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The Children's Kingdom

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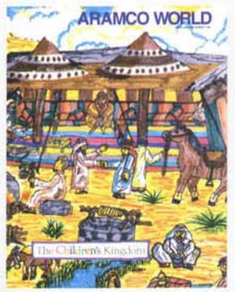

Cover: Cooking, conversation and coffee-making animate this scene of a men's encampment at a desert well, drawn by 11-year-old 'Imad Jaha of Jiddah, a winner in the children's art contest sponsored annually by Saudi Aramco. The cauldron probably contains rice and meat—kid, mutton, baby camel or possibly game—and there will be fresh-picked dates to eat with the coffee that is brewing on the hearth at lower right.

◀ A Tuareg man at prayer amid the arches of Timbuktu's 14th-century Jingerebir Mosque. Photograph by Stephenie Hollyman.

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GHOSN


DOUGHTY AMORIM


SHAH

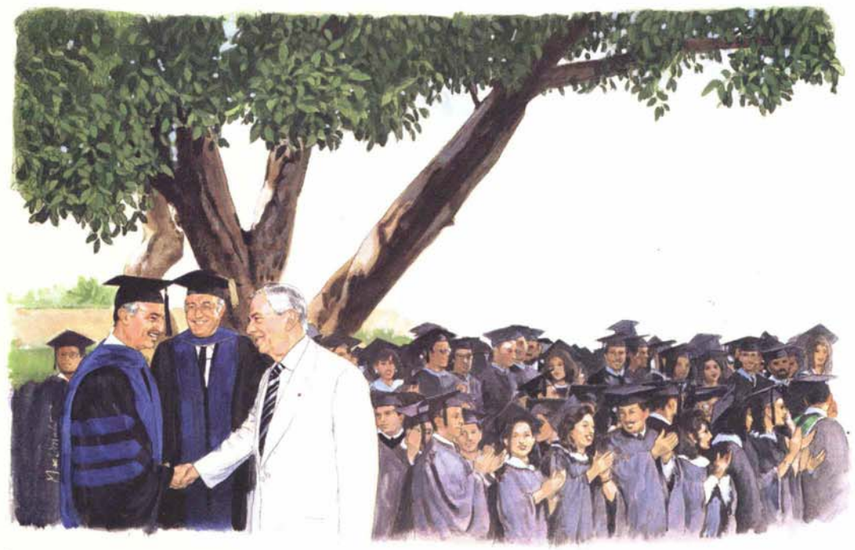

NAWWAB


LUXNER


COVINGTON

Lebanese American University

'WE DARED TO VENTURE'



Beirut University College

American Junior College for Women

The Story of Lebanese American University

Written by Ghassan Ghosn
Illustrated by Norman MacDonald

Beirut College for Women

When Eli and Sarah Smith arrived in Beirut in 1834, there were no public schools for girls in the city. Indeed, there were none in the Ottoman Empire, of which Lebanon was then a part: Education for girls was a family matter, and parents who chose to have their daughters educated arranged to have them taught at home.

This foreclosed the possibility of girls' schooling for poor families, and Sarah Smith "lost no time in getting at the task" of changing that fact, wrote Donald Roberts in his *Beirut College for Women: A Short History*. With backing from the American Presbyterian Mission for Syria and Lebanon, Smith opened what was known simply as *madrasat al-banat*, or "the girls' school," possibly the first elementary school for girls in the empire. It was to have far-reaching effects.

In 1862 the school became a secondary school and acquired a name: It was called the Beirut Female Seminary; in 1868 the name was changed to the American School for Girls (ASG).

At the end of World War I, French rule replaced Ottoman rule in Beirut, and in the post-war years—as in much of the world—women gradually began entering fields of study and work that had been closed to them. In recognition of this change, ASG expanded its instruction by adding a two-year college program to the secondary-school program. The result was the American Junior College for Women (AJC), founded in 1924 and now regarded as the "great-grandmother" of today's Lebanese American University.

In February 1924, Frances P. Irwin, a teacher from Virginia who had been studying Arabic in Beirut for more than a year, was named principal of the new college. Eight months later, Irwin welcomed the first freshman class—eight women—into a pair of small rooms borrowed from ASG, where faculty and students would both live and study. By 1927, Irwin and her two fellow faculty members were teaching their classes in the slightly less cramped quarters of a rented house. Six years later, in 1933, the cornerstone of the college's first permanent building was laid.

Enrollment at today's Lebanese American University reflects the country's recovery from civil war, as nearly 1000 students earn degrees each year (left).

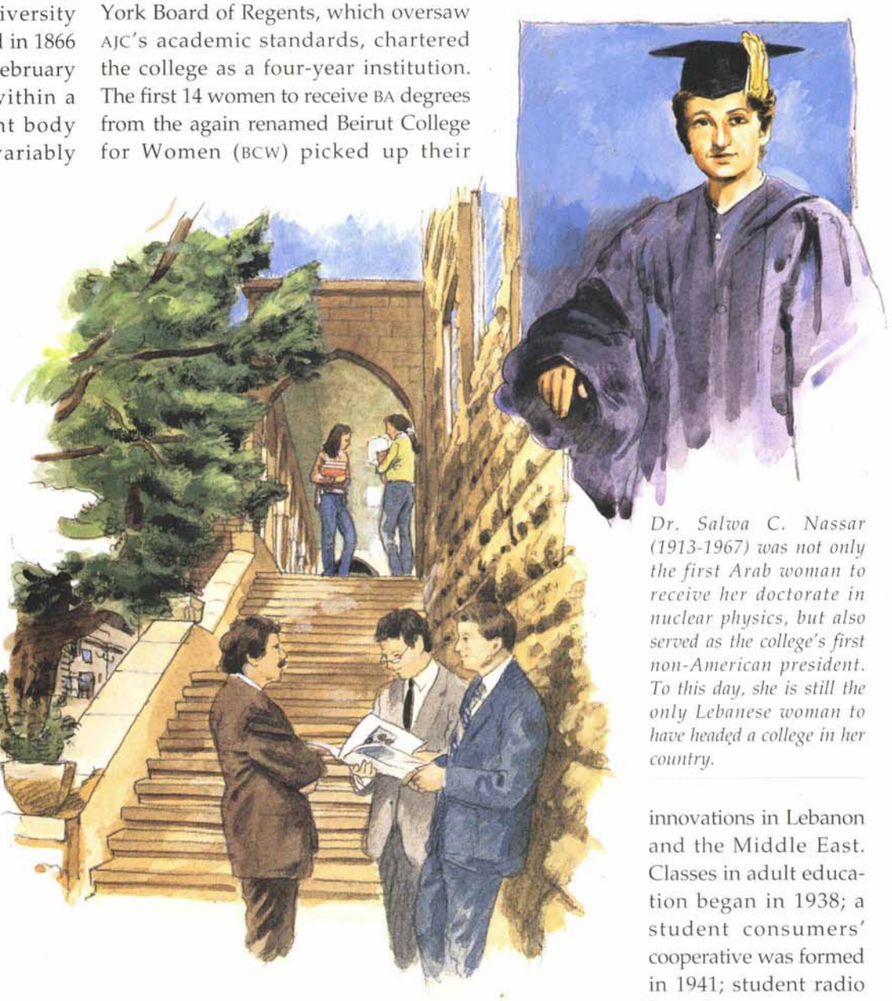
Five of the eight members of the freshman class of 1924-25 stand behind Frances P. Irwin, first president of the American Junior College for Women.

Many of AJC's students, after earning their associate's degrees, moved on to complete their bachelor's degrees at the neighboring American University of Beirut, founded in 1866 (See *Aramco World*, January-February 1991). There they studied within a predominantly male student body whose members did not invariably make them welcome. But many of the women had developed the will and toughness of pioneers by then, and they persevered.

Of AJC's first class, the class of 1926, only three women graduated. One was Saniya Habboub Nakkash, who went on to become the only Arab graduate at the Women's Medical College in Pennsylvania, where she earned her MD in gynecology and obstetrics. In 1932, as the first woman doctor to practice in Beirut, she opened a private clinic in obstetrics and general medicine where she worked for the next half-century. Prominent on the wall of her consulting room was her hand-lettered diploma from AJC.

In early 1935, Frances Irwin took her first furlough, or long leave, in the United States. She had worked an exhausting, virtually non-stop schedule in her decade as the organizing force behind AJC. But her first furlough turned out to be her last: On her arrival in the US, she felt obliged to take on the role of full-time companion to her dying mother, and four years later she herself died at age 44.

Shortly after World War II and the establishment of Lebanon as an independent country, the college introduced junior and senior classes on an experimental basis. The experiment was a success, and in 1950 the New York Board of Regents, which oversaw AJC's academic standards, chartered the college as a four-year institution. The first 14 women to receive BA degrees from the again renamed Beirut College for Women (BCW) picked up their diplomas that year, along with many others who graduated as traditional two-year students.



On the Beirut campus, students gather at Irwin Hall, named for Frances Irwin. Above left: 1926 alumna Dr. Najla Abu Izzedine served as AJC's first Lebanese faculty member.

The first college for women in the Middle East—grown up from its roots as the first elementary school for girls in the Ottoman Empire—has other innovative accomplishments to its credit as well. Dr. Marie Aziz Sabri, alumna, former faculty member and former acting president, recorded some of the college's educational innovations in Lebanon and the Middle East. Classes in adult education began in 1938; a student consumers' cooperative was formed in 1941; student radio broadcasts went on the air in 1946; and in 1962, BCW's president, Frances M. Gray, oversaw the establishment of a summer training program for female teachers from abroad.

Dr. Salwa C. Nassar (1913-1967) was not only the first Arab woman to receive her doctorate in nuclear physics, but also served as the college's first non-American president. To this day, she is still the only Lebanese woman to have headed a college in her country.

But over the years, AJC was mostly credited for producing women who entered professional fields, many of them among the first to do so.

"Changes that could not have taken place with the help of thousands of educated men, through a whole century of university education, are now being brought about in a third of that time by a few hundred women," wrote William Stoltzfus, the college's longest-serving president, to Sabri in 1962.

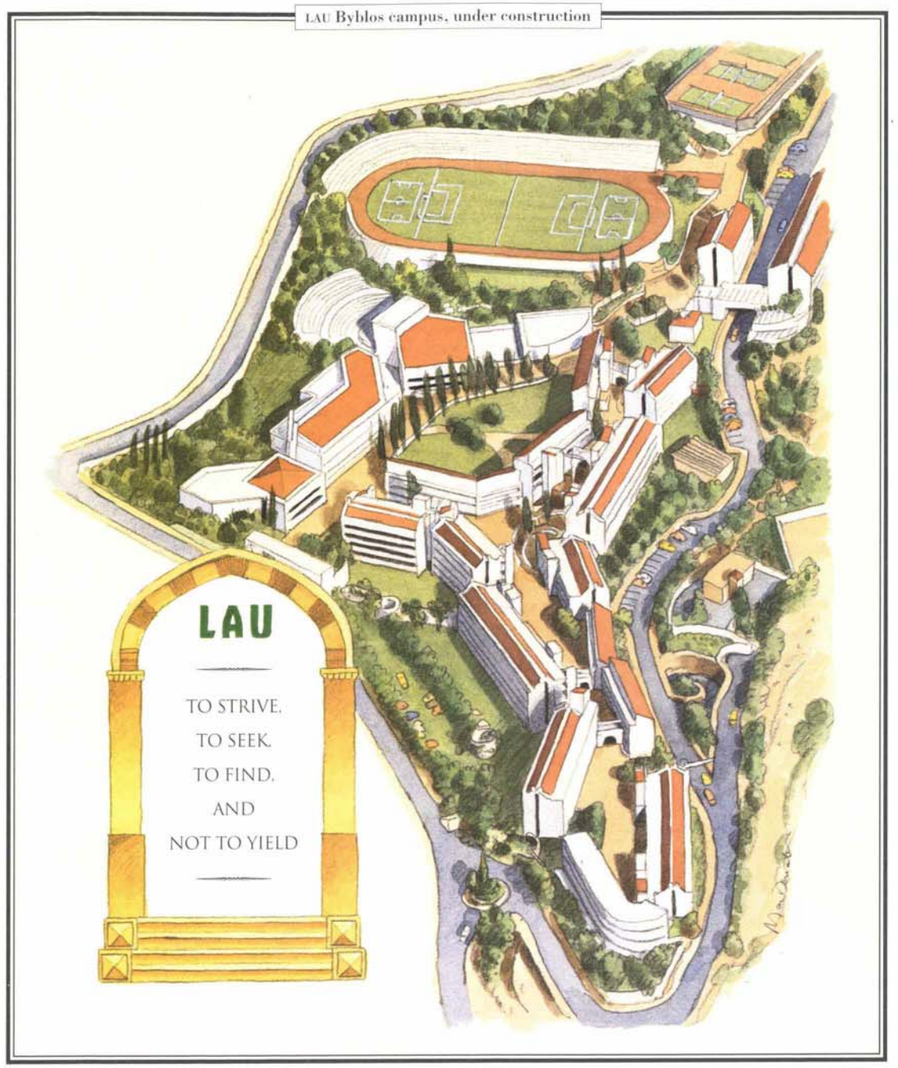
One 1942 graduate, Pergrouhi Najarian Svajian, returned briefly to BCW in the mid-1960's to serve as the college's first dean of faculty. What she said about her alma mater harmonizes with the college's philosophy today:

> The general emphasis [was] that education was for the enrichment of the human spirit, and not for prestige or position or financial security alone. The creative and open-minded attitude of the College...inspired similar attitudes in us, and when opportunities arose we dared to venture. The continuous effort to relate education to environment, generally absent in education in the Middle East, was a particular eye-opener for me. At the College we realized for the first time, forcefully, that education is a very dynamic experience, not a means to an end.

In 1974, the college began the celebration of its golden jubilee. During the festivities, the administration announced momentous changes: Henceforth, BCW would offer bachelor of science degrees as well as BA's; what was more, it would become fully coeducational, making official the long-standing informal practice of admitting male students who were unable to find particular courses at other institutions. To mark the new direction, the college's name was changed yet again: It would be known as Beirut University College (BUC). At the time of this move, slightly more than 40 percent of the students were Lebanese; the others represented 45 different nationalities.

But 1974's high hopes were short-lived: By the end of the academic year, civil war had engulfed Lebanon. Over the next 16 years, the final phrase of BUC's motto, "To Strive, To Seek, To Find, And Not To Yield," was put to its sternest test. Enrollment plunged from approximately 1100 students to 400 in the first term of the 1975-76 year, then to a scant 150 in the second term. As the war ground on, four BUC professors were kidnapped and held hostage, and university president Riyad Nassar was compelled to leave the campus with his family. Although one professor was released soon after the incident, three were held for six years. But neither they nor any BUC student,

LAU Byblos campus, under construction



LAU officials plant a cedar tree, symbol of a hopeful future, on the Byblos campus.

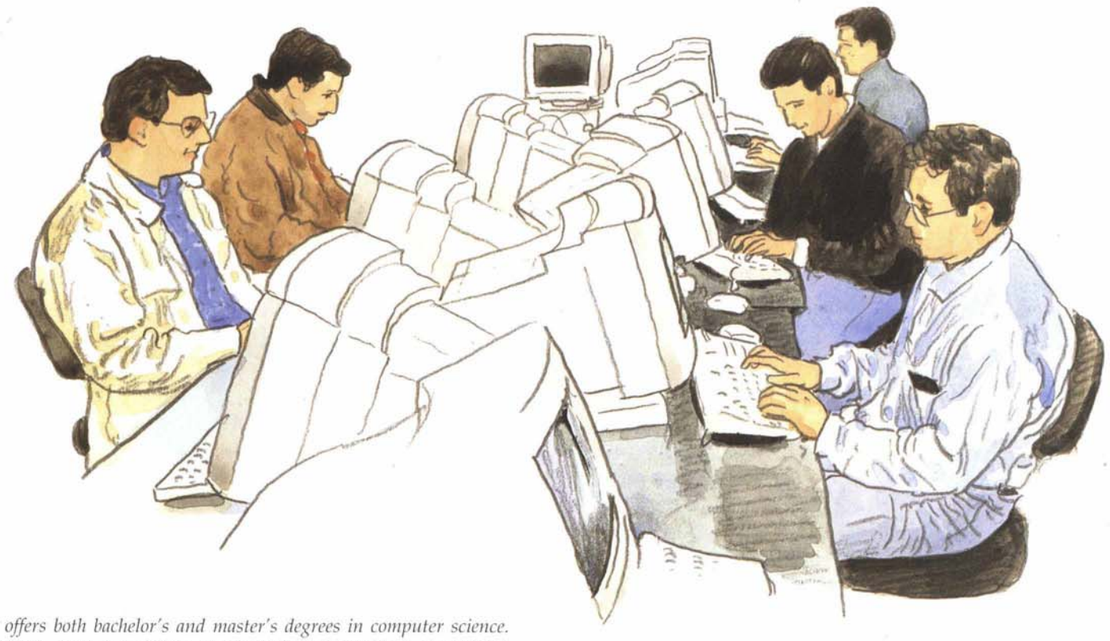
faculty member or staff member was killed or seriously injured in more than a decade and a half of turmoil.

