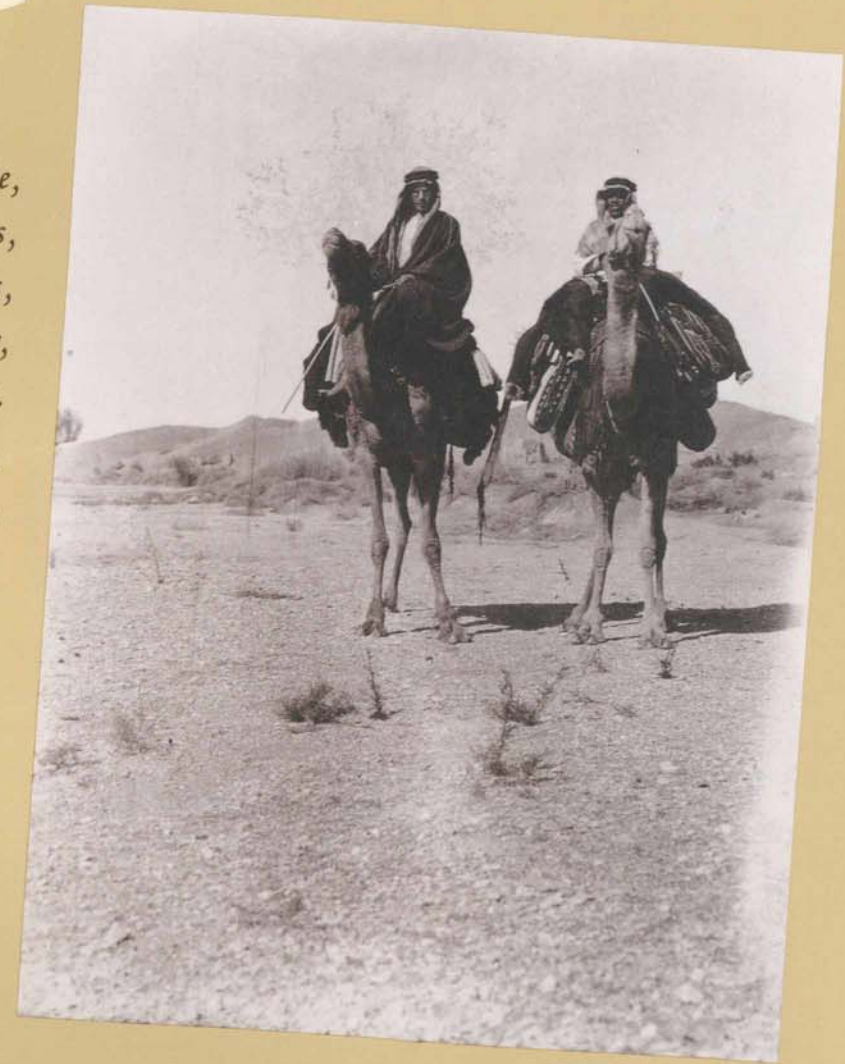


# Saudi Aramco world



*"We ride, ride,  
two men on two dromedaries,  
the sun flames over our heads,  
everything is shimmer and glimmer,  
and swimming light.  
Reddish and orange-colored dunes,  
dunes behind dunes, beyond dunes,  
loneliness and burning silence,  
and two men on two dromedaries  
in that swinging gait  
which makes you sleepy,  
so that you forget the day,  
the sun,  
the hot wind,  
and the long way."*



*Berlin to Makkah*

*Muhammad Asad's Journey into Islam*



## 2 Taking the Mystery Out of the Middle East

By Ellen Mansoor Collier  
Photographed by Janice Rubin

Since the mid-1970's, Audrey Shabbas has led more than 1000 cultural-understanding workshops for teachers across the United States, and her resource books and lesson plans help them improve study units on the Islamic world. Her formula is simple: A few thousand good teachers + good information and materials = lots of smarter kids—and maybe a better-informed, more tolerant country.



## 6 Berlin to Makkah: Muhammad Asad's Journey into Islam

By Ismail Ibrahim Nawwab

When Leopold Weiss left Austria at age 22 to visit an uncle in Jerusalem, he was spiritually adrift, disillusioned by Europe's materialism. He found the Muslim world an unexpected tonic: Its complexities, temperament and sense of spiritual security intrigued him. He stayed on, traveling, reading and conversing widely, and became a celebrated foreign correspondent. Then, one day in the Berlin subway, Islam embraced him. He became a Muslim and took the name Muhammad Asad. Over the decades that followed, he became the most articulate and passionate of scholar-converts, devoted to the regeneration of his adopted faith and its reconciliation with the modern world. At 80, he completed his English-language version of the Qur'an, with commentary, which has become a classic; his landmark autobiography, reissued this year to mark the 10th anniversary of his death, recounts his spiritual travels. No other westerner has recorded a journey into Islam with so much insight and love.

## 33 Islam: An Introduction

What is Islam? Who was the Prophet Muhammad? What do Muslims believe, and how do they practice their faith? What is the Qur'an, ...the Ka'bah, ...*jihad*? What are the cultural milestones of Islamic history? Who were some notable Muslims? Where can I find out more?



## RamadanUSA

Photographed by Naomi Harris, Janice Rubin, Steve Shelton,  
Ted McLaren, Faith Cathcart and Loren Santow

Every year, some five to six million American Muslims observe the holy month of Ramadan with fasting and fellowship, special prayers and special meals. When it is over and a new month begins, they celebrate the 'Id al-Fitr, the feast of fast-breaking. What is it like to do this? What does it mean? To better understand, we asked readers for essays and

poems about their Ramadan experiences, and six families in six cities around the country opened their doors to *Saudi Aramco World* photographers, who joined them for a day of fasting and a day of celebration.



## 60 Fasting Days, Festive Nights: Ramadan in Cairo

By Sarah Gauch  
Photographed by Lorraine Chittock

Of all the cities in the Arab world, Ramadan transforms Cairo most dramatically with light and color, as glittery streamers connect houses and colored-glass lanterns hang in doorways, shops and alleys. It is a month of prayer, abstinence, charity, changed routines and stay-up-late nights with family and friends—and it's everyone's favorite time of the year.



## 66 Annual Index 2001

## 70 Events & Exhibitions

### Cover:



With the words on the cover, Asad opened his autobiography, *The Road to Mecca*, which he wrote at the behest of friends who—to Asad's surprise—were fascinated by his nearly 30 years of intellectual and spiritual identification with Islam. The 1927 photograph is from his personal album. Under it Asad wrote, "A companion and myself on the way to Riyadh." He was en route to the Saudi capital from Makkah, in the first months of his six-year sojourn in Saudi Arabia. Photo courtesy of Pola Hamida Asad.

### Back Cover:



"Ramadan departs with the swiftness of light / But then comes 'Id, a celebration / Full of joy.... Spotting the moon / Putting henna on / Greeting friends and family / Exchanging gifts...." So wrote sixth-grader Sima A. Dar in a poem that is part of "RamadanUSA." These shiny packages await unwrapping by excited kids in the home of Mona and Hasan Hammad of Cooper City, Florida. Photo by Naomi Harris.

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♻️ Printed on recycled paper





"I'M A LIVING EXAMPLE OF HOW OFF-BASE STEREOTYPES CAN BE. I ALWAYS TELL MY AUDIENCES, 'I WANT TO LET YOU STEP WITH ME TO THE INSIDE, TO SEE WHAT A MUSLIM WORLDVIEW LOOKS LIKE AND FEELS LIKE, SO YOU CAN BRING IT BACK TO YOUR STUDENTS.'"

# Taking the Mystery Out of the Middle East

WRITTEN BY  
ELLEN MANSOOR COLLIER  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
JANICE RUBIN

At the beginning of the day, Audrey Parks Shabbas often tells her audience that she is both a Muslim and a Mayflower descendant who has lived nearly all her life in the United States. "I'm a living example of how off-base stereotypes can be," she says. "I always tell them, 'I want to let you step with me to the inside, to see what a Muslim worldview looks like and feels like, so you can bring it back to your students.'"

As founder and president of AWAIR (Arab World and Islamic Resources and School Services), Shabbas's goal is the elimination of prejudice against Arabs and Muslims. "Anything less would be unacceptable to our American ideals of equality and justice," she says. Her path to that goal is through education, by increasing teachers' awareness and knowledge of Islam and Middle Eastern cultures. Since 1992, she has been the primary leader of the Middle East Policy Council's national program of workshops.

"Audrey speaks in a familiar voice about an unfamiliar world," comments Linda Wuest, executive director of the Houston World Affairs Council, which in December sponsored one of Shabbas's 50-odd workshops scheduled for this school year.

It was in the mid-1970's, when she was teaching seventh-grade social

studies, that Shabbas became frustrated with both the inaccuracy and scarcity of teaching materials on Islam. Setting off on her own, in 1978 she published *The Arab World: A Handbook for Teachers*, the foundation of today's *Arab World Studies Notebook*.

Soon afterward, she began to offer one-day workshops to other educators. Rather than focus on current events, she placed the Middle East in historical context by concentrating on the contributions of Muslims to world civilization. "I believe teachers—not politicians or the press—are the vanguard of change in our society," she says. "For example, in schools you find a much more inclusive sense of 'we' than you do in most media. In schools it's not so much 'us' and 'them,' it's more like, 'look at how these people handle this; what can we learn from them?' Americans are searchers, and among teachers there's also a desire to serve the rising numbers of students and families who are Muslims."

During their six hours with Shabbas, says Michael Fahy, director of the University of Michigan's Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies, "teachers come to realize that the Western and Arab worlds are not the polar opposites they may appear, but indeed draw from many of the

same historical, religious, scientific, technological and cultural sources."

Shabbas's schedule has been full for nearly two decades now. Although most of her workshops are in the United States, she's traveled as far as Geneva and Bahrain. She customizes the presentations to fit her audiences, which range from elementary to university teachers, from teachers of English as a second language to the staffs of museums and Islamic centers. But mostly, she works with middle-school and high-school teachers.

"She translates very difficult concepts into understandable language," says Linda Adams, director of the Outreach Program at University of Utah's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, who attended a 1998 workshop. "Many teachers are astounded by how little they knew about this region and how much is ignored by Western textbooks." Thanks to the workshop training, Adams adds that "after September 11, our teachers were prepared to handle the barrage of questions and racist remarks about Muslims. The impact this one person has had on changing people's perceptions of the Arab world is inspiring."

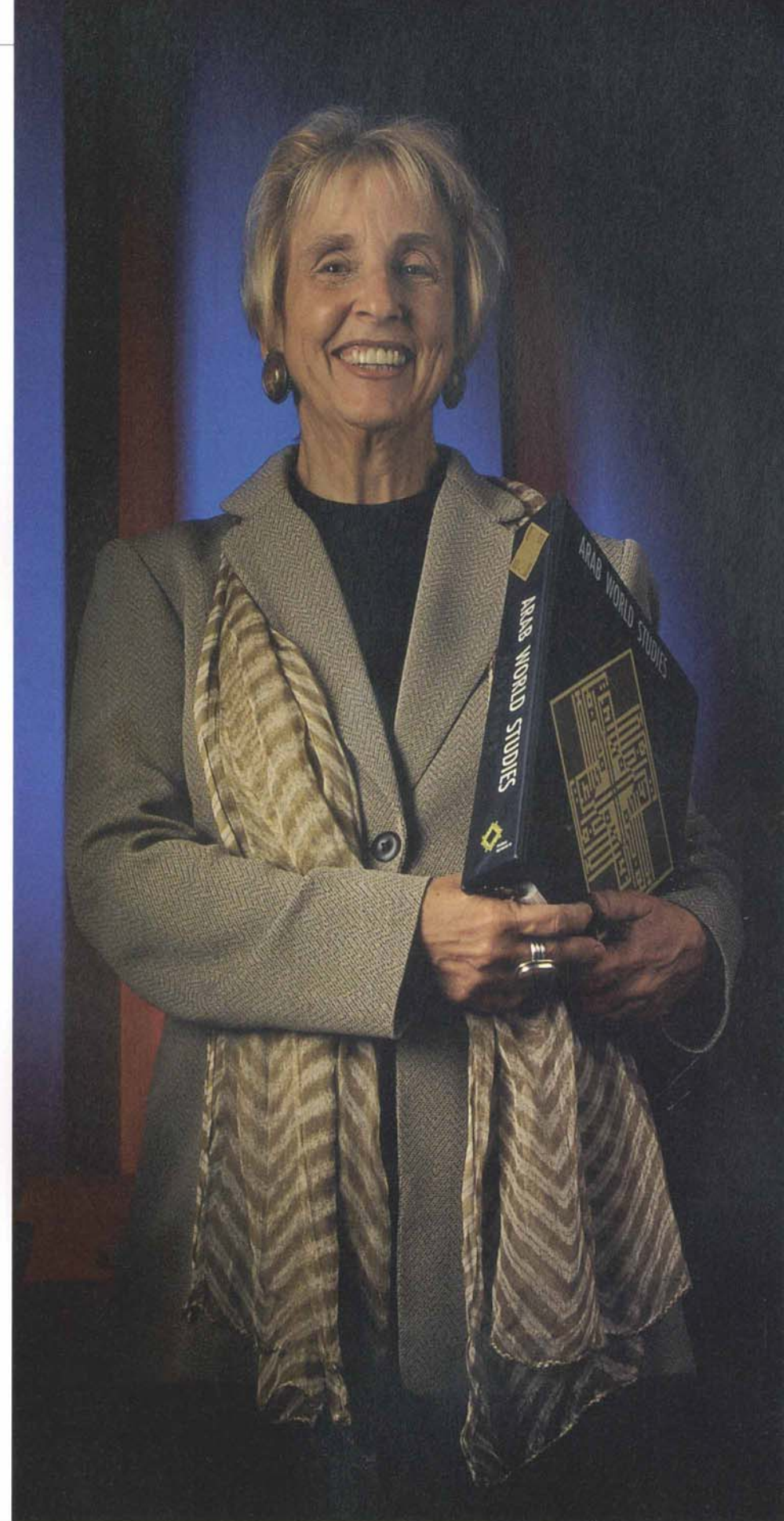
In 1992, the Washington-based Middle East Policy Council (MEPC), a non-profit educational organization, joined forces with Shabbas to develop

and fully fund a workshop program, and over the past 10 years has sponsored some 250 of her workshops in coordination with school districts, boards of education and academic organizations.

"Audrey's background, her easy rapport with teachers and her deep understanding of the Arab world make her an ideal instructor," says MEPC Executive Director Richard Wilson. "She's made a tremendous impact on schools nationwide, speaking in 160 cities in 42 states. Demand is so great that we hope to increase our workshops to 60 a year."

In her workshops, Shabbas covers a lot of ground, from Persia to Muslim Spain to Palestine and Indonesia, the country with the largest population of Muslims. Drawing on an overhead transparency, she uses the acronym "PATIO"—Persians, Arabs, Turks, Israelis and "Others"—to describe the ethnic make-up of Middle Eastern people "as they define themselves: by language." As she points out, "not all Arabs are Muslim, and not all Muslims are Arab," and only 18 percent of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims reside in the 22 Arab countries. In one of her most memorable classroom exercises, Shabbas hands out a checklist of religious quotations and asks teachers to identify which are from the Torah, which from the Bible and which from the Qur'an. After the teachers assign each quotation to one holy book or another, Shabbas announces the unexpected fact: All the quotations are from the Qur'an.

Shabbas also points teachers toward tools that will help them go farther in their own classrooms. Topping the list is the *Arab World Studies Notebook*, a 540-page, loose-leaf compendium, edited and co-authored by Shabbas, and printed by MEPC. It features articles from diverse sources on culture, history, politics, food and religion. It also includes 50 lesson plans. Over the years, the *Notebook* has been distributed to more than 10,000 teachers,



"I BELIEVE TEACHERS ARE THE REAL VANGUARD OF CHANGE IN OUR SOCIETY."



most of whom share the resource with others. If each notebook teaches 250 students a year over 10 years, Shabbas points out, "then you've reached 25 million students."

"It's a treasure-trove," says Beverly Mack, associate professor of African and Islamic studies at the University



One of Shabbas's most complex lesson plans, and a popular one from seventh-grade to high school, is her "Medieval Banquet in the Alhambra Palace," in which the participants role-play a banquet in 14th-century Islamic Spain. Created partly in response to the need for more interdisciplinary, experiential studies, the banquet allows students to step into "the world's first multicultural society" of Muslims, Christians and Jews. Students help stage the banquet, recreating costumes, settings, entertainment and food. They play the parts of key historical characters, such as doctor Ibn Rushd and author/librarian Fatima of Cordoba—as well as contemporary "guests" from outside Muslim Spain.

"The banquet provides a perfect doorway," says social studies teacher Aloise Miller, who has organized banquets with her Long Beach, California junior-high classes. "We decorated the windows with Islamic verses to depict

of Kansas. "Such education can help make the world a better place. It lays out Islam's profound influence on the progressive development of the world and replaces myths about Islam's constraints with truths about its support of equity and mercy for all."

Missouri world history teacher Chris Kelley, who traveled to the Middle East in the 1980's and later took a workshop, says that his students "especially enjoy studying the Middle East, since they were clueless about that part of the world. When we studied comparative religions, they were surprised to learn that the Muslim and Christian faiths actually share many of the same beliefs and values. It's a total epiphany."

a beautiful Moorish palace. My classes were amazed to learn that the Muslim world was so progressive by the eighth century—and so advanced in trade, art, science, architecture, law and medicine, especially compared to medieval Europe. It was a complete revelation for students to discover that Islamic culture made such a deep impact on the Christian crusaders and that it helped bring about the Renaissance in Europe."

Despite the years of rave reviews, Shabbas admits that, since September 11, she is doing more explaining than ever: Her workshops are as much dialogue as lecture, she says, and it's clear she doesn't shy away from tough questions. The September 11 perpe-

trators she refers to as "so-called Muslims." She stresses that "Islam says you always choose life. According to Islam, the true heroes of September 11 are the people who tried to save lives—firefighters, police officers and rescue workers."

"The beauty of Islam is all in the Qur'an," she says, drawing a clear distinction between what was revealed by God through the Prophet Muhammad and practices that are the result of cultural interpretation of the Message. "It's important to separate culture and religion, and dig deeper. And what's exciting is that more and more, I find teachers doing that on their own, so my time with them is both deeper and broader."

For example, she explains, "In the Qur'an, God has no gender, nor does the Qur'an consider women inferior or subservient to men. Indeed, Islam is deeply committed to social justice and knowledge for understanding. As the Prophet Muhammad said, 'It is the duty of every Muslim man and woman to seek education.'" In fact, she stresses, the Qur'an helped liberate women by allowing them extensive legal and marital rights.

As a girl growing up in the ethnically diverse, low-income neighborhood of Richmond in the San Francisco Bay area, Shabbas was raised mainly by her mother, who supported four children on her secretary's salary. "My mother instilled in me a strong sense of social justice," she recalls. Her favorite seventh-grade teacher, a Mr. Smith, introduced her to the Middle East, and her interest found encouragement under one Mr. Wilde, who taught a high-school class on the non-Western world. Shabbas participated in a Model United Nations, then a new program, where she represented Iraq. She excelled in debate and student government, and became president of the Future Teachers of America.

At the University of California at Berkeley, she majored in international relations and political science, with a



A DECADE AGO THE AVERAGE SEVENTH TO 12TH-GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS SPENT THREE TO FOUR DAYS ON ISLAM AND THE MIDDLE EAST. NOW IT MAY SPEND THREE TO FOUR WEEKS, OR MORE. "I'VE SEEN TREMENDOUS CHANGES IN TEACHERS' ATTITUDES, AND I THINK THE WORKSHOPS HAVE HELPED."

concentration in Middle East studies and a minor in Near East languages. Though a native, she became president of the International Students Association her freshman year. "It was in college I witnessed the discrimination my Arab friends suffered—and still face—because of their ethnicity and religion," Shabbas recalls. "My friends were often turned away from hotels because they looked Middle-Eastern."

