more than a third of Bollywood's revenues now come from

outside India, especially from the Middle East, the US and the UK. And it's not just the 30 million members of the Indian diaspora who are watching.

West Africans are flocking to Bollywood releases; Dubai is the hot launching pad for red-carpet premieres; Prague's six-year-old Bollywood film festival saw record attendance last year; and Bollywood films seem to break their own previous box office records every month in the US and the UK. Increasing investments from Hollywood include Fox Searchlight's distribution of "My Name is Khan" last year, which grossed more than \$40 million in more than 40 countries. As an industry, Bollywood is projected to grow more than 14 percent a year, outperforming the 6.8-percent projected growth rate of the Indian GDP.

Aditya Chopra, Shah Rukh Khan, A. R. Rahman and Farah Khan are four of the biggest names in India's film business. They're also bringing Bollywood to the world.



Son of one of India's most famous directors, Aditya Chopra, left, wrote "The Braveheart Will Take the Bride" in 1995 at age 23. It became India's longest-running film and launched the career of Shah Rukh Khan, shown above with actress Kajol in one of the film's promotional stills.





**O**n a Friday night in Fremont, California, Priya and Manesh Bhatt guide their children through the crowded lobby of Big Cinemas, one of 16 multiplexes that India's largest theater chain has opened in the U.S. The smell of popcorn and samosas—spicy, potato-filled pastries—fills the air. The Bhattas moved here 10 years ago from Chennai, India.

"Bollywood films are such a good way to keep the kids in touch with India," Priya says.

"They're a good way to keep *me* in touch," laughs Manesh.

But these days, the film the Bhattas will watch might actually be about people like themselves: "NRIs," or "Non-Resident Indians," who live with one foot in their Indian culture of origin and the other in their culture of residence. This onscreen shift to a more international representation of Indian identity has occurred largely thanks to Aditya Chopra, the son of Yash Chopra, one of India's most renowned producer-directors. Aditya Chopra is now vice chairman of his father's Yash Raj Films, one of India's top media companies.

In 1989, when Aditya Chopra began assisting his father, the characters in Indian films tended to stop at the border. NRIs, if they appeared at all, "were usually portrayed as sinister characters," says Sangita Gopal, professor of film studies at the University of Oregon. "They often betrayed the family, betrayed the girl and lost their Indian values."

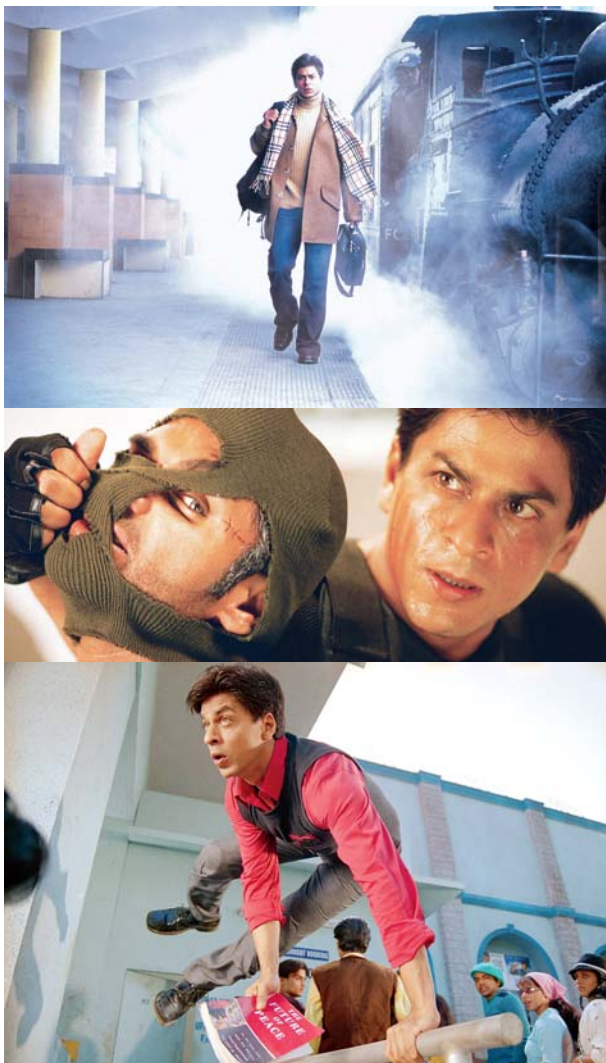
In 1995, at the age of 23, Aditya Chopra wrote and directed "Dilwale Dulhania le Jayenge" ("The Braveheart Will Take the Bride"). It might seem like a typical Bollywood film, with singing, dancing and pining lovers. But the main characters were NRIs who managed to successfully straddle the disparate worlds of India and Europe.

"DDLJ" became the longest-running Indian film of all time. It launched the younger Chopra's career and solidified the fame of its star, Shah Rukh Khan. It also ushered in a new wave of Bollywood films about and for cosmopolitan Indians.

This was very good business, as well. "Tickets overseas can be eight or ten times the cost of a ticket in India," points out Tejaswini Ganti, author of *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*.

But the overseas audience also needed better access to the films, according to Minal Hajratwala, author of *Leaving India: My Family's Journey from Five Villages to Five Continents*. "We mostly watched copies of copies of scratchy videocassettes," she says. "They weren't subtitled in English, so they weren't as accessible to a second generation who couldn't speak Hindi." Back then, she adds, the technical quality of the movies couldn't compete with Hollywood's slick productions.

So, in the 1990's, Yash Raj Films made another shrewd business move—setting up its first distribution center in London. By 2004, Yash Raj Films was the largest



**Often playing characters who struggle amid conflicting ideas of tradition and modernity, Shah Rukh Khan's rise to Bollywood megastardom parallels India's own rise on the global stage. Here he stars in the 2004 film "Main Hoon Na" ("I'm Here for You").**

## Bollywood Basics

- \* The word "Bollywood" originated in the 1970's as a playful combination of "Hollywood" and "Bombay" (now Mumbai), where India's Hindi-language films are produced.
- \* Bollywood films have been shaped by multiple influences, including traditional folk and Parsi theater, early Hollywood musicals and MTV.
- \* Because most films in India are shown in big, single-screen theaters, Bollywood films have to appeal to broad audiences—teenage boys, grandmothers and everyone in between. That's why the three-hour extravaganzas mix comedy, romance, tragedy, action and song-and-dance numbers.
- \* The modesty standards of the Indian film industry (no kissing, for example) keep love stories family-friendly.
- \* India produces more feature entertainment films than any other country and roughly twice as many as Hollywood.
- \* Bollywood films released abroad nearly always have subtitles in English and other local languages.

Indian distribution house. In 2006, the company embraced technology, opening its own state-of-the-art studio in Mumbai to equal Hollywood's visual and sound quality. Yash Raj Films has also experimented with new media, including its own channel on YouTube.

As a result, Yash Raj Films' more than 40 productions have become some of the highest-grossing Indian films to date. India's *Filmfare* magazine ranked the son-and-father Chopras among the most powerful people in the industry in 2005 and 2006.

Today, a fan almost anywhere in the world can watch Yash Raj Films productions—and other Bollywood films—on satellite, cable, Netflix, iTunes and YouTube.

Hajratwala sees this new technology as a gift. "The older generations watch movies on satellite, while my young teenage cousins, four generations out of India, download videos and music and watch them with their parents. The technology has helped them stay connected to the culture."

Because the films are subtitled in multiple languages, they're now accessible even



to people who don't speak Hindi – second- or third-generation Indians, or people who aren't Indian at all.

**S**hah Rukh Khan is used to screaming fans like those in Berlin. He's not just one of the most famous people in India: He's known around the world.

As the star of some of the biggest hits in Bollywood history, "King Khan" (or "SRK") is like Michael Jackson, Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt wrapped up into one charismatic, action-packed, dancing bundle of energy. He has his own wax statue at Madame Tussaud's in London, and in 2008, *Newsweek* magazine named him one of the 50 most powerful people in the world.

Last October, Khan reached a new level of fame. He was the focus of an academic conference in Vienna, "Shah Rukh Khan and Global Bollywood." Scholars from India, Europe and the United States convened to discuss such topics as "SRK and the Global Dispersal of Postmodernity."

"It's astounding to have an academic conference about a film star," says Ann David, principal lecturer at Roehampton University, London. "It means Hindi film studies are finally being taken seriously."

The conference also means that Shah Rukh Khan is saying something important. Anupama Chopra, author of *King of Bollywood: Shah Rukh Khan and the Seductive World of Indian Cinema*, ties SRK's rise to the rise of India itself.

## A. R. Rahman has "created the sound of a new Bollywood, one that's appropriate to a new, global India."

Many Bollywood stars and directors come from second-, third- or even fourth-generation Bollywood families, but SRK was an outsider who broke into Bollywood by his own efforts at the same time that India itself was painfully vaulting into the modern world.

"He achieved a superstardom that crosses all borders and all demographics," Chopra says. "He really represents all the great things that have happened within India in the last 15 years."

The heroes in SRK's films often experience the conflicts that great global change

imposes on individuals: What is my role in the world? What should my relationship be to my family? To my country? Khan's best-known role is still that of Raj in Aditya Chopra's "DDLJ." Raj is a sophisticated "global Indian" who lives in London and wears designer clothing, but he still manages to retain accepted Indian values. He

even chooses not to run away with the girl he loves, insisting instead on winning her father's blessing.

"Shah Rukh Khan's characters—and his off-screen persona—manage to reconcile tradition and modernity," says David. "That's not just an Indian issue. It's important for people all over the world."

**B**ollywood's music may be one of its best international ambassadors. Just ask any of the 25,000 people who gathered in the pouring rain at the Moses Mahibda stadium



**A. R. Rahman named his 2010 world concert tour "Jai Ho" after his hit song on the soundtrack of "Slumdog Millionaire." This year the composer-performer, who has sold more recordings than the Rolling Stones, won more fame in the West with his hit soundtrack to the film "127 Hours."**

## Have Your Own Bollywood Weekend

- \* Start with 1995's "Dilwale Dulhania le Jayenge" to see Shah Rukh Khan in his most famous role.
- \* Keep the tissues close by for "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham," which in the nine years since its release has become a beloved classic family drama.
- \* Then go back to the 19th century in "Lagaan," whose cricket battle between Indian villagers and the British Raj received a well-deserved Oscar nomination in 2001.
- \* Finish by laughing and dancing through "Om Shanti Om," Farah Khan's tongue-in-cheek 2007 masterpiece that both embraces what made Bollywood great and signals future trends in Indian cinema.
- \* And if you don't think you are quite ready for those, take a half-step: Check out Bollywood-inspired films such as "Slumdog Millionaire," "Bride and Prejudice" and "Monsoon Wedding."



in Durban, South Africa to hear A. R. Rahman's 2010 world-tour show. The show also played to packed arenas in the US and Europe.