During the war, Lebanon came to be divided along sectarian lines. Neighborhoods, towns and cities were often cut off from each other. BUC, like other educational institutions based in West Beirut, opened what were called temporary branches on the eastern side of the city to accommodate students who could not safely cross the demarcation line. In 1983, BUC's leadership decided to keep these programs going, and indeed integrate them into the permanent institution, by expanding the college into a multi-campus university. In 1987, a branch in Byblos, north of Beirut, started operating in rented premises.

This move did not go uncriticized. Some said it encouraged the break-up of Lebanon into sectarian "cantons" by helping institutionalize the country's divisions; BUC's administration held that the war had made decentralization essential to the college's ability to make education available to a diverse student body. In 1992, a campus was opened in Sidon, south of Beirut. And in 1994 the name of the university changed a third time, to "Lebanese American University," or LAU.

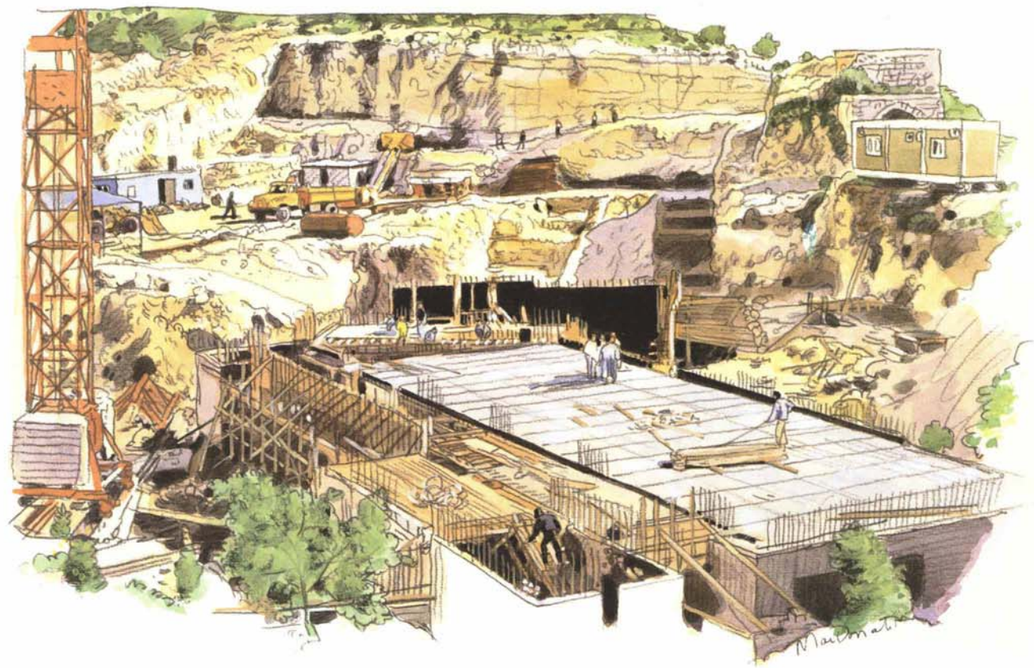
Today, LAU and many other Lebanese institutions and individuals are struggling to meet the demands of the country's post-war reconstruction (See *Aramco World*, January-February 1994). The six-story Zakhem Engineering Building at the Byblos campus, just completed, was built with a $2-million construction pledge from engineer and contractor George Zakhem, chairman of the London-based Zakhem Group; it is the first LAU structure to carry the name of a Lebanese family. The second is likely to be a building at the Sidon campus donated by Walid Hariri, whose brother Rafic serves as prime minister of Lebanon.

Enrollment, too, is recovering. In 1994-95, 4200 students attended classes—a far cry from the eight of



LAU offers both bachelor's and master's degrees in computer science. Although eight out of 10 LAU students are Lebanese, more than 40 nationalities are represented in the student body.

Zakhem Engineering Building



Construction on the Zakhem Engineering Building on LAU's Byblos campus began in 1993, and it opened this fall, making it the newest facility of the multi-campus university.

1924, and even from the 1100 of 1974. They celebrated the school's 71st anniversary in the schools of arts and sciences, architecture and design, business, and engineering. Now, the university offers bachelor's degrees in those fields as well as in pharmacy, political science, education and human development, computer science, and communications. Through a dual-degree joint program with several American engineering schools, students in that field may elect to finish their studies in the United States. And the university's graduate program today offers master's degrees in business management, international affairs and computer science. A majority of today's students receive some form of financial support.

LAU has moved from writing history to making history, said university president Riyad Nassar in his 1994 commencement address. Nassar, a chemist who joined the faculty in 1965 and was elected to the presidency in 1982, is confident that LAU graduates are among Lebanon's best ambassadors. Thirty years at the university, and the experiences of a painful civil war, have also reinforced his belief that education leads to a more harmonious society.

"Educated people," he said, "are less destructive, more tolerant, more ready to forgive and, in general, believe in freedom, justice and peace"—fine goals for LAU's eighth decade. ⊕

Ghassan Ghosn is a former reporter and editor for Voice of America *who is now a university instructor and free-lance writer in Lebanon.*

After making their ways out of Bosnia—in some cases with difficulty—and traveling for more than 24 hours, arriving students return the smiles and welcomes of Project Shelter's host families at the Dayton International Airport. Below, from left: Sead Hadzibeginovič; Ajla Hadzimehmedovič; Nadza Halilbegovič; Ajdin Dropič; and Nedina Hadziibrisevič. Among the families meeting the 24 students with signs, balloons and roses, at right, are Melinda Maier (behind bouquet) and three of her children, Max, Tessa and Zeke. Opposite page: Dave and Barb Armand flank a travel-weary Maja Kajan, who will live with them during her stay in the US, for an arrival-night photo.

SHELTERING SKIES

WRITTEN BY DICK DOUGHTY AND KEVIN AMORIM PHOTOGRAPHED BY TORSTEN KJELLSTRAND

"We want to give these kids an opportunity to learn skills they can use to put their country back together again."

IT WAS ON SEPTEMBER 7, AT GATE C-11 of the Dayton, Ohio airport, that Melinda Maier of Lakeside, Kentucky learned her first word of Serbo-Croatian—the language of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"Zdravo," she penned in large letters on posterboard: Serbo-Croatian for "hello," and she followed it with the sentence, "Maida Fazlič, Welcome to America."

Maier, a mother of three, had been reading the newspaper earlier in the summer when an article about local families taking English-speaking, teenaged Bosnian students into their homes caught her attention. Project Shelter, as the group is now called in the southern Ohio and northern Kentucky area, has "adopted" 24 young Bosnian men and women, aged 16 to 20, who will finish their educations in the US. At her home, Maier and her husband Bob renovated their basement to make a bedroom for 16-year-old Fazlič.

"It's kind of like expecting another baby," she says from amid the several television crews and the crowd of host families, most holding signs, flowers and balloons, all awaiting Continental flight 1253.

"We want to give these kids an opportunity to learn skills they can use to put their country back together again," says Robert Azzi, photojournalist and founder of what has become a national network committed to sheltering Bosnia's future leaders from the ravages of war.

Azzi's efforts began, he explains, when he and his daughter Iman watched the dedication of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. on television.

"She turned to me," Azzi says, "and asked me, 'Are they going to build a museum for the Muslims in Bosnia, too?' Coming from the mouth of a nine-year-old, a question like that becomes an imperative to act."

The Zagreb-based Women's Association of Bosnia-Herzegovina agreed to help Azzi locate non-refugee teenagers who would qualify for educational visas to the US. His first group of eight students arrived in 1993 in his own hometown of Exeter, New Hampshire and received national attention last year when "CBS Sunday Morning" aired their story. That broadcast inspired the formation of Cincinnati-based Project Shelter. To date, Azzi has arranged host families in half a dozen states, scholarships at private and public schools and free air transport from Continental Airlines for a total of 56 young Bosnians; at least 15 more will arrive by the end of the year.

"Many of [the host families] have never met anyone who is Muslim before," says Azzi. "We have Democrats, Republicans, Muslims, Catholics, Jews—a wonderful range of people helping out. The prospects for cultural learning are enormous on both sides, but the key is that both the kids and the families are committed to the multiculturalism and pluralism of Bosnia. These kids will all go back."

At Gate C-11, the young Bosnians of Project Shelter are the last to leave the plane. They file out to lights and cheers, a bit bewildered by all the attention.

"I don't want to talk about life in Sarajevo," says Arnela Smajilović, 20, in response to a question. "You see the news. My cousin is dead; my brother is wounded; my father is wounded. If I could, I would go to college here." For the next year, however, she will finish high school on the east side of Cincinnati.

Project Shelter's founder, Rick Deerwester, who escorted the group from New York to Ohio, tells about one of the young Bosnian women, an aspiring opera singer. "I had met them all at customs, and as we were standing there, going through the lines, I heard, softly over the noise of the airport, this beautiful, operatic voice," he says. "She was singing 'America the Beautiful.'"

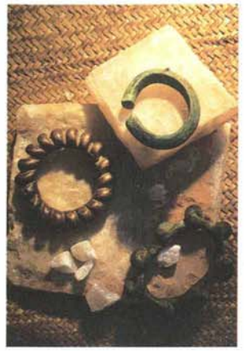
By the time the families of Project Shelter head home into the night, each richer by one new member, it is 4:00 a.m. Bosnian time. For the newly arrived students, one very long journey has ended, and another has begun.

Dick Doughty is Assistant Editor of Aramco World; *Kevin Amorim is a reporter for the* Dayton Daily News.

THE ISLAMIC LEGACY OF

TIMBUKTU

Written by Tahir Shah
Photographed by Stephenie Hollyman



At the Timbuktu Museum, relics of centuries of prosperity are displayed on blocks of salt, themselves once valued almost as highly as gold. Previous spread: Muezzin Alhaye stands next to the Jingerebir Mosque's mud-brick minaret, from which he calls the faithful to prayer.

The caravan of Sultan Mansa Musa, ruler of the Mali Empire, snaked its way through the scorching heat of the central Sahara on its long return from the 1324 pilgrimage to Makkah. Eight thousand soldiers, courtiers and servants—some say as many as 60,000—drove 15,000 camels laden with gold, perfume, salt and stores of food in a procession of unrivaled size.

Their destination was, first, the newly conquered city of Gao, on the Niger River. From there, they turned toward another metropolis just added to the Mali Empire, one surrounded by unrelenting dunes, a fabled oasis city on which Mansa Musa had longed to make his mark: Timbuktu. Thirsty and flagging under the searing sun, the caravan entered Timbuktu's ochre walls in the year 1325.

No word in English connotes remoteness more than *Timbuktu*. Thanks to the astonishing wealth that Mansa Musa had displayed on his visits to Cairo and Makkah, it also connoted riches. For eight centuries, Timbuktu captured the imaginations of both East and West, albeit for very different reasons. In 1620, the English explorer Richard Jobson wrote:

> The most flattering reports had reached Europe of the gold trade carried on at Timbuktu. The roofs of its houses were represented to be covered with plates of gold, the bottoms of the rivers to glisten with the precious metal, and the mountains had only to be excavated to yield a profusion of the metallic treasure.

Timbuktu was the product of an eclectic mixture of West African and Arab influences.

Opposite, clockwise from top: The Jingerebir Mosque draws congregants for Friday midday prayers; women talk in a Timbuktu doorway; a mason re-lays a brick floor in the 15th-century Mosque of Sidi Yahya—poet, professor and one of the city's most notable scholars; a woman slides unbaked loaves into an outdoor oven.

Other reports said that rosewater flowed in the city's fountains and that the sultan showered each visitor with priceless gifts. Europe's greatest explorers set out to risk their lives in search of the riches of Timbuktu. Exploration and travel societies sponsored competitions, with a prize for the man who reached there by the most difficult route. In fact, most European travelers perished before they ever saw the city rise above the desert horizon, and those who did get there found that the tales they had heard had missed the point.

Muslim travelers—most notably Ibn Battuta and Hasan al-Wazan, also called Leo Africanus—were no less eager to visit the city, but for them and a host of rulers, dignitaries and scholars from Morocco to Persia, the remote city held riches of another sort: Timbuktu was the starting point for African pilgrims going on the Hajj, and a center of some of the finest—and most generously available—Islamic scholarship of the Middle Ages.

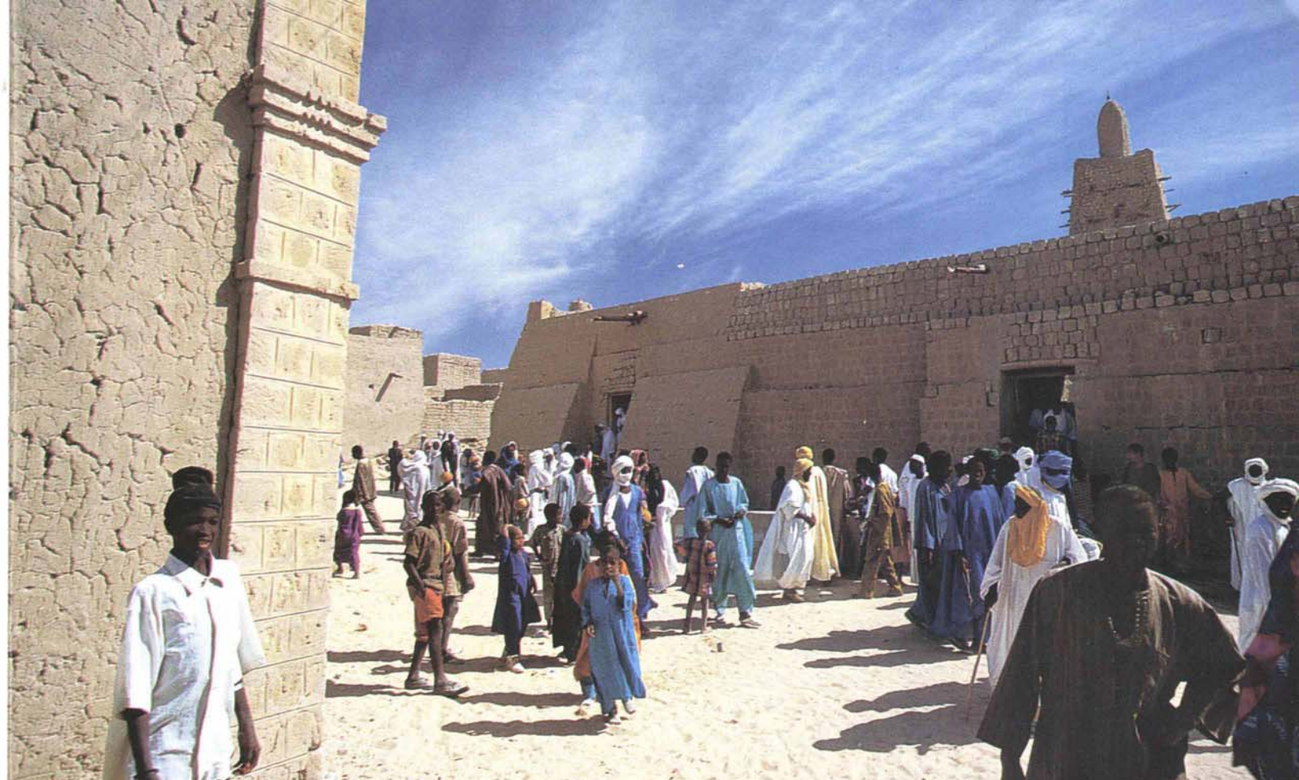
Located in today's Mali, some 12 kilometers (eight miles) north of the Niger flood-plain along the southern edge of the Sahara, Timbuktu today is little more than a sleepy, sweltering stop on the adventure-tourism trail. Most visitors fly in and out in a single afternoon; the city's days as a caravanserai and desert entrepôt are long past.