In the 1970's Shabbas began teaching middle-school social studies, and found her curricula rife with negative stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims, as well as factual errors. Frustrated in her efforts to find better materials, she produced *The Arab World: A Handbook for Teachers* in 1978 and, in the same year, formed Arab World Consultants with two friends. As word of their services spread, so did demand, and they worked for more than a decade without pay, advising on curricula and helping teachers with lesson plans. Shabbas knew what the educators needed: interesting learning materials to capture students' attention. The *Handbook* evolved into *The Arab World Notebook* in 1982.

In 1990, she founded AWAIR, and "finally," she says, "after 20 years of doing them for free," the workshops became self-supporting, funded by grants, donations and contributions from corporations, among them Saudi Aramco. When the 1991 Gulf War sparked a wave of interest in the

Middle East, requests for the workshops came from all over the world. The following year, the MEPC took her programs under its wing.

It was in this time that she herself became a Muslim, through a deeper reading of the Qur'an. "When I read it with my heart and not just my head, I knew I was a Muslim," she says.

Today, Shabbas says, she notices her audiences express more tolerance and acceptance toward Muslims than they did even a decade ago. "I've seen tremendous changes in teachers' attitudes, mostly due to an increasingly multicultural student body and a growing awareness of the close relationship that we in America have with the Muslim countries of the Middle East," she says. She also notes that classes today spend far longer on Islam and the Middle East: A decade ago, she says, "it would have been three or four days, and now it's three or four weeks, maybe six. This is a huge change. And I think the workshops have helped."

After September 11, she says, AWAIR received "numerous phone calls that only offered love and support. It was truly heartwarming to hear strangers expressing all those values America holds dear: respect for diversity and compassion for all God's people. I really think people are

ready for a deeper understanding of Islam. Americans are a very spiritual culture, and a very experiential culture, so there is a hunger for meaning and for knowing from the inside. At the same time you have teachers asking, more than ever, 'How do I make my class work for all of us?'—and that 'us', increasingly, includes Muslims and non-Muslims, together."

At 59, Shabbas is still full of optimism and confidence. She'll be a teacher's teacher, she says, "until my energy runs out." ☪



**Ellen Mansoor Collier** is a Houston-based writer and editor. Her byline has appeared in *Biography*, *Family Circle*, *Cosmopolitan* and other leading national magazines.

**Janice Rubin** has exhibited and published her photographs widely. A specialist in intercultural affairs, she lives in Houston.



TO BRING A "TEACHING ABOUT THE ARAB WORLD AND ISLAM" WORKSHOP TO YOUR SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION, contact Jon Roth, program manager of the Middle East Policy Council: 202-296-6767; jroth@mepc.org. "Teaching About the Arab World and Islam" is a fully funded, full-day staff development program that meets standard requirements for in-service training and credits.



# Berlin to Makkah

## Muhammad Asad's Journey into Islam

**TWO ROADS DIVERGED IN BERLIN IN THE 1920'S:** a well-worn one to the West, the other, rarely traveled, to the East. Leopold Weiss, a gifted young writer, traveler and linguist with a thorough knowledge of the Bible and the Talmud and with deep roots in European culture, took the road eastward to Makkah.

He traveled that road as Muhammad Asad, and his name now figures prominently on the roll of 20th-century English-language Muslim scholars and thinkers.

The story of how Asad walked out of Berlin, away from the West, and into a new spiritual life is best told in his own words and an Old Testament simile: "After all, it was a matter of love;" he wrote, "and love is composed of many things; of our desires and our loneliness, of our high aims and our shortcomings, of our strengths and our weaknesses. So it was in my case. Islam came over me like a robber who enters a house by night; but, unlike a robber, it entered to remain for good."

Written by Ismail Ibrahim Nawwab

Additional reporting by Louis Werner

Photographs by Muhammad Asad, courtesy of Pola Hamida Asad

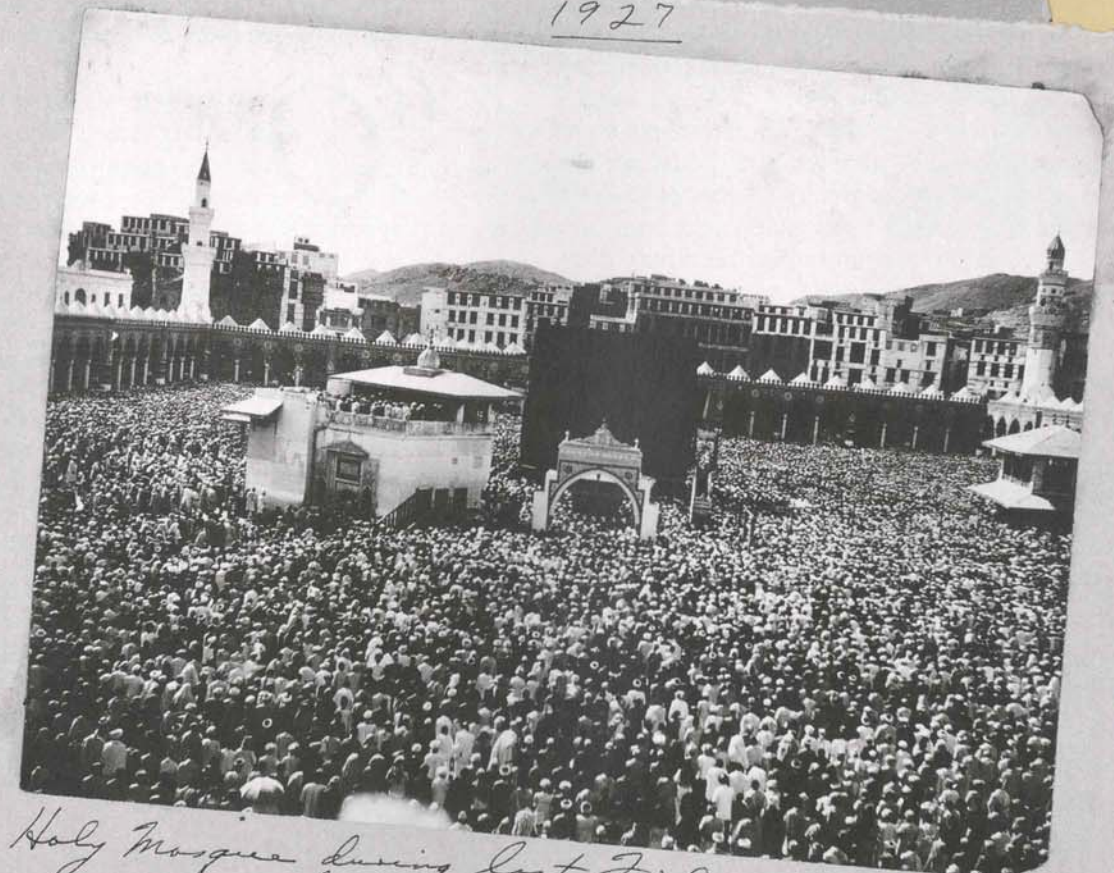
37

1926-27



On the day  
I became  
a Muslim  
(Sept, 1926)

1927



Holy Mosque during last Friday prayers  
before Pilgrimage

53



**M**UHAMMAD ASAD WAS BORN LEOPOLD WEISS IN JULY 1900 in the city of Lvov (German Lemberg), now in Poland, then part of the Austrian Empire. He was the descendant of a long line of rabbis, a line broken by his father, who became a barrister. Asad himself received a thorough religious education that would qualify him to keep alive the family's rabbinical tradition. He had become proficient in Hebrew at an early age, and was also familiar with Aramaic. He had studied the Old Testament in the original as well as the text and commentaries of the Talmud: the *Mishna* and *Gemara*, and he had delved in the intricacies of Biblical exegesis: the *Targum*.

His family moved to Vienna, where 14-year-old Weiss ran away from school and tried unsuccessfully to join the Austrian army to fight in the First World War. No sooner had he finally been officially drafted than the Austrian Empire collapsed, along with his dreams of military glory.

After the war, he pursued philosophy and art history at the University of Vienna, but those studies failed to satisfy him and he abandoned them to seek fulfillment elsewhere. Vienna at that time was one of the most intellectually and culturally stimulating cities in Europe, a hothouse of burgeoning new perspectives on man, language and philosophy. Not just its academic institutions, but even its famous cafés reverberated with lively debate centered on psychoanalysis, logical positivism, linguistic analysis and semantics. This was the period when the distinctive voices of Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler and Ludwig Wittgenstein filled the air, and echoed round the world. Weiss had a ringside seat for these exciting discussions, and though he was impressed by the originality of those pioneering spirits, their major conclusions left him still unsatisfied.

Weiss left Vienna in 1920 and traveled in Central Europe, where he did "all manner of short-lived jobs" before arriving in Berlin. Here, luck and pluck led to a scoop that elevated him from a mere telephonist working for a wire service, into a journalist: He reported the presence in Berlin of Maksim Gorky's

wife, who was on a secret mission to solicit aid from the West for Soviet Russia.

At this stage, Weiss, like many of his generation, counted himself an agnostic, having drifted away from his Jewish moorings despite his religious studies. He left Europe for the Middle East in 1922 for what was supposed to be a short visit to an uncle in Jerusalem. There he came to know and like the Arabs and was struck by how Islam infused their everyday lives with existential meaning, spiritual strength and inner peace.

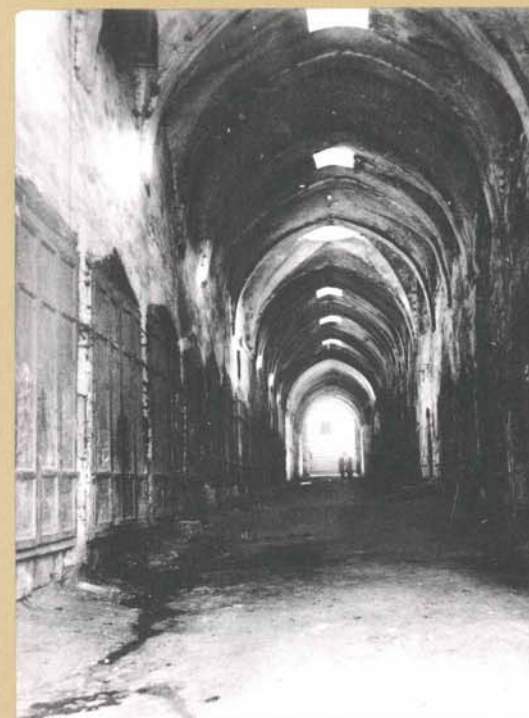
Weiss now became—at the remarkably young age of 22—a correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, one of the most prestigious newspapers of Germany and Europe. As a journalist, he traveled extensively, mingled with ordinary people, held discussions with Muslim intellectuals, and met heads of state in Palestine, Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

During his travels and through his readings, Weiss's interest in Islam increased as his understanding of its scripture, history and peoples grew. In part, curiosity propelled his explorations, but he also felt something darker—in his words, "a spiritual emptiness, a vague, cynical relativism born out of increasing hopelessness"—from which he needed to escape. He remained agnostic, unable to accept that God spoke to and guided humankind by revelation.

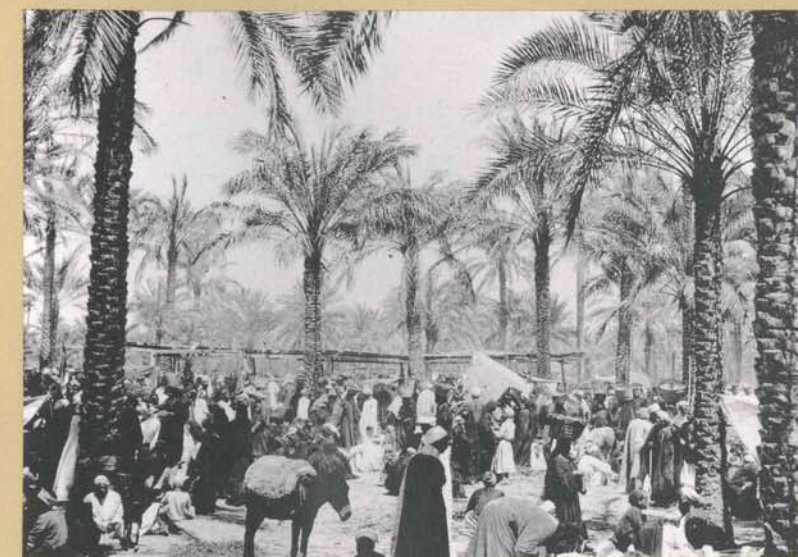
Back in Berlin from the Middle East a few years later, Weiss underwent an electrifying spiritual epiphany—reminiscent of the experience of some of the earliest Muslims—that changed his mind and his life. He described it in a striking passage that he wrote some 30 years later:

**"ONE DAY—IT WAS IN SEPTEMBER 1926—ELSA AND I** found ourselves travelling in the Berlin subway. It was an upper-class compartment. My eye fell casually on a well-dressed man opposite me, apparently a well-to-do-businessman.... I thought idly how well the portly figure of this man fitted into the picture of prosperity which one encountered everywhere in Central Europe in those days: ...Most of the people were now well dressed and well fed, and the man opposite me was therefore no exception. But when I looked at his face, I did not seem to be looking at a happy face. He appeared to be worried: and not merely worried but acutely unhappy, with eyes staring vacantly ahead and the corners of his mouth drawn in as if in pain—but not in bodily pain. Not wanting to be rude, I turned my eyes away and saw next to him a lady of some elegance. She also had a strangely unhappy expression on her face, as if contemplating or experiencing something that caused her pain.... And then I began to look

Between 1924 and 1929, Leopold Weiss—who changed his name to Muhammad Asad in September 1926—kept a photo album devoted to his travels. In it there is only one photograph from Europe: the day he became a Muslim, in Berlin. He traveled widely in these years, recording places and people with an eye as keen as his intellect. He photographed with equal fascination the powerful and the humble, monuments and markets, landscapes and technologies. He labeled his photographs in English, and his words are reproduced here as he wrote them. Most of the photographs selected for this article appear in print for the first time.



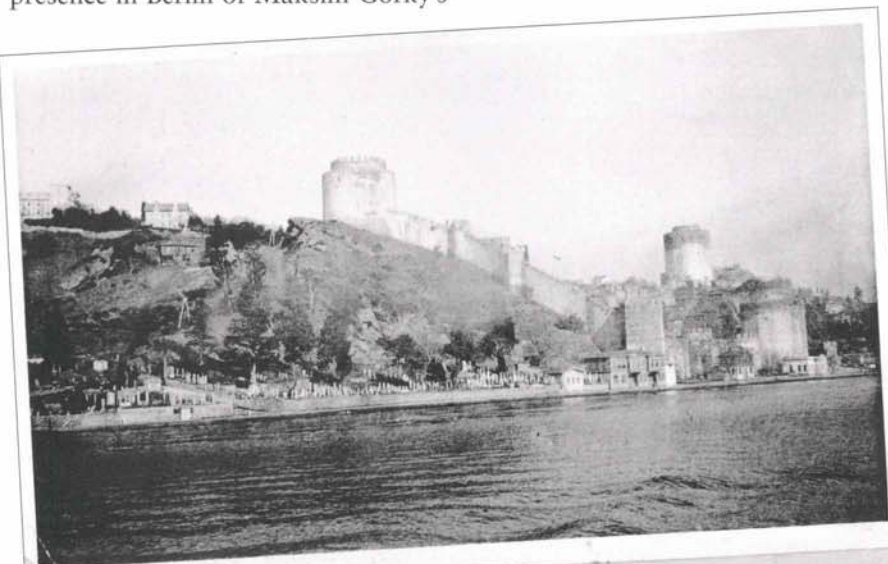
Bazaar Street in Jerusalem



Egyptian Village



Cairo



Hamuli Hissar (Bazargan)





Baghdad



Water-wheel on the Euphrates



Bazaar in Tehran  
decorated for Holiday

Simple curiosity propelled Weiss away from everything familiar toward what was new and different, yet there was also something deeper, "a spiritual emptiness, a vague, cynical relativism born out of increasing hopelessness.... My vagueness, to be fair to myself, was not of my own making. It was the vagueness of an entire generation." Little did he expect to find in Islam answers to the existential questions that had become his preoccupation.

Iraq

around at all other faces in the compartment—faces belonging without exception to well-dressed, well-fed people; and in almost every one of them I could discern an expression of hidden suffering, so hidden that the owner of the face seemed to be quite unaware of it.

"...The impression was so strong that I mentioned it to Elsa; and she too began to look around with the careful eyes of a painter accustomed to study human features. Then she turned to me, astonished, and said: 'You are right. They all look as though they were suffering torments of hell.... I wonder, do they know themselves what is going on in them?'

"I knew that they did not—for otherwise they could not go on wasting their lives as they did, without any faith in binding truths, without any goal beyond the desire to raise their own 'standard of living,' without any hopes other than having more material amenities, more gadgets, and perhaps more power....

"When we returned home, I happened to glance at my desk on which lay open a copy of the Koran I had been reading earlier. Mechanically, I picked the book up to put it away, but just as I was about to close it, my eyes fell on the open page before me, and I read:

*You are obsessed by greed for more and more  
Until you go down to your graves.  
Nay, but you will come to know!  
And once again: Nay, but you will come to know!  
Nay, if you but knew it with the knowledge of certainty,  
You would indeed see the hell you are in.  
In time, indeed, you shall see it with the eye of certainty:  
And on that Day you will be asked what you have done  
with the boon of life.*

"For a moment I was speechless. I think that the book shook in my hands. Then I handed it to Elsa. 'Read this. Is it not an answer to what we saw in the subway?'

"It was an answer so decisive that all doubt was suddenly at an end. I knew now, beyond any doubt, that it was a God-inspired book I was holding in my hand: for although it had been placed before man over thirteen centuries ago, it clearly anticipated something that could have become true only in this complicated, mechanized, phantom-ridden age of ours.

"At all times people had known greed: but at no time before had greed outgrown a mere eagerness to acquire things and become an obsession that blurred the sight of everything else: an irresistible craving to get, to do, to contrive more and more—more today than yesterday, and more tomorrow than today: ...and that hunger, that insatiable hunger for ever new goals gnawing at man's soul: *Nay, if you but knew it you would see the hell you are in....*

"This, I saw, was not the mere human wisdom of a man of a distant past in distant Arabia. However wise he may have been, such a man could not by himself have foreseen the torment so peculiar to this twentieth century. Out of the Koran spoke a voice greater than the voice of Muhammad...."

**T**HUS IT WAS THAT WEISS became a Muslim. He converted in Berlin before the head of the city's small Muslim community and took the names Muhammad, to honor the Prophet, and Asad—meaning "lion"—as a reminder of his given name. He took other decisive steps: He broke with his father over his conversion, he married Elsa, who also converted, he abruptly left his newspaper job, and he set off on pilgrimage to Makkah.

The psychological and emotional dimensions of Asad's migration were even more important than the physical ones. Asad regarded Islam not as a religion in the conventional, or western, sense but as a way of life for all times. In Islam he had found a religious system and a practical guide for everyday living that were harmoniously balanced. "Islam appears to me like a perfect work of architecture. All its parts are harmoniously conceived to complement and support each other; nothing is superfluous and nothing lacking; and the result is a structure of absolute balance and solid composure."

Nine days after his first sight of Makkah, Asad's life changed momentarily yet again. Elsa died suddenly, and she was buried in a simple pilgrim's cemetery. He stayed on in the holy city and, after a chance encounter with Prince Faysal in the Grand Mosque's library, accepted an invitation to meet with his father, the legendary King 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia. This invitation soon led to almost daily audiences with the king, who quickly came to appreciate Asad's knowledge, spiritual depth and keen mind.