"The crowd was going crazy," recalls Mike van Heerden, official photographer for the Mahibda stadium. "All ethnicities, all ages. Everyone was laughing, dancing and singing along with the music. Jai Ho!" He pauses. "I love that song."

Rahman's 2009 hit "Jai Ho," and his soundtrack for "Slumdog Millionaire," won Rahman a 2009 Golden Globe Award, two Academy Awards and a global spotlight. A Bollywood music icon, dubbed "The Mozart of Madras" by *Time*, Rahman has sold more albums than the Rolling Stones.

Most Bollywood films feature five or six song-and-dance numbers, often presented like embedded music videos. These film songs drive the Indian music industry: A whopping 65 percent of music sold in India comes from film soundtracks.

Devesh Sharma, a correspondent at *Filmfare*, believes Rahman's global popularity stems from his global outlook.

Rahman draws from Indian *ghazals*, *bhangra*, hip-hop, R&B, Michael Jackson and other international music to create a unique Bollywood-world beat.

"He's created the sound of a new Bollywood," says Sangita Gopal. "One that's appropriate to a new, global India."

Mason Ward, an American mother of two in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, was on

## Coming Soon from Bollywood

- \* **The single-genre film:** As multiplexes proliferate, filmmakers target niche audiences.
- \* **The "more western" film:** More attention to global tastes may bring shorter running times, more risqué love scenes and less dancing.
- \* **The nostalgic and self-referential film:** Films like "Om Shanti Om" not only refer to earlier Bollywood but are actually about the industry itself.

her exercise bicycle when she first heard the song that got her feet pumping and her heart rate soaring. She went right home and downloaded it. Then she called her friends. "Y'all know 'Jai Ho'?" she asked.

The women stretching at Threebee dance studio in London are warming up for one of the studio's weekly Bollywood fitness classes. Shweta Aggarwal, Threebee's founder, says her inspiration for opening her studio came from Farah Khan—director, producer, choreographer, talk-show host and one of the most powerful women behind the cameras in male-dominated Bollywood.

Although her family worked in the film industry, Khan never received dance training. Instead, she learned by watching Bollywood films, Michael Jackson and Hollywood musicals.

"She's created a marvelous fusion," says professor Ann David. "Her steps mix hip-hop, old Hollywood dance and a deliberately exaggerated Bollywood style."

Khan has choreographed more than 80 films, and she's created signature gestures for stars such as Shah Rukh Khan. She was one of the first Bollywood choreographers to cross over into international productions with the 2001 hit "Monsoon Wedding" and the 2002 musical "Bombay Dreams." In 2004 she began directing, and her 2007 "Om Shanti Om" became the highest-grossing Bollywood film at the time.

To the uninitiated, Bollywood's song-and-dance sequences, in which the characters might be whisked off to an idyllic countryside or to an entirely different country, may seem disconnected from the plot.

The truth, asserts Sangita Gopal, is that the dance segments are vital to the meaning of the films. "The dances are where the films take their visual and social risks. They provide a space to express forbidden desires, to explore fantasy."

**Mixing hip-hop, Hollywood and "a deliberately exaggerated Bollywood," Farah Khan, left, has choreographed more than 80 films. Above right: A children's class at Dhoonya Dance in New York.**

They are also points of entry for viewers new to the genre: Luxurious sets, extravagant costumes and breathtaking dancing create spectacles beyond language.

Priya Pandya, the co-founder of Dhoonya Dance in New York (which exhorts visitors to "Find your inner Bollywood"), sees newcomers in her classes frequently. "We have children whose parents love Bollywood, but have never been to India themselves. We have women who saw a Shah Rukh Khan film and want to dance like his co-stars. Many of my Bollywood dance classes are 70 percent non-Asian."

"You don't need to speak Hindi to love Bollywood dance," Gopal agrees.

From there, it may be just a few short steps to loving the films, too. 🌐



**Susan Fry** broke her arm on her first visit to India. While recovering in her hotel room, she discovered Bollywood on television. She lives in the San Francisco Bay area, where she's free-lanced for *Stanford Magazine*, *Red Herring*, *The San Jose Mercury News*, *salon.com* and other publications. Her e-mail address is [susan@steeltrap.com](mailto:susan@steeltrap.com).



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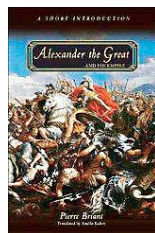
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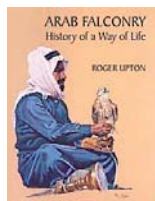
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**Alexander the Great and His Empire: A Short Introduction.** Pierre Briant. Amélie Kuhrt, tr. 2010, Princeton, 978-0-691-14194-7, \$26.95 / £18.95 hb. This serious little book first appeared in French 36 years ago, but in this updated edition the author remains as determined as ever to

provide a balanced treatment of the one-sided story presented in most books and films. Neither a biography nor a battle narrative, this volume examines the major issues surrounding Alexander’s overthrow of the Achaemenid dynasty that had long ruled the great Near Eastern empire of Persia. Why did Alexander invade the East, and how did the Persians respond? Briant gives the reader a pragmatic assessment from multiple perspectives. Although written for a general audience, scholars will appreciate the addition of a new appendix in which Briant critiques the current state of Alexander studies. Avoid the ramblings of unskilled “Alexandabblers,” skip the movie—read this book.

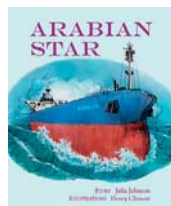
—FRANK L. HOLT



**Arab Falconry: History of a Way of Life.** Roger Upton. 2010, Medina Publishing, 978-0-95641-706-0, £35 hb. Though present-day falconry has become a sport of the affluent rather than the means of subsistence it once was, Upton focuses on falconry’s

proud traditions, from Morocco to Pakistan and China. He also describes its practice as a sport in today’s Arabian heartland, as well as in Europe and North America. This new edition of a 2002 book is illustrated with more than 200 color photos and numerous line drawings, and includes a glossary. Though titled a “history,” it more closely resembles an encyclopedic reference work. Drawing on his own long experience, Upton describes falcons’ capture and training, their care, their relationship with their handlers, the equipment needed to maintain them—from hoods and perches to radio location finders—and life around hunters’ campfires. This detailed book will please serious birdwatchers and students of ornithology, as well as anyone thinking of taking up the ancient sport.

—WILLIAM TRACY



**Arabian Star.** Julia Johnson. Henry Climent, ill. 2009, Stacey International, 978-1-90529-984-3, \$16.95 hb.

This is a dramatic story of the high seas, but there are no pirates here. Rather, the story for young readers is set aboard the oil tanker named

in the title and follows a budding environmentalist named Ali who is angry about the effects of oil on his beloved sea creatures. Caught in a squall off Egypt’s coast as he attempts to save a sea turtle, Ali is rescued by the multinational crew of the *Arabian Star*. He soon recovers from his ordeal and travels on the ship through the Suez Canal, learning about running an enormous tanker and the role petroleum plays in modern life. He also sees how the crew takes care not to pollute the

environment or harm wildlife. The author toured the *Gemini Star*, a Saudi supertanker, and her book reflects that visit. Henry Climent’s illustrations highlight this adventure tale that will fascinate and inform readers about the transportation of oil and the dedicated folk who move it around the globe.

—CAITLIN CLARK



**Barefoot Through Mauretania.** Odette du Puigaudeau. 2010, Hardinge Simpole, 978-1-84382201-1, £14.95 / \$25 pb. French author Odette du Puigaudeau (1894–1991) is best known as an expert on the traditional culture of Mauritania. *Barefoot Through Mauretania* chronicles her

first trip there, an improbable and fascinating journey that inspired her life’s work. In 1933, the author and her friend Marion Sénonès sailed on a fishing boat from Brittany to the shores of Mauritania. Once on land, they hired camels and guides and set out to explore the country, hoping to collect traces of Neolithic civilizations. They lived as nomads, relying on the generosity of the local people and occasionally on the French authorities. De Puigaudeau fell in love with the people of Mauritania and their traditional way of life. Her engaging and sometimes humorous narrative delights in the simple pleasures of their life on the road, but never glosses over the challenges they encountered, many of which were the result of their own unwise decisions. Caroline Stone’s valuable introduction to this new English edition chronicles the author’s unusual life and work.

—KAY HARDY CAMPBELL



**A Brief Introduction to Modern Arabic Literature.** David Tresilian. 2008, Saqi, 978-0-86356-405-5, £7.99 pb.

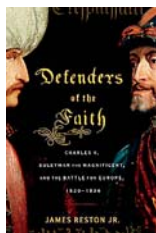
This survey of recent Arabic literature starts with such modern pioneers as Taha Hussein and “the greatest of all Arab novelists,” Naguib Mahfouz. In Tresilian’s chrono-

logical catalog of writers, works and ideas, he discusses the adaptation of the European novel form; the Arabic interpretation of modern poetry; the unique Palestinian writing community; and the contemporary scene. Tresilian introduces his audience to some of the issues afoot in reading Arab literature: the tension between traditional forms and the so-called liberal and innovative, and the variance between the state-embraced and the oppositional. He confines his focus to books written after 1945, emphasizes prose over poetry, is concerned primarily with the eastern Arab world rather than the western, and includes only works originally written in Arabic and available in translation. His *Brief Introduction* will probably find the happiest home among students of comparative literature.

—ANN WALTON SIEBER

**Defenders of the Faith: Christianity and Islam Battle for the Soul of Europe 1520–1536.** James Reston, Jr. 2009, Penguin, 978-0-14311759-9, \$17 pb. Reston has written an engaging historical work that has as its focus the conflict between the Muslim and Christian worlds in the 16th century.

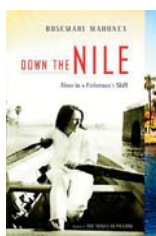




More like a novel than a history, *Defenders of the Faith* centers on the era when the Ottoman Empire nearly conquered Europe. Reston brings to life the two superpower rulers of the time: the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and the Turkish sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, each of

whom, in his youthful exuberance, believed himself to be a defender of his faith, fulfilling the will of God. With the accuracy of a historian, Reston offers a detailed look at Renaissance Europe and the beginnings of modern-day debates between the West and Islam.

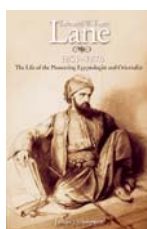
—CHARLES BAKER



**Down the Nile, Alone in a Fisherman's Skiff.** Rosemary Mahoney. 2007, Little, Brown, 978-0-31610-745-7, \$23.99 pb. Rosemary Mahoney steamed up the Nile on a luxury cruise ship on her first visit to Egypt in 1996. Two years later she returned, vowing to row from Aswan to Luxor in

a small boat. This is her story of that trying, yet enlightening, journey. A veteran rower of New England bays and rivers, Mahoney found that the fishermen with whom she bargained for a boat could not understand why a woman would want to row down the Nile. But she persevered, finally meeting a Nubian felucca captain who helped her buy a two-meter (7') skiff and complete her 160-kilometer (100-mi) adventure. Along the way she discovered that, despite some deep cultural divides, she had much in common with the Egyptians she met on her journey. In addition to her own impressions, Mahoney adds those of other voyagers who have written about the river over the centuries.