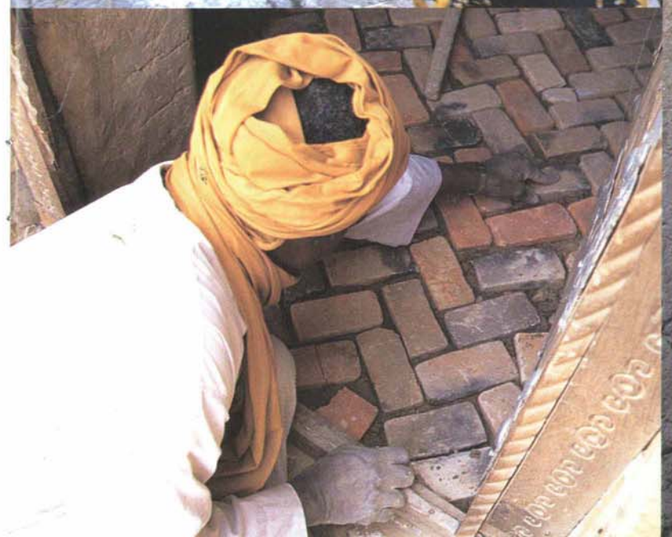
A more purposeful visit, however, has its rewards. There is much to see as one strolls about the stark streets, lingers, looks beyond the soft-drink stalls and engages in casual conversation here and there. Although Timbuktu has been conquered many times by many powers, absorbed into one empire after another, none ever sacked or looted it. As a result, traces of its Islamic legacy appear at almost every turn. Qur'anic inscriptions decorate doorways. The tombs of hundreds of famous scholars and revered teachers dot the town—some unremembered, some within the knowledge of local guides. Most noticeably, a handful of fabulous mosques reel upward into the brilliant African sky and constitute the anchor points of the city's plan.

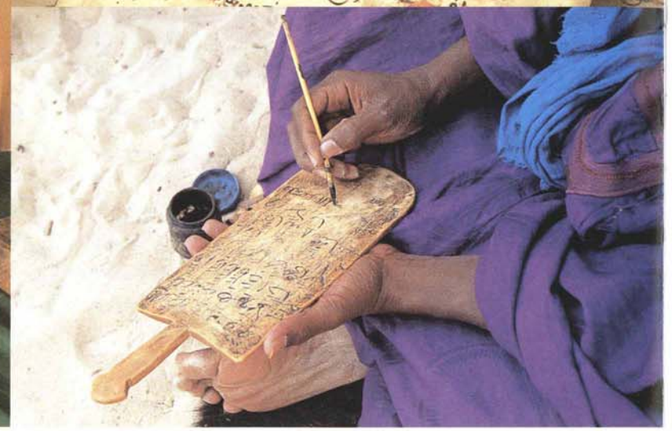
Set on the Islamic world's southwestern edge, Timbuktu was the product of an eclectic mixture of West African and Arab influences that found in Islam a common denominator. Its peoples often saw themselves as the faithful pitted against the pagans lurking beyond the city's walls. Tuareg, Fulani, Berbers, Soninke and Songhoi lived side by side, in peace, bound together by their belief in God, their acceptance of the Qur'an, and their familiarity with Arabic.

Because the city lay on the periphery of the kingdoms that ruled it—and was left to its own devices by most of them—the community of Timbuktu was forced through isolation to look inward. This introspective attitude influenced all aspects of Timbuktu's society, and nowhere did this become more apparent than in its pious pursuits. Barely two centuries after being founded as a small Tuareg settlement around 1100, Timbuktu had earned its reputation as the most important Islamic center in West Africa. Its quiet rise to high regard—against enormous odds of geography and climate—is remarkable. Equally astonishing is that Timbuktu also prospered economically, seemingly beyond reason, as if to spite the adversity of its surroundings.

At its height during the mid-16th century, the city had a population of about 60,000. A prime caravan stop and center of manufacturing, it dominated West Africa in trade and exports. Al-Wazan wrote that:







Preserving and cataloguing a portion of Timbuktu's more than 10,000 surviving Arabic manuscripts is the job of Djibril Doucouré (above, left), director of CEDRAB, the Ahmed Baba Center for Documentation and Research, and researcher Sane Chirfi Alpha. These and other historical preservation efforts have received support from the governments of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, UNESCO and other organizations. Above, lower right: A teacher in one of the city's Qur'anic schools writes out a verse of the holy text on a writing board—similar to a colonial-American hornbook—for his students to copy.

> the rich king of Tombuto...keeps a magnificent and well furnished court. The coin of Tombuto is gold.... There is a most stately temple to be seen, the walls of which are made of mortared stone; and a princely palace also built by a most excellent workman of Granada. Here are many shops of craftsmen and merchants, and especially of such as weave linen and cotton cloth.

Though undergirded by its economic success, Timbuktu's key role was cultural, as a crucible of learning. The difficulty of the journey to or from Timbuktu induced pilgrims and traders alike, once they got there, to spend months, even years, in the city before moving on. In time, local belief held that, by studying the Qur'an or donating generously to Timbuktu's Islamic schools, one would be assured safe passage through the surrounding desert.

A rich account of Timbuktu's history and Islamic heritage has come to us through a series of chronicles, known as *tarikh*s, written from the mid-17th through the mid-18th centuries. These texts—some plain and undeviating, others embroidered with ornate rhetoric—help us slip into the world of Timbuktu in the Middle Ages. Here we learn of its great mosques, of its ruling families, of the eminent schools of literature and learning, and of its "golden age."

Of these chronicles, none is more detailed or intricate than the *Tarikh al-Sudan*, or *History of the Sudan*. Written in 1653 by the city's most eminent scholar, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sadi, the *tarikh* traces the history and society of Timbuktu from its founding until the time of writing. Al-Sadi's work is so reliable, and his descriptions so exact, that 250 years after it was written the French journalist Felix Dubois used it as his guidebook. "The author displays an unusual conscientiousness, never hesitating to give both versions of a doubtful event," wrote Dubois in 1897.

The two major *tarikh*s that followed al-Sadi's were essentially less ambitious updates. The first, Mahmoud Kati's *Tarikh al-Fattash*, supplements al-Sadi's work up to the early 18th century. Kati lacks the astute insight of his predecessor, but his book does contain important information on the legal and administrative heritage of Timbuktu. The anonymous *Tadhkirat al-Nisyan*, or *A Reminder to the Oblivious*, is similarly thin in detail, and it in turn brings the history up through the mid-18th century. The two latter chronicles frequently lapse into nostalgia and lament the decline of Timbuktu's fortunes.

Since its earliest beginnings, when the Tuareg would move down to the plateau each summer from the pastures of Arawan, Timbuktu has been dominated by its mosques. It is to them that the old city, with its triangular layout, owes its specific quarters—each with its unique character. Built literally of the desert itself, the adobe mosques of Timbuktu became famous throughout the Islamic world. They towered high above the sandy streets and afforded the city an impressive skyline.

The northern quarter, at the apex of the triangular city, takes its name from the Sankoré Mosque. A great, tawny, pyramidal structure laced with protruding wooden support beams, the Sankoré Mosque was the bastion of learning in Timbuktu. Its imams were regarded with unequaled respect; its school attracted the noble and the rich as students. Indeed, mentors and scholars alike are said to have flocked to Sankoré's *jam'iyyah*, or university, from as far afield as the Arabian Peninsula. Here, surrounded by the Sahara's windswept dunes, students could concentrate their minds as nowhere else. And, as Timbuktu's fame grew in the Islamic world, Sankoré became the most important center of Islamic scholarship in Africa.

The eastern corner of the city was home to the much smaller Jami' al-Suq, the Market Mosque. Like many of the less grand mosques of Timbuktu, it has fallen into disrepair, been enlarged or been rebuilt many times. The adobe construction, characteristic of sub-Saharan buildings (See *Aramco World*, November-December 1990), weakens when it rains. Each year, after the winter downpours—if they occur—many of the city's major buildings must be patched up and reinforced, but it is unexpected thunderstorms that are the dread of Timbuktu. The noted mosque Jami' al-Hana collapsed in a storm in 1771 and killed 40 people. Local legend relates that, rather than being embittered by catastrophe, the residents of Timbuktu believed that God had been so stirred by the prayers from the mosque that he had whisked the congregants up to heaven at once.

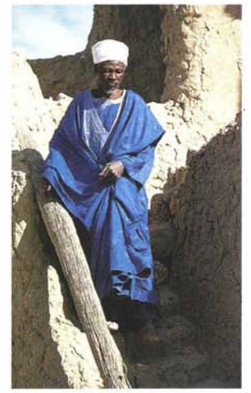
When the grand caravan of Mansa Musa arrived on that scorching day in 1325, the sultan ordered the Granadan architect and poet Abu Ishaq al-Sahili, who had traveled with him from Makkah, to build a magnificent mosque—one far larger than any the region had known—in the western corner of the city. Its name, Jingerebir, is a corruption of the Arabic *jami' al-kabir*, or "the great mosque." Five hundred years later, in 1858, the British traveler Henry Barth wrote that the mosque "by its stately appearance made a deep impression on my mind. [It]...includes nine naves, of different dimensions and structure."

Giant and rambling, and one of the first mosques in Africa to be built with fired-brick walls, Jingerebir at once became the central mosque of the city, and it dominates Timbuktu to this day. In times of crisis, in years when rains failed and the Niger River had risen insufficiently or not at all in its annual, life-giving flood, the people of Timbuktu gathered at Jingerebir. Within the cool shade of its walls, the imam—who often doubled as the town's ruler—would lead his congregants in prayer.

According to the *tarikhs*, Timbuktu's religious leaders, judges and officials all tended to be graduates of the city's illustrious schools. In the city where the study of Islamic principles was regarded as of supreme importance, al-Wazan found "a great store of doctors, judges, priests, and other learned men." This scholastic elite was underwritten largely by the city's business class, who themselves formed a considerable part of the student body. Especially at Sankoré, it was also these scholars who provided energy and direction to civil administration, commercial regulation, legislation, town planning and architectural projects—in addition to maintaining a number of superb libraries. The ranks of the city's elite were limited, however: Six families have provided two-thirds of Timbuktu's *qadi*s, or judges, during the last 500 years.

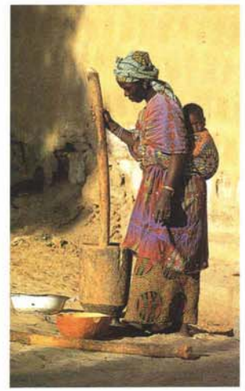
By the mid-16th century—the so-called golden age of Timbuktu—the city boasted well over 150 schools, and the curricula were rigorous. The Islamic sciences formed the core of the academic syllabus, including Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsir*), the traditions of the Prophet (*hadith*); jurisprudence (*fiqh*), sources of the law (*usul*), and doctrinal theology (*tawhid*). Apart from the religious courses, students were also required to study grammar (*nahw*), literary style and rhetoric (*balaghah*), and logic (*mantiq*). Scholars focused on the way that a person should behave within the context of Islamic society.

Only when religious and linguistic literacy had been achieved was a student assigned to a particular mentor. The relationship between pupil and master often grew to be a strong one, and favored students might work as *mulazama*, or private secretaries, to their teachers. As the community grew, an intellectual genealogy developed, similar to those acknowledged elsewhere in the Islamic world, that linked masters to pupils and those pupils to their own students. Strong academic and religious ties with other scholastic centers of the Middle East and North Africa linked Timbuktu to the rest of the Islamic world.



On the staircase of the Jingerebir Mosque, wind and occasional rains have rounded the edges of the mud-brick construction.

By Timbuktu's golden age, the city boasted well over 150 schools.



A woman pounds millet in the street outside her home.

As the number of students increased, so did the fields of study available. Subjects such as history, mathematics, astronomy and cartography in time joined the wealth of courses available.

Although Timbuktu prided itself on the rigor of its teaching for even the youngest of pupils, visiting traders or travelers were encouraged to enroll while they stayed in the city. Thus many itinerant non-Muslim merchants were led to conversion in Timbuktu through encounters with Muslim scholars. Even older visitors could be assured that the city's scholastic community would educate them. Indeed, the people of Timbuktu were reputed to be so philanthropic that they would afford any visitor an education regardless of his means—maintaining that anyone who had endured the journey to their desert metropolis had earned himself a scholarship.

Likewise, those born in Timbuktu to humble families were also guaranteed their education. So great was the fervor for Islamic learning that even the tailors of Timbuktu, among other craft guilds, founded their own centers of learning where instructors oversaw both the workshop and its college. In this environment, students worked as apprentice tailors while they were also instructed in the foundations of Islamic scholarship. By the 16th century, Timbuktu is said to have had more than 26 establishments for tailor-

Hemispherical withy fish traps near Timbuktu show that the Niger River provides a livelihood for some of the city's residents. The river also remains a crucial avenue of trade between Central and West Africa, and irrigates the flood plain upon which much of the city's food is grown. Opposite, top: The pyramidal minaret of the Sankoré Mosque marks what was once the leading center of Islamic scholarship in Africa. Lower: A hesitant young scholar peers through the carved wooden doorway of a Qur'an school. Some of the doors, strengthened with decorative ironwork plates, date back to the 17th century, Timbuktu's historical high-water mark as a city of learning and trade.

scholars alone, many employing more than 100. Thus these institutes also reinforced the city's role as a significant manufacturer of cloth.

At the height of the city's golden age, Timbuktu boasted not only the impressive libraries of Sankoré and the other mosques, but also a wealth of private ones. One of the greatest, containing more than 700 volumes, was left by the master scholar Hajji Ahmad bin 'Umar. His library was said to have included many of the rarest books ever written in Arabic, and he copied and annotated a considerable number of the volumes himself.

The libraries of Timbuktu grew through a regular process of hand-copying manuscripts. Scholars would visit the caravanserais and appeal to learned travelers to permit their precious volumes to be reproduced. Alternatively, they duplicated texts borrowed from their mentors' collections, studying the material as they did so.

Al-Wazan commented that "hither are brought divers manuscripts or written books, which are sold for more money than any other merchandise." As late as the close of the 19th century, Félix Dubois purchased a number of antique books in Timbuktu, including a copy of the *Divan of Kings*, a chronology of the rulers and events of the Sudan between 1656 and 1747.

Timbuktu's position as a principal staging point along the pilgrimage route to Makkah may partly explain why so many books were available. Even so, modern scholars are staggered by the sheer quantity and rarity of Arabic texts and poems proffered and composed in the city. Of the books written in Timbuktu, a number are surprising in their scope. Ahmed Baba's biographical dictionary, for example, included the lives of notables from Arabia, Egypt, Morocco and Central Asia, as well as Timbuktu itself.

Of the city's scholars, none is more lionized today than Muhammad Askia, called "Muhammad the Great," who reigned over Timbuktu for more than three decades in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Regarded as the city's savior, it was he who wrested Timbuktu from the infamous Songhoi ruler Sunni Ali in 1493. Ali was despised as one who undermined Islam by persecuting the scholastic class, efforts that earned him uncomplimentary entries in the *tarikh*s. Under Askia, however, scholarship and Islam were again revered and supported, and a new era of stability began that led to Timbuktu's 16th-century golden age.

Scholars are staggered by the quantity and rarity of the texts.

Like any frontier town, Timbuktu also gained strength from the melting-pot of peoples who sought to make their lives within its walls. A mixture of North and West African tribes wove their unique ways into the framework of Timbuktu's culture.

The influence of the Songhoi people, for example, extended to the calendar, where Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, was popularly known by the Songhoi word *haome*, which translates, literally, as "closed mouth." The end of the Ramadan fast was known similarly as *ferme*, or "open mouth." Observance of the Ramadan fast has never been easy in Timbuktu, where the desert climate much resembles that of central Arabia, but the holy month has always been taken very seriously in the city.

Like Muslims everywhere, the people of Timbuktu were united by Ramadan. As the sun scorched down, or as the flour-fine Sahara sand squalled through the streets, the faithful would gather in the mosques, protected from the desert and enveloped in the simplicity of the adobe architecture, in order to renew their faith.