Asad spent some six years in the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, where he studied Arabic, the Qur'an, the *hadith*—the traditions of the Prophet—and Islamic history. Those studies led him to "the firm conviction that Islam, as a spiritual and social phenomenon, is still, in spite of all the drawbacks caused by the deficiencies of the Muslims, by far the greatest driving force mankind has ever experienced." From that time and until the end of his life, his interest was "centered around the problem of its regeneration." His academic knowledge of classical Arabic—made easier by familiarity with Hebrew and Aramaic, sister Semitic languages—was further enhanced by his wide travels and his contacts in Arabia with Bedouins.

To study Muslim communities and cultures further east, Asad left Arabia for India in 1932. There he met the celebrated



Jayd (in Iraq)





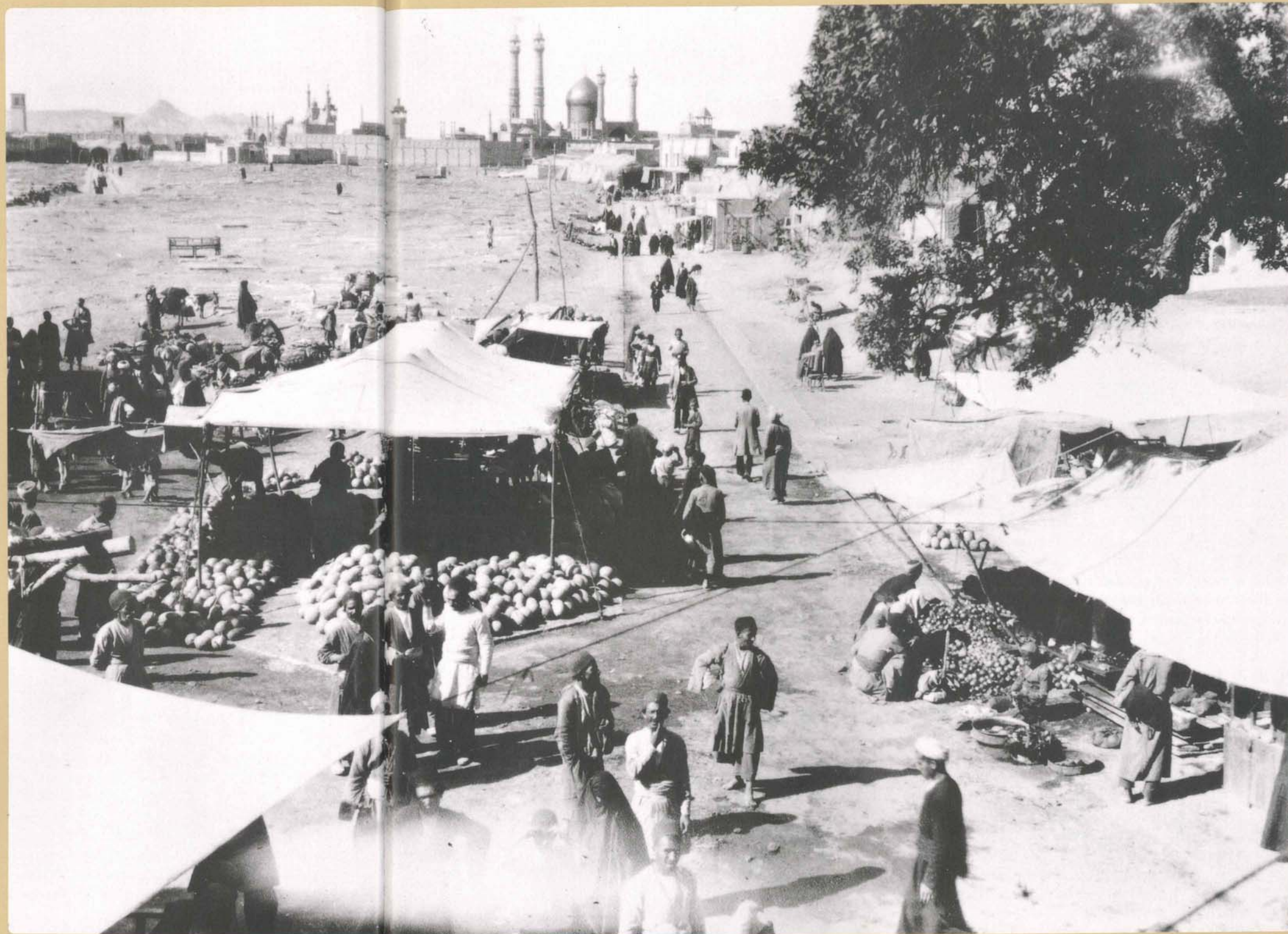
*Old city gate in Kazvin*



*Shepherds in Central Iran*



*Samadan*



*Qom (northern Iran)*

*Iran*

"I had come face to face with a life-sense that was entirely new to me. A warm, human breath seemed to flow out of these people's blood into their thoughts and gestures....I recognized in them that organic coherence of the mind and the senses which we Europeans had lost.... And what at first had been hardly more than a sympathy for the political aims of the Arabs, the outward appearance of Arabian life and the emotional security I perceived in its people, imperceptibly changed into something resembling a personal quest. I became increasingly aware of an absorbing desire to know what it was that lay at the root of this."



poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal, the spiritual progenitor of Pakistan. Iqbal persuaded Asad to stay on "to help elucidate the intellectual premises of the future Islamic state...." Asad soon won Iqbal's admiration, and public acclaim, with the publication of a perceptive monograph on the challenges facing modern Muslims. But his freedom was curtailed when the Second World War broke out in 1939. Ironically, though he had refused a German passport after the annexation of Austria in 1938 and insisted on retaining his Austrian citizenship, the British imprisoned him on the second day of the war as an "enemy alien," and did not release him till 1945. Asad was the only Muslim among the three-thousand-odd Europeans interned in India, the large majority of whom were Nazi sympathizers.

Asad moved to Pakistan after its creation in 1947, and was charged by its government with formulating ideological foundations for the new state. Later he was transferred to the Pakistan Foreign Ministry to head its Middle East Division, where he endeavored to strengthen Pakistan's ties to other Muslim countries. He capped his diplomatic career by serving as Pakistan's Minister Plenipotentiary to the United Nations—a position he resigned in 1952 to write his autobiography, *The Road to Mecca*.

After writing this book, he left New York in 1955 and finally settled in Spain. He did not cease to write. At 80, after 17 years of effort, he completed the work that had been his life's dream, and for which he felt all his life till then had been an apprenticeship: a translation and exegesis, or *tafsir*, of the Qur'an in English. He continued to serve Islam till his death in Spain on February 23, 1992.

With his death passed a journalist, traveler, social critic, linguist, thinker, reformer, diplomat, political theorist and translator, a scholar dedicated to the service of God and humankind, and to leading a righteous life.

**B**UT DEATH WILL NOT BE THE FINAL CHAPTER IN ASAD'S close relationship with the Muslims: His luminous works remain a living testimony to his great, enduring love affair with Islam.

Asad, in fact, represents an outstanding example of a phenomenon of modern times: the conversion, on both sides of the Atlantic, of a number of western writers and intellectuals to Islam, and their passionate commitment to its vision and way of life. The circumstances and particulars of their entering the fold vary, but there are usually three overarching reasons common to them: belief in the divine origin of the Qur'an, in the prophethood of Muhammad, and in Islam's message to lead a righteous life.

Their acts of faith have shown a wider western public that Islam is not a quaint, fanatical religion followed by wild natives in remote regions, that, on the contrary, Islam's message and teachings are relevant to, and appropriate for, reasonable and thoughtful people in the most advanced areas of the world.



*Caravanserai*



*Salt swamps of Kafia  
(southern Iran)*



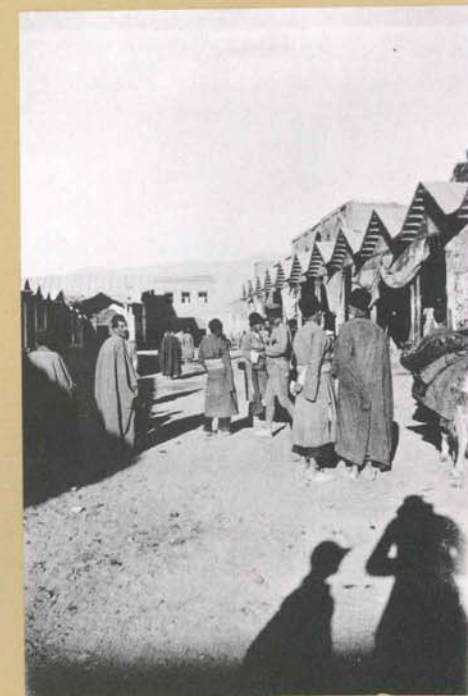
*Province of Seistan  
(eastern Iran)*



*Herat (western Afghanistan)*

*Asad represents a little-noticed phenomenon of modern times: The embrace of Islam by a number of Western intellectuals.*

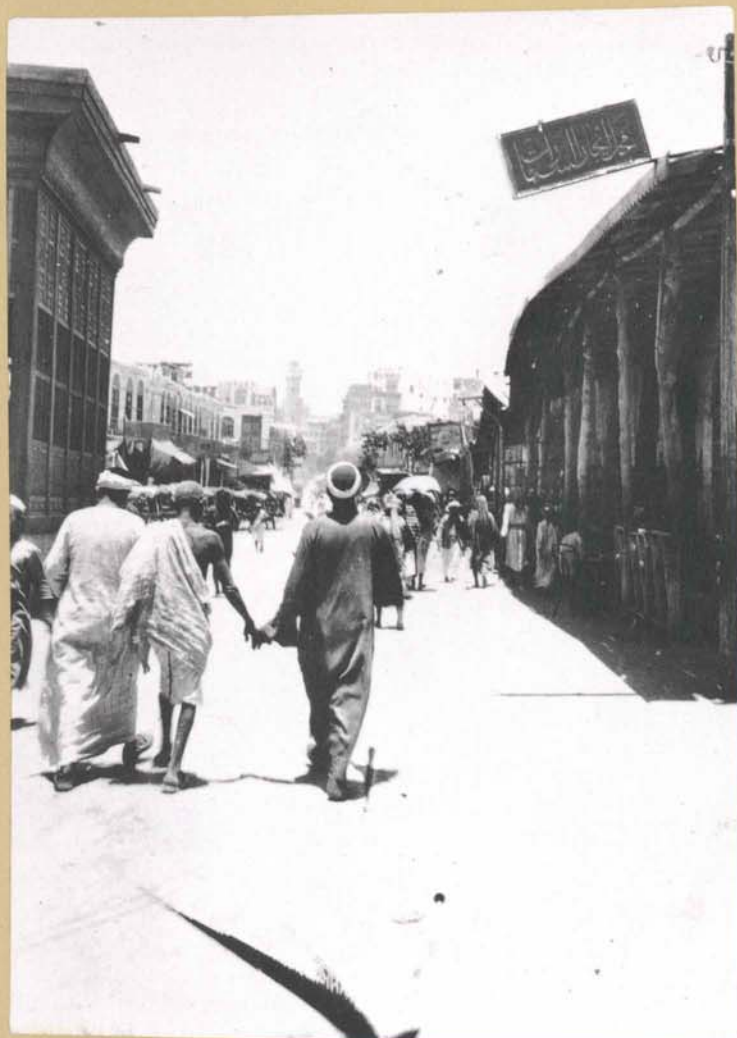
It was on a winter night near Herat, while debating his host on the reasons behind Islam's decline from its golden age, that he was given the first hint of his longer personal path. Asked how he had to come to know so much about Islam, Weiss prefaced his answer with the claim that he himself was an unbeliever, with only a student's interest in religion. His host then retorted, "But you already are a Muslim, only you don't know it." It would not be until his return to Europe that he would internalize this: "The thought of embracing Islam was like the prospect of venturing out onto a bridge that spanned an abyss between two different worlds; a bridge so long that one would have to reach the point of no return before the other end became visible."



*Bazaar street*



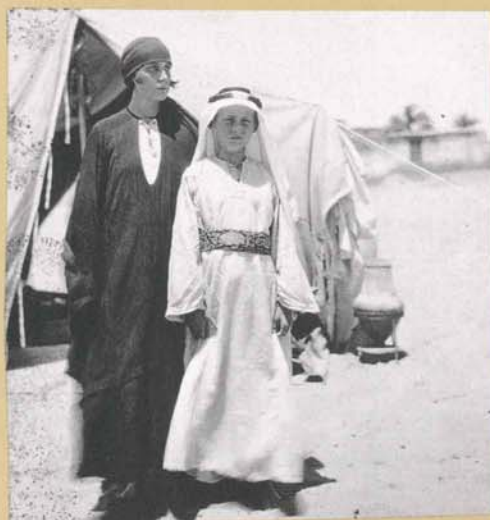
1926



Streets of Mecca



Jidda (Jijaz)



Near the pyramids of Giza (Egypt)



Pilgrims going from Jidda to Mecca

En route to Makkah for the first time and newly married, Asad's wife Elsa, a painter by occupation, posed with Heinrich, her son by previous marriage, in the photograph at top right. A few weeks later, in Makkah, Elsa died. Heinrich was returned to Germany. Asad remained "in darkness and utter desolation" grieving "the death of the woman whom I loved as I have loved no woman since and who now lies buried under the soil of Mecca, under a simple stone without inscription that marks the end of her road and the beginning of a new one for me."

Equally significant, they have also demonstrated that, at least among some fair-minded westerners, the centuries-old false images of Islam are fading.

Even more remarkably, these converts have often found their way to the Muslim faith by the unlikely medium of literature on Islam and the Muslims produced in European languages, mostly by orientalists not friendly to Islam—indeed, some of these converts are orientalists themselves. To mention just a few names: From Great Britain have come, among others, Lord Stanley of Alderley, an uncle of Bertrand Russell; the 11th Baron Headley (Umar al-Farooq), a member of the House of Lords and an activist believer; Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, a superb novelist and, later, a translator of the Qur'an; Martin Lings (Abu Bakr Siraj ad-Din), a perceptive scholar of mysticism; and Charles Le Gai Eaton, a talented expositor of Islam. French converts have included René Guénon ('Abd al-Wahid Yahya), an expert in metaphysics, comparative religion and esotericism; Vincent Mansour Monteil, an orientalist; and Maurice Bucaille, an author. From Germany we can count Murad Wilfried Hofmann, a diplomat and writer; from Austria, Baron Umar von Ehrenfels, an anthropologist; from Hungary, Abdul Karim Germanus, an orientalist; from Switzerland, Frithjof Schuon, described by T. S. Eliot as the most impressive writer in the field of comparative religion he had ever encountered. From North America, there is Thomas Irving (al-Hajj Ta'lim 'Ali), an Islamic scholar and translator of the Qur'an; Margaret Marcus (Maryam Jameelah), a writer; Cyril Glassé, author of *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* and other Islamic works; Jeffrey Lang, a mathematician and writer on Islam, and Michael Wolfe, a poet, novelist, and writer of travel books.

It would seem that these western Muslims have been just as earnest in their devotion to Islam as Muhammad Asad. So why does Asad stand head and shoulders above all other western converts who wrote in English? Because none of them—not even Pickthall—has contributed more than he to elucidating Islam as an ideology and conveying its quintessential spirit in contemporary terms to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Asad's contributions resist easy summary, but we can look at his work against the backdrop of his first encounter with the Muslim world and pick out some salient features of his intellectual landscape.

ASAD'S INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSLIM WORLD TOOK place when he visited a turbulent, fearful Middle East in the wake of the First World War. The power and breadth of the threat that many Muslims perceived as coming from the West at that time can today hardly be remembered or conceived of, and is difficult to encapsulate in a few sentences.



On the day I became a Muslim (Sept. 1926)

For the previous two centuries, an ascendant Europe had remade the entire map of the Muslim world. Its military, political, cultural and economic onslaught on the area had extinguished the glory of the Mughals of India and the Safavids of Persia, broken the back of the once-formidable Ottoman state, abolished the caliphate. The Muslims lagged far behind the West in educational, industrial and technological and scientific fields. As the first decades of the 20th century wore on, they were at bay, deeply divided, disheartened and humiliated.

By the time Asad came to the Middle East in 1922, these momentous changes had loosed new values, concepts and social stresses on the Muslim world of such violence and scope that they threatened to sweep away the very foundations of Muslim society. Many Muslims still cherished traditional Islamic values, yet a broad spectrum of competing, confusing trends appeared in the Islamic world in response to the influence of the West. There were movements in support of religious reform, which had their roots in Muslim tradition. Iqbal and Muhammad 'Abduh of Egypt represented this trend. But there were also advocates of westernization, nationalism, and secularism who looked to the West for inspiration, such as Kemal Atatürk in Turkey and Reza Shah of Iran. It was not possible to square the ideas of the traditional Islamic reformers with those of the advocates of westernization and secularism.

Asad saw it as his duty to critically examine the causes of the decline of the Muslims as well as the forces and the problems pressing them, and to wake them from their slumber. Driven by a reformer's zeal, he tried to reconcile religion and modernization and to produce a wide-ranging synthesis of Islam, modernity, and the needs of the society of the day. To this effort he brought depth of knowledge, clarity of reasoning and a gift for the meticulous exposition and dissection of arguments, even when he accepted their conclusions. It is his peculiar achievement that, with high virtuosity and great passion, he contrived to make a coherent whole of his concerns, which were as diverse as the western challenges that gave rise to them.

The primary sources of Asad's inspiration were the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet. But he could not fail to be impressed by 'Abduh and Iqbal and other thinkers, who had

37





The Great Senussi, Sayyid Ahmad ash-Sherif, with followers at Mecca



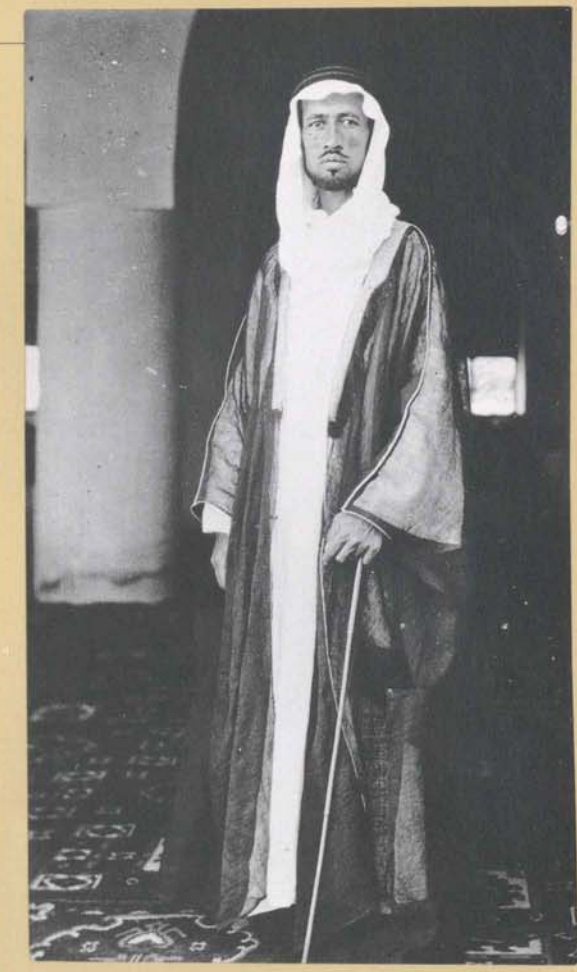
Abdullah al-Atiqi, the King's advisor



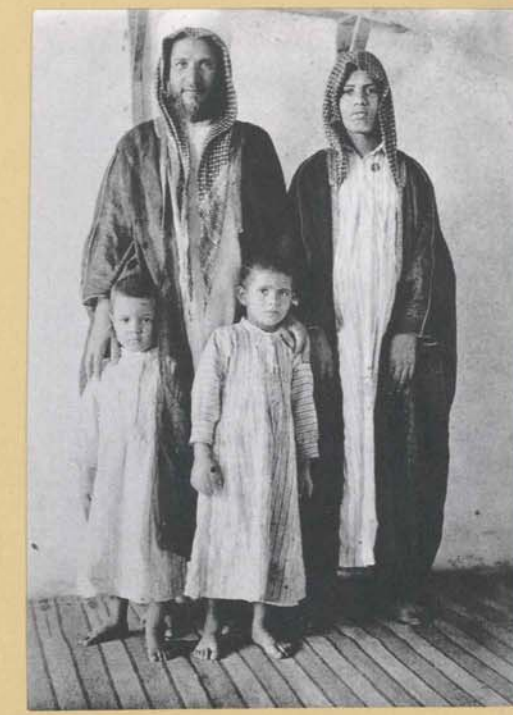
Abdullah ad-Dimulji, Foreign Minister

Asad saw it as his duty to critically examine the causes of the decline of the Muslims. To this effort he brought high virtuosity, great passion and a gift for the meticulous exposition and dissection of arguments.