—BRIAN CLARK



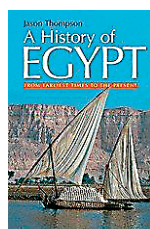
**Edward William Lane, 1801-1876: The Life of the Pioneering Egyptologist and Orientalist.**

Jason Thompson. 2010, American University in Cairo Press, 978-977-416-287-9, \$39.95 hb.

In his famous *Orientalism*, Edward Said accused western scholars of the Middle East of viewing the region through a cultural-imperialist lens. One of the top three offenders Said named was Egypt expert and Arabic scholar Edward Lane. Though Thompson agrees with Said in general, he disagrees on Lane, in part because Said found little biographical material on Lane—a problem substantially remedied by this compelling and colorful 750-page work. Thompson discovered that Lane consciously sought to transcend many of the “imperial” attitudes and prejudices of his day, and was convinced he had achieved total objectivity in his writings on Egypt—particularly in his classic *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), which has never been out of print. Thompson thinks Lane was naïve to suppose this, but he gives the man credit for trying, and notes that most western and Arab scholars have praised Lane highly for his achievements. Lane translated the massive *Thousand and One Nights* (1839–1841),

in a version more accurate than Galland's first European translation (1704) and more prudish than Burton's later no-holds-barred version (1885–1888). Perhaps the greatest value of Lane's rendition is the rich corpus of anthropological notes accompanying the text—still consulted by scholars to this day. Thompson's biography gives us a close-up, sometimes quite intimate, look at a man whose attraction to Egypt and its people turned from fascination to a full-blown love affair.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING

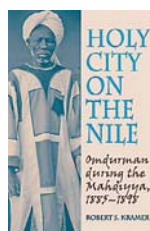


**A History of Egypt from Earliest Times to the Present.** Jason Thompson. 2008, American

University in Cairo Press, 978-977-416-091-2, \$34.95 hb; 2009, Anchor, 978-0-30747352-3, \$17 pb. Confronted by millennia of history, historians of Egypt have often focused on distinct eras—Pharaonic, Greco-

Roman, Ottoman or modern, for example—rather than write of a cohesive whole. This dearth of comprehensive histories is answered handsomely by Thompson's survey of Egyptian history from pre-dynastic times to the contemporary nation-state. The editor of two previous collections of observations on Egyptian culture by 19th-century British orientalist Edward Lane, Thompson traces both the elements of continuity that span Egyptian history and the ways that the perceptions of western scholars have shaped the prevailing image of the country. Primarily a political history with some attention to society, culture and religion, Thompson's straightforward account of the twists and turns of history and the people, famous and infamous, who have played a part in the story of Egypt will appeal to general readers and travelers seeking a historical background to all the marvels found in the land of the Nile, from pyramids to traffic jams, as well as to current events there.

—KYLE PAKKA



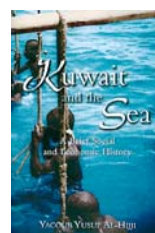
**Holy City on the Nile: Omdurman during the Mahdiyya, 1885-1898.** Robert S. Kramer.

2010, Markus Wiener, 978-1-55876-516-0, \$28.95 pb.

As the seat of power of the Sudanese Mahdi and his political successors, Omdurman was a sovereign capital symbolizing anti-imperialist defiance during the decade between the ouster of the Anglo-Egyptian forces led by General Gordon and the imposition of direct British rule under Lord Kitchener. As Kramer traces in this social history of the town, during that brief time it grew from a dusty river crossing over the White Nile to British-held Khartoum and became the focus of millennialist expectations and the spiritual center of northern Sudanese identity. Kitchener's gratuitous shelling of the Mahdi's tomb only reinforced northern Sudanese sentiment about what most still see today as their finest moment.

—LOUIS WERNER

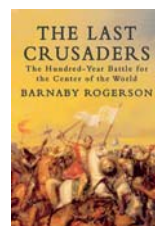
**Kuwait and the Sea: A Brief Social and Economic History.** Yacoub Yusuf Al-Hijji. Fahad Ahmad 'Isa Bishara, tr. 2010, Arabian Publishing, 978-0-9558894-4-8, \$60 hb.



Few of us know the Kuwait before oil: essentially a tiny, walled town called al-Qurain, surrounded by desert, bereft of natural resources, which turned to the sea and built a prospering economy based on the fruits of the Gulf and long-distance maritime trade that extended to East Africa

and the Indian subcontinent. The author, trained as a water-resource geologist, is a recognized expert on Kuwait's maritime history and spent many years researching this book and interviewing *nakhodas* (ship captains), merchants, mariners and shipbuilders. Al-Hijji paints a vivid picture of a parched environment where fresh water had to be brought from the Shatt al-Arab waterway in great wooden tanks aboard even greater dhows. Before oil, almost all able-bodied men were pearl divers in the summer months, a job Al-Hijji calls “a season in hell,” with divers working in blazing heat from daybreak to sunset, making ten dives in a row without a break. The long-distance dhow trade, another pillar of the economy, enjoyed a final burst of prosperity when World War II temporarily halted European freighter traffic to Asia, but then the era of wooden dhows came to an end. Al-Hijji captures the unique flavor of this bygone age and provides facts, figures and illustrations to sate the appetites of the most curious.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



**The Last Crusaders: The Hundred-Year Battle for the Center of the World.** Barnaby

Rogerson. 2010, Overlook Press, 978-1-59020-286-9, \$35 hb.

This account of the last crusade (1415–1578) and how and why it became the bridge between medieval and modern history, between feudalism

and colonialism, is told in an informative and creative manner by a talented storyteller. A highly respected scholar of Islamic history as well as a good writer, he details the significance of these military clashes in an accessible and interesting manner. His skills are especially apparent in the passages that describe the Turkish role in this international crisis, as well as in his discussion of the rise of clashing faiths in Iberia and the Ottoman Empire.

—CHARLES BAKER



**The Last Hammams of Cairo.** May Telmissany, Eve Gandossi and Pascal

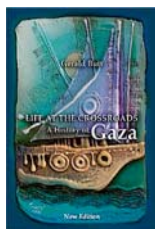
Meunier. 2008, American University in Cairo Press, 978-977-416-243-5, \$39.95 hb.

Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, writing in the 12th century, praised Egyptian bathhouses as “the most beautiful in the East.” Napoleon's scholars identified 77 of them in the *Description de l'Egypte*; a 1969 survey found 20; today, there are six working baths, or *hammams*. The survivors are not the glorious bathhouses of Istanbul or Aleppo but the workaday hammams of Cairo's poor. *The Last Hammams of Cairo* is an elegy to a dying social institution, a meditation on its decline from a “temple of well-being” to a



dilapidated relic. A collective effort by a photographer, novelist and journalist, the book's heart is devoted to these six hammams, with portraits in words and images of their owner-proprietors, masseurs and clients. The photographs are at once surreal and affectionate, postcards from a semi-subterranean world of steam and decay, inhabited by a resilient and resigned race of people who cling to a fading serenity amid the chaos of modern Cairo.

—KYLE PAKKA



**Life at the Crossroads: A History of Gaza.** Gerald Butt. 2009, Rimal Publications, 978-9963-610-39-6, €17 / \$20 pb.

This is a comprehensive yet concise chronicle of Gaza's history from ancient times to the end of the 2008–2009 Israeli war against the territory's Hamas-led administration.

The author, a former BBC Middle East correspondent, illustrates the part of his narrative that deals with recent times with material taken from interviews with Gaza residents. The story he tells is grimly ironic: A prosperous trading city at the crossroads of successive civilizations has been forced, in the space of a century, into poverty and isolation. This book is particularly useful for its succinct account of Gaza's role in Palestinian politics from the start of the first intifada onwards.

—EDWARD FOX

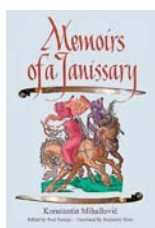


**The Locust and the Bird.** Hanan al-Shaykh. Robert Allen, tr. 2009, Pantheon, 978-0-30737-820-0 \$24.95 hb; 2010, Anchor, 978-0-30747231-1, \$15.95

In 1947, seven-year-old Hanan Al-Shaykh watched tearfully as her mother, Kamila, left their home in Beirut, and her two young daughters, to

marry another man. Forced into an arranged marriage at the age of 14, Kamila betrays the traditions of her culture to be with Muhammad, the love of her life. Separated from her mother for most of her life, novelist Al-Shaykh in 2001 finally acquiesces to Kamila's frequent requests to write her life's story. In doing so, Kamila's life unfolds before her eyes and Al-Shaykh admits to being humbled by her illiterate mother's frankness and courage. "My mother wrote this book. She is the one who spread her wings. I just blew the wind that took her on her long journey back in time." Written two years after Kamila's death, *The Locust and the Bird* is a beautiful tale of two love stories—that of Kamila and Muhammad, and the love Al-Shaykh discovered for the mother who left her behind.

—PINEY KESTING



**Memoirs of a Janissary.**

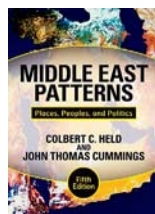
Konstantin Mihailović. Benjamin Stolz, tr. 2010, Markus Wiener, 978-1-55876-531-3, \$22.95 pb.

This fascinating chronicle and memoir of a single individual living in the 15th century serves as a wider history of the age, reflecting the multiple overlays and

ever-shifting linguistic and ethnic identities of

the Ottoman Empire's many subject peoples. As a Serbian boy drafted into service by a warlord ally of Sultan Mehmet II, Mihailović witnessed the 1453 fall of Constantinople from the winning side. Following his subsequent training in the elite Janissary corps, he took part for eight years in both court ceremony at Topkapı and battles at Trebizond and in the Balkans, including those against the Ottomans' legendary Albanian foe, Skanderbeg, and the ruler of Wallachia, Vlad the Impaler (later fictionalized as Count Dracula). The memoir has been found in several Eastern European libraries in Czech, Polish and Serbian versions, but its original language is uncertain, as are the circumstances of its composition, presumably after Mihailović's recapture by the Hungarians and his liberation from Ottoman service.

—LOUIS WERNER

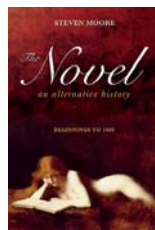


**Middle East Patterns: Places, Peoples, and Politics.** Colbert C. Held and John Thomas Cummings. 2010, Westview, 978-0-81334401-0, \$52 pb.