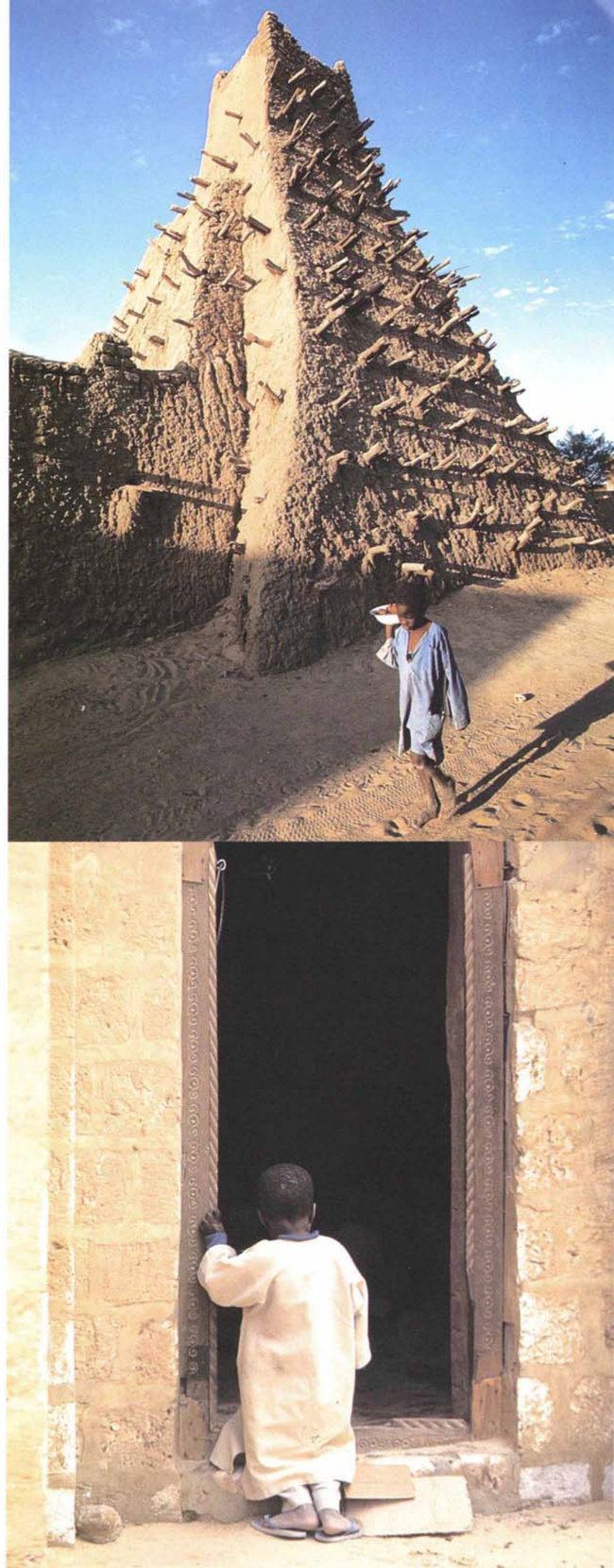
During Tyibsi, as Dhu al-Hijjah, the month which follows Ramadan, was called, feasting was in order. On the 10th day of the month, as pilgrims prepared to begin the taxing journey to Makkah, the men of Timbuktu would gather for special prayers, and the imam of Jingerebir would sacrifice a ram. Then everyone would hurry home, for a local tradition maintained that the first man to follow the imam's sacrifice with one of his own would be the first to ride into paradise.

With desert dunes surrounding it in all directions, and trapped in a severe and perfidious climate, the fact that fabled Timbuktu rose and prospered for 800 years is remarkable. That it also became a center of scholarship so fertile that it advanced the worldwide community of Islamic learning is astonishing. But more surprising still is that Timbuktu's intellectual tradition remained largely intact generation after generation. Even during times of economic depression, caused by shifting caravan routes or spoiled crops, the community ensured that the Qur'anic academies survived.

Early in the 19th century, the young French explorer René Caille remarked that all the population of Timbuktu was apparently "able to read the Qur'an and even know it by heart." Some 66 years later, when the French colonized the region, they recorded that some two dozen key scholastic centers still flourished in Timbuktu. Continuing to teach Arabic, Qur'anic doctrine and traditional lore, the schools had altered little in 500 years.

Now, as the desert creeps slowly southward all across sub-Saharan Africa, Timbuktu stands more isolated by sand and heat than ever. At the same time, in the city that captivated both West and East, some of the richest parts of the legacy of Islam lie only just beneath the city's baked-mud surface, waiting silently to be rediscovered, and perhaps reawakened.

Tahir Shah lives in London and is the author of Beyond the Devil's Teeth: Journeys in Gondwanaland, *published by Octagon Press, as well as five other books.*



The Children's Kingdom

WRITTEN BY **Ni'mah Isma'il Nawwab**

A century ago, the idea that children could create art worthy of public exhibition would have been ridiculed. Today, increased understanding of child development and psychology is helping adults take seriously the art of the young, and appreciate the window it provides on their world.

In many ways, children's artistic expression is remarkably similar in different countries and cultures. From the first crayon put to paper at around age two, an artistic journey begins. At three or four, most children start to form circles and other geometric designs, which lead to progressively more intricate patterns and renditions of objects and scenes that are familiar to the child: parents, school, home and homeland. But the flowering doesn't always last: Around age nine, free-wheeling expression often begins to give way to concern for precision and realism, with a resulting loss of the flexibility of earlier works. But each phase can be savored for its own distinctive flavor.

For the past 16 years, Saudi Aramco has sponsored a nationwide children's art contest, one of the first such events in the Arab world. "Muslims were once famous all over the world for their contributions to art, and we want to enhance our children's abilities in this field," said Ismail I. Nawwab, former General Manager of Saudi Aramco Public Affairs and founder of the competition. "The aim of the contest is to encourage our youth to continue that artistic journey, climbing new peaks of beauty, imagination and creativity." The contest is open to all children in the kingdom, regardless of nationality.

For people outside the Saudi kingdom, of course, the more than 67,000 young artists aged four to 14 who have taken part in the contest up to now provide a view of the country that is difficult to obtain from other sources. Using crayons, oils, acrylics, watercolor, silk, felt, beads and even rocks, they have depicted an enormous range of vibrant imagery of people, folklore, modern industry, desert life, traditional markets and calligraphy. Contemporary events—such as the war in Bosnia and the 1991 Gulf War—evoke especially intense emotions that show clearly in the artwork.

But the children's "vivid and positive works reflect their optimism even in the darkest moments," notes Muhammad Tahlawi, head of Saudi Aramco Publications. "Another striking aspect is the abundance of traditional themes in their art."

In a country that is modernizing at unprecedented speed, where children deal with home computers and fiber-optic communication systems while their parents remember the first direct-dial telephones, "the importance of preserving traditions soon becomes vital," Tahlawi explains. "At home and at school, children are encouraged to explore, recall and value their heritage and traditions, so scenes of life in the desert, images of old-fashioned craftsmen and representations of traditional architecture are more interesting to them than images of modern-day Saudi Arabia."

A nationwide advertising campaign announces the start of the contest each year. Teachers, parents, schoolchildren and preschoolers get to work in homes and schools across the kingdom. "The contest started because this type of art leads to an enjoyment of nature and pleasure in its beauty," says Sa'id Attiyah Abu Ali, former general director of education in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. "It has also given the kingdom's children a chance for healthy competition."

The contest is judged by a different panel of three internationally known artists or prominent teachers each year. Past judges have come from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria and the United States. They select winners in age categories based on originality, quality, composition, use of color and interpretation of the subject.

BY: **Husam Rashad,** AGE: **13,** CITY: **Tayif**

Open-air and covered markets throughout Saudi Arabia sell fresh fruits and vegetables.

Each year, an exhibit of winning entries tours Saudi Arabia. Saudi Aramco is now cataloging all 16 years' worth of entries in an archive that will trace children's changing perceptions of the world around them. The company has reproduced prize-winning works on greeting cards and a wall calendar. Others have appeared in Saudi Aramco publications distributed worldwide. Permanent exhibitions have been set up in the Saudi embassies in Washington, D.C. and London, and temporary exhibitions in schools and galleries have attracted many local viewers.

Sharing the collection invites an international audience to join in celebrating one of art's most universal and creative forms: the child's vision.

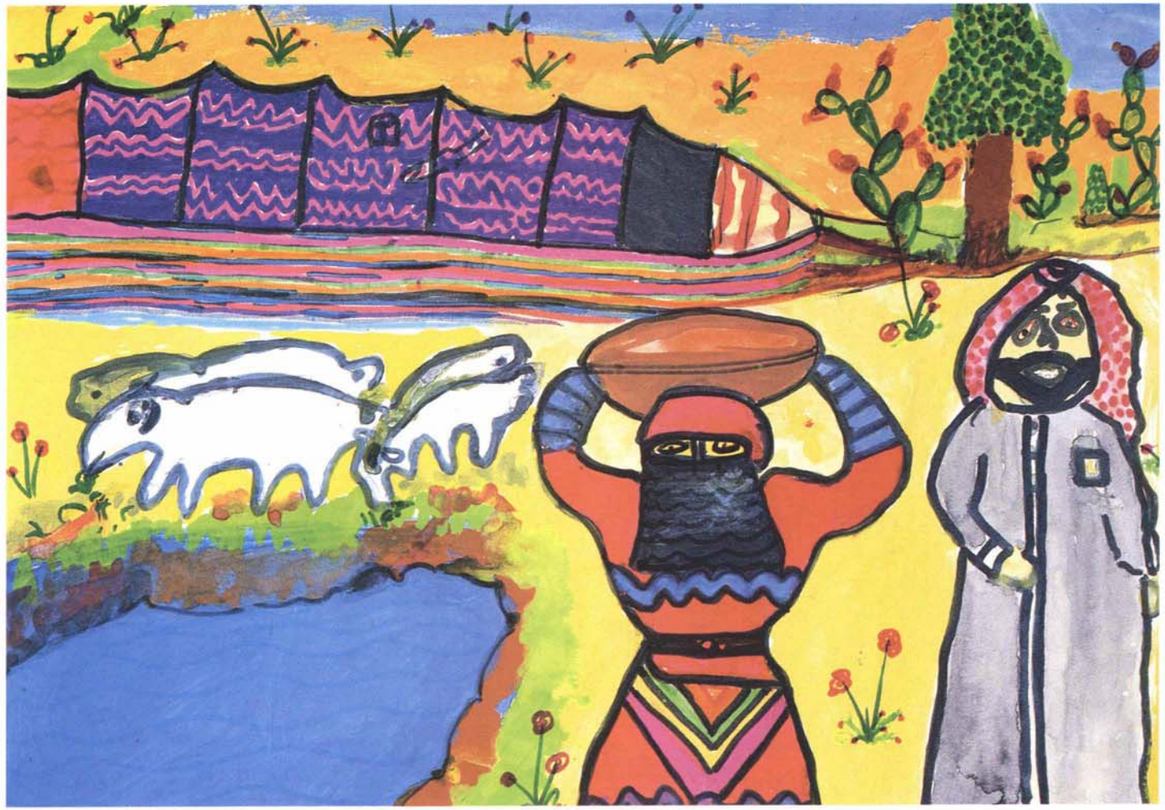
Ni'mah Isma'il Nawwab writes on Arabian history, customs and crafts from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

BY: **'Ali Abu Lawz,** AGE: **14,** CITY: **Makkah**

Once a feature of every Saudi city, the watercarrier poured each household's supply from his goatskin bag into a covered, unglazed clay pot, where evaporation kept it cool.

BY: **Iman Turkistani,** AGE: **9,** CITY: **Tayif**

Bedouins water their flocks at desert wells or oases—or use tank trucks to bring the water to the sheep.

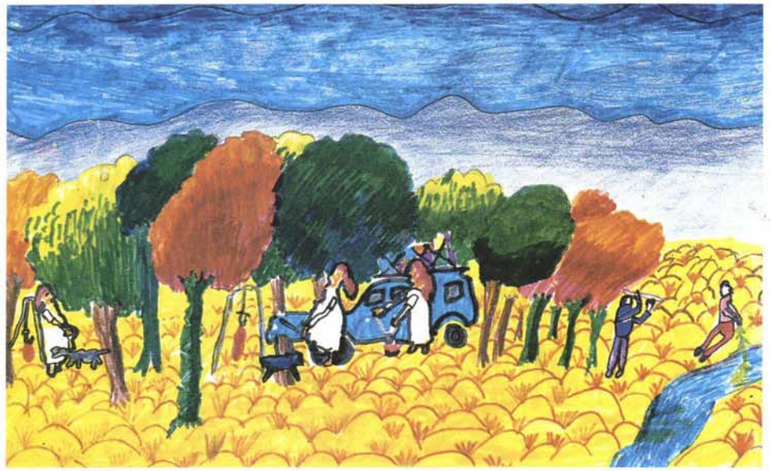


BY: **Ra'id Hasan,** AGE: **14,** CITY: **Ad-Dawadimi**

A cloth merchant displays his wares to an abaya*-clad customer.*

BY: **Islam Hamid,** AGE: **10,** CITY: **Jubail Industrial City**

Scene in a grove.



BY: **Junaydi Filimban,** AGE: **12,** CITY: **Makkah**

Scene of town life.

BY: **Shada al-Dahsh,** AGE: **11,** CITY: **Riyadh**

Dancers wear brightly colored, billowing costumes to perform a traditional dance from the western province of Saudi Arabia.

BY: **Shams ash-Shammas,** AGE: **11,** REGION: **Eastern Province**

A Saudi wedding.

BY: **'Abd al-'Aziz al-Hudhayfah,** AGE: **10,** CITY: **Al-Khobar**

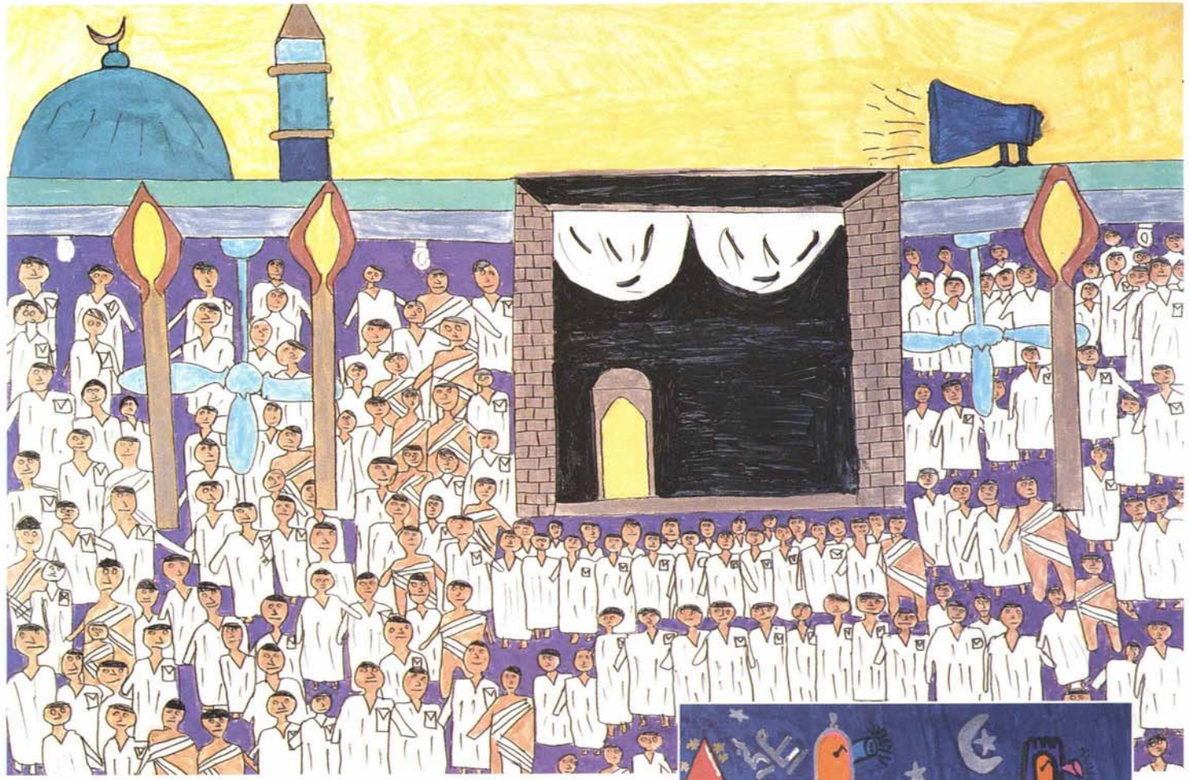
War in Bosnia.