"The more I understood how concrete and how immensely practical the teachings of Islam are, the more eager became my questioning as to why the Muslims had abandoned their full application to real life. I discussed this problem with many thinking Muslims in almost all the countries between the Libyan Desert and the Pamirs, between the Bosphorus and the Arabian Sea. It almost became an obsession which ultimately overshadowed all my other intellectual interests in the world of Islam."



Sayyid Ansayn of Mecca



Shaykh Abu Samh, imam of the Holy Mosque, and sons



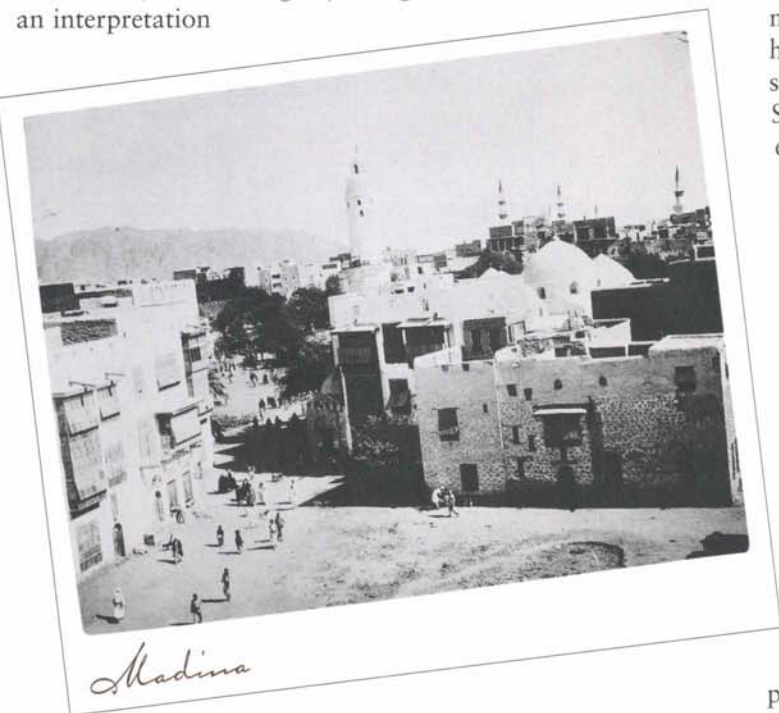
Haji Agus Salim of Indonesia (on the right)

*Shakhsah*



earlier diagnosed the ills of Muslim society. A vigorous promoter of Muslim ideology and values and a precursor of those Muslims who were proud of their identity and wanted to preserve it in a changing, tumultuous world, Asad instilled in his public new confidence in the power and future of Islam. To do all this, he used a powerful tool: his pen.

The reach, range, depth and relevance of what he penned were immense. Asad's writings on Islam and the Muslims extend over half a century, from the 1920's to the 1980's. His writings include: *Unromantisches Morgenland* (*The Unromantic East*); *Islam at the Crossroads*; *The Road to Mecca*; *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*; *Sahih al-Bukhari: The Early Years of Islam*, an annotated translation; *The Message of the Qur'an*, an interpretation



Madina

of and commentary on the Muslim Holy Book; and *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*. In 1946 and 1947 he also brought out a journal, *Arafat: A Monthly Critique of Muslim Thought*.

Asad's first book, *Unromantisches Morgenland*, was based on his travels and observations as a correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. It was published in the mid-1920's, and showed an unusual insight into the Middle East. His first book as a committed Muslim was *Islam at the Crossroads*, published in 1934. That work did not claim to give a comprehensive answer to the many ailments that had weakened and destabilized the Muslim world, but it warned the Muslims against blindly imitating Western values and mores, which Asad thought posed a mortal danger to Islam. It was an incisive, sweeping—and often startling and refreshing—response to the tide of Western cultural and political hegemony, and vivified the debate on two concerns which greatly

exercised Muslim reformers: the perplexing problems of westernization and Muslim revival, and the extent to which it might be necessary for Muslims to follow the West's ways in order to achieve progress.

Asad espoused adherence to the teachings of the Qur'an and the *sunnah*; the latter he defined broadly as "the example the Prophet has set before us in his attitudes, actions and sayings" and "the only binding explanation of the Qur'anic teachings." He says in *Islam at the Crossroads*: "Many... spiritual doctors have tried to devise a patent medicine for the sick body of [the Islamic world]. But, until now, all has been in vain, because all those clever doctors—at least those who get a hearing today—have invariably forgotten to prescribe, along with their medicines, tonics, and elixirs, the natural diet on which the early development of the patient had been based. This diet, the one which the body of Islam, sound or sick, can positively accept and assimilate, is the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad." "The Sunnah," he emphasizes, "is the key to the understanding of the Islamic rise more than thirteen centuries ago; and why should it not be a key to the understanding of our present degeneration?"

But, he wrote, "this does not mean that Muslims should seclude themselves from the voices coming from without. One may at all times receive new, positive influences from a foreign civilization without necessarily abandoning his own. An example of this kind was the European Renaissance. There we have seen how readily Europe accepted Arab influences in the matter and method of learning. But it never imitated the outward appearance and the spirit of Arabian culture, and never sacrificed its own intellectual and aesthetic independence. It used Arab influences only as a fertilizer upon its own soil, just as the Arabs had used Hellenistic influences in their time. In both cases, the result was a spiritual enrichment, a strong, new growth of an indigenous civilization, full of self-confidence and pride in itself. No civilization can prosper, or even exist, after having lost this pride and the connection with its own past."

*Islam at the Crossroads* received great critical acclaim and was a commercial success, and it is certainly one of the works on which Asad's fame will rest. But other themes and achievements beckoned the young man.

**A**FTER *ISLAM AT THE CROSSROADS*, ASAD FOCUSED HIS attention on one of the earliest and most enduring of his concerns as a reformer: "to make real the voice of the Prophet of Islam—real, as if he were speaking directly to us and for us; and it is in the *hadith* that his voice can be most clearly heard." Like other Islamic reformers, he thought that knowledge of the traditions—the carefully collected and recorded sayings of the Prophet, which complement and amplify the Qur'an—was necessary for "a new understanding and a direct appreciation of the true teachings of Islam."

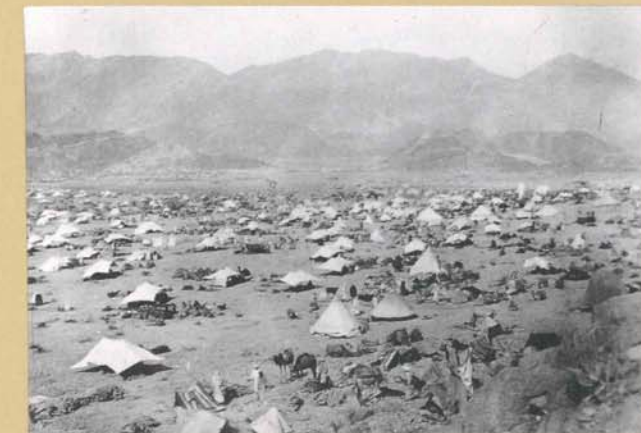


The Kaaba

"Islam did not seem to be so much a religion in the popular sense of the word as, rather, a way of life; not so much a system of theology as a programme of personal and social behaviour based on the consciousness of God.... No asceticism was required to open a hidden gate to purity: for purity was man's birthright, and sin meant no more than a lapse from the innate, positive qualities with which God was said to have endowed every human being. There was no trace of any dualism in the consideration of man's nature: body and soul seemed to be taken as one integral whole.... All this was intellectually and ethically far more 'respectable' than anything I had previously heard or read about Islam."



Mosque of Al-Zuhra,  
built on the site of the first  
mosque in Islam—outside Madina



Pilgrims at Mina after return  
from Arafat



Toward this end, and with the encouragement of Iqbal, he attempted a task that had never been undertaken in English: the translation of, and commentary on, the Prophet's authentic traditions, as they had been carefully and critically compiled in the ninth century by the great traditionalist al-Bukhari. Between 1935 and 1938, Asad published the first five of 40 projected installments of Bukhari's celebrated work under the title, *Sahih al-Bukhari: The Early Years of Islam*. Though he was unable to complete the publication of this work because of his internment and the loss of his manuscript in the chaos of Partition, the ten years he spent on this undertaking were not in vain; on the contrary, they were, as Asad himself recognized, a preparation for a greater task that was awaiting him.

In *The Road to Mecca*, published in 1954, Asad offers us nearly 380 enthralling pages which revolve around the only love that captivated him for life: Islam. His story is "simply," he says, "the story of a European's discovery of Islam and of his integration within the Muslim community." He wrote it in response to those of his western colleagues in New York who had been baffled by his conversion and his identification with the Muslims. A rich story and marvelously told, it covers Asad's life from his beginnings in Lvov in 1900 to his last desert journey in Arabia in 1932. It treats of vast themes: a journey in space and in spirit, an exploration of vast geographical distances and of the deep interior recesses of a man's psyche.

*The Road to Mecca* gives us a rounded portrait of a man in search of adventure and truth. It is part spiritual autobiography, part summary of the author's intuitive insights into Islam and the Arabs, part an impressive travelogue. Punctuated with abundant adventure, moments of contemplation, colorful narrative, brilliant description and lively anecdote, *The Road to Mecca* tells above all a human story, a story of a modern man's restlessness and loneliness, passions and ambitions, joys and sorrows, anxiety and commitment, vision and humaneness. Its author comes out as brilliant, exciting, lively, full of penetrating observation, immense charm, tremendous zest for life, and deeply held religious beliefs. Significantly, he triumphantly achieves his purpose in writing the book: No one can read it without gaining a better appreciation of Islam. Resigning as Pakistan's ambassador to the United Nations in order to devote himself to writing *The Road to Mecca*, he became with its publication an ambassador of Islam both to the West and to alienated intellectuals and young people in Muslim lands.

Like any classic, *The Road to Mecca* has passages which never lose their flavor, despite repeated reading. Here is a breathtaking display of Asad's religious feeling and narrative skill. It is also an unsurpassed nostalgic description of the pilgrimage of a bygone era:

**"NOT FAR FROM HERE, HIDDEN FROM MY EYES IN** the midst of this lifeless wilderness of valleys and hills, lies the plain of Arafat, on which all pilgrims who come to Mecca assemble

# Hijaz

A chance encounter with Prince Faysal in the Grand Mosque's library led to a meeting with his father, King 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud. This led to daily audiences as the king came to appreciate Asad's spiritual depth and keen mind. When requested to accompany the royal household to Riyadh, Asad asked to travel by camel rather than motorcar, so as to learn the desert's customs and landscapes. Thus Asad also gained the king's respect as a hardy traveler and kindred soul of his Bedouin subjects.

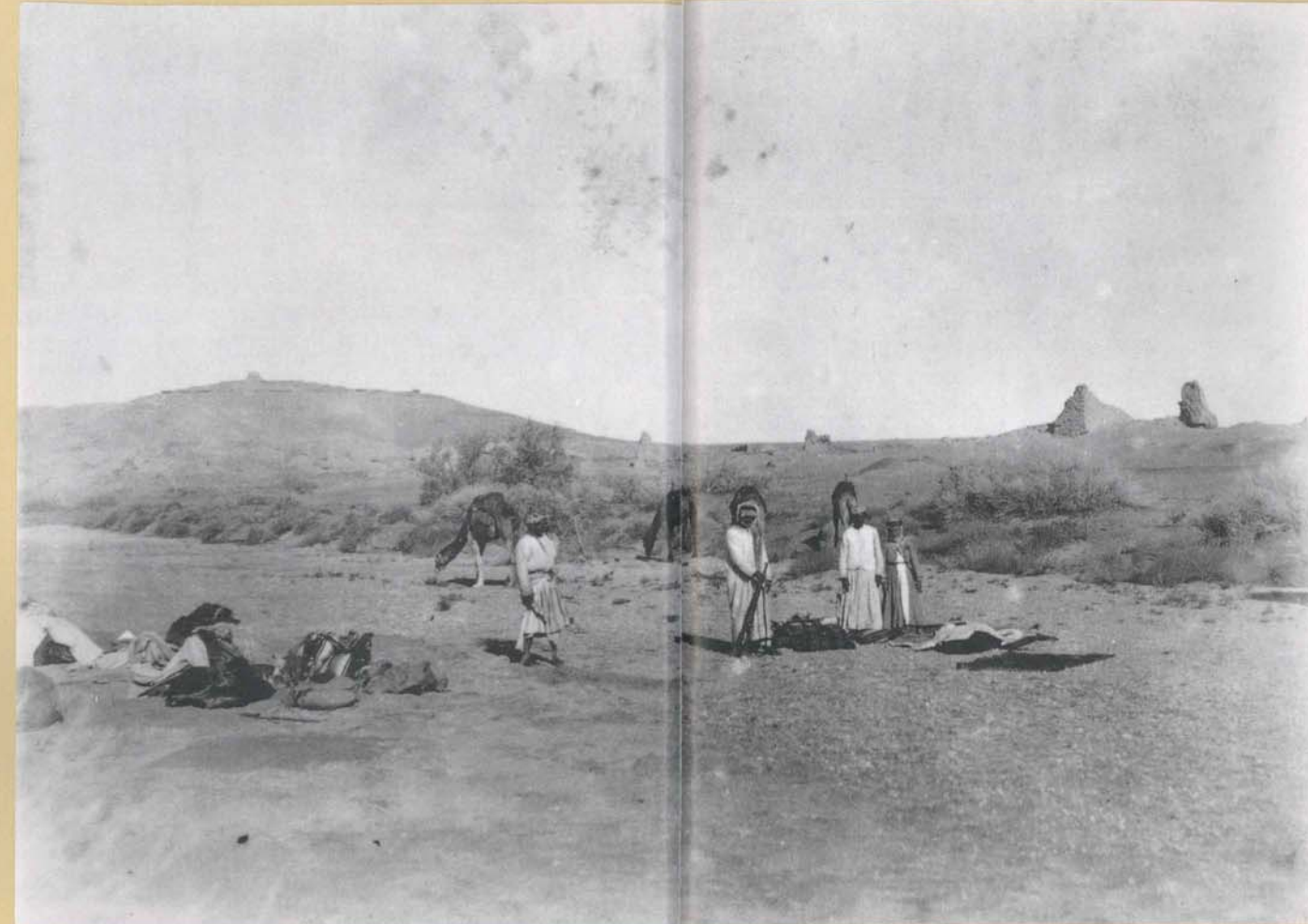
"Life in its majesty: majesty of sparseness, always surprising: herein lies the whole nameless scent of Arabia, of sand deserts like this one, and of the many other changing landscapes."



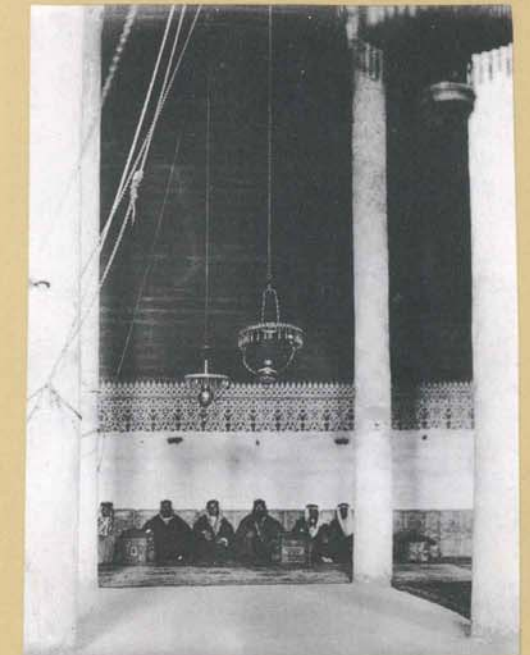
Volcanic plateau near Madina



Buraydah (central Najd)



Camp on my journey to Najd



Reception room in the house of the Subhan family, Hayil

# Najd





*Mansur al-Asaf,  
my guide*



*Ibn Bani,  
the foremost sword-  
maker and goldsmith  
of Najd*



*Najdi woman  
at home*



*Najdi woman*

"My coming to this land was it not, in truth, a home-coming? Home-coming of the heart that has espied its old home backward over a curve of thousands of years and now recognizes this sky, my sky, with painful rejoicing? For this Arabian sky...vaulted over the long trek of my ancestors...that small Bedouin tribe of Hebrews, forefathers of that man who was to be born in Ur of the Chaldees... one among many Arabian tribes which at one time or another had wound their way from the hungry deserts of the Peninsula toward the northern dreamlands."



*Bedouin of the  
Ikhwan*

on one day of the year as a reminder of that Last Assembly, when man will have to answer to his Creator for all he has done in life. How often have I stood there myself, bareheaded, in the white pilgrim garb, among a multitude of white-garbed, bareheaded pilgrims from three continents, our faces turned toward the Jabal ar-Rahma—the 'Mount of Mercy'—which arises out of the vast plain: standing and waiting through the noon, through the afternoon, reflecting upon that inescapable Day, 'when you will be exposed to view, not one secret of yours will remain concealed'....

"And as I stand on the hillcrest and gaze down toward the invisible Plain of Arafat, the moonlit blueness of the landscape before me, so dead a moment ago, suddenly comes to life with the currents of all the human lives that have passed through it and is filled with the eerie voices of the millions of men and women who have walked or ridden between Mecca and Arafat in over thirteen hundred pilgrimages for over thirteen hundred years. Their voices and their steps and the voices and the steps of their animals reawaken and resound anew; I see them walking and riding and assembling—all those myriads of white-garbed pilgrims of thirteen hundred years; I hear the sounds of their passed-away days; the wings of the faith which has drawn them together to this land of rocks and sand and seeming deadness beat again with the warmth of life over the arc of centuries, and the mighty wingbeat draws me into its orbit and draws my own passed-away days into the present, and once again I am riding over the plain—riding in a thundering gallop over the plain, amidst thousands and thousands of *ihram*-clad beduins, returning from Arafat to Mecca—a tiny particle of that roaring, earth-shaking, irresistible wave of countless galloping dromedaries and men, with the tribal banners on their high poles beating like drums in the wind and their tribal war cries tearing through the air: 'Ya Rawga, ya Rawga!' by which the Atayba tribesmen evoke their ancestor's name, answered by the 'Ya Awf, ya Awf!' of the Harb and echoed by the almost defiant, 'Shammar, ya Shammar!' from the farthest right wing of the column.