This book offers a scholar's-eye view of the broad swath of nations that swing in an arc from Egypt to Turkey. The

book, in its fifth edition, presents the territory's biophysical, ethnographic, economic and geopolitical patterns, and then spotlights each country in the region. Colbert Held, who authored the original book in 1989, is a diplomat-geographer with an eye for detail. Thomas Cummings, a veteran economist, provides his own specialist insights. The new version of the book retains its earlier structure, discussing patterns of land use, natural resources and geography, while updating and integrating material about political and development economics. It includes sections on terrorism and piracy. Held got his grounding in the region beginning in 1957, when he went to Beirut as a geographic attaché in the US Foreign Service. Now diplomat in residence at Baylor University, Held worked in every country in the region during his 15-year Foreign Service career. He obviously took good notes, and he has updated them regularly.

—ARTHUR P. CLARK



**The Novel: An Alternative History. Beginnings to 1600.**

Steven Moore. 2010, Continuum, 978-1-4411-7704-9, \$39.95 hb.

A reviewer recently said a new translation of the Mesopotamian epic *Gilgamesh* "reads as effortlessly as a novel." Maybe that's because it is a novel. Steven Moore

would like to claim that it is the world's first novel, but he concedes its language is closer to poetry than prose; it should probably be called a "novel in verse." Moore's book, the first volume of two, takes a fresh, bold and irreverent look at the great works of world literature before 1600. The novel, he says, actually began with fictional tales written anonymously in ancient Egypt's Middle Kingdom, for by the 19th century BCE, all the elements of the novel were in place there: sustained narrative, dialogue, characterization, metafiction—even magical realism. Moore gives us a new perspective on the early writings of many peoples, including

the Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Celts, Britons, Scandinavians, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Chinese and Mesoamericans. Of particular interest is his analysis of the classic frame-tale collection, *The Thousand and One Nights*, Persian in origin but thoroughly Arab in its present form. Moore extracts three extended narratives from this influential opus that qualify as separate novels: *The Story of the Hunchback* (a "cruel comedy"), *The Story of Qamar al-Zaman* (a "dark romance" forming the core of the *Nights*) and *The Tale of King Umar ibn al-Nu'man* (the longest, taking Shahrazad a hundred nights to narrate). More artistically refined Arabic works of the Middle Ages are highlighted as well, such as Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, which may have influenced *Robinson Crusoe*, and the "hugely entertaining" *Adventures of Sayf ben Dhi Yazan*, which Moore calls "the most outlandishly imaginative tale in Arabic literature."

—ROBERT W. LEBLING

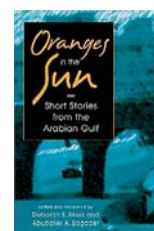


**Oman Emerges: An American Company in an Ancient Kingdom.** Lois Critchfield. 2010, Selwa Press, 978-0-97011-578-2, \$29.95, hb.

This is a behind-the-scenes account of the hurdles faced by a US engineering firm brought to Oman by Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id in

1975 to advise on security and economic matters. Tetra Tech International (TTI), headed by James Critchfield, a retired CIA energy expert, soon ran into the age-old conflict between corporate and national interests—most notably involving Shell, operator of Oman's oil facilities. Shell, the book suggests, wanted to extract as much oil as cheaply and quickly as possible. TTI advocated limited oil production, accompanied by extensive new reservoir engineering and exploration, to conserve Oman's diminishing reserves. Although TTI lost that battle, it accomplished much during nearly 13 years in Oman, building roads, schools, marine facilities and an airport, and even promoting tourism. A major achievement was the creation of a nationwide electricity-generation system powered not by oil but by cheaper and more plentiful gas.

—TOM PLEDGE



**Oranges in the Sun: Short Stories from the Arabian Gulf.**

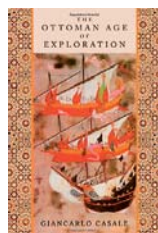
Deborah S. Akers, ed. Abubaker A. Bagader, tr. 2008, Lynne Rienner, 978-0-89410-893-8, \$49.95 hb; 978-0-89410-869-3, \$17.95 pb.

Literary societies from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and

Kuwait helped gather this collection of 49 short stories by widely published Gulf writers. Deborah Akers introduces the volume with an insightful essay on the relatively new genre of short-story writing in the region, describing the literary life that nurtures these writers. Nearly all the stories focus on social change; the most riveting illuminate a specific world and moment, combining vivid description, gripping character studies, a strong story arc, a universal theme and an element of mystery. Outstanding selections include "Ghomran's Oil Field" by Su'ad al-Amiri (Oman),



"A Woman" by Huda al-Nu'aymi (Qatar) and the title story, "Oranges in the Sun," by Yahya bin Salem al-Mundhri (Oman). —KAY HARDY CAMPBELL



**The Ottoman Age of Exploration.** Giancarlo Casale. 2010, Oxford, 978-0-19537-782-8, \$49.95 hb.

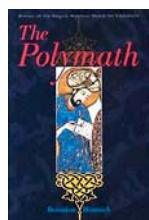
The so-called European Age of Exploration, led by the Portuguese around Africa and into the Indian Ocean in the late 15th century, may have got the Iberians off to a

head start. But historian Casale shows how the Ottomans made up for lost time by commanding the Red Sea's and Persian Gulf's shortcuts to India and the Spice Islands by the 1540's, without wasting their efforts, as the Iberians did, by sailing west across the Atlantic in search of the East. Although a bit heavy on the Sublime Porte's political backdrop, the book properly corrects the common but mistaken view of the Ottoman Empire as an exclusively land-based power. —LOUIS WERNER



**Photography Through the Eyes of Saudi Arabian Women.** Rania A. Razek. 2010, razekstudio, 978-0-61536125-3, \$37.50 hb.

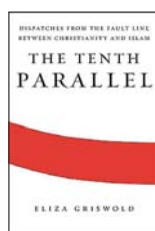
If a picture is worth a thousand words, as the saying goes, Rania Razek's book speaks volumes. It is the first to showcase the work of amateur and professional female photographers in Saudi Arabia, and in doing so, Razek focuses her lens on the changing culture of the kingdom. "Heretofore, most published photographic images of Saudi society have been the work of western or Saudi male photographers," notes Razek. "I believe that Saudi women photographers offer a valuable additional perspective grounded in their own life experiences." Thirty photographers are featured in the book, and their accompanying biographical essays are as interesting as the diverse subjects they have chosen to photograph. Razek is a pioneer among female photographers in Saudi Arabia. She writes in the introduction that "I first held a camera when I was a child, and that is when my journey in life began." Razek was instrumental in developing the photography diploma program in 2003 at Dar Al-Hikma, an all-girls' private college in Jiddah where she teaches. In 2004, she helped found the first women's photography club in Saudi Arabia. —PINEY KESTING



**The Polymath.** Bensalem Himmich. Roger Allen, tr. 2009, American University in Cairo Press, 978-9-77416-252-7, \$15.95 pb. This novel covers the last two decades of the life of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), the great Tunisian-born historian and philosopher of history. He was

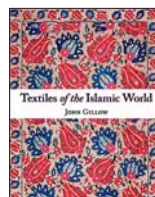
a polymath, an expert in many disciplines, but his lifelong fascination was with history and the social sciences that surround it. Himmich's novel begins in Cairo, after Ibn Khaldun has written his great history and lost his wife and children when their ship sinks off the coast of Alexandria.

The story covers three phases that steadily build in intensity: Seven nights spent dictating his thoughts on tyrants, governments, "group solidarity" (one of the greatest evils, he says) and political intrigue; an unexpected second chance to build a family, when the 60-year-old falls in love, marries again and fathers a child, seeking to balance his new personal life with precarious public service as a religious judge under the dangerous Mamluk sultan Barquq; and his role with the next sultan, Barquq's 13-year-old son Faraj, in defending Damascus against the Mongol conqueror Tamerlane, finally helping to negotiate the city's surrender. Throughout the novel, we see the human side of the great historian: his frailty in a maelstrom of political duplicity and violence. A scholar who disdains tyranny and abuse of power, he nevertheless quails before the mighty and heaps flattery upon the mercurial sultans—and later upon Tamerlane. Ibn Khaldun finds his own behavior disgusting, but he justifies it as the only way to stay alive and protect his wife and baby daughter. Sadly, even the stratagems of a polymath sometimes come to naught. —ROBERT W. LEBLING



**The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam.** Eliza Griswold. 2010, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 978-0-37427318-7, \$27 hb; 2011, Picador, 978-0-31256936-5, \$16 pb. More than 60 percent of the world's two billion Christians live along the tenth parallel

north of the equator, as do 50 percent of its 1.3 billion Muslims. In this remarkably informative and illuminating book, narrative journalist Eliza Griswold travels along the tenth parallel in Africa and Asia—through Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines—reporting on the interaction of Christianity and Islam along this fault line. Griswold's writing is engrossing and personal, and she plays no favorites as she seeks to understand the causes of interfaith conflicts in which, often, "race, oil, and power played as large a role as religion." She explains a historic and sociological backdrop unfamiliar to most western readers, and her reporting is astonishingly brave as she seeks out individual stories of faith and conflict. —ANN WALTON SIEBER



**Textiles of the Islamic World.** John Gillow. 2010, Thames and Hudson, 978-0-500-51527-3, £45. At last! Here is a survey of textiles from all across the Islamic world in one beautiful and authoritative volume. For more than three decades, Gillow, a world expert, has

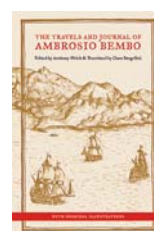
traveled throughout the lands he describes, buying textiles and studying both them and the people who make them. He is thus in a position to write about these materials as part of a living tradition, not simply museum pieces. Arranged by country, the text provides a concise outline of the different types of textiles and their traditional uses in each area—for clothing, the house or tent, or as animal trappings—as well on their social importance and use as trade goods. Unlike

some other surveys, the book extends east to describe the textiles of the Muslim communities in China, to the Caucasus and to sub-Saharan Africa. The 628 illustrations, most in color, make the book an inspiration to embroiderers and weavers and of great value to anyone involved in design or interior decoration, as well as those with a specific interest in Islamic culture, textiles or costume. It is further enriched by portraits of surviving craftsmen—now sadly few—and some historical photographs that show the fabrics in their original contexts. There is also a useful list of major museum collections, as well as a glossary of terms and a substantial bibliography. —CAROLINE STONE



**Threads of Identity: Preserving Palestinian Costume and Heritage.** Widad Kamel Kavar. 2011, Rimal Publications, 978-9963-610-41-9, €40 / \$50. This very beautiful book about costume and textiles is quite different from most works on the subject, as the

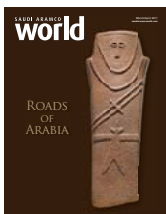
cover suggests, with its picture of a tasselled fringe and a series of photographs of women. A great deal of invaluable information is given about the varied articles of clothing from different areas of Palestine, but the emphasis is always on the women who made them, with each named and with the hometown or village that she was forced to leave identified. Widad Kamel Kavar, whose lifelong passion for her national heritage has led her to build this unparalleled collection, allows the women, Muslim and Christian, to speak about what their weaving and embroidery and their particular articles of dress mean to them and, through these, to tell the stories of the terrible losses they have endured since 1948 and 1967. The book has numerous excellent photographs, modern and historic, and is filled with information to aid the identification of individual pieces or patterns, always giving the Arabic names. It is a treasure trove for embroiderers and designers, as well as textile collectors and experts, and a visual delight. In the end, however, it is the oral histories, the lives of the women themselves whom the author has saved from obscurity, that remain unforgettable. —CAROLINE STONE



**The Travels and Journal of Ambrosio Bembo.** Clara Bargellini, tr. Anthony Welch, ed. 2007, California, 978-0-520-24939-4, \$27.95 pb. Venetian adventurer Bembo traveled overland to Goa as a young man in the 1670's, passing outbound through Iraq and inbound through

Iran, and thus tasted the delights of both Ottoman Baghdad and Safavid Isfahan to compensate for his rough going between even rougher caravanserais. His journal remained a neglected text until 1964, when the University of Minnesota acquired one of two known manuscripts, and its appearance in English puts him ahead of his more famous countryman Pietro della Valle, whose informative travelogue of the same route 50 years earlier is still not fully translated. —LOUIS WERNER





## FOR STUDENTS

We hope this two-page guide will help sharpen your reading skills and deepen your understanding of this issue's articles.