BY: **Ahmad 'Abd al-'Aziz,** AGE: **6,** CITY: **Tayif**

Policeman directing traffic.

BY: **Thamir ar-Ruhayli,** AGE: **11,** CITY: **Jubail Industrial City**

Traffic safety poster.

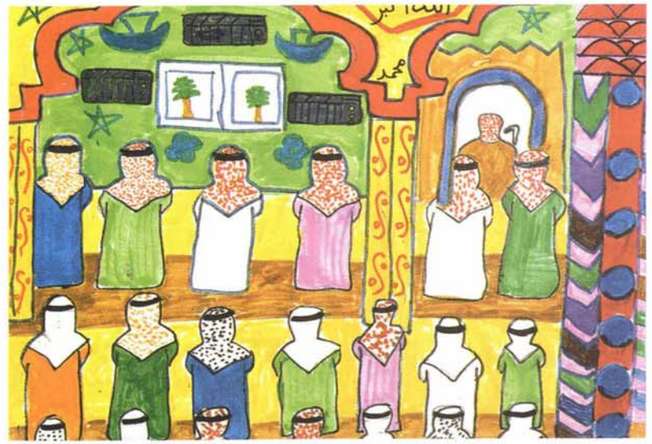


BY: **Yahya al-Batran,** AGE: **14,** CITY: **Qatif**

Pilgrims circle the Ka'bah in one of the rituals of the Hajj.

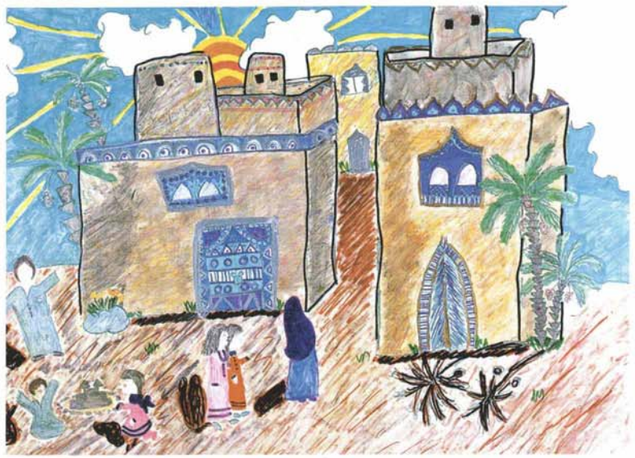
BY: **Hasna' al-'Awfi,** AGE: **12,** CITY: **Riyadh**

A muezzin calls to prayer from the minaret of a domed mosque. The first words of the call, "God is most great," float from the loudspeaker.



BY: **'Abd al-'Aziz ash-Shammari,** AGE: **13,** CITY: **'Ar'ar**

Congregational prayer in a village mosque. Privately or together, Muslims pray five times a day.

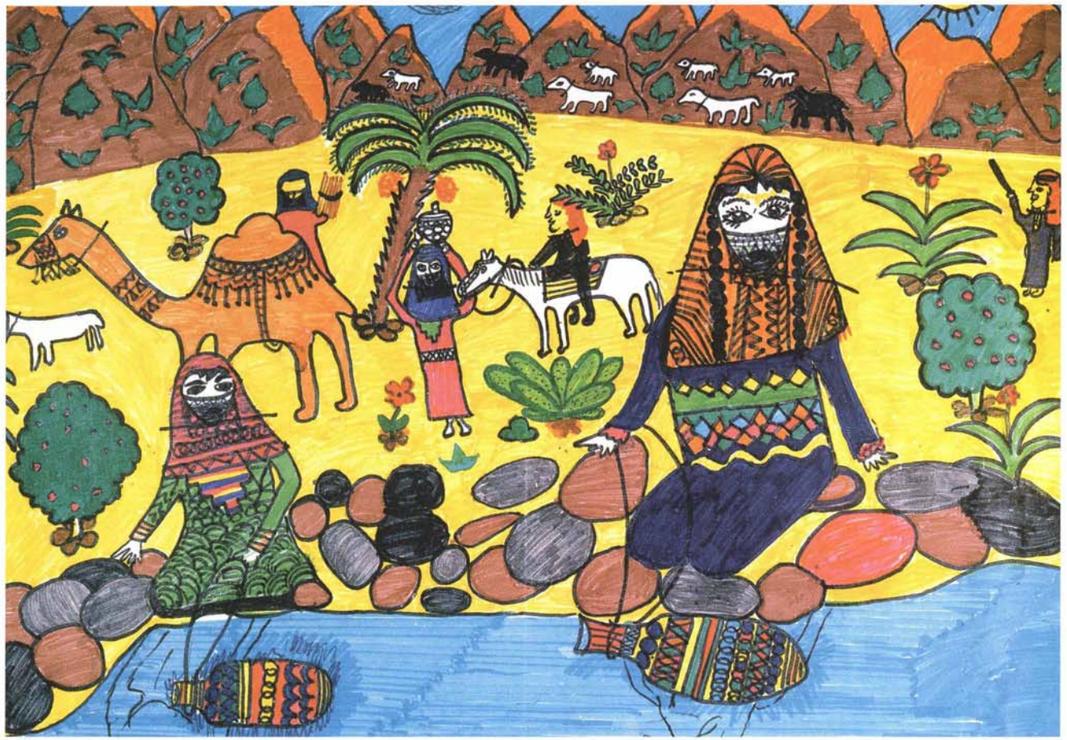


BY: **Rim al-Jarbu',** AGE: **11,** CITY: **Riyadh**

Traditional houses in Riyadh.

BY: **Wardah Al Talaq,** AGE: **14,** CITY: **Dhahran**

Picking dates in a palm grove.



BY: **Yusuf al-Maliki,** AGE: **13,** CITY: **Tayif**

Bedouin women fill water containers at a stream.

BY: **Nadiyah al-'Aydarus,** AGE: **14,** CITY: **Riyadh**

Coffee is an essential part of Arab hospitality. Beans are kept in a decorated container, lightly roasted in a shallow, long-handled ladle, and stirred with the spoon. The bellows keeps the fire hot.

BY: **Naji ash-Shammas,** AGE: **9,** CITY: **Dhahran**

Letters of the Arabic alphabet, of all stripes.

BY: **Ghadir 'Inan,** AGE: **14,** CITY: **Riyadh**

An antique wooden door opens onto a desert scene.

The South American Leaf

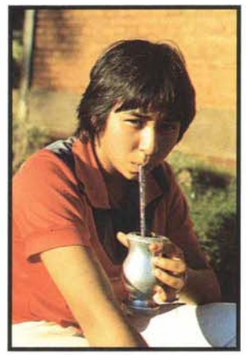
Written and Photographed by Larry Luxner

ARGENTINE PRESIDENT CARLOS MENEM DRINKS IT. SO DO MILLIONS OF ARGENTINES, URUGUAYANS AND CHILEANS—AND SO, SURPRISINGLY, DO MANY SYRIANS, LEBANESE AND ARABS OF THE GULF REGION.

What everyone is imbibing is *yerba maté* (pronounced YER-ba MAH-tay), a tea-like decoction of the leaves of *Ilex paraguariensis*, a hardy but finicky, small evergreen tree related to holly but grown only in the semi-tropical lowlands that make up southeastern Brazil, southern Paraguay and the hitchhiker's thumb of Argentine territory between the two.

A bitter, slightly smoky drink, yerba maté was a staple beverage for centuries among the indigenous Guaraní people, and Jesuit missionaries first commercialized it. Later, on Argentina's vast pampas, gauchos subsisting on a frontier diet drank maté for the vitamins it contains as well as for the pleasure of a hot, revivifying, non-intoxicating drink. Since then, yerba maté has grown into a $350-million industry employing 400,000 people in the three producing nations. Surprisingly, many of the brew's devotees are to be found in homes and cafés in the Arab world, especially in Syria and Lebanon.

In fact, of the 200,000 hectares (500,000 acres) that grow yerba maté in Argentina, a respectable eight percent are given over to export production, much of it shipped to Arab countries. The biggest customer abroad last year was Syria, which bought 5.8 million kilograms (12.8 million pounds) of yerba maté valued at around $7.4 million, according to Argentine government statistics. Other large importers include Chile, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It is neighboring Uruguay, however, that boasts the highest per-capita consumption of maté in the world.



The only way to drink maté: A young Argentine sips the brew from a calabash through a bombilla, *a metal straw. Luxury maté sets feature calabashes with silver fittings or calabash shapes made entirely of silver.*

"During the time the Ottoman Empire ruled Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, many Arabs emigrated to Argentina, and there they learned to drink yerba maté," explained Juan Carlos Peña, director of Cruz de Malta SA, which handles 70 percent of Argentina's yerba maté exports to the Arab world. "They worked hard, made money and returned to the Middle East, but they kept the custom of drinking yerba maté."

Abel Actis, manager of Establecimiento Las Marias SA, Argentina's largest producer, added, "When the immigrants who lived here returned to Syria, the only thing they took back with them that was typical of Argentina was yerba maté."

According to experts, the leaf of the Argentine variety of *Ilex paraguariensis* is so prized in Syria that inferior blends from Paraguay and Brazil are occasionally falsely labeled in Arabic to lure the unwary into thinking it comes from Argentina. In Damascus alone such counterfeit brands have carried at least a half-dozen names.

"The Arabs are particular, and they always give us good business. We don't know how much more we could export to the Middle East if the product were not being counterfeited," remarks Luis de Bernardi, a maté expert in Buenos Aires.

In the United States, only some $400,000 worth of maté is consumed annually, mostly by Argentines in New York, Miami and Los Angeles. One US firm, Cawy Bottling Co., has begun canning a carbonated drink, named Matérva, made from yerba maté

extract. And more and more, yerba maté is turning up at health-food stores.

Indeed, the extract of *Ilex paraguariensis*, say its aficionados, calms and energizes at the same time—traits similar to those claimed for the ginseng root—while providing a dose of vitamins along the way. It contains less tannin than tea and less caffeine than either tea or coffee. "The gaucho lived on wheat and water and maté," said de Bernardi. Yerba maté "has high concentrations of carbohydrates, phosphorus, iron, calcium and vitamins C, B_1 and B_2."

The beverage is made with both the *palo*, or stem, of the plant and the *hoja*, or leaf; a third component is *polvo*, or leaf powder, the product of a milling process. According to Rogelio Llambi, an Argentine native who lives in Paraguay and is president of Yerba Maté Asuncion SA, there are more than 200 brands of maté on the market. Like coffee and tea, preparation of the drink varies from country to country.

"Chileans, for example, like only the leaf, which is more expensive than the grade consumed in Syria, which contains both *palo* and *polvo*. Paraguayans mix the leaf or the powder with ice water and call it *tereré*," explains Llambi.

At the Yerba Maté Rosamonte SA factory, which employs some 200 workers, controller Angel Rogosinski showed how freshly picked maté leaves are passed rapidly over a fire for 20 to 30 seconds to remove humidity. From there, they go to the *secado*, a second drying process that lasts just over half a day. Then the leaves are put through the *canchadora*, where they are shredded and packed into 50-kilogram (110-pound) jute sacks. These sacks are then left to age for six months to two years. This final process—the *estacionamiento*—is crucial in determining the quality of the final product and the depth of its flavor.

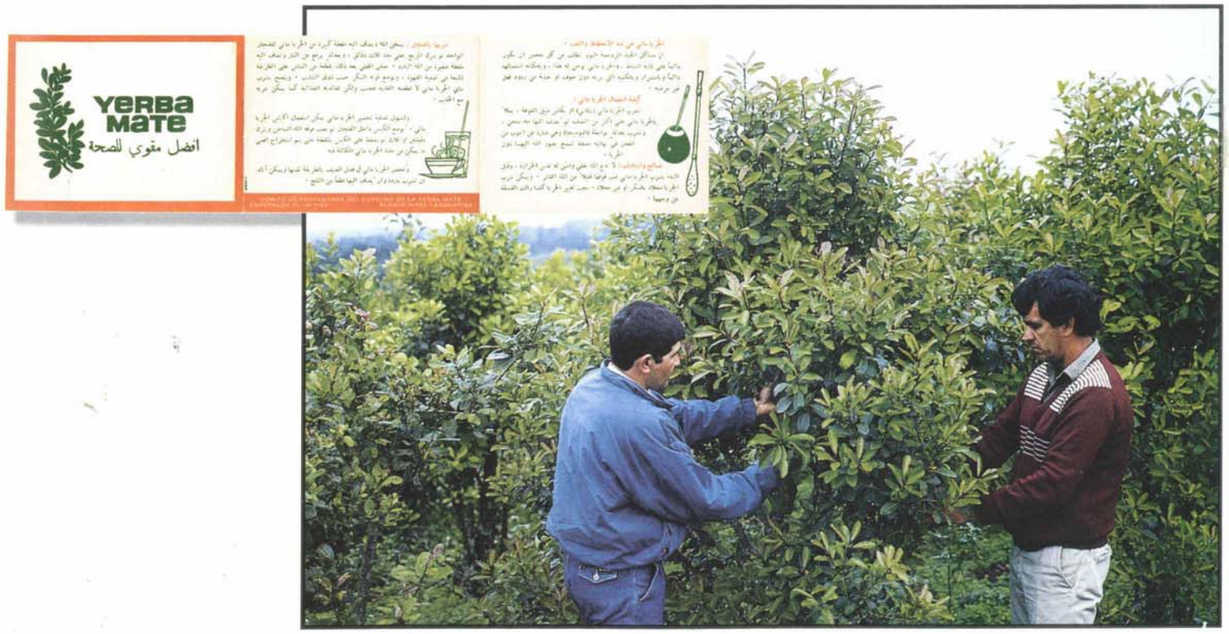
Export packages of yerba maté are labeled in Arabic. Below them is a silver bombilla, *whose perforated bulbous end keeps the maté leaf out of the drinker's mouth.*

Ilex paraguariensis does not grow much beyond shrub height when it is cultivated and its leaves are regularly picked. Below left, an information pamphlet in Arabic explains how to brew maté, and extols its virtues.

Aged maté is sorted into prelabeled packets ranging from 250 grams (one-half pound) to two kilograms (4½ pounds) and trucked to Buenos Aires for distribution. Currently, prices average around $1.40 per kilo, making a cup of yerba maté cheaper than almost any other beverage—at least in the country where it's grown.

Despite efforts to market Argentine yerba maté overseas, there is still little demand for the plant outside the Middle East and southern Latin America. In 1992 the government of Carlos Menem—himself of partly Middle Eastern ancestry—disbanded the Yerba Maté Regulatory Commission, whose purpose had been to protect the markets of the country's 14,000 *yerbateros*, or maté producers, by limiting cultivation. Now, as the Argentine maté supply rises in a deregulated economy, many in the industry are increasingly looking to the more lucrative, higher-priced export market for an economic lifeline—and looking harder at the Middle East.

Larry Luxner is the editor of South America Report, *a monthly business newsletter published in Bethesda, Maryland.*

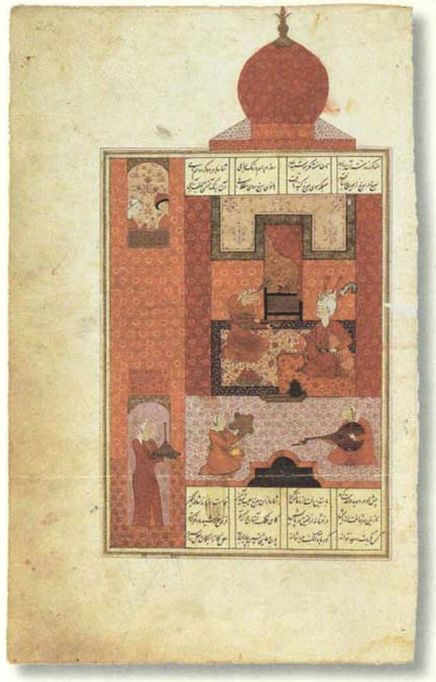


TOP: RICARDO GUERRA

Squatting behind his seated patient, the doctor applies a fearsome-looking cupping glass to the young man's back. Turning around, the patient picks this inopportune moment to demand that his treatment be on credit. A noisy argument ensues, and a crowd of colorfully turbaned, bearded men presses close to enjoy the spectacle. But it turns out that the doctor is a quack and the "patient" is his conniving son; together, they have set up their act to draw the crowd. The pair proceed to beg for alms, and then vanish into the city.