"We ride on, rushing, flying over the plain, and to me it seems that we are flying with the wind, abandoned to a happiness that knows neither end nor limit...and the wind shouts a wild paean of joy into my ears: 'Never again, never again, never again will you be a stranger!'

"...Someone in the surging host abandons his tribal cry for a cry of faith: 'We are the brethren of him who gives himself up to God!'—and another joins in: 'Allahu Akbar!'—'God is the Greatest!—God alone is Great!'

"And all the tribal detachments take up this one cry. They are no longer Najdi beduins revelling in their tribal pride: they are men who know that the secrets of God are but waiting for them...for us.... Amidst the din of thousands of rushing camels' feet and the flapping of a hundred banners, their cry grows into a roar of triumph: 'Allahu Akbar!'

"It flows in mighty waves over the heads of the thousands of galloping men, over the wide plain, to all the ends of the earth: 'Allahu Akbar!' These men have grown beyond their own little lives, and now their faith sweeps them forward, in oneness, toward some uncharted horizon....

"The smell of the dromedaries' bodies, their panting and snorting, the thundering of their innumerable feet; the shouting of the men, the clanking of the rifles slung on saddle-pegs, the dust and the sweat and the wildly excited faces around me; and a sudden, glad stillness within me.

"I turn around in my saddle and see behind me the waving, weaving mass of thousands of white-clad riders and, beyond them, the bridge over which I have come: its end is just behind me while its beginning is already lost in the mists of distance."

In another arresting passage, Asad's reveals his intense devotion to the Prophet and his awareness of the Prophet's wondrous spiritual presence permeating Madinah:

"I enter the city and cross the huge, open square of Al-Manakha to the inner city wall; beneath the heavy arch of the Egyptian Gate, under which the money-changers sit clinking their gold and silver coins, I step into the main bazaar—a street hardly twelve feet across, tightly packed with shops around which a small but eager life pulsates.

"The vendors praise their goods with cheerful songs. Gay headcloths, silken shawls and robes of figured Kashmir wool attract the eye of the passerby. Silversmiths crouch behind small glass cases containing beduin jewellery—arm-rings and ankle-rings, necklaces and earrings. Perfume vendors display basins filled with henna.... Floods of people in both directions, people from Medina and the rest of Arabia and—as the time of the pilgrimage has ended only a short while ago—from all the countries between the East Indies and the Atlantic Ocean, between Astrakhan and Zanzibar: but in spite of the multitude of people and narrowness of the street, there is no hurried frenzy here, no pushing and jostling; for in Medina time does not ride on the wings of pursuit.

"But what might appear even more strange is that despite the great variety of human types and costumes that fills them,



*Amir Ibrahim ibn  
Subhan and myself*

*Najd*





*King 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia*

About King 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, Asad wrote: "He was so well-proportioned that his huge size—he must have been six and a half feet—became apparent only when he stood. His face, framed in the traditional red-and-white-checked *kuffiya* and topped by a gold-threaded *igal*, was strikingly virile. He wore his beard and moustache clipped in Najdi fashion; his forehead was broad, his nose strong and aquiline.... While he spoke, his features were enlivened by unusual mobility, but in repose his face was somehow sad, as if withdrawn in inner loneliness; the deep setting of his eyes may have had something to do with this....

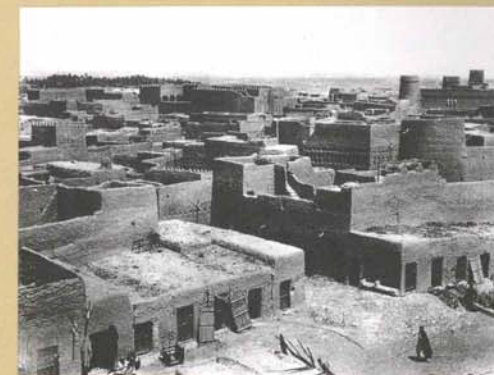
A good and just man in his personal affairs, loyal to his friends and supporters, generous toward his enemies and implacable towards hypocrites, graced by intellectual gifts above the level of most of his followers, Ibn Saud has established a condition of public security in his vast domains unequalled in Arab lands since the time of the early Caliphate a thousand years ago. His personal authority is tremendous, but it does not rest so much on actual power as on the suggestive strength of his character. He is utterly unassuming in words and demeanor.... He has an almost unfailing, instinctive insight into the motives of the people with whom he has to deal."

*Riyadh*

Prince Faysal (later king) at 22, as viceroy of the Hijaz, two years after his father's conquest of the region. "He seemed to be kind, dreamy, and a little reserved and shy—an impression which was confirmed during the later years of our acquaintance."



*Amir Faysal with entourage*



*Riyadh*

there is nothing of an 'exotic' medley in the streets of Medina: the variety of appearances reveals itself only to the eye that is determined to analyze. It seems to me that all the people who live in this city, or even sojourn in it temporarily, very soon fall into what one might call a community of mood and thus also of behaviour, and, almost, even of facial expression: for all of them have fallen under the spell of the Prophet, whose city it once was and whose guests they now are....

"Even after thirteen centuries his spiritual presence is almost as alive here as it was then. It was only because of him that the scattered group of villages once called Yathrib became a city and has been loved by all Muslims down to this day as no city anywhere else in the world has ever been loved. It has not even a name of its own: for more than thirteen hundred years it has been called *Madinat an-Nabi*, 'the City of the Prophet.' For more than thirteen hundred years, so much love has converged here that all shapes and movements have acquired a kind of family resemblance, and all differences of appearance find a tonal transition into a common harmony.

"This is the happiness one always feels here—this unifying harmony.... Never has any city been so loved for the sake of one single personality; never has any man, dead for over thirteen hundred years, been loved so personally, and by so many, as he who lies buried beneath the great green dome.

"It was precisely because he was only human, because he lived like other men, enjoying the pleasures and suffering the ills of human existence, that those around him could so encompass him with their love.

"This love has outlasted his death and lives on in the hearts of his followers like the leitmotif of a melody built up of many tones. It lives on in Medina. It speaks to you out of every stone of the ancient city. You can almost touch it with your hands: but you cannot capture it in words...."

**A**ND THERE IS THIS INIMITABLE JEWEL:  
"We had stopped for our noon prayer. As I washed my hands, face and feet from a water-skin, a few drops spilled over a dried-up tuft of grass at my feet, a miserable little plant, yellow and withered and lifeless under the harsh rays of the sun. But as the water trickled over it, a shiver went through the shrivelled blades, and I saw how they slowly, tremblingly, unfolded. A few more drops, and the little blades moved and curled and then straightened themselves slowly, hesitatingly, trembling.... I held my breath as I poured more water over the grass tuft. It moved more quickly, more violently, as if some hidden force were pushing it out of its dream of death. Its blades—what a delight to behold!—contracted and expanded like the arms of a starfish, seemingly overwhelmed by a shy but irrepressible delirium, a real little orgy of sensual joy: and thus life reentered victoriously what a moment ago had been as dead, entered it visibly, passionately, overpowering and beyond in its majesty.

1927



1928

Asad became one of Ibn Saud's trusted counselors. The incongruity could not have been more extreme: Here was a man, born a Jew in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Arabs' enemy in a war just 10 years past, now befriending the king of Saudi Arabia as a fellow Muslim. One day in 1928 in Makkah, "news was brought to the King that his father had died in Riyadh. I shall never forget the uncomprehending stare with which he looked for several seconds at the messenger, and the despair which slowly and visibly engulfed the features that were normally so serene and composed; and how he jumped with a terrible roar, 'My father is dead!' and, with great strides, ran out of the room, his *abaya* trailing on the ground behind him; and how he bounded up the stairway, past the awe-struck faces of his men-at-arms,... shouting, 'My father is dead!' 'My father is dead!'... How many sons of middle age, how many kings who had won themselves a kingdom through their own strength, would have thus mourned the passing of a father who had died the peaceful death of old age?"



King Ibn Saud



Sons of King Ibn Saud



Crown Prince Saud with younger brother Khalid

"Life in its majesty...you always feel it in the desert. Because it is so difficult to keep and so hard, it is always like a gift, a treasure, and a surprise. For the desert is always surprising, even though you may have known it for years. Sometimes, when you think you can see it in all its rigidity and emptiness, it awakens from its dream, sends forth its breath—and tender, pale-green grass stands suddenly where only yesterday there was nothing but sand and splintery pebbles. It sends forth its breath again—and a flock of small birds flutters through the air—from where? where to?—slim-bodied, long-winged, emerald-green; or a swarm of locusts rises up above the earth with a rush and a zoom, grey and grim and endless like a horde of hungry warriors...."

"Life in its majesty: majesty of sparseness, always surprising: herein lies the whole nameless scent of Arabia, of sand deserts like this one, and of the many other changing landscapes."

The merits of *The Road to Mecca* were widely recognized when it appeared. The *Times Literary Supplement* said, "History tells us of many European converts to Islam, some of whom have risen to high place and power in the lands of their adoption.... But it is rare to find a convert setting out, step by step, the process of his conversion; and doing this, moreover, in a narrative of great power and beauty. His knowledge of Middle Eastern peoples and of their problems is profound; indeed in some respects his narrative is at once more intimate and more penetrating than that of Doughty." The reviewer of the *Christian Science Monitor* wrote: "[This] book is one which has burst with strange and compelling authority upon the small fraternity of Westerners who know Arabia,...a book trenchant with adventure magnificently described, and a commentary upon the inner meaning of Arab and Moslem life, helpful to all who would achieve a more accurate understanding of the Arabs and their lands."

Asad's versatile talents and thought also flowered finely in other directions, including Islamic law—*shari'ah*—and Islamic political theory. Both fields were of importance to him, as he felt that the spiritual and temporal success of the Muslim community depended largely on a correct understanding and application of Islamic law and on a sound political system.

His attention turned to Islamic legal and political systems in the 1930's when he, along with Iqbal, began to work for the creation of Pakistan, where the Indian Muslims could lead their lives in accordance with the ideals and teachings of Islam. Asad was one of the distinguished English-language thinkers who contributed to building the intellectual and ideological framework for the new Islamic state. Later he republished and developed some of his earlier writings on



Old Palace Stables

this subject in *The Principles of State and Government in Islam* (1961) and *This Law of Ours and Other Essays* (1987).

"[A]n Islamic state," Asad posits in *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, "is not a goal or an end in itself but only a means: the goal being the growth

of a community of people who stand up for equity and justice, for right and against wrong—or, to put it more precisely, a community of people who work for the creation and maintenance of such social conditions as would enable the greatest possible number of human beings to live, morally as well as physically, in accordance with the natural Law of God, Islam."

Asad further believed that modern and future Muslims had considerable flexibility to deal creatively—through *ijtihad*, independent thinking—with an ever-changing world and its attendant challenges. But he believed that they must, when carrying out *ijtihad*, be bound by the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. He believed that in all matters which were clearly enjoined by the *shari'ah*, sovereignty belonged to God alone, but in most other areas, such as the form of the political system to be adopted, God in His wisdom had given the believers the right, and imposed on them the duty, to exercise their reason and to arrive at the appropriate decision for their time by mutual consultation. Asad laid great emphasis on the Qur'anic principle of consultation; he gave no quarter to totalitarian systems of government, which he thought were pernicious and anti-Islamic.

The emphasis that Asad and other reformers placed on *ijtihad* bore fruit within his lifetime: Several Muslim countries and international organizations have formed juristic bodies to exercise independent thinking on such issues as organ transplantation, genetic engineering, interest-free banking and insurance.

It was Asad's wife Pola Hamida Asad who gathered together various writings and radio talks of his and persuaded him to publish them as *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*. This book represents Asad's work and thought from the mid-1940's to 1987. In her foreword, she points out that the reader will be struck "not only by the extraordinary timeliness and timelessness of these thoughts and predictions, but also by their great consistency."

*This Law of Ours and Other Essays* deals with Islamic and western civilizations and Muslim law. In particular, it dwells on the role of *ijtihad* and the creative outlook of the





Myself

Asad was interested not only in Muslims' past glory but in their renewed greatness and their potential to serve as a model for all nations. Often he seemed to be ahead of his contemporaries in forcefully pointing up the necessity of a dynamic approach to solving problems based on *ijtihad* ("independent thinking"). While deeply respectful of the past, he was critical of blind deference and today, many distinguished scholars endorse *ijtihad* enthusiastically. Asad's disenchantment with the West's secularism and materialism was deeply felt, searchingly scrutinized and trenchantly expressed. His iconoclastic critique reoriented many Muslims away from defeatism to pride in their identity and heritage.

Companions of the Prophet and the great jurists of the past regarding the necessity for independent thinking based on the Qur'an and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. It also contains Asad's perspective on the ideological basis of Pakistan as well as on Islam's encounter with the West.

"Simply talking about the need for a 're-birth' of faith is not much better than bragging about our glorious past and extolling the greatness of our predecessors," he says in *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*. "Our faith cannot be born unless we *understand what it implies* and to what practical goals it will lead us. It will not do us the least good if we are glibly assured that the socio-economic programme of Islam is better than that of socialism, communism, capitalism, fascism, and God knows what other 'isms'.... We ought rather to be *shown* in unmistakable terms, what alternative proposals the *shari'ah* makes for our social life, what its true concept of society is, what views it puts forward with regard to individual property and the communal good, labour and production, capital and profit, employer and employee, the state and the individual; what its practical measures are for the prevention of man's exploitation by man; for an abolition of ignorance and poverty; for obtaining food, clothing and shelter for every man, woman and child...."

He demonstrates a similar consistent practicality about religion in another place in the book: "Specious sermonising about 'faith' and 'sacrifice' and 'surrender to God's Will' cannot lead to the establishment of true Islam on earth unless we are shown *how* to gain faith through a better insight into God's plan, *how* to elevate our spirit by living a righteous life, and *how* to surrender ourselves to God by doing His Will as individuals and as a community, so that we might *really* become 'the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind' (*surah* 3:110)."

**M**ANY YEARS OF ASAD'S LIFE WERE SPENT contemplating the Qur'an's meaning and dreaming of producing a new rendering of the Holy Book, with a commentary in the tradition of the great commentators whose scholarship has enriched Qur'anic studies through the centuries. In *The Message of the Qur'an*, at the age of 80, Asad realized that lifelong dream. Following a limited edition of the first nine *surahs*, or chapters, of the Qur'an in 1964, the complete edition, a volume of 1000 pages, was the creative eruption that capped his scholarly contributions and long service to Islam.

What kind of book is the Qur'an, and—since there were already some 30 renderings of it in English—why did Asad undertake yet another? Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the Word of God revealed in Arabic and untranslatable into any other tongue. What challenges therefore face its interpreter, and how can his success be measured? Furthermore, Asad not only rendered the Qur'an into English, he also

wrote a *tafsir*, or commentary, on it. Can any time-bound, mortal commentary do justice to God's eternal Word?

The translator of any literary text is faced with two immediate problems: rendering the meaning of the original faithfully in language that is idiomatic and in a style that resonates with the unique linguistic traits and flavor of the target language. In the case of translation of Arabic into English the problems are greater because of the vast gap between the different syntactical, rhetorical, and linguistic worlds of a Semitic language and an Indo-European tongue. And for translation of the Qur'an the challenge grows exponentially for a variety of reasons. First, the beauty and power of its language, rhythm and cadences are inimitable. Second, Qur'anic diction is highly elliptical and condensed, and expresses a world of meaning with pungent brevity. But the translator of such elliptical constructions is forced to add linking phrases to clarify his rendering, preferably without unwelcome had spent over three decades studying the Qur'an, the hadith and other allied Islamic disciplines. He had lived in Arabia and, through daily courtship, and not least important, the Qur'an coined numerous usages and terms to express religious and moral concepts; it thus gave novel meanings to old words.

The first English interpretation of the Qur'an by a European convert appeared only in 1930. In his justly celebrated translation, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall expresses some of the difficulties inherent in any effort to translate the Qur'an: "The Koran cannot be translated. That is the belief of old-fashioned Sheykhs and the view of the present writer. The Book is here rendered almost literally and every effort has been made to choose befitting language. But the result is not the Glorious Koran, that inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy. It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Koran—and peradventure something of the charm—in English. It can never take place of the Koran in Arabic, nor is it meant to do so."

A commentator on the Qur'an faces still more difficulties. First, his qualifications must exceed those of a translator in a variety of Islamic fields, ranging from Arabic linguistics to lexicography, *hadith* to hermeneutics, history to heresiology, grammar to jurisprudence, rhetoric to dogmatics and phonetics to biography. Second, he must decide which line of interpretation he wants to follow, for the science of Qur'anic exegesis is a rich one and has engendered many, at times differing, schools of interpretation. However deep and how-ever illuminating, those interpretations remain personal, human, partial perspectives on the Word of God and have not been considered binding on other scholars or on the community of believers.

Even in view of these daunting requirements, Asad was eminently qualified for his task. He interpolated into the Qur'anic text. Third, *Arabic* has preserved



Horse races before Amir Paksal in Paif

a lot of the hard-to-translate everyday imagery of an ancient world. First, Arabic has preserved a lot of the hard-to-translate everyday imagery of an ancient world. Fanciful world. 'an. He had been in contact with some of the most perceptive Muslims of his times. As an earnest convert, he treated the Qur'an with both the veneration of a believer and the passion of an intellectual on a mission.

Asad says in the foreword to *The Message of the Qur'an*, "...although it is impossible to 'reproduce' the Qur'an as such in any other language, it is none the less possible to render its message comprehensible to people who, like most Westerners, do not know Arabic...well enough to find their way through it unaided." With the humility of a confessing scholar, he adds: "And I am fully aware that my rendering does not and could not really 'do justice' to the Qur'an and the layers upon layers of its meaning: for, 'if all the sea were ink for my Sustainer's words, the sea would indeed be exhausted ere my Sustainer's words are exhausted.' (Qur'an 18: 109)."

In his exegesis, Asad was eclectic. The wealth of material he quotes from classical authorities—starting with the Companion and cousin of the Prophet, the father of Qur'anic exegesis, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas—is one of the fortes of his rendering: In no other version of the Holy Book in English is there as much comment and interpretation from the giants of exegesis, whose original work is normally accessible only to scholars of Arabic.

Asad's own bias is shown by the authority he most often quotes, the Mufti of Egypt Muhammad 'Abduh. What perhaps impressed Asad most about 'Abduh was that he viewed the Qur'an primarily as a book of divine guidance for Muslims in matters concerning their life in this world and in the hereafter, whereas many had long regarded it merely as a source of theology or a model of Arabic. "The



reader will find in my explanatory notes frequent references to views held by Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905)," Asad writes. "His importance in the modern context of the world of Islam can never be sufficiently stressed. It may be stated without exaggeration that every single trend in contemporary Islamic thought can be traced back to the most outstanding of all modern Islamic thinkers."

So, how well did Asad succeed in attaining the unattainable or translating the untranslatable? *The Message of the Qur'an* received favorable reviews from discriminating scholars. Gai Eaton, a leading British Muslim thinker, after pointing out the limitations of Asad's rationalist approach, called it "the most helpful and instructive version of the Qur'an that we have in English. This remarkable man has done what he set out to do, and it may be doubted whether his achievement will ever be surpassed."

Asad himself, while pleased with this judgment, would not have accepted it in its entirety, for he believed that the Word of God could never be entirely encompassed by a translator or commentator. In fact, had he lived longer it is certain that he would have kept on improving his rendering, as we can see he did when we compare the verses he translated in *The Road to Mecca* with the same verses rendered in *The Message of the Qur'an*. Asad's translation, like all other Muslim translations of the Qur'an in any language, is sincere and heartfelt—yet it, like the others, is only an attempt, transient and in no way completely satisfactory, to interpret what is essentially uninterpretable: the Word of God revealed in Arabic.