## FOR TEACHERS

We encourage reproduction and adaptation of these ideas, freely and without further permission from *Saudi Aramco World*, by teachers at any level, whether working in a classroom or through home study.

—THE EDITORS

## Curriculum Alignments

To see alignments with national standards for all articles in this issue, click "Curriculum Alignments" at [www.saudiaramco-world.com](http://www.saudiaramco-world.com).

## Professional Development Workshops

The Middle East Policy Council, an independent, non-partisan educational organization, offers free Professional Development Workshops to help K–12 educators understand the geographical, political and human complexities of the region and to provide valuable teaching resources. MEPC will design a workshop to give your school, organization or conference innovative tools and strategies for teaching about the Middle East and Islam. For information, e-mail Barbara Petzen at [bpetzen@mepc.org](mailto:bpetzen@mepc.org) with your name, school or organization, phone number, and subject and grade taught. MEPC has also developed a companion website, [TeachMiddleEast.org](http://TeachMiddleEast.org), with background essays and lesson plans.

**Julie Weiss** is an education consultant based in Eliot, Maine. She holds a Ph.D. in American studies. Her company, Unlimited Horizons, develops social studies, media literacy, and English as a Second Language curricula, and produces textbook materials.

## CLASS ACTIVITIES

In this edition of the "Classroom Guide," you have a chance to look at one small, ordinary thing—the spice called "cloves"—using different tools. You can think of the activities that follow as building blocks. For most of the activities, you will use the article "Zanzibar: Cloves and Stone" to see how intricate one seemingly simple item can be. In the process, you can see that using different methods of asking questions—and using different kinds of information to answer them—provides what you think of as a "textured understanding" of something that at first glance seems very simple. In the final activity, you'll look at pictures of another thing—a mysterious ancient structure—and try to figure out what it might be. You'll see that sometimes you have to look deeply at something to know anything at all about it.

### Object #1: Cloves

Before you begin these activities, number the paragraphs in the article "Zanzibar: Cloves and Stone." The numbers will help orient you as you explore cloves.

### The First Building Block:

#### Personal Experience

Get some whole, dried cloves from the store or your kitchen. You probably recognize them, or at least their sweet smell. Put a few in the palm of your hand. What do they look like? Describe their appearance, considering color, size and shape. What do they feel like in your hand? What is the texture like? Are they soft or hard, smooth or rough? Smell them. Describe the smell. Do you like it? Finally, taste a clove. Describe the taste. Again, do you like it? After you've explored the clove with your senses, write a few sentences about it.

### The Second Building Block: Geography

Where do cloves come from? You may have got yours from the supermarket, but cloves don't grow in little jars. They grow on trees. And where are those trees? Read the first five paragraphs of "Zanzibar: Cloves and Stone." On a map, find the following significant places in the back story of cloves. If you're using a wall map, use pushpins. If you're using a virtual map, you can use virtual pushpins.

- Zanzibar and Pemba, where the author began his journey
- Moluccas, where cloves originated
- Egypt, which supplied cloves to Europe in the 1200's
- Venice, where cloves were sold at the time

What do you notice about these different places? By looking at the location of these

different places in relation to each other—what geographers call relative location—you can make some good guesses about who was growing, selling and buying cloves. You can also get a sense of how far people could travel at different times in the past. (If you want to know even more, you can look at other kinds of maps to find out what kind of weather cloves need in order to grow, and what the wind patterns are, since winds might have affected travel.) Write a few sentences that summarize what geography has so far added to your understanding of cloves.

And keep your map handy. You'll be using it again.

### The Third Building Block: History

A good place to start when you're going to be working with history is to make a timeline. You can make a timeline by drawing a horizontal line on chart paper, or you can stick a piece of tape or yarn to the wall, or you can make a timeline on the computer. Whatever form you choose, start your timeline in 500 BCE, when the Chinese were using cloves, and end your timeline in 2011. Roughly divide the timeline into increments so that you get a sense both of the order in which things happened and how much time passed in between events.

Now go back to the reading. In the last part of paragraph five, you discovered that European countries, especially Portugal and the Netherlands, were looking for a sea route to get cloves directly. You probably learned about the spice trade when you studied European exploration. For Europeans, finding a way to get spices without the Venetians getting a piece of the action was a major impetus for exploration. Cloves were one of the spices they were after. Read the next paragraph in the article. When did the Portuguese arrive in Mozambique? Mark the event on your timeline, and label it. When the Portuguese arrived, they discovered that trade had been going on in the area, apparently for some time.

Go back to your map. (It's often hard to use history and geography separately, since people and objects are anchored both in time and in space. You're going to be using both building blocks from here on out.) What goods were exported from Africa? Trace on the map the routes that these exports traveled and the places that they ended up. Then trace the routes back to Africa from those destinations. What goods were exported to Africa?

Write a few sentences that summarize what history has added to your knowledge about cloves so far. And hold onto your timeline. You'll be using it again.



### The Fourth Building Block: Culture

Culture refers to values, beliefs, traditions and behaviors that a group of people share. Culture is a very important building block to use when you're trying to understand people, no matter where they lived or when they lived there. Now that you know that cloves, in addition to being objects, are important to people, culture is an important element in your study of cloves. To find out about culture as it relates to the history and geography of cloves, read paragraphs 7 through 11.

Religion is part of culture. You might be wondering: how could religion possibly have anything to do with cloves? Answer that question. Explain to a partner why religion has shown up in this article. (Hint: Think about what you've already learned about the geography and history associated with cloves.) On your map, find the place where Islam began, and trace Muslim traders' journeys to Africa. What evidence in coastal Africa suggests that Muslims lived there? According to the evidence (and the article), when did Muslims first arrive in the area? Mark it on your timeline.

Language is another part of culture. What evidence exists that people from the Arabian Peninsula and Portugal spent time on the east coast of Africa? What other cultural evidence suggests a connection?

Write a few sentences that summarize what knowledge of culture has added to

your understanding of the history and geography of cloves. And yes, you'll be coming back to culture, too.

### The Fifth Building Block: Politics

People create their cultures when they live in specific places at specific times. In general, those people are organized into some kind of political unit—a city, a country or a colony, for example. Whatever the unit, there is generally some kind of leadership or government in place. That government—what we can call the political leadership of the place—is another of your building blocks.

Read paragraphs 12 through 18. Look back at your timeline. When did the Portuguese arrive in Zanzibar? What happened in 1698? Mark it on the timeline, and find and mark Oman on your map. As you keep reading, mark the key events on your timeline and locate them on your map.

And it's time to add another block....

### The Sixth Building Block: Economics

Economics is the study of the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Since trade is part of the distribution of goods, economics includes trade. As you learned in paragraph 15, trade was important to Sa'id bin Sultan. And what did he want to trade? Cloves! Write a short statement of how Zanzibar and Pemba changed as a result of Sa'id bin Sultan's economic interest in cloves. How does the clove

industry in Zanzibar and Pemba relate to its geography?

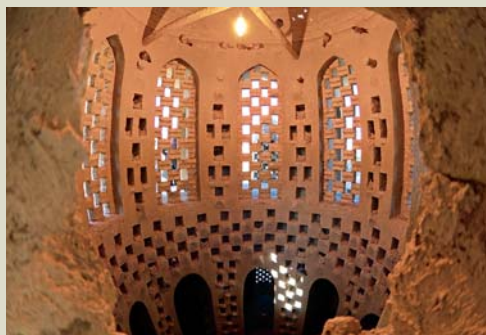
Now you've got some basic building blocks: personal experience, geography, history, culture, politics and economics. From here on out, they get jumbled when you're learning about cloves. Read the rest of the article. Mark which of the building blocks apply to the information in each paragraph. (More than one might apply at a time.) Share your work with another student. Have you used the same building blocks in the same places? If not, should you add more blocks—or persuade your partner that the blocks don't apply where he or she thought they did?

Finally, try using these building blocks to analyze an object other than cloves. Think about an object that's part of your daily life. Write it at the top of a piece of chart paper or at the top of a virtual document. Make a chart or other graphic organizer that lists your building blocks and has space for you to write questions that you have about the object that fall within each block's perspective. Have everyone display their work. Bring a pack of sticky notes with you as you go around the room looking at each other's projects. If you think of other questions about the different objects, and those questions fall into the building-block categories, write each one on a sticky note and put it up in the appropriate place.

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

### Object #2: The Mysterious Structures

Turn your attention now to yet another object. Look at the photographs of the "Castles of the Fields" on pages 2 and 3, but try not to read the article or the captions. For the purposes of this activity, all you need to know is that the "castles" are located on the outskirts of Isfahan, Iran (find and mark it on your map), and they are nine to 12 meters high (30 to 40 feet). What do you think they are? As a class, brainstorm your ideas about what the mysterious structures might be. As each person calls out a guess, explain how you came to that hypothesis. What is it about the



structure that makes you think it is whatever you think it is? When you've got a good list, read the article "Castles of the Fields." Did anyone guess the actual purpose for the structures? Go through the article the same way you went through "Zanzibar: Cloves and Stone," identifying information about the objects that fits into the different

building-block perspectives. Make a chart, like the one you used before, to organize the information about the objects into the different building blocks. As you wrap up, think about other situations where you might be able to use these building blocks. Hopefully you'll find them very useful.