Treasures From the Neva

WRITTEN BY RICHARD COVINGTON
PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ARCH



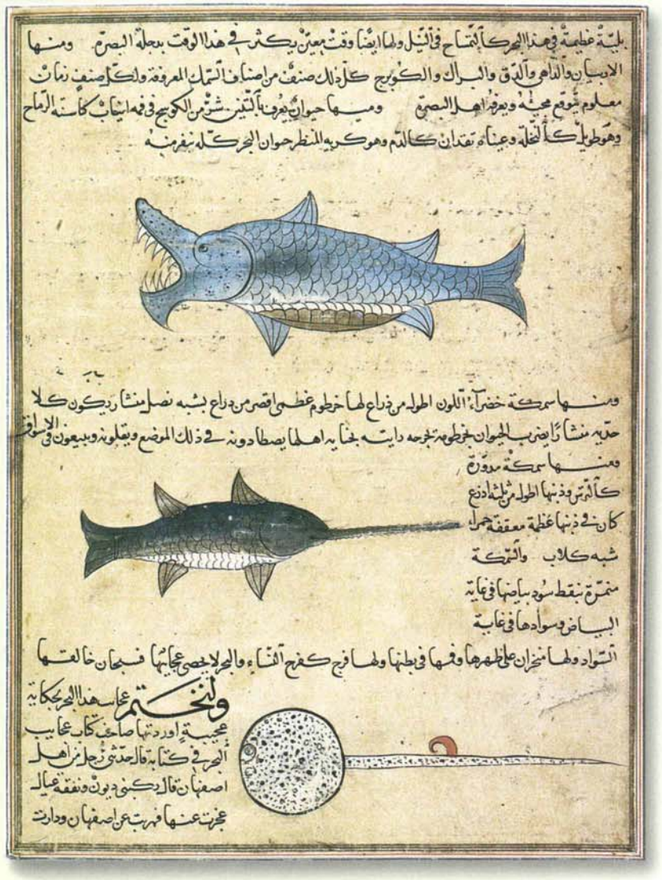
LEFT:
Maqamat
Iraq
CA. 1240

ABOVE:
Khamsah
Shiraz
1543

Though Abu Muhammad al-Qasim ibn 'Ali al-Hariri al-Basri is one of the great names in Arabic literature, and his Maqamat *were widely circulated and often recited from memory, only about a dozen copies of the text are known that include illustrations. The 50 short tales recount the mischievous adventures, disguises and roadside encounters of a silver-tongued rogue, one Abu Zaid al-Saruji. This copy (opposite) probably once included 120 miniatures, of which 96, rich in pattern and detail, are preserved.*

Five independent epic poems by the 12th-century Persian poet Nizami make up the Khamsa; *one of them is the romantic biography of the Sassanid prince Bahram Gur, who married seven princesses from seven lands. At left he visits the red pavilion of the Slavic princess; one of the tales she tells him inspired the Puccini opera* Turandot.

The scene at left, and others like it, appear in an illustrated book of picaresque tales from 13th-century Iraq known as the *Maqamat*, and it is a highlight among some 190 rare Arabic miniatures, Persian and Mughal paintings, decorated copies of the Qur'an and illustrated manuscripts that have lain hidden for more than a century in the Institute for Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg, Russia. After enthusiastic receptions at exhibitions in Lugano, Switzerland,



The Wonders and Curiosities of Creation
Iran or Iraq
14TH C.

Zakariya' ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Qazwini was born in Iran in 1203 and served as a judge in several Mesopotamian cities. His cosmography, one of the Muslim world's best-loved works of popular science, described the realms beyond the earth in one part and, in the second, the earth, its elements, climates, geography and creatures—including plants, animals, humans and jinns. *Above, from one of the oldest manuscripts of this work, a page showing a stingray, a sawfish and—possibly—a shark.*

Carpet-like designs separate the first and second chapters of the Qur'an in the copy at right, and others divide the holy text's 114 suras *into four approximately equal sections, a frequent feature of West African transcriptions of the Qur'an.*

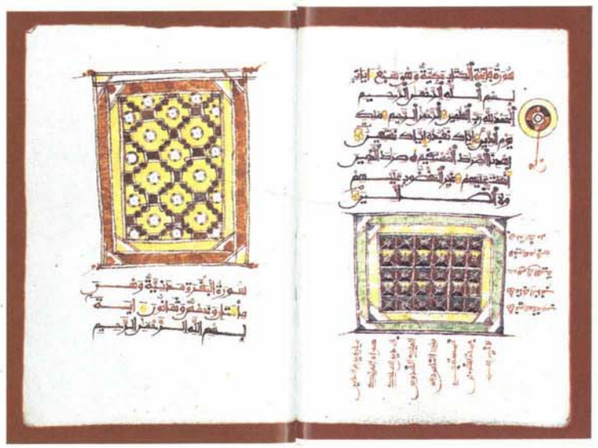
misplaced—and other oddities, as well as manuals of horsemanship and the arts of war. Some 900 years after the earliest known printed text in Arabic (See *Aramco World*, March-April 1981) the Islamic tradition of the handwritten, illuminated manuscript continued to thrive, testimony to the great care lavished on texts as objects of art as well as knowledge or entertainment. To layman and scholar alike, the exhibition is a revelation.

"Pages of Perfection: Islamic Paintings and Calligraphy from the Oriental Institute, St. Petersburg," was curated by the Metropolitan Museum's Marie Lukens Swietochowski and Stefano Carboni; they describe it as the most historically significant display of Islamic art in the US or Europe in more than 60 years. It premiered last fall at the Petit Palais in Paris and was shown this summer at the Villa Favorita in Lugano.

"The *Maqamat* is exceedingly rare," explains Harvard University professor Stuart Cary Welch, former head of the Islamic Department at the Metropolitan Museum. "It is filled with an astoundingly vivid description of life in 13th-century Iraq. The artist—or artists—put their heart and soul into the illustrations. You can almost hear and smell their world, with the people gossiping, the animals braying. It's the observation of humanity almost in the raw that makes the manuscript so buoyant."

Welch is also an international authority on the Persian *Shah-namah*, *The Book of Kings*, on Mughal paintings and other Islamic arts. His own latest book, to be published in the fall, concentrates on the "St. Petersburg *Muraqqa'*," or royal album, a group of Persian and Mughal paintings and calligraphies from the 16th through the 18th centuries. Like the *Shah-namah*, many rulers commissioned such albums and, although two are on view at the exhibition, it is the St. Petersburg copy that is one of the stand-out masterpieces of the entire collection.

"In these manuscripts, you find people whose humanity comes right out at you in an appealing and friendly way," says Welch. "One hopes an exhibition of this sort reveals not only the responsible, serious scholarship of people in the former Soviet Union, but also, through these works of art, the human appeal of the cultures that they represent and which we need to learn about. You can see it. You don't have to be an expert to sense it.



Qur'an
Kano, Nigeria
MID-19TH C.

and in Paris, some of the best of the St. Petersburg collection is on view through December 10 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

This is a jewel-like assemblage, comparable only to the better-known collections in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the British Library in London and Topkapı Sarayı in Istanbul. But this trove has been almost a secret, with few items published in any language but Russian, and none put on public view, in the 176 years of its existence.

As a whole, the collection evokes an Islamic millennium passionately devoted to the propagation of beauty, literature and science. The exhibition actually covers roughly 1400 years, starting with a fragment from a seventh-century copy of the Qur'an transcribed on parchment, and ending with exquisitely patterned 19th-century Qur'an copies from Syria, Nigeria and present-day Tajikistan.

As witness to the breadth of Islamic culture, the display encompasses traveler's tales and cosmological myths, love stories and tableaux of life at court, poetry anthologies and books on ethics, a charming and an eerily accurate bestiary portraying a sawfish, a rhinoceros—its horn somewhat

"I think it's terribly important not to be intimidated by this material," Welch advises. "Some people groan and say: 'Oh, I know nothing about Islam and I can't read Arabic. Why should I go?' They should use their eyes and delight in the works. Look at the calligraphy in terms of a kind of visual music. The changes in size of script, the shading and color of ink, the few accents of red and the brown-black ink against the creamy white paper—these are wonderful things to contemplate."

The exhibition appears thanks to a combination of serendipity and determination. Swiss-born Archduchess Francesca von Habsburg, daughter of Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza, one of the world's most influential art collectors, and herself a respected collector, was in St. Petersburg at the Institute for Oriental Studies in 1989 doing research that led to an exhibition of Tibetan art. As she worked, she gradually became aware of the extent of the Institute's mostly hidden and closely guarded holdings. She won the trust of the curators only when she invited them to view her Tibetan exhibition at the family's Villa Favorita Museum in Lugano, where, she says, they were sufficiently impressed that they "practically begged" her to return to St. Petersburg to see the rest of their vast collection.

There, after she had pored over everything from papyrus manuscripts to Chinese scrolls, the curators at last brought out the incomparable *Muraqqa'*.

"It had taken me two trips to St. Petersburg and three months before I could even get my foot in the door of the Institute," she recalls. "When I finally laid eyes on the miniatures, I was in awe." On the spot, she determined to bring the cream of the Islamic collection to the Villa Favorita.

Awed, too, was the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Only days after the arrival of hasty Polaroids and black-and-white photocopies of slides from von Habsburg, and urged on by its Islamic Department, the museum's exhibitions office dispatched Stefano Carboni to Lugano for a closer look. This was August of last year; only two months later, the Metropolitan had committed itself to an exhibition for the following September—an extremely quick turn-around in the museum world, where exhibition calendars are often filled years in advance. "We decided to do it as soon as possible," Carboni explains. "We didn't want the exhibition to circulate too much before we had it."

In mounting the exhibition, von Habsburg's overriding concern—apart from making the Islamic treasures available for public viewing—was to use the show to generate desperately needed funds for the Institute for Oriental Studies itself. When she began negotiating the show, the scholars in St. Petersburg were earning a mere $25 a month, and even those meager salaries dried up after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Russian government has since resumed paying partial salaries, but the Institute's budget has been drastically cut. Through Arts Restoration for Cultural Heritage (ARCH), von Habsburg's Lugano-based foundation dedicated to the preservation of cultural treasures in Eastern Europe and the former USSR, she drummed up funds to improve salaries and pay for manuscript restorations.

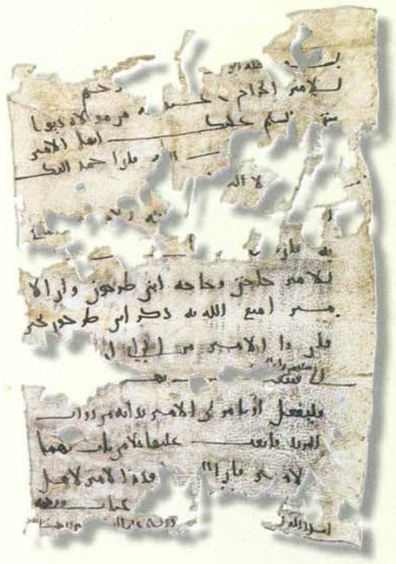
Now, the Institute budget is supplemented by fees charged for lending the works and by royalty payments for postcards and catalog reproductions, and senior scholars earn the equivalent of $400 a month. "This is considered a good salary," says von Habsburg. "The loan fees keep these people, many of whom are reaching retirement age, alive. It's the ARCH foundation's greatest achievement."

Oleg Akimushkin, head of the Middle Eastern Department of the Institute for Oriental Studies, was "amazed and curious" to witness the reaction the paintings have evoked in the West—and deeply grateful that ARCH is restoring his beloved manuscripts. "Previously, the Russian government financed this conservation," explains Akimushkin, "but our Institute has suffered greatly under the present budget. Francesca's proposition came at a very opportune time."

So far, the ARCH foundation has raised more than $200,000 from sponsors to stabilize flaking paint, consolidate crumbling bindings, repair tears and fumigate against bugs. In the case of the *Muraqqa'*, each page of the 98-page manuscript was unbound and encased in a separate mounting a centimeter (0.4") thick.

As the extensive restorations progress, Akimushkin expects manuscripts now undergoing conservation to be placed on exhibit in either St. Petersburg or Moscow in the coming years. "With Islamic countries on Russia's borders, the interest in this exhibition should be very high," he predicts.

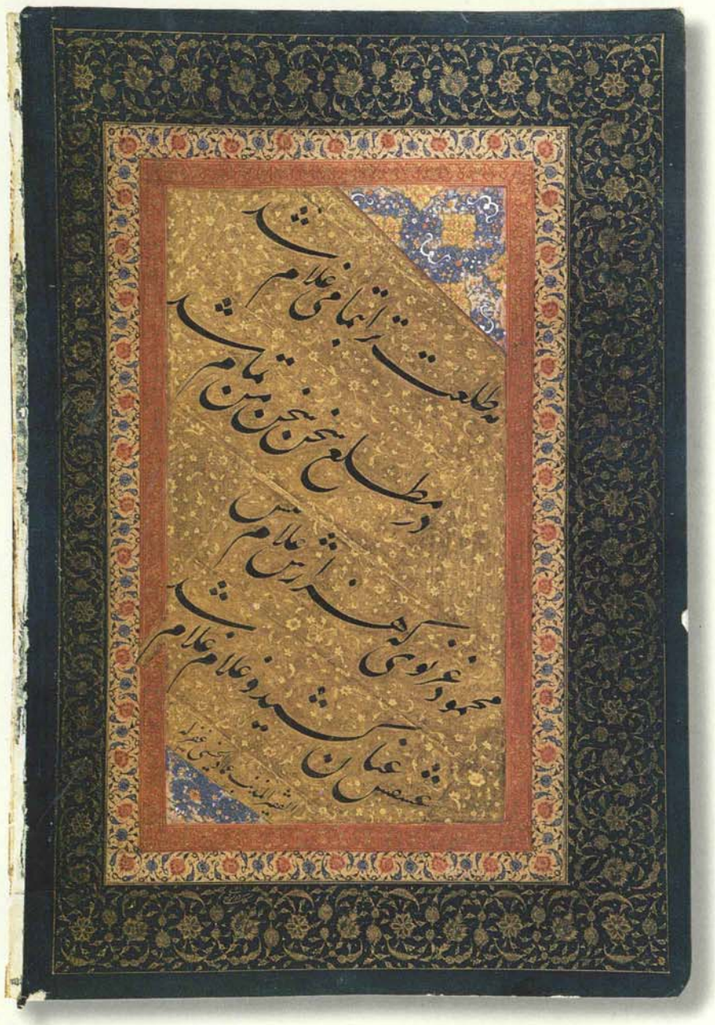
This badly worm-eaten letter, written on leather, was found in what is today Uzbekistan. Because it names four individuals known from Arab chronicles, it tends to confirm the value of those chronicles as historical sources, as well as illuminating the political situation of the time.



Letter
Sogdiana
718-719

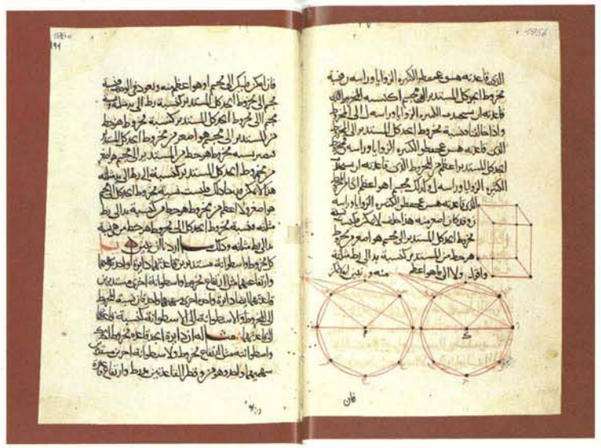
The St. Petersburg Muraqaa' *is a group of extremely fine Mughal and Persian miniatures bound into an album together with extraordinary pieces by the great Persian calligrapher 'Imad al-Hasani. One Mirza Mahdi commissioned the album in 1734/1735 to bring together some of the miniatures and calligraphies he owned. By the time the selection was completed, his magnificent collection had been enlarged by works looted from the Mughal court. The quatrain below dates from 1598/1599.*

Situated on the banks of the Neva River a few doors down from the Hermitage, the Institute for Oriental Studies occupies the former Romanov palace of Grand Duke Michael, the son of Czar Nicholas I. Designed in the spirit of the age, it is a grand, rambling 19th-century structure, and its colonnaded ballroom, with its majestic crystal chandeliers, is now a huge library of some 80,000 manuscripts in 45 languages. At the heart of the collection are the 10,000 Islamic works, all little-known outside a small circle of mostly Russian scholars.