**WHAT, AND HOW LASTING, IS MUHAMMAD ASAD'S legacy?** Asad was a man who received his chief nourishment from the Qur'an and *sunnah* of the Prophet, and spent his energy on the preservation of the ideals of Islam and the identity of the Muslim community. He was the foremost champion of the *shari'ah* among western converts. He held that Islam's spiritual and cultural achievements across the centuries remain a brilliant and moving spectacle, but he was interested in Muslims' continuing greatness, and their serving as a model for all nations.

Often he seemed to be ahead of his contemporaries in advocating the use of *ijtihad*, arguing passionately that this rugged path was the only way to ensure a successful revival in the Muslim world. He was deeply respectful of the achievements of the great scholars of the past, but critical



of blind deference to individual opinions. He believed that all qualified Muslims were entitled—indeed, enjoined—to exercise their judgment on the range of societal issues that arise in every age and that have not been determined by divine revelation or authentic Prophetic traditions.

Asad's disenchantment with secularism and materialism was the child of his very intimate, personal experience of the West. This disappointment was deeply felt, searchingly scrutinized and trenchantly expressed, and his devastating critique of these trends reoriented many Muslims toward pride in their identity and heritage.

Asad almost always worked on his own, and never belonged to any organized movement. Because he was, and remained, an intellectual and never became an activist or the founder of a party, he did not leave any disciples who could carry on and develop his thought. But posterity will continue to benefit from the radiance of his thought through the written legacy he left in many fields: travel and autobiography, *sunnah* and *shari'ah*, jurisprudence and Qur'anic exegesis, secularism and westernization, political theory and constitutional ideas.

Nonetheless, as is the case with most writings, Asad's, too, will eventually become dated. His translations and interpretations of the Qur'an and *Sahih al-Bukhari* will in time be supplanted, his views on secularism and westernization will be re-examined and modified, his successful espousal of *ijtihad* will become *passé*, and his proposals for political and constitutional reform will be enacted. But one work of Asad's promises to escape the earthly oblivion that is the fate of almost all human endeavor: his unequalled, dazzling masterpiece, *The Road to Mecca*.

But only God knows the future. Meanwhile, the passionate love affair of a great and splendid European with Islam is indelibly inscribed in the past. For, once upon a time, two roads diverged in Berlin, and Muhammad Asad took the one less traveled by. He took the road to Makkah, and that has made all the difference. ☪



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In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to God, The Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee do we worship; And Thy aid do we seek. Show us the straight way; The way of those on whom Thou has bestowed Thy Grace; those whose [portion] is not wrath; And who go not astray.

The Qur'an, Chapter 1  
"Fatiha" ("Opening Chapter")

# Islam

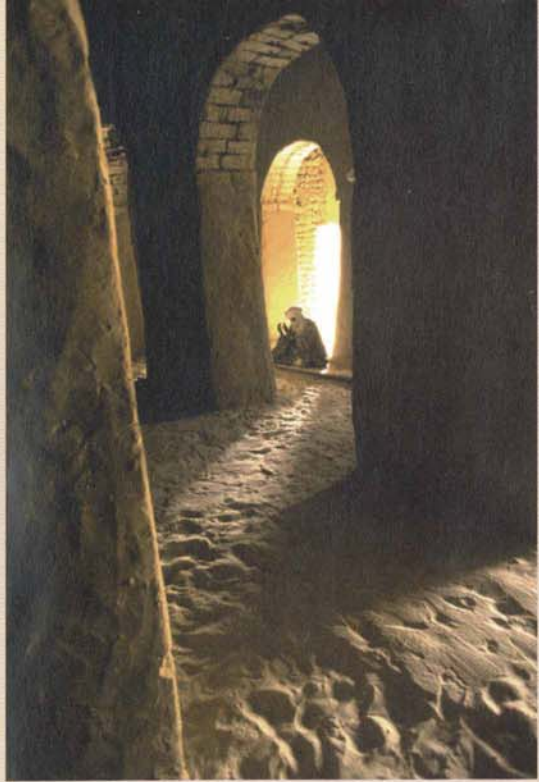
A special pull-out section from  
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## An Introduction

Facts about Islam and Muslims  
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يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا  
وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

O mankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, [not that ye may despise each other.] Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is [he who is] the most righteous of you.

The Qur'an, Chapter 49  
"Hujurat" ("The Dwellings")  
Verse 13



# NotableMuslims

**Abu Bakr "al-Siddiq"**, ca. 570–634: One of the first followers of the Prophet who, in 632, became the first of the four "rightly guided" caliphs.

**'Umar ibn al-Khattab**, 592–644: Second of the four "rightly guided" caliphs. He originated most of the major political institutions of the Muslim state and helped stabilize the rapidly expanding Arab empire.

**'Uthman ibn Affan**, d. 656: Third of the "rightly guided" caliphs, married successively to two of the Prophet's daughters. Elected caliph in 644, he ordered the official collation of the Qur'an.

**'Ali ibn Abi Talib**, ca. 596–661: Cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. In 656 he became the last of the "rightly guided" caliphs.

**Harun al-Rashid**, 786–809: Fifth caliph of the Abbasid empire, he ruled during its apogee, as described in *The 1001 Nights*. Founder, with his son and successor **al-Ma'mun**, 813–833, of the Bayt al-Hikmah, or House of Wisdom, in Baghdad, where works from classical Greece were translated, studied and preserved.

**Ziryab (Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Nafi)**, b. 789: Baghdadi musician, 'ud master and cultural innovator who became chief musician and *arbiter elegantiarum* at the court of Abd al-Rahman II in Córdoba in 822.

**Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj**, 817–875: Collector of the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*).

Muhammad ibn Musa **al-Khwarizmi**, ca. 800–847: Mathematician, astronomer, geographer of Baghdad. He introduced algebra and Indian/Arabic numerals—as well as the words *algebra* and *algorithm*—to Europe in the 12th century.

Muhammad ibn Ismail **al-Bukhari**, 810–870: Compiler of *hadith*.

**Zubayda**, d. 831: Wife of Harun al-Rashid. Sponsored mosques, hostelries and schools and backed improvements to the pilgrims' road from Kufa to Makkah, the *darb Zubayda*.

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya **al-Razi**, 841–926: Physician, philosopher, alchemist, musician and mathematician, born in Rayy, Persia. Called **Rhazes** in the West. Islam's greatest physician and most freethinking philosopher, author of more than 200 books, including the first pediatric work, the first treatise on smallpox and measles, and a 25-volume medical survey.

**Firdawsi** (Abu 'l-Qasim Mansur), 940–1020: Great Persian poet, author of the 60,000-verse *Shahnama* (*Book of Kings*), the Persian national epic.

Abu 'Ali al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan **ibn al-Haytham**, 965–1040: Combined physical doctrines with mathematics. Known in the West as **Alhazen**. Wrote the *Kitab al-Manazir* (*On Optics*), in which he proposed a new theory of vision. Influenced Kepler and Descartes; extended Euclid's *Elements*.

Abu al-Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad **al-Biruni**, 973–1048: Astronomer, mathematician, geographer, physicist, historian. Born in (today's)

Uzbekistan, he wrote *A History of India*, and *A Chronology of Ancient Nations* as well as other major works.

Abu 'Ali al-Husayn ibn 'Abd Allah **ibn Sina**, 980–1037: The "Leonardo da Vinci of the Muslim world," known as **Avicenna** in the West. Born in Bukhara, (today's) Uzbekistan. Wrote on theology, metaphysics, astronomy, philology, poetry, and medicine, including *Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb* (*The Canon of Medicine*), a codification of all existing medical knowledge that was used as a reference in Europe well into the 15th century.

'Aisha bint Ahmad **al-Qurtubiya**, ca. 1000: Famed woman poet and calligrapher of Andalusia.

**Omar Khayyam**, ca. 1048–1125: Persian mathematician, astronomer and poet best known for the *Rubaiyat*; also helped reform the solar calendar.

Abu Hamid Muhammad **al-Ghazali**, 1058–1111: Persian astronomer, jurist, philosopher and mystic; **Algazel** to the West. Author of some 70 works, al-Ghazali won early fame as a lawyer in Baghdad but later relinquished his post to pursue the nature of knowledge.

Abu Marwan 'Abd al-Malik **ibn Zuhr**, 1091–1162: Physician, born Seville. Known to the West as **Avenzoar** and renowned for his surgical skills.

**Wallada bint al-Mustakfi**, d. ca. 1091: Poet of Umayyad Córdoba famous for her wit and eloquence, literary parties and love poetry.

Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad **al-Idrisi**, 1099–1180: Geographer, born Ceuta, Morocco and educated in Córdoba. Served in the court of Roger II of Sicily, for whom he produced *al-Kitab al-Rujari*, a geographical treatise which included the first scientific map of the world.

Abu al-Walid Muhammad **ibn Rushd**, 1126–1198: Philosopher, physician, jurist. Known as **Averroës** in the West. Active in Seville, Córdoba and Marrakech. "The Great Commentator" on Aristotle whose works, translated into Latin, gave Europeans their first substantive introduction to Greek philosophy.

**Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi**, 1138–1193: Founder of Ayyubid dynasty of Egypt and Syria; known as **Saladin** in the West. Ejected the Crusaders from Jerusalem in 1187 and garnered fame through chivalric battles with Richard the Lion-Hearted.

Muhyi 'l-Din al-Ta'i **ibn al-'Arabi**, 1165–1240: Mystic, born in Murcia, Spain. Author of some 400 works, including a summary of the teaching of 28 prophets from Adam to Muhammad.

Hafsa bint al-Hajj **al-Rakuni**, ca. 12th c.: Greatest woman poet of al-Andalus.

Badi' al-Zaman Isma'il ibn al-Razzaz **al-Jazari**, ca. 1150–1200: Engineer, inventor. His prescient *Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices* gives detailed descriptions and drawings of clocks, irrigation machines, fountains, automata, and other technologies.

Jalal al-Din **Rumi**, 1207–1273: Mystic, poet, born in Balkh, (today's) Afghanistan. After his death,

his disciples organized the Mevlevi order, sometimes called the "whirling dervishes."

**Ibn al-Nafis**, d. 1288: Physician of Damascus. Wrote compendium of Arab knowledge of ophthalmology. Proposed the theory of the pulmonary circulation of the blood.

'Abd al-Rahman **ibn Khaldun**, 1332–1406: Historian, sociologist. Born in Tunis, he served at courts in Andalusia and North Africa and taught at al-Azhar in Cairo. Author of *Kitab al-'Ibar* (*Universal History*), in which he treated history as a science and outlined reasons for the rise and fall of civilizations.

**Timur (Tamerlane)**, ca. 1336–1405: Conqueror of an empire that included all or parts of today's Afghanistan, Persia, India, Turkey, Syria and Egypt. Equally famed for ruthlessness and the monuments he commissioned, especially in his capital, Samarqand.

**Sinan**, 1488–1587: Master architect of the Ottoman empire who designed, among many others, the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul and the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne.

**Süleyman I**, 1494–1566: Ottoman Sultan who guided the empire to the fullest extent of its power and prestige. A patron of the arts and sponsor of vast public works; the present city walls of Jerusalem are one of his many projects in that city alone.

Shihab al-Din **ibn Majid**, 15th c.: Navigator on Vasco da Gama's voyage from Portugal to India in 1497–1498.

Mirza Asad **Ghalib**, 1797–1869: Great poet of India, father of modern Urdu prose.

Jamal al-Din **al-Afghani**, 1838–1897: Journalist, reformer. A founder of modern Muslim anti-colonialism, he advocated a religious and cultural revival to counteract European influence.

Muhammad **Iqbal**, 1876–1938: Poet, philosopher, jurist and social reformer. He advocated the creation of a Muslim state in northwest India.

Muhammad Ali **Jinnah**, 1876–1948: First president of Pakistan.

**Um Kulthum**, 1908–1975: She combined traditional Arabic love poetry, contemporary musical forms and the cadences of religious songs to become the Arab world's greatest popular singer.

**Naguib Mahfouz**, b. 1911: Egyptian writer, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988. His work features realistic depictions of middle-and lower-class Egyptians.

**Malcolm X**, 1925–1965: American civil rights leader.

**Muhammad Ali**, b. 1942: Three-time world heavyweight champion boxer; became a Muslim in 1964.

**Ahmed H. Zewail**, b. 1946: Egyptian-born American chemist, winner of the 1999 Nobel Prize for imaging chemical interactions on an atomic scale.



## What is Islam?

Islam is the religion, and the way of life, of about one fifth of the world's population. Its adherents, called Muslims, believe Islam is God's final message to humankind, a reconfirmation and perfection of the messages that God has revealed through earlier prophets.

## What do Muslims believe?

The central Muslim belief is that there is only one God, unique, incomparable, eternal, absolute and without peer or associate. He cannot be perceived in this world but through His works.

Other important tenets of Islam are that God is the Creator of all that exists; that His will is supreme; that He has sent messengers to humankind, of whom Muhammad was the "seal"—that is, the last; that the Qur'an is the very Word of God; that angels, immortal creatures, exist, as does Satan; that humans are responsible to God for their actions; and that, on Judgment Day, an all-knowing and merciful God will judge all mortals according to their deeds in this life.

## Who was the Prophet Muhammad?

Muhammad was the prophet through whom, Muslims believe, God sent his last revelation to humankind.

Muhammad was born around the year 570 in the Arabian city of Makkah, a city built on trade and on the flow of pilgrims to the Ka'bah, the shrine believed to have been erected by Adam, and which was then filled with idols from many cultures.

Muhammad was orphaned at age six. In his 20's, he went to work for a widow named Khadijah, who ran trading caravans. Working for her, he traveled widely and earned a reputation for trustworthiness. Later, and in spite of a considerable age difference, he married Khadijah.

In his late 30's, Muhammad took to meditating alone in a cave on Mount Hira, a few hours' walk outside the city. There, one day during the month of Ramadan, he heard a voice ordering him to "Recite!"

Three times, Muhammad replied that he could not: He was illiterate. But each time the command was repeated, and finally Muhammad received the first revelation:

Recite: In the name of your Lord who created, Created man from a clot. Recite: And your Lord is Most Bounteous, Who taught by the pen, Taught man that which he knew not.

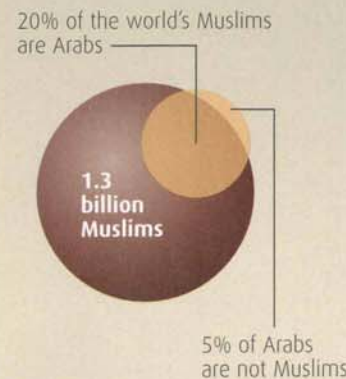
The voice—it revealed itself as the Angel Gabriel—told Muhammad that he was to be the Messenger of God, and the revelations continued at irregular intervals for the 22 remaining years of Muhammad's life. The total of these revelations is the Qur'an, a

word that means, literally, "recitation."

At first, Muhammad told only his wife and his closest friends of his experience. But as the revelations kept coming, they enjoined him to proclaim the oneness of God publicly—something that took courage, because most Makkans believed there were many gods (polytheism).

It was the eloquence of the revelations, and the ease with which listeners recognized in them true words of God, that led to the emergence of Muslims. But Muhammad also faced opposition from Makkan polytheists: To them, Muhammad's monotheism was a threat to their control of the Ka'bah—and the pilgrimage trade. In the early fall of 622, Muhammad and his followers emigrated from Makkah north to the town of Yathrib (later renamed al-Madinah). This emigration—known as the *hijrah*—marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar, because it was in Yathrib that the followers of Muhammad's teachings developed a society organized along the reformist lines of God's revelations.

In 630, after a series of battles, Muhammad peacefully re-entered Makkah, where he cleared the Ka'bah of idols. Two years later, he took ill, and died on June 8, 632. His close companion, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, told the grieving Muslim community, "Whoever worshiped Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead, but whoever worships God, let him know that God lives, and dies not."



## 10 Masterpieces of Classical Islamic Art

"Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts, the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art," wrote Ruskin. "Of the three the only trustworthy one is the last." The objects listed below, chosen by historians of Islamic art Jonathan M. Bloom and Sheila S. Blair, are only 10 pages from the vast "manuscript" of Islamic civilization, but they offer a sample of the riches of the whole.



1. **The Dome of the Rock**, Jerusalem, 692. The first great work of Islamic architecture. It was built over the rock from which the Prophet Muhammad made his miraculous ascent to heaven, which is described in chapter 17 of the Qur'an.

2. **The Malwiya minaret**, Samarra, Iraq, mid-ninth century. This 50-meter (160') helicoidal tower of sun-dried and baked brick was probably modeled on ancient ziggurats. It symbolizes the power of Islam at the zenith of the Baghdad-based Abbasid caliphate.



## What is the Qur'an?

The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam. Muslims believe that it is the Word of God, transmitted by the Angel Gabriel, in Arabic, through the Prophet Muhammad. It is meant for all humanity, not for any exclusive group. At its heart is the teaching of monotheism, but the Qur'an provides guidance for every part of a believer's life, including aspects that in the West would be considered social, political or legal, and not religious. The Qur'an is considered by Muslims to complete God's earlier revelations.

Unlike the Bible, there is only one version of the Qur'an, unchanged since Muhammad received it. A number of his followers had carefully memorized each of the revelations, word for word—an achievement still common among serious scholars—and the text we know today was written down by the year 651. The Qur'an is also considered to be untranslatable, because no other language carries the full range of often subtle meaning that the Arabic of the Qur'an can convey. Thus Muslim scholars regard versions of the Qur'an in other languages to be interpretations rather than true translations, and in Arabic literature there is no work whose eloquence, clarity and erudition approach those of the Qur'an.

## What is the Ka'bah?

The Ka'bah is the black cubical stone structure in the courtyard of the Great Mosque at Makkah. Muslims believe it was built by Adam and rebuilt by Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail (Ishmael). The Ka'bah is empty, and it is not entered except for a ritual cleaning each year. A black cloth covering, called the *kiswah*, embroidered in gold with Qur'anic calligraphy, is made for it each year. When Muslims pray, wherever in the world they are, it is the direction of the Ka'bah that they face. During the *Hajj*, pilgrims circle the Ka'bah seven times in a ritual called the *tawaf*, or circumambulation, which is also performed throughout the rest of the year.



3. **The Mughira pyxis**, carved at Córdoba, Spain, 968. This small, exquisite box, carved from a cylindrical section of elephant tusk, is the most beautiful of the handful of known Islamic ivory carvings. Now in the Louvre in Paris.

4. **The minbar from the Kutubiyya Mosque**, Marrakesh, Morocco, 1137. This wooden pulpit, nearly four meters (13') tall, was carved in Córdoba by the descendants of the workmen who carved the Mughira pyxis. Hundreds of thousands of pieces of wood and bone are carved and fitted together with consummate artistry.



5. **The mihrab from the Maydan Mosque**, Kashan, Iran, 1226. (A *mihrab* is a niche in a wall of a mosque indicating the direction of the Ka'bah.) Composed of glazed ceramic slabs fitted into a complex, harmonious ensemble of calligraphy and arabesques, this is the acme of the difficult luster technique of overglaze decoration perfected by Persian ceramists. Now in the Islamic Museum of Berlin.

6. **The Baptistère of Saint-Louis**, Cairo, 1300. This hammered bronze basin, inlaid in silver and gold, is decorated on both the interior and the exterior with marvelous figural scenes showing hunters, servants, and warriors. First made to catch water after hand-washing before prayers, it was only later used as a baptismal font by the French court. Now in the Louvre.