## Selma Gürbüz: *Shadows of My Self*

presents the drawings, paintings and sculptures of one of Turkey's leading contemporary artists. In this small selection, Gürbüz reveals a gestural staging of her past and present; the earth and sea; art history and real-life events; animals and humans; East and West. In a way, the exhibition represents the cross-cultural aspects of Istanbul, her place of birth and the city where she lives. Exploring the simple and powerful effects of line drawing, Gürbüz produces fairytale landscapes, creatures of the sea, patterned images and beautifully crafted and haunting figures. There is also an autobiographical aspect to her work in the maidens leaning on uncomfortable beds of thorns or sea urchins, laboring ants, tamed lions and playful dogs and cats. Her references are far-reaching, embracing Ottoman, Japanese and European motifs, from Velasquez's *Las Meninas* to figures made from the evil eye or *çintamani*. Leighton House Museum, London, through April 9.

**"Woman With Three Cats,"** gouache on handmade paper, 169.5 x 112 cm, 2005.



### CURRENT March

**Arabia**, an IMAX 3-D film shot at more than 20 locations across Saudi Arabia, provides a vivid portrait of the history, culture and religion of the Arabian Peninsula. The movie mixes scenes of modern-day life in the kingdom with images of its natural and built heritage, and looks into the future through the eyes of young Saudis. Actress Helen Mirren narrates, but the film's real voice is Hamzah Jamjoon, a Jiddawi film student at Chicago's DePaul University. He sets out with a film crew to explore his Arabian identity, diving in the Red Sea, flying over dune and oasis towns, riding camels with the Bedouin and exploring Madain Salih, the 2000-year-old Nabataean town famous for its huge sandstone tombs. Viewers also join three million Muslims making the pilgrimage to Makkah with another Saudi, Ni'mah Ismail Nawwab. A photographic companion book, *Arabia: In Search of the Golden Ages*, is available. Now playing at **Texas State History Museum, Austin**; Museum of Science, **Boston**; **Detroit Science Center**; **Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull**; Papalote Children's Museum, **Mexico City**; Museum of Science and Industry, **Tampa, Florida**; Hemisfèric, City of Arts and Sciences, **Valencia, Spain**; AFM IMAX, Istinye Park, **Istanbul**; AFM IMAX, Ankamall, Akköprü, **Ankara, Turkey**; Cinestar IMAX Sony Center, **Berlin**. Continues through March at National Museum of Natural History, **Washington, D.C.**; April 11 at Keong Emas IMAX Theatre, **Jakarta, Indonesia**; May at **Louisville [Kentucky]** Science Center and Discovery Place, **Charlotte, North Carolina**; June at Auto & Technik Museum, **Sinsheim, Germany** and **Montreal Science Center**; July 23 at Scientific Center, **Salmiya, Kuwait**.

**Contemporary Myths** II centers on Wael Shawky's epic marionette animations film "Cabaret Crusades: The Horror Show File." Chronicling the First Crusade, from 1096 to 1099, the film features 200-year-old marionettes from the Italian Lupi Collection, and follows the course of events after a papal mandate sent a half-million Franks on a military campaign to reclaim Jerusalem from the Muslim armies. Mining this historical moment for its profound resonance today, the artist's film examines the causes and effects of religious war and its impact on European and Arab relations. Sfeir-Semler Gallery, **Beirut, Lebanon**, through March 19.

**Well-Dressed Afghanistan:** *Men's and Women's Clothing from Afghanistan* includes more than 30 outfits, plus other garments and accessories, for men, women and children. The materials, designs and colors the Afghans use in their clothing reflect the central and strategic location of their country, but each of the main ethnic groups, with its own way of life and its own history, has its own traditional dress as well. Some of these garments are relatively plain; others are decorated with woven, dyed and embroidered patterns in bright colors. Some are made of silk, others of heavy felt. The exhibition also includes an unusual outfit for *buzkashi*, the aggressive polo-like game played by Afghan men, and a series of photographs by Dutch photographer Hans Stakelbeek.

Textile Research Center, **Leiden, Netherlands**, through March 23.

### Clothing and Culture in South Asia

explores the intricate and intimate connections between clothing and culture on the Indian subcontinent. South Asian dress is as varied as the people who wear it. Gandhi's simple handspun cotton *dhoti*, the lovingly embroidered hem of a village girl's skirt, a jeweled headdress from Ladakh and the color-drenched urban chic of a Chennai sari all express who their wearers were in the world. Koehnline Museum of Art, **Des Plaines, Illinois**, through March 25.

**Bridge of Knowledge** offers a rare glimpse of powerfully evocative books, engravings, manuscripts and documents on travel, science, art and literature from the holdings of the Arcadian Library, Europe's most reputed specialized private library on the East-West interface. The exhibition celebrates the centuries-old relationship between the West and the Arab and Islamic worlds; on display will be books from the dawn of printing, such as an illuminated edition of the medical compendium *The Canon* of Ibn Sina (Avicenna). Early printed editions of other scientific texts—medical, astronomical, alchemical—testify to the profound impact of Islam's greatest scientific minds on western learning. The library's collection embraces accounts by pilgrims, diplomats, merchants, soldiers, natural historians and other travelers; European pamphlets, documents, chronicles and illustrated books on the Turks, whose westward advance on central Europe, and ultimately to the gates of Vienna, provoked a violent response on the battlefield and in print; and works demonstrating the influence of Arab literature and learning on European scholarship and literature, reaching a peak in the illustrated versions of the *Arabian Nights* that became part of our heritage in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London**, through March 26.

**History Lessons:** *Mada'in Saleh, Al Ula and the Hejaz Railway* presents photographs by Jackie Leger that focus on

architecture and landscape related to Nabataean society. Vast sandy desert surrounded by ethereal mountains is the setting for the Nabataean funerary architecture, but the approximately 130 tombs tell only a fragment of the story of the short-lived civilization that built them between 100 BCE and 76 CE. Little is known about the Nabataeans themselves, except that they raised camels and engaged in the incense trade from south to north. Mada'in Saleh was chosen as the Nabataean southern capital when trade flourished and the region was prominent on the ancient caravan routes. The Nabataeans were conquered by the Romans in 106 CE and the land routes were abandoned. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London**, through March 26.

**Along the Danube to the Black Sea** is the theme of the 2011 Al-Bustan International Festival of Music and Performing Arts. This edition offers an extensive program featuring internationally renowned soloists, opera stars and orchestras as well as dance and jazz ensembles. Featuring 29 performances, the festival aims to foster the arts. Participating artists this year include Gauthier Capuçon, Inva Mula, Lone Madsen, Gianluca Marciano and Valeriy Sokolov, among many others. Bustani Auditorium, **Beirut, Lebanon**, through March 27.

**Les Rêves N'Ont Pas de Titre** is French-Algerian artist Zineb Sedira's first retrospective, featuring a large selection of videos, photographs and installations created between 1995 and 2009. Articulated in chapters, the exhibition follows a chronological development from the artist's strongly autobiographical early works—concerned with her position as a French woman of Algerian descent living in the UK—to her more recent reflection on the stakes of human displacement and the mirages of a globalized world. Her practice is particularly relevant to Marseille, a port city fashioned by numerous waves of immigration and marked by its role during the colonial era. Her work contributes to the debates on the Mediterranean heritage shared by France and



Algeria; it considers that relationship's difficult past in order to move forward. Musée d'Art Contemporain, **Marseille**, through March 27.

**Lawrence of Arabia:** *Genesis of a Myth* covers Lawrence's life and achievements, from his first encounter with the East to his death in 1935 at the age of 46, following a motorcycle accident, and presents the process that led to the creation of the Lawrence myth, which the exhibition does not intend to confirm or revive. The starting point of the myth, the show by American journalist Lowell Thomas, is reconstructed in an abbreviated multimedia format. Lawrence's literary work, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, is investigated from an art-historical as well as a literary viewpoint. His last phase, as a soldier, writer, diplomat and enthusiast about technological progress, provides the conclusion of the exhibition. Landesmuseum Natur und Mensch, **Oldenburg, Germany**, through March 27.

#### Current April

**A Glimpse of Paradise:** *Gold in Islamic Art* explores the unique status of gold in Islam through a small group of objects drawn from the museum's collection. The diverse selection includes a 14th-century Qur'an folio from Central Asia or Turkey, with gold decoration added in India, and a resplendent eagle-shaped pendant made in Iran during the 19th century. As these works show, gold has been put to multiple uses in the arts of Islam, serving both as a sign of the divine and as an ornament for earthly pleasure. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through April 2011.

**Monumental "Miniatures":** *Large-Scale Paintings From India*. The miniature paintings of India were made in sets to illustrate stories and were intended to be viewed at a close distance, usually by one person at a time. In some cases, however, Indian "miniatures" were produced on a grand scale, making them especially well suited for certain devotional rituals and such group activities as storytelling. This exhibition features a selection of paintings dating from the 15th through the 21st centuries and explores the great regional and thematic diversity of India's tradition of large-scale painting. Highlights include an elaborate storytelling scroll from Andhra Pradesh and a sumptuous reinterpretation of an illustrated manuscript by the contemporary Pakistani-American artist Shahzia Sikander. At 150 centimeters (5') tall, this work reveals in clear, bold terms the deep impress of the "miniature" upon artistic practice today. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through April 2011.

**Heroes and Kings of the Shahnama** shows folios of the famous text from each of the Library's 25 copies, produced in Iran and India between the 14th and 19th centuries. The *Shahnama*, or *Book of Kings*, is the Iranian national epic, relating the glorious, often gory, feats of the heroes and kings of pre-Islamic Iran. Compiled in written form in the 11th century by the poet Firdawsi, these tales have been popular both inside and beyond Iran for more than a millennium. While many tell of dragons and divs, others, such as stories of Alexander the Great, derive from recorded history. The exhibition celebrates the 1000th anniversary of Firdawsi's

completion of the text in the year 1010. Fully illustrated catalogue. Chester Beatty Library, **Dublin**, through April 3.

**Glimpse.** In 2007, an NGO arranged for photographers, journalists and artists to teach the basics of photography to 500 children between the ages of 5 and 12 in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. The children were then given disposable cameras. "Oppressed in every aspect of their lives, these children are witnesses to the harshest living conditions and bear a heavy burden of exile, war, marginalization and lack of life commodities. The project presented the children with a means of expression to which they rarely have access. The resulting photographs are extraordinary in their power to reveal a reality that we never see." Jerusalem Fund Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through April 8.

**Indian Painting From the Seitz Collection** provides a unique perspective on the artistic tradition of the Mughal courts of North India and the southern Deccan, drawing on one of Europe's most important private collections. Museum Rietberg, **Zurich**, through April 10.

**Fakes, Forgeries and Mysteries** highlights mistakes and discoveries regarding the attribution, authenticity and value of works in the museum's collection, and includes some 50 paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, drawings and decorative arts from—or thought to be from—European, African, American, Asian, Islamic and ancient Near Eastern cultures. The exhibition displays works whose attribution has changed, known forgeries and ongoing "mysteries." **Detroit** Institute of Arts, through April 10.