Muraqqa'
Qazwin, Persia
1598-1599

A look at world figures quickly shows just how staggeringly large this collection is: Of the roughly five million manuscripts estimated to have been produced in both the pre-Islamic Middle East and the Islamic world, only 630,000 survive, and of these, only 200,000 date from the period before 1600. The earliest pre-Islamic manuscripts are written on vellum, made from the hide of gazelles, sheep and calves. There are works on Egyptian papyrus, on paper imported from China, and on the Samarkand paper that dominated the region from the ninth to the 14th century (See *Aramco World*, September-October 1982).



Euclid's Book on the Elements
1188

Ever since Peter the Great, the czars had campaigned to obtain artifacts offering cultural insight, the better to fathom the cultures and beliefs—and ultimately the politics—of Russia's many Central Asian and Middle Eastern neighbors. In 1819, French diplomat Jean-Louis Rousseau, a descendant of the philosopher and a veteran of many Middle Eastern postings, sold the first 700 Islamic books and manuscripts to what was then called the Asian Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences, precursor of the present institute. In the years that followed, directors of the Asian Museum pressured the czarist government to instruct foreign consuls posted to the Middle East to acquire manuscripts wherever and whenever they could. Russia's annexation of the Central Asian provinces in the 1880's brought several thousand additional invaluable works to St. Petersburg.

On a bitter February day shortly after the 1917 Russian Revolution, Institute curator Ignatii Krachovski arrived at the Winter Palace in an open sleigh to spirit away a priceless collection of 40 manuscripts—a tiny fraction of Czar Nicholas II's private library—to the safety of the Asian Museum. Tucked under the curator's fur cape were Arabic translations of Christian works, given to the czar as a present by the Patriarch of Antioch, Grigori al-Hadad—among them a three-volume Arabic Bible unmatched even in the Vatican Library.

During the Stalinist purges of the 1930's, dozens of Islamic specialists were either shot or deported to the gulags: Stalin feared they could become defenders of the Muslim populations in the southern Soviet Union that the regime was bent on subduing. But the books themselves remained untouched, and the Asian Museum was restructured as the Institute for Oriental Studies in 1930. Since Stalin's era, bureaucracy and lack of funds have hobbled Russian scholars far more than outright suppression.

Now, the international scholarly community can turn its attention to these works through the exhibition. According to Carboni of the Metropolitan Museum, knowledge of miniature paintings from the 14th through the 16th century is expected to make particular strides. For instance, a copy of the Christian Epistles translated into Arabic in 1341 in Damascus is a prized piece in a scholarly puzzle. Pinpointing the date and place of its creation has allowed other, similar manuscripts to be grouped definitively into a 14th-century "school of Damascus" style. A 16-line letter written in 719 by a local ruler in Sogdiana, in modern Uzbekistan, confirms historical accounts about the period immediately after the Arab conquest whose accuracy had been questioned, and also gives paleographers a valuable fixed point in their studies. Another 14th-century manuscript, a panegyric for the Egyptian sultan Al-Nasir Nasir-al-Din Muhammad—and for his nephew, who commissioned the work—is assisting scholars in dating other Egyptian works with greater accuracy.

At its height in the 10th century, the Islamic caliphate stretched nearly 10,000 kilometers (6200 miles) from Andalusia in southern Spain to the Indus River Valley. By the 12th century, when the largest libraries in Europe—in the monasteries of Durham in England and Cluny in France—could claim no more than 500 volumes, there were collections in mosques and in private hands in Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Cordoba, Bukhara and elsewhere that comprised 10,000 books or more. In many of them, readers were provided writing paper and pens without charge to enable them to copy the works for their own libraries.

In Islamic tradition, the acquisition of knowledge is regarded as essential: "Seek knowledge, even as far as China," the saying goes. Muslim cultures of the Middle Ages, through their translations of texts, preserved Greek and Roman medicine, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and other sciences—and achieved as well unprecedented intellectual and technological innovations of their own, which they passed on.

"It is impossible to imagine the European Renaissance without access to the discoveries of Islamic civilization," observes Akimushkin. And without Arabic translations of classical Greek and Roman texts, the pace of civilization in Western Europe would surely have been set back centuries, with vital knowledge likely lost forever. A 12th-century manuscript in the exhibit, of unknown provenance, is a translation of Euclid's *Elements* in 280 pages of text and precise diagrams. Almost 500 exquisite, botanically accurate illustrations of healing plants come from *Kitab al-Hasha'ish*, *The Book of Medicinal Herbs*, another manuscript virtually unknown to international scholars in the Persian version. Its lineage goes back to the *Materia Medica* of the first-century Greek physician Dioscorides, a work that was very widely copied and translated for hundreds of years (See *Aramco World*, March-April 1987). The 17th-century Persian text on display is itself a translation of an Arabic version made in the late ninth or early 10th century by Ishaq ibn Hunayn.

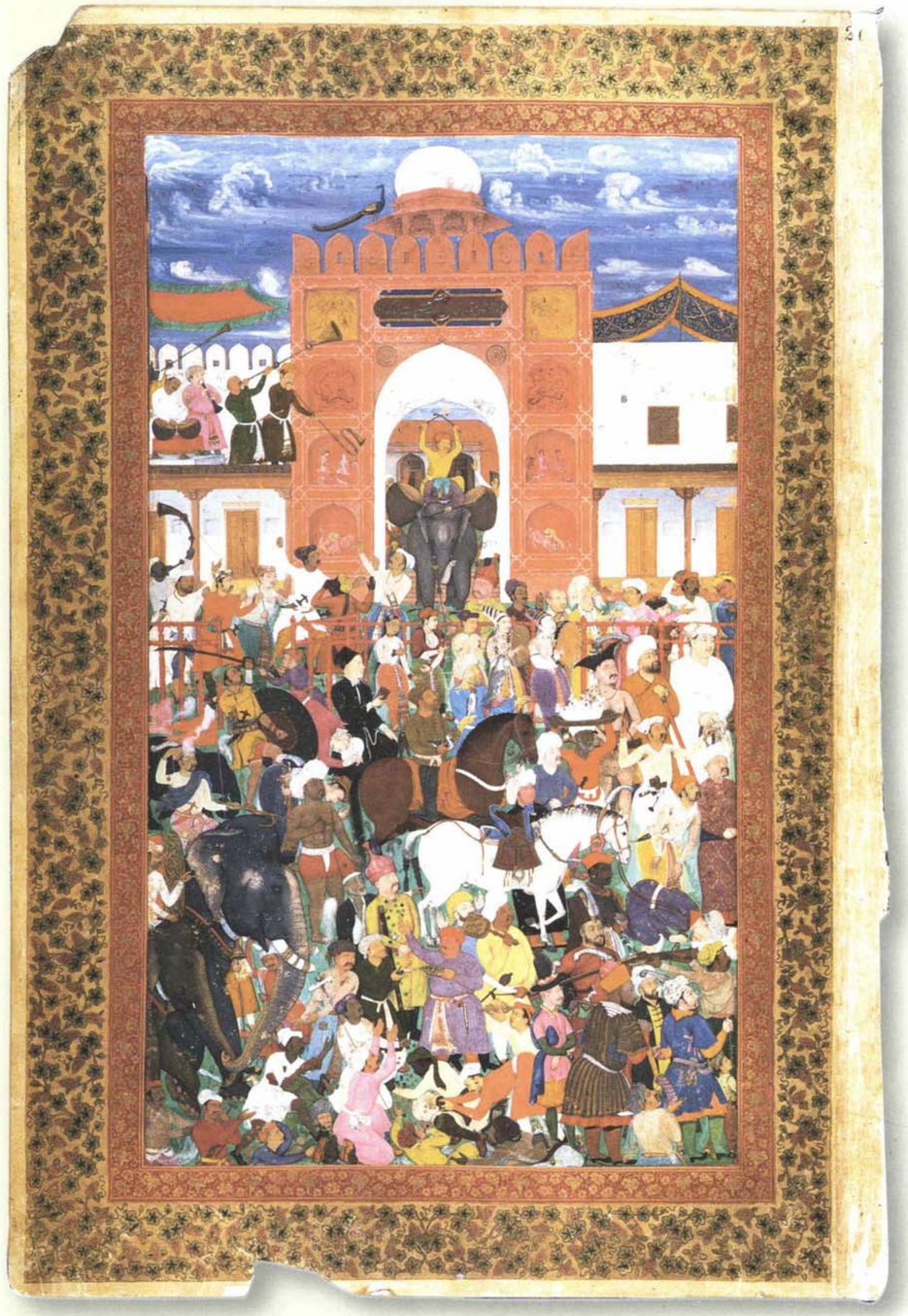
Similarly, European poetry owes a profound debt to a popular, itinerant Arab bard. The 12th-century poet claimed by the Spanish as Ibn Guzman—whose works inspired Provençal troubadours and contributed to the revival of the art of poetry in early Renaissance Europe—was in fact Ibn Quzman, a Muslim who lived in Andalusia. A volume of his poems, with the prosaic title *A Guide to Achieving Goals by Remembering Various Situations*, was donated to the Institute's collection in 1896 by the German baron David Ginzburg, a Berlin sugar refiner and connoisseur of Arabic poetry. The St. Petersburg Arabist Viktor Rosen wrote that this unique manuscript, with its many Romance loan words, shed light on the cross-fertilization of Arabic and Romance literature in the early Middle Ages.

In addition to the pursuit of knowledge, many of the royal courts of the era also spent great resources either waging or preparing for war. The quaintly illustrated 15th-century Mamluk *Book of Sciences* is in fact a manual of martial techniques that elucidates, for instance, the proper way to hold a lance to avoid breaking one's hands; how to confound enemy cavalry with spiraling formations; and, in recipe form, how to prepare explosives. One panel depicts soldiers bearing the precursors of Molotov cocktails, fuses lit, guaranteed "to enable 10 men thus equipped to rout an entire army, however powerful." (See *Aramco World*, March-April 1995)

The translation of Euclid's Elements *at left is a prime example of the works of classical knowledge preserved and expanded by scholars of the Muslim world and later passed on to the West. Euclid's text, written about 325 bc, remains the foundation of geometry.*

Ghiyat al-Din Muhammad Ridwi translated Ishaq ibn Hunayn's Arabic version of Dioscorides's Materia Medica *into Persian, but that Arabic version was itself based on a Syrian translation of the prolific Greek original. At the top of the page below, a black-pepper vine curls; below it are two different plants called "water-pepper."*

The Book of Medicinal Herbs
Isfahan
1658



Masterful composition and a brilliant palette characterize the work of one of the Mughal court's greatest painters, Abu-l-Hassan ibn Aqa Ridha, who was given the honorific "Wonder of the Age" by Emperor Jehangir. In this overflowing picture from the celebrations surrounding his coronation, the emperor has just passed by in the parade moving from left to right; in his wake follow a courtier scattering gold coins, a poet carrying his paean, wrestlers, grooms, bodyguards, foreigners, falconers, mahouts, soldiers, dancing girls and many more—yet every face is different, each figure is an individual person. Each of the 98 cardboard folios of the Muraqqa' *bears a miniature on one side and up to five pieces of calligraphy on the other, all beautifully mounted and bordered. Assembly and decoration of the album began in 1747 and was completed 12 years later.*

Muraqqa'
Agra
1605-1606

The artists and calligraphers who produced such works were greatly honored in the Arab world; the ninth-century Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun is said to have paid one calligrapher the weight of his work in gold. So vital was the transmission of both holy writ and secular artistic expression that the *qalam*, the reed pen used to copy the manuscripts, became known as a "second tongue." Aesthetically inclined rulers maintained manuscript studios employing 25 or more masters in calligraphy, miniature painting, bookbinding and decorative arts. The shops of *warraq*s, where writing materials and books were sold, often became intellectual oases where the cultivated elite could discuss literature, philosophy, science and religion.

Among the geniuses produced by the era was the early 16th-century Safavid Persian painter Sultan Muhammad Tabrizi, an artist Welch compares to Raphael in his finesse and power and to Picasso in his unpredictable stylistic inventiveness. In the exhibition, Sultan Muhammad is represented by a *Shah-namah* executed in Tabriz in 1524. "He was a painter-mystic," Welch declares, "a very religious person, and that spirit emerges most gracefully in his mature work."

Not every work from his hand was a masterpiece, however. In the miniature depicting a rebellious Persian prince playing polo with his father's enemies, the figures appear stiff and off-balance. "There's good reason for that," Welch maintains. "The picture was one of Sultan Muhammad's moonlighting efforts. Here he's earning a little money, maybe in the bazaar." Marie Swietochowski, however, points out that the manuscript's colophon says it was made in the "Dar al-Sultana."

By embracing more than a thousand years of creative effort across the Islamic world, the exhibition also points up the range of stylistic diversity from one region to another. In one Uzbek volume from Bukhara, for instance, two lovers in a garden offer one another gifts as the wind rustles through a cypress tree and a maple with leaves of autumnal red, yellow and gold.

"There is a kind of arabesque rhythm surging through the miniature," Welch observes. "In this sense, most Persian painting—and I could add Uzbek as well—compares to rhymed verse. It's formal and restrained, whereas Mughal painting is closer to very sensitive prose, more reportorial. The figures in Persian paintings are not individualized, they are types. In Mughal works, every individual is a clear portrait, a spitting image. You know their ages, personalities, practically where they were born, just by studying the paintings."

To make his case, the professor cites a characteristic example from the *Muraqqa'*. The painting focuses on a *sadhu*, or mystic, who is being visited by a Mughal nobleman. But there is much more in the picture. "You've got everything under the sun going on," whoops Welch. "You've got camels, goats, elephants and musicians playing kettledrums—and in the center sits this regal *sadhu*, a skeletally-thin gentleman with a long white beard, receiving a nobleman as if he himself were the emperor. Such a portrait of a spiritual royal encampment gives tremendous insight into the ways of these respected men. It brings Persian aesthetic technique together with the knowledge of the indigenous peoples that fascinated their Mughal rulers."

The incisive characterization in the portraits—particularly in the 17th-century Mughal and Persian miniatures—turns out to be one of the exhibition's unexpected strengths. In one painting from Isfahan, a young Safavid ruler sits serenely puffing on a water pipe as his courtiers kneel around him, one watchful, another treacherous, a third browbeaten and wearied. The expressiveness of this dubious court is worthy of a Rembrandt or Frans Hals, and in fact, what appears to be a Dutchman, dressed in gold brocade and lace, leans forward with a match to relight the shah's pipe.

The Mughal courts first viewed Western art thanks to the arrival of 16th-century Jesuit missionaries, who were followed by traders from the Dutch East India Company and other merchant enterprises. The Mughal emperors Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jahan all encouraged the

Luqman's Fables
FIRST HALF, 17TH C.

Two groups of folk tales widely circulated among various peoples of the Middle East are illustrated in this manuscript with unsophisticated drawings that accord well with the half-popular, half-literary style of the text. Luqman's Fables *or, more formally,* Tales Told by the Learned *includes the moral story of a stag who was proud of his fine rack of antlers but deplored his spindly legs. When the hunters appeared, however, his legs might have saved his life, spindly though they were, had his antlers not become tangled in the branches of a tree.*

Only half a century after the death of Ibn Quzman of Cordoba, this unique manuscript of 149 of his zajals, *or songs, was completed in Syria. Written in the Andalusian dialect of Arabic, its style and language point to definite connections between Arabic poetry and the poetry of the troubadours of southern France, and demonstrate the cultural cross-fertilization of the 12th century.*

A Guide to Achieving Goals...
Safad, Syria
1204

Horsemanship—including the arts of war—played an important role in the life of the Mamluk ruling class, and manuals like this one laid out the things a competent aristocrat should know and do. This manuscript, however, was copied for Jarbash al-Silahdar al-Maliki al-Ashrafi, a Mamluk officer in charge of troop training, and it includes additional information on firearms, grenades, incendiary devices, signaling and even a kind of primitive artillery. The text is full of technical terms that demonstrate the long-standing links between the countries of the western Mediterranean and the Middle East, and the manual is in effect a snapshot of the earliest days of modern warfare, when the possibilities of gunpowder were just beginning to be explored. This illustration shows a fire arrow, two fire lances, a grenade, a complex incendiary device—and a hand-held cannon with the shot just emerging from its mouth.

painters in their ateliers to copy the European works. "It was the appeal of the exotic," explains Welch, "the equivalent of French artists incorporating *chinoiserie*."