## How do Muslims practice their faith?

*Islam*, in Arabic, means "submission," meaning submission to the will of God. It also means "peace," the peace one finds through submission to God's will. Muslims accept five primary obligations, commonly called the "Five Pillars of Islam." In practice, of course, Muslims can be seen observing all of these to varying degrees, for the responsibility of fulfilling the obligations lies on the shoulders of each individual. **The profession of faith (*shahadah*):** This is a simple statement: "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

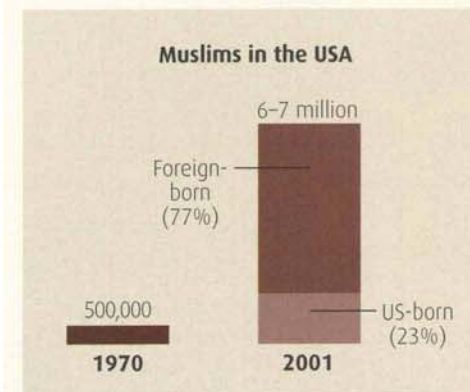
**Prayer (*salah*):** Muslims pray five times a day—at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and evening—facing toward the Ka'bah, the House of God, in the Great Mosque in Makkah. They may pray wherever they are when prayer-time arrives, in any clean place, preferably in the company of

other Muslims. On Fridays at noon, Muslims are encouraged to pray as a gathered community in congregational mosques. There is a sequence of physical postures, fixed by tradition, for ritual prayer, and the prayers are said in Arabic regardless of the local language.

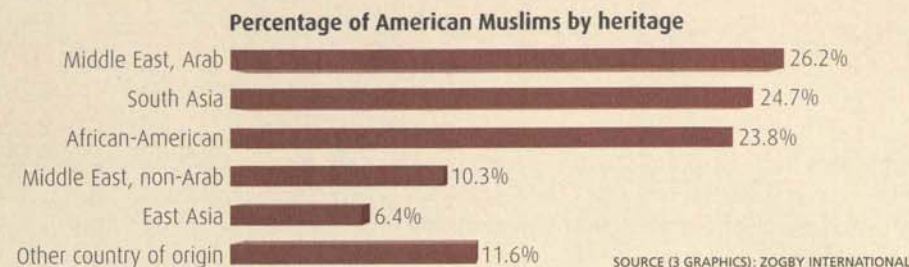
**Charity (*zakah*):** A fixed proportion of a Muslim's net worth—not just his or her income—is prescribed as a donation for the welfare of the community, whether that community is made up of Muslims, non-Muslims or a mixture.

**Fasting (*sawm*):** Every day from dawn to dusk during the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims must abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual contact; even more than at other times, they must also avoid cursing, lying, cheating, and otherwise abusing or harming others.

**Pilgrimage (*Hajj*):** The journey to Makkah is obligatory for every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to make it. Pilgrimage need be made only once in a lifetime, but it can be made several times if a Muslim wishes. The *hajj* proper is made between the eighth and 13th days of Dhu al-Hijjah, the 12th month of the Islamic calendar, and every pilgrim carries out specified rituals at specific times. At any other time of year, Muslims can perform similar prayers and rituals and thus complete the *'Umrah*, or "lesser pilgrimage."







## Why are modern numerals called “Arabic numerals”?

The modern numerals widely used today were probably developed in India, but it was Arabs who transmitted this system to the West. In 771, an Indian scholar arrived in Baghdad bringing with him a treatise on astronomy that used the Indian numerical system, which the Arabs admired because it was more economical than the Roman system. In time, they added a further improvement: the *sifr* (“cipher”), or zero.

## Arabic Writing

Most scholars believe that Arabic developed from Nabataean and/or Aramaic dialects spoken in northern Arabia and much of the Levant during roughly a thousand years before the Islamic era.

The Arabic alphabet has 28 letters. More complex than differing capital and small letters in English, each Arabic letter may have up to four forms, depending on where it appears in the word and which letters precede or follow it. The Arabic script is read from right to left.

The cursive nature of the script and the variability of the letterforms made it difficult to adapt Arabic for use with early printing presses. It is for this reason that the Arab world continued for some centuries after the time of Gutenberg to rely on handwriting for the production of books, especially the Qur’an. This was one of the reasons that calligraphy—“beautiful writing”—emerged as perhaps the most important Arab art form.

## What is *jihad*?

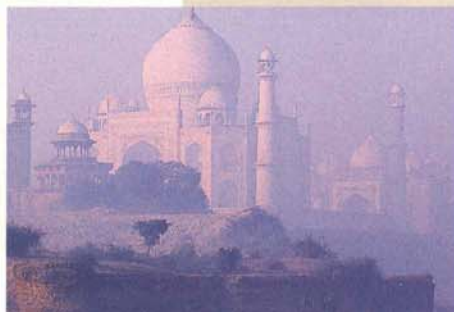
The Arabic word *jihad* means “to struggle or strive, to exert oneself” for a praiseworthy aim. The “greater struggle” is the personal one: the struggle to resist temptation, combat one’s own evil traits and imperfections and become a better person in God’s sight. The “lesser struggle” is exertion for the betterment of Muslim society or trying to persuade non-believers, by tongue or pen or by example, to embrace Islam. The lesser struggle may also include physical combat for the sake of Islam and the Muslim community, especially in self-defense and if carried out according to the explicit limitations imposed by the Qur’an. Some modern thinkers liken *jihad* to the Christian concept of “just war.”

7. The **Ahmad al-Suhrawardi Qur’an manuscript**, Baghdad, 1307. This is arguably the finest display of the calligrapher’s art. The paper was polished to an impeccable smoothness, allowing the pen to glide effortlessly across a pearly surface. This was a multivolume manuscript for an anonymous patron, and it is now dispersed. The colophon is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



8. The **Ardebil Carpets**, Iran, 1539–40. These two enormous carpets were worked in 10 colors of silk and wool. Each has more than 25 million knots, making them one of the most splendid examples of the weaver’s art. This one is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the other is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

9. The **Selimiye Mosque**, Edirne, Turkey, 1574. The breathtaking interior of the mosque is the masterpiece of the Ottoman architect Sinan, who created a huge and uninterrupted space under a towering dome. The centralized space of the prayer hall literally and symbolically embraces the community of believers and unites them under God’s radiance.



10. The **Taj Mahal**, Agra, India, 1647. This enormous white marble monument is set in a garden along the banks of the Jumna River, centerpiece of a complex designed to evoke the gardens of paradise that await believers.

PHOTO CREDITS: 1: DAVID H. WELLS 2: MICHAEL SPENCER 3: H. LEWANDOWSKI/ART RESOURCE 4: ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE 5: BILDARCHIV PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ 6: LOUVRE/ART RESOURCE 7: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART 8: VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM/ART RESOURCE 9: VANNI/ART RESOURCE 10: NIK WHEELER

## The Islamic Calendar

The Islamic calendar is based on a lunar year of 12 full lunar cycles taking exactly 354 and 11/30 days. Each new year in the Islamic calendar thus begins 10 or 11 days earlier in the 364 ¼-day solar calendar commonly used in the West. The 12 months of the Islamic year are:

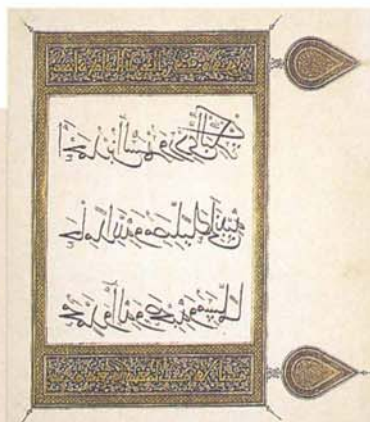
Muharram, Safar, Rabi’ al-Awwal (“Rabi’ I”), Rabi’ al-Thani (“Rabi’ II”), Jumada al-Ula (“Jumada I”), Jumada al-Akhirah (Jumada II), Rajab, Sha’ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, Dhu al-Qa’dah, and Dhu al-Hijjah.

The first day of year one of the Islamic calendar was set as the first day of the *hijrah*, the Prophet’s move from Makkah to Madinah: July 26, 622. The western convention in designating Islamic dates is thus by the abbreviation AH, which stands for the Latin *anno hegirae*, or “Year of the Hegira.”

To roughly convert an Islamic calendar year (AH) into a Gregorian equivalent (AD), or vice versa, use one of the following equations.

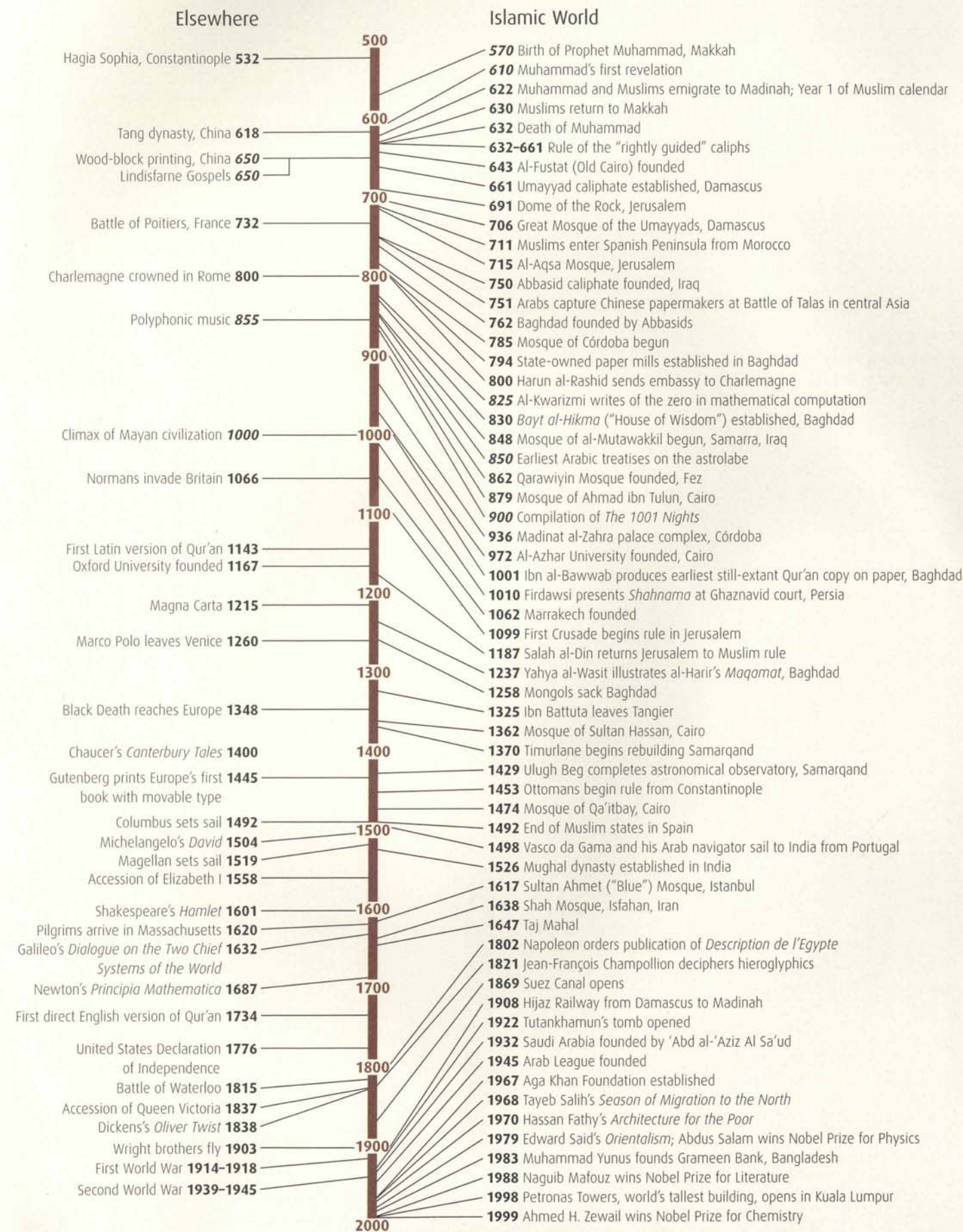
$$AD = 622 + (32/33 \times AH)$$

$$AH = 33/32 \times (AD - 622)$$



## Cultural Timeline of the Islamic World

*Italicized dates are approximate*





# SuggestionsforReading

**Readers who want to learn more about Islam will find interesting material in this list.** Some of the titles are recent, some are classic, and others did not get the attention they deserved when they were published. Without endorsing the views of individual authors, we encourage wide reading and comparisons of information and viewpoints presented. The books listed here are available in libraries and book-stores. Please do not order books from *Saudi Aramco World*.

**Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations.** Michael Sells. 1999, White Cloud, 1-883991-26-9, \$21.95 pb with cd. New translations of the Makkan *surahs*—often considered the most poetic and hymnic—with insightful commentary.

**The Essential Koran: The Heart of Islam.** Translated and presented by Thomas Cleary. Book Sales, 1998, 0-7858-0902-3, \$18.99 hb. The author has selected passages that, in his opinion, best lead the non-Muslim to understanding.

**The Hadj: An American's Pilgrimage to Mecca.** Michael Wolfe. 1998, Grove, 0-8021-3586-2, \$14 pb. The author, a recent convert, treads the path of earlier writer/explorers, but with less romantic zeal and more quiet wonder while bringing to life the momentous experience of the contemporary Hajj.

**The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary.** Abdullah Yusuf Ali. 1987, Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, 0-940368-31-5, \$25, pb; 0-940368-32-3, \$30, hb. A standard English version, with extensive notes.

**Ideals and Realities of Islam.** Seyyed Hossein Nasr. 2000, ABC International Group, 0-930637-11-X, \$17.95 pb. A lucid presentation of important aspects of Islamic religion and culture and their relationship to present-day society.

**Islam in America.** Jane I. Smith. 1999, Columbia University Press, 0-231-10967-9, \$19.50, pb. An excellent panoramic view of the Muslim experience in America.

**Islam and Democracy.** John L. Esposito and John O. Voll. 1998, Oxford, 0-19-510816-7, \$19.95 pb. Using six case studies, the authors examine the relationship of the desire for an Islamic revival and the demand for political participation.

**Islam: An Introduction.** Annemarie Schimmel. 1992, State University of New York Press, 0-7914-1328-4, \$16.95 pb. A lifelong scholar's clear, insightful and reliable overview of the faith.

**Islam: A Primer.** John Sabini. 6th ed. 2001, AMIDEAST\*, 0-913957-17-8, \$11.50 pb. An easy-to-read, no-frills field guide to Islam's origins and beliefs, with notes on social customs and rituals such as hospitality, weddings and births.

**Islam: A Short History.** Karen Armstrong. 2000, Modern Library, 0-679-64040-1 \$19.95 hb. One of the best books on the shelf for non-Muslims who want to lay the foundation for a factual, sensibly panoramic understanding of Islam.

**Islam: A Thousand Years of Faith and Power.** Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair. 2000, TV Books, 1-57500-092-X, \$28 hb. The authors interweave cultural, political and religious history in this brisk and lively work.

**Islam: Origin and Belief.** Emory C. Bogle. 1998, University of Texas Press, 0-292-70861-0, \$30 hb; 0-292-70862-9, \$13.51, pb. A very useful, widely accessible presentation aimed at general readers.

**Islam: The View from the Edge.** Richard W. Bulliet. 1994, Columbia University Press, 0-231-08218-5, \$20, pb. The pervasive influence of Islam in everyday life is examined in light of religious conversion, migration, education and the drive by many modern Muslims to rededicate themselves to their religion.

**Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam.** Rudolph Peters. 1996, Markus Wiener, 1-55876-108-X, \$18.95, pb. Thorough discussion of the subject from the time of the Prophet to the modern day, with extensive use of source materials.

**The Life and Times of Muhammad.** Sir John Glubb. 2002, Cooper Square Press, 0-8154-1176-6, \$17.95, pb. Glubb Pasha, former commander of the famed Arab Legion, wrote nearly a dozen works on the Middle East, including this sweeping, readable account of the Prophet's life.

**The Light of Dawn: A Daybook of Verses from the Holy Qur'an.** Selected and rendered by Camille Adams Helminski. 1998, Shambhala, 0-939660-60-1, \$24.95 hb. An assemblage of verses from all 114 chapters of the Qur'an offers a gateway to the spiritual depth of Islam.

**Living Faith: Inside the Muslim World of Southeast Asia.** Steve Raymer. Asia Images Editions, 2001, 981-04-4207-6, \$45, hb. An informative and beautifully photographed account of daily life among the people in the region of the world where some 40 percent of all Muslims live.

**The Meaning of the Glorious Koran.** Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall. 1996, Amana, 0-915957-22-1, \$12, pb. An English rendering of the Holy Book, justifiably famous for the beauty and sensitivity of the language.

**Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet.** Karen Armstrong. 1993, Harper Collins, 0-06-250886-5, \$15 pb; 0-06-250014-7, \$23 hb. A respected western scholar provides a readable and sympathetic account of Muhammad's life, including contextual information about economics and politics of his time.

**Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources.** Martin Lings. 1987, Inner Traditions International, Ltd., 0-89281-170-6, \$19.95 pb. A well-narrated biography by a British Muslim scholar, based on traditional sources.

**Muhammad in Europe: A Thousand Years in Western Myth-Making.** Minou Reeves. 2000 NYU Press, 0-8147-7533-0, \$34.50, hb. A troubling examination of how politics have often distorted the West's perception of Muhammad.

**One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage.** Michael Wolfe, ed. Grove, 0-8021-3599-4, \$17.50, pb. Accounts by 23 pilgrims of a dozen nationalities who made their ways to Makkah between 1150 and 1990 illuminate the Hajj and Islam.

**The Oxford History of Islam.** John L. Esposito. 2000, Oxford, 0-19-510799-3, \$49.95 hb. An excellent resource in terms of breadth, edited by a thoughtful and well-regarded American scholar of Islam.

**The Road to Mecca.** Muhammad Asad. 2001, Fons Vitae, 1-887752-37-4, \$17.95 pb; 1999, Islamic Book Trust, 983-9154-12-5, \$24.95 hb. A fascinating and moving spiritual autobiography of one sophisticated westerner's journey into Islam.

**Towards Understanding Islam.** Abu A'la Maududi. 1994, Islamic Foundation, 0-860370-53-4, \$5.95, pb. A concise explanation of the main teachings of Islam by one of the greatest of modern Muslim thinkers.

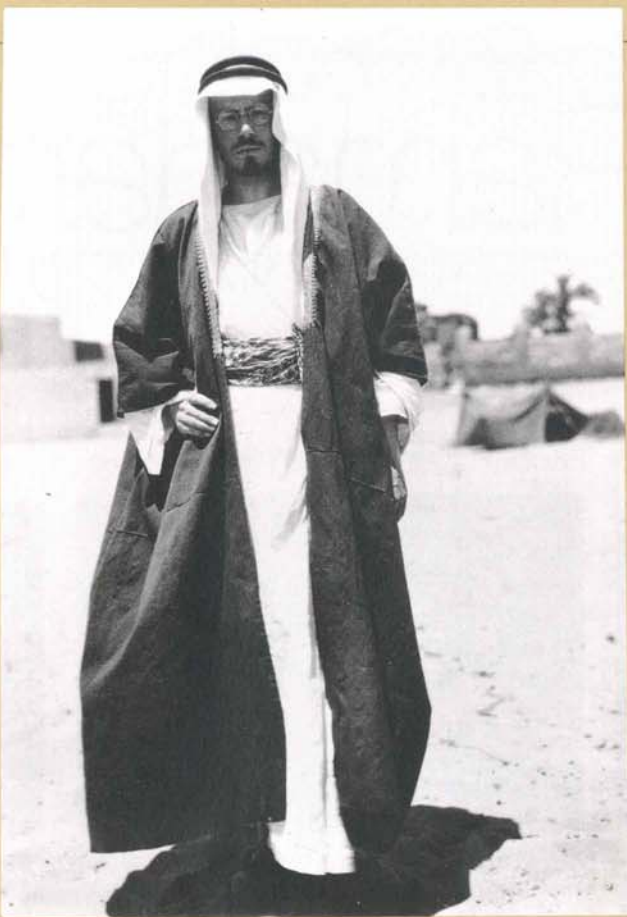
**Understanding Islam: An Introduction to the Muslim World.** Thomas W. Lippman. 1995, Meridian, 0-452-01160-4, \$14, pb. A concise but comprehensive survey of Islam both as a world religion and as a political-economic force, by a senior *Washington Post* correspondent.