**Passion For Perfection:** *Islamic Art From The Khalili Collections* presents highlights from one of the world's most renowned collections of Islamic art. Displaying some 500 objects, De Nieuwe Kerk glitters with richly illuminated copies of the Qur'an and other manuscripts, paintings, gold, jewels, textiles, ceramics, glassware, lacquerware, metalwork and wood carvings. These works illustrate the refinement and grandeur of Islamic art and bear witness to a quest for perfect craftsmanship. The exhibition shows that Islamic art is an expression not of a single national culture or civilization, but of the many people linked by Islam for more than 1400 years. Nieuwe Kerk, **Amsterdam**, through April 17.

**Shahnama: 1000 Years of the Persian Book of Kings** displays 33 paintings and objects from the 14th to 16th centuries to celebrate the *Shahnama*, Iran's national epic and one of the world's greatest literary masterpieces, completed in about 1010 by the poet Firdawsi. Intricately detailed and sumptuously painted images of kings, heroes and mythological creatures will be on view, as the *Shahnama* recounts the myths, legends and "history" of Iran from the beginning of time to the Arab conquest in the seventh century. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through April 17.

#### Current May

**Orientalism in Europe:** *From Delacroix to Kandinsky* presents diverse interpretations of North Africa and the Middle East by almost 100 western European

artists, beginning with the time of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798–1801) and continuing through the modernism of the early 20th century. Masterpieces by Ingres, Delacroix, Gérôme, Renoir, Sargent, Klee and Kandinsky—as well as a number of lesser-known artists—present orientalism as a theme that transcends styles, artistic perspectives and national borders, one that is particularly relevant because, in the globalized 21st century, the different concepts of East and West are still colliding. The exhibition thus also considers the social, political, ethnic and religious aspects of orientalism. Though western fascination with the Middle East dates back centuries, in the 19th century many artists started actually traveling to the region; some even settled there. Their paintings and photographs fostered further tourism and shaped a particular image of the Orient that was strongly influenced by colonial motivations. The exhibition concludes with works by several modern artists who were equally unable to resist the allure of the Orient and who interpreted the topic with a new pictorial expression. Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, **Munich**, through May 1.

**To Live Forever:** *Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum* uses some 100 pieces of jewelry, statues, coffins and vessels dating from 3600 BCE to 400 CE to illustrate the range of strategies and preparations that the ancient Egyptians developed to defeat death and to achieve success in the afterlife. The exhibition explores the belief that death was an enemy that could be vanquished, a primary cultural tenet of ancient Egyptian civilization, and explains the process of mummification, the economics and rituals of memorials, the contents of the tomb, the funeral accessories—differentiated by the class of the deceased—and the idealized afterlife. Exhibits include the vividly painted coffin of a mayor of Thebes, mummies, stone statues, gold jewelry, amulets and canopic jars. Norton Museum of Art, **West Palm Beach, Florida**, through May 8; **Nevada** Museum of Art, **Reno**, June 11 through September 4.

**Jean-Léon Gérôme**, the first major retrospective in 30 years to focus on the work of the 19th-century French orientalist painter and sculptor, displays a carefully selected group of some 70 works that cast new light on Gérôme's oeuvre on the basis of research undertaken in recent decades. The exhibition will consider Gérôme's theatrical concept of history and mythological painting (his preferred genres), his use of a realistic idiom and the interest in detail evident in his orientalist works (based on highly detailed sketches made during his numerous trips, as well as on photographs), and his use of polychrome in his sculptures. The exhibition will also look at the artist's use of illusionism and *trompe l'oeil*, revealing the links between his paintings and new media of that time such as photography. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, **Madrid**, through May 22. It will also be shown at the Musée d'Orsay, **Paris**, and the J. Paul Getty Museum, **Los Angeles**.

**Told / Untold / Retold:** *23 Stories of Journeys Through Time and Place* presents new commissioned works from 23 contemporary artists with roots in the

Arab world, including painting, sculpture, photography, video, multimedia installations and interactive digital art. Some works' stories are "told," evoking autobiographical accounts and nostalgia for the things that were. Other stories are "untold," anticipating imagined futures that could be. And there are those that are "retold," proposing an alternative narrative to the things that are. Central to each story is the use of time as a concrete compositional element and the reflection on the act of journeying, a condition that has come to describe the rampant fluidity of today's society. Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through May 28.

**Interventions** honors and celebrates the lives and careers of five pivotal modernist Arab artists: Dia Azzawi, Farid Belkiah, Ahmed Nawar, Ibrahim el-Salahi and Hassan Sharif. As well as highlighting key moments in their experiments and oeuvres, the exhibition introduces five new works commissioned by Mathaf from the artists for this exhibition. These new works are presented alongside pertinent pieces from the museum's permanent collection, providing a context that emphasizes thematic and artistic progression. The new works assert the continuing commitment of the five artists and the endurance of their discourse and their cultural roles. Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through May 28.

**Mummies of the World** presents 150 human and animal mummies and related artifacts from South America, Europe, Asia, Oceania and Egypt, showing how science can shed light on the historical and cultural record and demonstrating that mummification—both intentional and by natural processes—has taken place all over the world. The exhibition includes interactive multimedia exhibits that illustrate how such scientific tools as computer tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, DNA analysis and radiocarbon dating allow researchers to deduce facts about the lives, history and cultures of the mummies. **Milwaukee [Wisconsin]** Public Museum, through May 30.

#### Current June

**Secrets of the Silk Road** features more than 150 objects relating to the people and cultures of the Silk Road during its early period. The exhibition's "secret" is that many of the exhibits predate the known Silk Road by almost 2000 years and reflect a much more global population than previously realized. The legendary trade route linked Xian, then the capital of China, in the East, to such Mediterranean cities as Rome and Baghdad. Exhibits include a travel permit from the year 732; a deed for a female slave; the stylish boots of a Silk Road traveler from between 206 BCE and 420 CE, and exquisite jewelry from the same time period. Such finds along the Silk Road have helped historians better understand the settlement of ancient East Central Asia and have opened a window to understanding the very early exchange of important technologies, life-improving inventions and ideas and customs. The two mummies that had been part of this exhibition were withdrawn by Chinese authorities shortly before it opened in Philadelphia. University of **Pennsylvania** Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, **Philadelphia**, through June 5.



**Motawi Tileworks** showcases tile as both art and architectural decor, sheds light on the tile-making process and draws connections between the firm's contemporary production and the Arab world's tile-making tradition. Motawi Tileworks products are handmade in a studio in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and though Egyptian-American siblings Naval and Karim Motawi have been producing them for less than 20 years, they are widely admired for their rich glazes and their Arts-and-Crafts-influenced designs. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through June 12.

**Monsters, Demons and Winged-Beasts: Composite Creatures in the Ancient World.** The abundant imagination of the ancient world gave birth to a vast array of monsters that inhabited a rich world of myth, legend and high adventure. This exhibition explores the menagerie from the Greek perspective, focusing on the ways in which the Greeks borrowed imagery from Egypt and the ancient Near East and developed a vast repertoire of imaginary creatures that proliferated in the Greco-Roman world. From the siren, the human-headed bird whose call is fatal, to the fire-snorting lion with a serpent's tail, the exhibition traces the development and dissemination of "monstrous" imagery through works in gold, silver, precious and semi-precious stone. Carlos Museum, Emory University, **Atlanta, Georgia**, through June 19.

**Georg Schweinfurth: Pioneer of Textile Archaeology and African Explorer** began excavations at Arsinoë (Egypt) at the beginning of the 1880's and, within two short years, unearthed around 450 textile fragments from late antiquity, as well as complete items of clothing and headaddresses, blankets and cushions. While it was customary for other excavators at the time to cut out the ornamental features of textiles and discard the rest, thus destroying the objects' cultural-historical context, Schweinfurth preserved the items as completely as he could. Some 30 archeological textiles are on display, spanning the entire spectrum of clothing and used fabrics from late antiquity. In addition, the exhibition uses several of Schweinfurth's ancient Egyptian finds as well as manuscripts, drawings and printed books to trace the explorer's biography and examine the full range of his diverse researches. Bode-Museum, **Berlin**, through June 19.

SAUDI ARAMCO WORLD  
(ISSN 1530-5821)  
is published bimonthly by  
Aramco Services Company  
9009 West Loop South,  
Houston, Texas 77096-1799, USA

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Services Company. Volume 62,  
Number 2. Periodicals postage  
paid at Houston, Texas and  
at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:  
Send address changes to  
Saudi Aramco World  
Box 2106  
Houston, Texas 77252-2106

**Archaeologists and Travelers in Ottoman Lands.** In the late 1800's, the University of Pennsylvania began excavating the ancient city of Nippur, located in present-day Iraq. This marked the first American expedition in the Middle East. Over a decade, the excavation team unearthed a remarkable collection of nearly 30,000 cuneiform tablets. This exhibition tells the stories of three men whose lives intertwined during the Nippur excavation, as well as the story of the excavation. Osman Hamdi Bey, director of the Imperial Museum in Istanbul (now the Istanbul Archaeological Museum), was the gatekeeper for all excavations in the Ottoman Empire. Also an accomplished painter, Hamdi Bey created a painting of the excavations at Nippur. This painting, along with another Hamdi Bey painting in the Penn Museum's collection is featured in the exhibit. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, **Philadelphia**, through June 26.

**Current July**  
**Central Nigeria Unmasked: Arts of the Benue River Valley** is the first major international exhibition to present a comprehensive view of the arts produced in the Benue River Valley, source of some of the most abstract, dramatic, and inventive sculpture in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet compared to the majority populations living in northern and southern Nigeria, the diverse groups flanking the 650-mile-long river—and their fascinating arts—are far less known and studied. The exhibition includes more than 150 objects used in a range of ritual contexts, with genres as varied and complex as the region itself—figurative wood sculptures, masks, figurative ceramic vessels, and elaborate bronze and iron regalia—and demonstrates how the history of central Nigeria can be "unmasked" through the dynamic interrelationships of its peoples and their arts. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, through July 24.

**Current August**  
**The Salvaged Gods From the Palace of Tell Halaf.** During an expedition in the Middle East in 1899, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim (1860–1946), heir to a banking family and diplomat from Cologne, unearthed the remains of a palace dating from the early first millennium BCE on the Tell Halaf mound in what is today north-east Syria. Once the excavations were completed, most of the spectacular finds were brought to Berlin and were not—as originally intended—exhibited on Berlin's Museum Island, but were instead placed on display in a renovated machine plant in 1930. During World War II, a bomb destroyed the private museum and the unique sculptures it housed. Nearly 60 years after the collection's devastation, one of the largest restoration projects ever undertaken has led to the reconstruction of the monumental stone sculptures and relief panels, pieced together from 27,000 fragments. This is the first chance for visitors to experience sculptures at first-hand that were, until now, thought to be lost forever. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Pergamon Museum, through August 14.