The Islamic painters quickly absorbed Western influences, assimilating techniques of chiaroscuro and perspective, and even going so far as to place their subjects in front of idealized landscape backgrounds. Some of their works, such as "The Sacrifice of Abraham" in the exhibition, are unabashed imitations of Flemish paintings, except that they are rendered in reds, golds and blues far more flamboyant than on any northern European palette. In a spare ink drawing of a turbaned man with kind, melancholy eyes, aquiline nose and sparse goatee (See inside back cover), a 17th-century Persian master, Rida'i 'Abbasi, pays uncanny homage to Albrecht Dürer. In his time, observes Welch, 'Abbasi was "roundly criticized for consorting with lowlife characters, frequenting taverns and places of ill repute—a sort of Caravaggio of his era—but he was utterly brilliant in his psychological insights."

Manual of Horsemanship
Egypt or Syria
1474

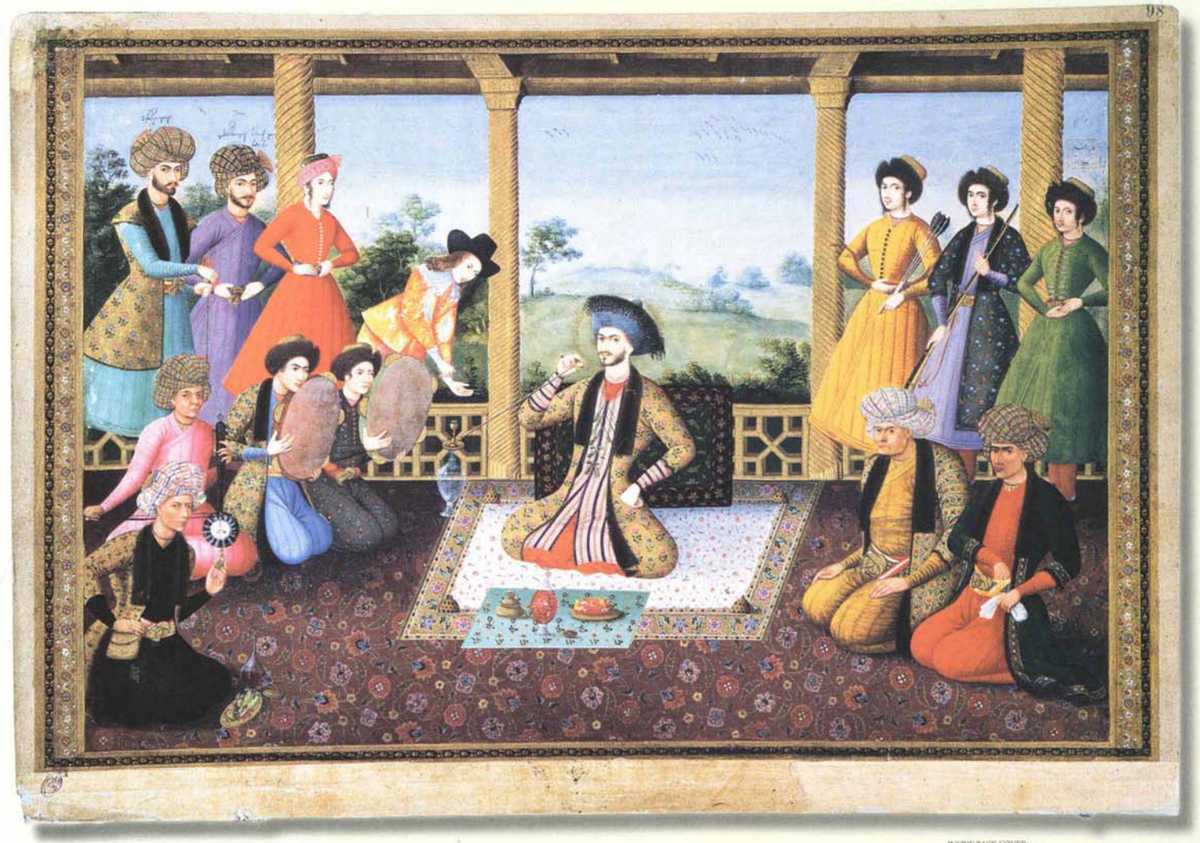
In addition to the miniatures and other illustrated texts, the illuminated copies of the Qur'an, with their astonishing range of calligraphy and their ornately flowered frontispieces, are another striking find. Among the unusual volumes is one copied out with a Byelorussian interlinear translation—but the Byelorussian too is written in Arabic script. "The heart of Islam is of course the Qur'an," explains Gilles Chazal, chief curator of the Petit Palais. "Calligraphy was invented to render the holy text as beautiful as possible. In Paris, it was a great discovery for many people that calligraphy had an aesthetic side, almost like abstract art." Even Arabic speakers, however, find reading the medieval texts slow going, just as an English speaker might slog through a handwritten copy of Chaucer.

Apart from the Qur'an, perhaps the most widely-known book in the exhibition is the Persian *Shah-namah*, which every Iranian schoolchild still uses as a reader. In it, the Persians poached the character of Alexander the Great from the Greeks and transformed him into their own national hero, a practice followed in other epics as well. "It was a way of asserting that Persia was the center of the world," observes Chazal. In one brilliantly executed miniature by Sultan Muhammad Tabrizi, Alexander, on a quest for the fountain of life (See *Aramco World*, May-June 1992), listens to a group of men giving him directions. Behind them loom mottled, lavender-hued mountains being transformed into demons. "It's extremely curious," puzzles Chazal, "as if Hieronymus Bosch had taken over the painting." According to the legend, Alexander never reaches his goal, but his guide, al-Khadir, who is shown in the miniature taking a different path, finds and drinks from the fountain of life.

In New York, as in Europe, "Pages of Perfection" comes as a unique and welcome view of the vast historical expanse of Arab and Islamic civilizations. "We have such a distorted idea of the Middle East," says von Habsburg. "This exhibition is a chance to open the eyes of people in the West to the inextinguishable richness of Arab art."

Paris-based writer Richard Covington specializes in the arts and media. He is a correspondent for The International Herald-Tribune *and* Smithsonian.

Ali-Quli Jabbadar, court painter to the Safavid Shah Sulaiman, was one of the most prominent exponents of the European styles that penetrated the Middle East in the 17th century. He used landscape backgrounds and perspective, and modeled the features of his subjects with light and shadow—all elements that appear in this somewhat tense court scene (below) in a garden pavilion. The economical and characterful portrait on the inside back cover was drawn in the last year of his life by Rida'i 'Abbasi, one of the founders of the influential "Isfahan school" of painting.



Muraqqa'
School of Isfahan
SECOND HALF, 17TH C.

INSIDE BACK COVER:

Muraqqa'
School of Isfahan
1634

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

This mid-19th-century rug from Torbat-e Heydariyeh in the Khorasan region, in a bold floral design called *mina-khani*, is woven with two levels of warp threads.

Baluch Rugs from the Boucher Collection presents 19 woven saddlebags, rugs and covers in a little-known style woven by the largely migratory peoples of the Khorasan region—near the border of Iran and Afghanistan—where the Baluch constitute the dominant ethnic group. A soft, lustrous wool and a rich, saturated palette of blue, red, brown and black highlighted with ivory characterize the weaving style that developed among the Baluch, Turkmens, Kurds, Jamshidis and Heydaris. Living mostly in Baluch-controlled territories, each created unique tribal and village variations of the generally small rugs. Baluch rugs, woven under rough conditions and never exported in great numbers, have only recently received recognition as a distinct style, and now they are among the most sought-after in the world. The examples on display date from the 19th and 20th centuries. The Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through February 25.

Teaching About the Arab World and Islam is the theme of teacher workshops cosponsored by the Middle East Policy Council in Washington, D.C., and conducted by AWAIR, Arab World And Islamic Resources and School Services in Berkeley, California. Confirmed sites and dates include: **Dallas**, November 15; **State College, Pennsylvania**, December 1; **Milwaukee**, February 10 and 14. For details, call (202) 296-6767 or (510) 704-0517.

Contemporary Indian Miniatures. This is the ninth annual display of this delicate style to be held at the Commonwealth Institute, **London**, November 17 through February 18.

Raiders and Traders on China's Northern Frontier examines how contacts among urban Chinese and pastoral nomads in the first millennium BC produced unique variations in the arts associated with war and commerce: harness fittings, weapons and vessels of precious metals. Many of the 100 objects are from an unpublished collection. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, **Washington, D.C.**, November 19 through August 18.

Science, Technology and Islamic Values: *Building Ties into the 21st Century* is a conference that will explore the effects of Islamic values and institutions on public policy, economic development and ethics. **Pennsylvania** State University, **State College**, December 1 through 3. For more information, call (814) 863-5130.

Precious Stones of the Ancient Orient: *The Sumerians and Sasanids* highlights five millennia of jewelry production using crystals, turquoise, pearls, garnets and other stones. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through December 18.

The Pyramids and the Sphinx: *100 Years of American Archaeology at Giza* draws upon excavations by Harvard University and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago to give a historical perspective. Semitic Museum of Harvard University, **Cambridge, Massachusetts,** through December 31.

Ebla: *The Origins of Urban Civic Life.* Treasures from the excavations of Ebla help reconstruct everyday life, culture and art of the Syrian civilization. Scuderie del parco di Miramare, **Trieste**, through January 7.

Mysterious Voids at the Heart of Historic Textiles: *A Search for Meaning* explores the ways designs from around the world that share a theme of undecorated space at the center may also share a trans-cultural concept of space. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.,** through January 7.

Voyages and Visions: *Nineteenth-Century European Images of the Middle East from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London,* displays watercolors and drawings from the Seariight Collection depicting the rise of European interest in the Middle East. Ripley Center of the Smithsonian Institution, **Washington, D.C.,** through January 7.

Africa: *Art of a Continent* stands as the centerpiece for **africa95**, a national season that includes events in galleries, museums and arts centers throughout Great Britain. The 700-piece exhibition explores the contexts of a multitude of artistic and cultural achievements. The Royal Academy of Arts, **London**, through January 21.

Crowning Glory: *Hats from Africa* displays 50 hats, caps, crowns and head-dresses from throughout the continent, each chosen for outstanding aesthetic qualities. Museum voor Volkenkunde, **Rotterdam**, through January 21.

In Detail: *Looking at Persian, Turkish and Indian Pictures* uses a dozen miniatures together with photographic enlargements of details to open visitors' eyes to the qualities of the miniature-painting tradition. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts,** through January 21.

Art and Empire: *Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum* displays vivid and intricate large-scale stone reliefs from the first-millennium BC palaces at Nimrud and Nineveh along with sculpture, metalwork, ivories, seals and tablets. The Kimbell Art Museum, **Fort Worth, Texas,** through February 4.

Embroideries of the Ottoman Empire presents the museum's collection of 18th- and 19th-century Turkish embroideries. Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, **Geneva**, through May 12.

Rivalry and Power: *Arts of the Book in the 14th Century.* The exhibit explores the interchange of manuscript traditions between the rival dynasties of the Mongols and the Mamluks. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.,** through May 27.

Elihu Vedder's Drawings for the Rubáiyát. This display of all 54 of the American expatriate artist's original drawings for the celebrated 1884 edition of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* also includes photographs of Vedder and several editions of the book. The National Museum of American Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through June 9.

Portraits Without Names: *Palestinian Costume* includes more than 100 items drawn from the Tareq Rajab Museum, Kuwait, and the Palestine Costume Archive, Canberra, Australia. The Powerhouse Museum, **Sydney**, through August.

The Ancient Nubian City of Kerma, 2500-1500 bc. Kerma, capital of Kush, is the oldest city in Africa outside Egypt to be excavated, and diverse objects reveal wealth and artistic traditions. National Museum of African Art, **Washington, D.C.**, indefinitely.

The Saudi Aramco Exhibit. Centered on the Arab-Islamic technical heritage, this permanent interactive, "learn-by-doing" scientific exhibit relates the historical background to today's petroleum exploration, production and transportation. **Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.**

Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion in this listing.

ARAMCO WORLD INDEX

The most recent *Aramco World* cumulative index, covering issues through 1994, was published in the July-August 1995 issue of the magazine. Reprints of the index are available on request.

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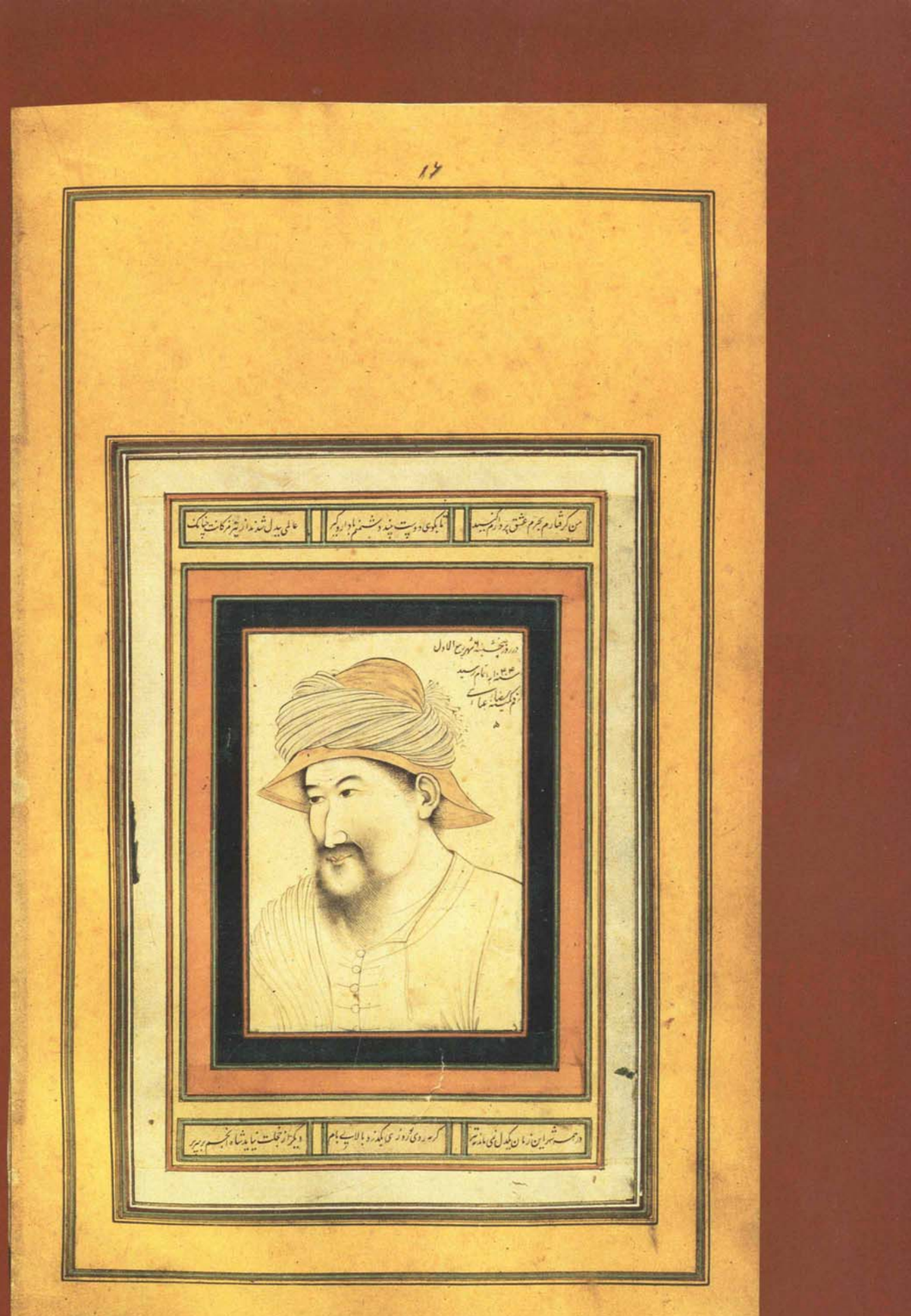

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