**Current September and later**  
**In Search of Biblical Lands: From Jerusalem to Jordan in Nineteenth-Century Photography.** In the 1800's, travelers

came to the eastern margins of the Mediterranean and encountered a landscape of belief at once forbidding and monotonous. Propelled by a connection to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and encouraged by texts recently discovered in Egypt and Assyria, explorers, excavators and entrepreneurs came to photograph places hitherto only imagined. This exhibition presents images of the region known variously as Palestine, western Syria, the Transjordan Plateau and the Holy Land. Subjects range from architectural sites and strata to evocative geography and scenes of pastoral life. Getty Villa, **Malibu, California**, through September 12.

**Sajjil: A Century of Modern Art** is a comprehensive cross section of art from the Arab world produced over the last 100 years. The word *sajjil* means "the act of recording," and the exhibition brings together more than 200 artworks from Mathaf's extensive collection, presenting turning points in artistic thought as it evolved in the Arab world during the century leading up to the 1990's. The exhibition helps set Arab modern art in its historical place within a larger art-history tradition. It also emphasizes the several common moments and concerns that make it possible to talk about a shared identity in the region. The exhibition is divided into 10 themed categories: nature; the city; individualism; form and abstraction; society; family; history and myth; struggle; *hurufiyah* (abstract letterform art), and Doha. Many elements of the art recur across time and space and in spite of historical interruptions. Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through October 1.

**Second Lives: The Age-Old Art of Recycling Textiles** highlights the ways people in various cultures have ingeniously repurposed worn but precious fabrics to create beautiful new textile forms. Examples include a rare *sutra* cover made from a 15th-century Chinese rank badge; a large patchwork hanging from Central Asia, stitched together from small scraps of silk ikat and other fabrics; and a pictorial *kantha* from India embroidered with threads recycled from old saris. "Second Lives" complements the major spring exhibition, **Green: The Color and the Cause**, listed below. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through January 8, 2012.

**Of Gods and Mortals: Traditional Art from India.** In India, art is an integral part of daily life. The importance of paintings, sculpture, textiles and other art forms comprises two basic categories, one related to religious practices and the other to the expression of prestige and social position. This new installation of works from the museum's collection features some 28 pieces, principally representing the 1800's to the present. Peabody Essex Museum, **Salem, Massachusetts**, through March 1, 2012.

**Painting the Modern in India** features seven renowned painters who came of age during the height of the movement to free India from British rule. To liberate themselves from a position at the margins of an art world shaped by the colonial establishment, they organized path-breaking associations: the Calcutta Artists Group in 1943, the Progressive Artists Group in Bombay in 1947 and the Delhi Shilpi Chakra in

1949. They pioneered new approaches to painting, repositioning their own art practices internationally and in relation to the 5000-year history of art in India. These artists created hybrid styles that are an under-appreciated yet essential component of the broad sweep of art in the 20th century. After independence in 1947, they took advantage of new opportunities in art centers around the world, especially Paris, London and New York, intensifying their quests for what the Bombay Progressives termed "aesthetic order, plastic coordination and color composition." At the same time, they looked deeply into their own artistic heritage, learning from the first exhibition of Indian art in 1948 at Raj Bhavan in Delhi and taking inspiration from ancient sites like the old city in Benares and the temples at Khajuraho. Peabody Essex Museum, **Salem, Massachusetts**, through June 1, 2012.

**Coming March**  
**Reconfiguring the Silk Road: New Research on East-West Exchange in Antiquity** is a public symposium that focuses on the history of the Silk Road and the origins of the mysterious Tarim Basin mummies. New archeological discoveries and scholarship over the past 15 years have created the need to reexamine the very idea of the Silk Roads, discussing among other topics ancient transportation and economies, the origins of early westerners in Central Asia, the excavation of textiles in Xianjiang and a reinvestigation of the mummies themselves. University of Pennsylvania Museum, **Philadelphia**, March 19.

**Before the Pyramids: The Origins of Egyptian Civilization** explores Egypt's Pre-Dynastic and Early Dynastic material culture and shows how these early materials shed light on our understanding of later Egyptian culture. The most fundamental aspects of ancient Egyptian civilization—architecture, hieroglyphic writing, a belief in the afterlife and allegiance to a semi-divine king—can be traced to Egypt's Pre-Dynastic era 1000 years before the pyramids were built. This exhibit, based on the most recent research on the origins of ancient Egypt civilization, includes 140 objects, including pottery, stone work, carved ivories and objects from the tombs of the first kings and of the retainers who were buried alongside them. Catalog. Oriental Institute Museum, **Chicago**, March 28 through December 31.

**Coming April**  
**Captured Hearts: The Lure of Courtly Lucknow.** A cosmopolitan Indo-Islamic-European capital, Lucknow was the 18th- and 19th-century cultural successor of the resplendent Mughal Empire. It fostered some of the most vibrant artistic expression of its day in a variety of media, and represented a rare intersection of eastern and western artistic traditions. The exhibition features album paintings, historical and religious manuscripts, textiles, period photographs, metalwork, glassware and jewelry that offer proof of a rich and dynamic culture. Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet, **Paris**, April 13 through July 18.

**Global Patterns: Dress and Textiles in Africa** focuses on the accomplishments of African weavers, dyers, bead embroiderers and tailors, and



highlights continuities, innovation and the exchange of ideas from within and without that mark dress and textile production in Africa. More than any other artistic expression, dress and textile production in Africa demonstrates the continuous connections of the continent with the outside world. Throughout centuries, African textile artists seamlessly and joyfully integrated into their visual vocabulary new design elements and new materials such as glass beads, buttons and fabrics that arrived as the result of trade with Europe and places as far away as India and Indonesia. They added to or transformed existing traditions, and at times created new types of textiles and garments. Beadwork among the Ndebele peoples of South Africa and the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria, Kente cloth in Ghana and Togo, and Yoruba indigo-dyed cloths called *Adire* are among the highlights of the display. Museum of Fine Arts **Boston**, April 13 through January 8, 2012.

**Dis[Locating] Culture:** *Contemporary Islamic Art in America* showcases American Islamic artists, broadly defined, and aims to problematize stereotypes and challenge notions of cultural and religious homogeneity. A symposium to explore the issues suggested by the exhibition, keynoted by renowned scholar Reza Aslan, will be held April 16 at the Warhol Museum Theater. Michael Berger Gallery, **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, April 15 through July 30.

**The Art of Adib Fattal.** The Syrian artist's graphic works colorfully interpret the Arab world. Jerusalem Fund Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, April 15 through May 6.

**Green:** *The Color and the Cause* explores the techniques people have devised to create green textiles, the meanings that this color—traditionally associated with nature and its attributes, including life, fertility and rebirth—has held in cultures across time and place, and the ways that contemporary textile artists and designers are responding to concerns about the environment. The exhibition includes works from the museum's collection, along with extraordinary work by contemporary artists and designers from five continents, including two site-specific installations. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, April 16 through September 11.

**Coming May 1100–1900:** *The 40 Greatest Masters of Indian Painting* presents 240 of the works of artists who, in their own tradition, are equivalent to Dürer, Michelangelo, Rembrandt or Vermeer in the West: 'Abd al-Samad, Farrukh Beg, Nainsukh, the "Master of the Elephants" and many others. The milestone exhibition provides an overview of the development of Indian painting from 1100 to 1900. Museum Rietberg, **Zurich**, May 1 through August 21.

**Roads of Arabia:** *Archaeological Treasures from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.* The study of archaeological remains only really began in Saudi Arabia in the 1970's, yet brought—and is still bringing—a wealth of unsuspected treasures to light: temples, palaces adorned with frescoes, monumental sculpture, silver dishes and precious jewelry left in

tombs. The exhibition, organized as a series of points along trade and pilgrimage routes, focuses on the region's rich history as a major center of commercial and cultural exchange, provides both chronological and geographical information about the discoveries made during recent excavations and emphasizes the important role played by this region as a trading center during the past 6000 years. More than 300 works—sculptures, ceramics, jewelry, frescoes—are on display, dating from antiquity to the beginning of the modern period; the majority have never before been exhibited. State Hermitage Museum, **St. Petersburg, Russia**, May 17 through August; Pergamon Museum, **Berlin**, October through December.

**Breaching the Wall.** A wide range of artists share their thoughts and feelings about the Separation Wall in Palestine, using sculpture, paintings, photographs and film. Jerusalem Fund Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, May 20 through June 24.

**Coming June**  
**Gifts of the Sultan:** *The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* is a pan-Islamic exhibition that spans the eighth through 19th centuries and includes more than 240 works of art from three continents: carpets, costumes and textiles, jewelry and other objects of precious metals, miniature paintings and other arts of the book, mosque furnishings and arms and armor. It also includes a small contemporary component: new work by three artists with roots in the Islamic world who have been commissioned to interpret the theme of the exhibition. *Gifts of the Sultan* introduces viewers to Islamic art and culture with objects of

undisputed quality and appeal, viewed through the universal lens of gift giving—a practice that proliferated at the great Islamic courts not only for diplomatic and political purposes but also as expressions of piety, often associated with the construction or enhancement of religious monuments. Gift-giving was part of the social fabric of the medieval and late-medieval Islamic world as a signifier of power and an expression of political aspirations. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, June 5 through September 5; Museum of Fine Arts, **Houston**, October through December.

**Coming July**  
**The Art of the Writing Instrument From Paris to Persia.** Every culture that values the art of writing has found ways to reflect the prestige and pleasure of the craft through beautiful tools. Writing implements such as pens, knives and scissors, as well as storage chests, pen-cases and writing desks, were often fashioned from precious materials: mother-of-pearl, gems, imported woods, gold and silver. Once owned by statesmen, calligraphers and the rich, these objects highlight the ingenuity of the artists who created them and underline the centrality of the written word in the cultures that produced them. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, July 2 through September 25.

**Inside the Toshakhana:** *Treasures of the Sikh Courts* brings together some of the finest examples of Sikh art and heritage in public and private collections as a tribute to Punjab's rich artistic traditions. The *toshakhana* (treasury) in question belonged to the one-eyed ruler of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839). Though physically unattractive

himself, the "Lion of Lahore" surrounded himself with handsome courtiers and amassed a magnificent collection of beautiful objects and works of art; a vast array of jewelry, paintings, textiles and arms and armor was variously purchased, bartered, stolen or given to him to form his unrivaled *toshakhana*. The exhibition focuses on objects connected with the Sikh court of Lahore generally and Ranjit Singh's *toshakhana* specifically, which was dispersed a decade after his death following the annexation of Punjab to British India. In addition, the exhibition will showcase one of the finest collections of early Sikh photography relating to post-annexation Punjab. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London**, July 14 through September 24.

**PERMANENT/ INDEFINITE**  
**Molten Color:** *Glassmaking in Antiquity* features more than 180 ancient glass objects, including works from Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Greek world and the Roman Empire. Getty Villa, **Malibu, California**.

**The Saudi Aramco Exhibit** relates the heritage of Arab-Islamic scientists and scholars of the past to the technology of today's petroleum exploration, production and transportation, set against the background of the natural history of Saudi Arabia. **Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.**

Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Most institutions listed have further information available at their Web sites. Readers are welcome to submit information eight weeks in advance for possible inclusion in this listing.

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