**Understanding Islam and the Muslims.** 1990, The Islamic Texts Society, 0-946-62120-9, \$3.50 pb. An illustrated question-and-answer guide to basic beliefs. Excellent for discussion groups.

**What Everyone Should Know about Islam and Muslims.** Suzanne Haneef. 1995, Library of Islam, 0-935782-00-1, \$9.95 pb. A clear guide to basic tenets and their expression in beliefs, worship, festivals, values and standards of conduct.

**Windows on the House of Islam: Muslim Sources on Spirituality and Religious Life.** John Renard, ed. 1998, University of California Press, 0-520-20976-1, \$55 hb; 0-520-21086-7 \$22 pb. A collection from more than 30 classical and modern writers and artists to help non-Muslims fathom what it means to be a Muslim.

\*AMIDEAST: 1730 M Street NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20036. Phone: 202-776-9600, fax: 202-776-7000, web: [www.amideast.org](http://www.amideast.org).



*Muhammad Asad  
1900–1992*

*“We ride on, rushing, flying over the plain, and to me it seems that we are flying with the wind, abandoned to a happiness that knows neither end nor limit...and the wind shouts a wild paeon of joy into my ears: ‘Never again, never again, never again will you be a stranger!’... I turn around in my saddle and see behind me the waving, weaving mass of thousands of white-clad riders and, beyond them, the bridge over which I have come: its end is just behind me while its beginning is already lost in the mists of distance.”*





# RamadanUSA

Fasting during the month of Ramadan—abstaining from food and drink between sunrise and sunset—is the fourth pillar of Islam, prescribed for Muslims in the Qur'an. (See p. 36.) Though the fast is difficult—especially when Ramadan falls in summer—the season is a happy one, thanks to the feelings of community and closeness to God, the overflowing mosques, the gift-giving and the special foods prepared for night-time meals. This year, Saudi Aramco World photographers visited six American Muslim families as they fasted during Ramadan and then celebrated the 'Id al-Fitr holiday (the "Feast of Fast-Breaking") that begins with the new month. At the same time, we invited American Muslims to share with readers what Ramadan means to them, and to recall favorite Ramadan memories; we regret that space does not allow us to publish all of them.

—The Editors

Hammad: **MIAMI**



Muntaha, 5; Hasan; Mona and Mahmoud, 9. The family owns and runs Mona's Hair and Beauty Wholesale, Inc. and Mona's Beauty Accessories. Mona grew up in Cleveland and Florida; Hasan is from El-Bireh, Palestine; both children were born in Cooper City, a suburb of Miami.

Bhutan-Coates: **HOUSTON**



Aisha Neal, 9; Fatimah Bhutan, third grade teacher at Iman Academy; Safiyyah Neal, 7; Jim Coates, stepfather, deliveryman for the *Houston Chronicle*. Fatimah was born of Indian and Bhutanese parents, and she grew up in Trinidad and Tobago; Jim was born of Italian and English heritage, and grew up in Chicago. They live in west Houston, and Fatimah jokes that the car is "our home away from home."

Soeharto: **SEATTLE**



Aditya, 18, University of Washington freshman; Paramitha, 12; Irma Ladya Bebasari, Wartini's niece; Wartini, chemical engineer, homemaker, part-time worker at Marshall's department store and Renton Technical College student; Tonny, engineer at Boeing Co.; Ratih Puspita Ningrum and her husband, Eric Trisandja, Wartini's nephew, who is looking for work in the travel industry. Wartini, Tonny and the children immigrated to the us in 1995 from Indonesia. Wartini is from Madura; Tonny is from Bali.

Khan: **COLUMBIA, MO.**



Faeza, 14; Fahmida Akhter, physician and homemaker; Helena, award-winning author of more than 45 Bangladeshi children's books; Mahir, 11; Fazle, son of Helena, chief of the Office of Surveillance for the State of Missouri's Division of Environmental Health. Originally from Bangladesh, the Khans moved to Columbia from Boise, Idaho in 1998. "We wanted a good community for our children," says Fahmida.

Randolph: **JEFFERSON CITY, MO.**



Deborah Ann Randolph is an administrative support technician for the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. Born in Boston of Dutch-Irish heritage, she grew up in Texas and has lived in Jefferson City since 1992. She became a Muslim last year.

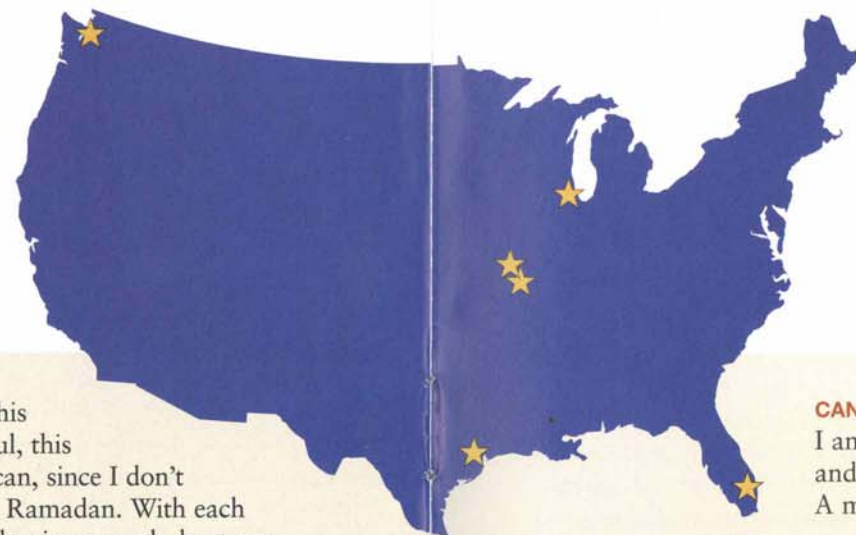
McCloud-Al-Deen: **CHICAGO**



Aminah McCloud, Ph.D, assistant professor, DePaul University; her daughter Sadikia Thomas, crime scene investigator, Schaumburg Police Department; Sadikia's daughter Jenna, 3; Frederick Thaufer Al-Deen, caseworker, Illinois Department of Human Services. Aminah was born in St. Louis, and has been a Muslim since age 16; Frederick was born in South Carolina and became a Muslim in 1976.

"There is no God but Allah [God], and Muhammad is his prophet. Pray five times a day. Give alms. Fast during the month of Ramadan. If you are capable, make a pilgrimage to Mecca. If these 'five pillars' seem foreign to you, you may not be talking to your neighbors. Islam is an American religion."

—*TIME*, October 1, 2001



**RAMADAN IS SO PURE,** like the whiteness of the moon that brings it. The purity is contagious, cleansing everything it touches. Ramadan unites the community.

—Safiyyah Hosein, 6th grade  
Islamic Academy of New England  
Sharon, Massachusetts

**ONCE THE MOON IS SIGHTED** there is this sense of urgency that sets into the soul, this sense that I need to do as much as I can, since I don't know if will I be around for the next Ramadan. With each passing day I wonder, did I do enough, give enough, hurt anyone? Did I waste time not doing the things I need to, the things that get me closer to heaven and to my Lord? Did I gossip, did I make enemies, was my forgiveness accepted?

—S. A.  
Hayward, California

**CAN YOU GUESS WHO I AM?**

I am a month of mercy, forgiveness, and protection from the fire. A month that disgraces the liar.

I am a month that encourages you to feel like the poor. A month which has opportunity knocking on your front door.

Encouraging you to fast in this month every day, I call Muslims for *tarawih*, which is recommended to pray.

I am a month that helps you to feel, The way the poor and needy deal.

I am a month that reminds you of God. I tell you to be patient.

I am a month that is like a shopping spree Where rewards are totally free.

Good deeds are easy to earn, New knowledge you've got to learn.

Can you guess who I am?

—Anum Shami, 8th grade  
Laurel, Maryland





## Hammad MIAMI



**Saturday, 9:15 a.m.**  
Mona wakes Muntaha.



**9:45 a.m.**  
Hasan reads a passage from the Qur'an.



**9:55 a.m.**  
Mahmoud gives best friend and neighbor Nathan a birthday present while Nathan's mom looks on.



**10:05 a.m.**  
Mona arrives at work.



**10:40 a.m.**  
Mahmoud helps Hasan pack the van that serves their wholesale clients. Deliveries to beauty shops fill their day.



**11:30 a.m.**  
Each year, Mona and Hasan give a "family present" at the 'Id. This year, Mona books a trip to Disney World.



**12:00 p.m.**  
Muntaha breaks her morning-long fast. Mahmoud fasted until early afternoon every day.

"Ramadan is all about how we should be thankful for what we have. We donate money anonymously. We want to show our kids how to do things without bragging to people."

—Mona

"When I pray I say thank you to God for my family, my house, my religion and that I am Arab."

—Mahmoud, 9



**1:32 p.m.**  
Mona drops by a girls' birthday party run by her store.



**1:45 p.m.**  
Mona picks up Hasan's dry cleaning.



**3:35 p.m.**  
Mona and Muntaha stop to buy food for the evening's iftar at Al-Salam, a restaurant and Arab food shop run by Hasan's aunt and uncle.



**4:30 p.m.**  
Muntaha plays with Jackie, who lives next door, while E.T., Jackie's dog, tries to join in.



**4:45 p.m.**  
Mona prepares dinner: Lentil soup.



**5:49 p.m.**  
With Hasan and Mahmoud not home yet, Mona breaks her fast by eating a date.



**5:55 p.m.**  
Mona and Muntaha pray salat al-maghrib, the sunset prayer.



**6:10 p.m.**  
Iftar together. "We teach them how important family is," says Mona.

**IN THE FRAGILE GLIMMERING OF THE NEW MOON**, a powerful practice begins. Its yearly rhythm returns as a welcome friend, a mighty force for change and renewal, a reminder that my appetites are not in charge—I get to walk the talk of submission. For the love of God I determine to fast each day; for the love of God I embrace hunger and thirst and loss of sleep; for the love of God I surrender to this obligation—praying to increase my hunger and thirst for God. And in this process I get to do my own inner *jihad* against pride, anger, envy, appetite and blame.

—Hilal Diane Sala  
San Francisco, California

**TO ME**, Ramadan is not something I do to please my parents or to show my cousins that I can. I commemorate Ramadan out of respect for my God and my Prophet, Muhammad (pbuh). I feel honored to let my peers know that I am a Muslim.

—Taslima Choudhury, 8th grade  
Lorton, Virginia

**RAMADAN**  
Ramadan, Ramadan  
We read Qur'an  
We don't do anything *haram*  
In Ramadan!!!

We stay up late  
And eat some dates  
In our plates  
But we don't always gain weight!!!

We pray all day  
And never say  
A bad name  
And ask God to keep Satan away!!!

Ramadan Ramadan  
We read Qur'an  
We don't do anything *haram*  
In Ramadan!!!

—Dablia Fateen, 5th grade  
Santa Clara, California





Hammad  
MIAMI



6:55 p.m.

Mahmoud holds his "big present": an xbox electronic game set. He said he'd had a dream this was what he'd get.



7:30 p.m.

Haircut for 'Id. Later, Hasan took Mahmoud and Muntaha to Kids 'R Us to buy new shoes for tomorrow.



9:15 p.m.

Mahmoud readies his good clothes for the morning's visit to the mosque.



9:20 p.m.

Hasan says goodnight to his kids.



9:45 p.m.

Mona wraps the last gifts.



Sunday, 7:25 a.m., 'Id al-Fitr

Waking Muntaha, who is groggy. Both kids were up late last night.



7:26 a.m.

Waking Mahmoud.



7:40 a.m.

Mona perfumes Muntaha. "I make them wash as soon as they get up."



9:10 a.m.

Arriving at the mosque in Pompano Beach.



9:20 a.m.

Mona attends prayers in the women's section.



9:40 a.m.

Distributing gifts for children at the mosque.



11:30 a.m.

Waiting for a lunch table at El Salam. There is a crowd, and the kids get impatient.



12:30 p.m.

Sawaf's restaurant has no line, and relatives join the family for lunch.



3:30 p.m.

Mahmoud plays with Hot Wheels cars while Muntaha naps on the couch.

"I try to teach my friends who aren't Muslims about Ramadan. They tell me, 'You don't look like the type to do that! How do you do it?' And I tell them what it's about and why we fast."

—Mona



4:00 p.m.

Hasan's parents arrive. Mahmoud gets a kiss from his grandfather and namesake, Mahmoud.



4:05 p.m.

The kids present grandmother Nuha her gift.

Based in New York and Miami, free-lancer **Naomi Harris**'s photographs appeared last fall in *The New York Times Magazine*'s "Women and Photography" issue.

**SOME PEOPLE THINK** that in Ramadan we just do not eat. For me, Ramadan is a very spiritual month. When I first began to fast, I needed a lot of courage and strength inside. Yet it didn't take me long to get used to it. It's simple. In Ramadan, I learn more about myself and what I can do. When it's time to break the fast, I feel good. It's not that I feel great about eating food. I think of it as running a marathon, and that yes, I did it. I made it.

—Rasheeda Abdul-Musawwir, 5th grade  
Islamic Academy of New England  
Sharon, Massachusetts

**RAMADAN IS A UNIQUE MONTH.** What makes it special to me is having friends over for *iftar*. Once when some of my friends came over to break their fast, I had just had a dentist appointment. Therefore, I couldn't chew the food, and my mom had to grind it, which made me look like a baby. Everyone started making jokes and we all started laughing. We really had a good time.

—Aula Alami, 6th grade  
Islamic Academy of New England  
Sharon, Massachusetts

**THREE YEARS AGO WHEN I MOVED** to Stoughton, Ramadan arrived quickly. When we arrived at the mosque for 'Id, it was the largest mosque I'd ever seen. The parking lot was so crowded that we had to park way back in the field. When we entered, we had to put our shoes in a bag so we wouldn't lose them.

As my Dad and I found a spot to sit, I saw the *imam*. He said something that I still remember: "Treat your brothers and sisters the way you want to be treated. And whenever you hurt your brother's or sister's feelings, you should ask them for forgiveness, and *insha' Allah* he or she will forgive you." There I was, sitting near the last row, and I couldn't

even see the *imam* clearly, but what he said was like an 'Id gift for me.

—Aziz Akbar Dar, 5th grade  
Islamic Academy of New England  
Sharon, Massachusetts

#### FAJR: A JOURNAL OF NUR

I wake up every morning and thank God for the happy dreams I have been having since I started fasting this month. It is dark outside but I manage to walk downstairs and fix myself some *suhur*.





## Bhutan-Coates HOUSTON



**Wednesday, 8:55 a.m.**

Jim Coates readies his truck. "At work people mainly say they learn from me when they find out I'm a Muslim."



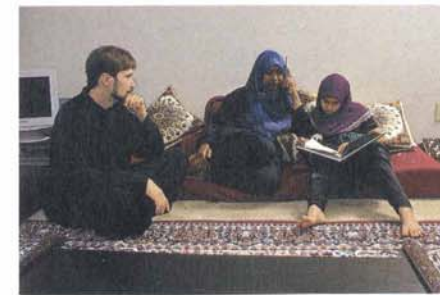
**Wednesday, 3:02 p.m.**

Fatimah Bhutan hands out folders to her third-grade class before dismissal for the day.



**Saturday, 12:00 p.m.**

Safiyah and Aisha, who fast only in the mornings, have lunch at home.



**12:20 p.m.**

"I've studied Christianity, Judaism and Islam a lot. It's striking how much they have in common," says Jim.



**1:07 p.m.**

Jim attends prayers at the El-Farouk mosque in west Houston.



**2:31 p.m.**

Fatimah says the *dhuhur*, or afternoon, prayer with the children at home.



**3:40 p.m.**

Fatimah practices tai chi with her instructor, Asr Cordes. She's been a student for a year.



**4:30 p.m.**

At the home of a friend, Fatimah and the girls apply henna to their hands for the 'Id. "It's a tradition we've started trying to do each year," says Fatimah.



**5:06 p.m.**

Jim drives home and helps with seatbelts, since Fatimah and the girls have to let their hands air-dry for several hours.



**Sunday, 7:30 a.m., 'Id al-Fitr**

The family visits the Noors, who recently moved from Afghanistan. Fatimah comforts Zakia Noor, whose husband unexpectedly had to work this day.



**9:11 a.m.**

Jim and Fatimah take the Noors' two kids and their own to prayers at the Astrohall.



**9:55 a.m.**

Jim attends prayers in the men's section. Total attendance is estimated at 20,000.



**10:20 a.m.**

Fatimah and her friend Tracy Ibrahim look for a place to sit together in the women's section.



**11:35 a.m.**

After prayers are over, there is a crush outside as friends and relatives exchange greetings.



**12:04 p.m.**

The children color placemats while Jim looks over the menu at Le Peep restaurant.



**1:53 p.m.**

A ride on the toy train in Hermann Park, in a drizzling rain.



**3:30 p.m.**

Shopping for 'Id gifts at K-Mart. Safiyah wanted a toy talking parrot; Aisha had already received a pet goldfish.

I return to my room, wash, and pray. Every morning I pray for peace. I envision peace graphically. It looks like light—*nur*. It starts growing from my heart and takes over my consciousness. The *nur* spreads to my surroundings, lighting everything.

My non-Muslim roommate stirs in her sleep as the light falls on her, over my books and my shelf, and escapes under the door. It is peace, light. It shoots across the hallway, lighting the entire dormitory. It travels roads and interstate highways. There is the illumination of peace across my home state of Massachusetts, quickly taking over every state in the nation. I imagine a map of the world, countries and bodies

of water, being taken over by the *nur* of peace traveling at the speed of light.

Peace. I pray and feel the warmth of my tears in my hands as I praise God for this light, peace, and happiness. I look up and the sun shines outside. Dawn has passed and everywhere I can see, light shines down from not just the sun, but from heaven. I thank God and prepare for school because I know that it was from my own heart that the *nur* was born. And it is from this *nur* that I know that my daily *jihad* will pay off.

Such is the peace I find in Ramadan. Such is the peace I find in fasting. It gives me more than just a glimmer of hope: It lights up my universe.

—Zabra Shoaib Ayubi  
Wellesley, Massachusetts



**3:55 p.m.**

In the car afterwards, Fatimah gives Jim the watch she bought for him.



**4:22 p.m.**

Back at the Noors' apartment, Formoli Noor has returned from work, and Jim and Fatimah give him a watch as a gift; he and Jim compare.



**8:00 p.m.**

Jim and Fatimah join friends for dinner at the home of Mustafa Tameez. The girls visit with their father at his home.

Since 1976 Janice Rubin's photographs have appeared in numerous publications including *Smithsonian*, *Newsweek*, *Town and Country*, *Fortune*, *Rolling Stone* and *The New York Times*. Her photographs are included in the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, as well as private collections. She is currently documenting religious diversity in the Houston area.





Soeharto  
SEATTLE



Friday, 11:16 a.m.

Mita, who is fasting for her third full Ramadan, follows a classmate past the cafeteria...



11:25 a.m.

...to the library, where she joins others for the period.



6:15 p.m.

Tonny and Adi look at digital cameras in a catalog.

#### THE FIRST TIME I FASTED FOR RAMADAN,

I was 14 and at boarding school in Massachusetts. I was a little scared but also excited. Until then, physically challenging myself hadn't been important. Going to school every day, doing my homework, learning the state flower of Colorado and getting the Barbies and books that I wanted—those were the priorities. Fasting would be the first thing I would do that I couldn't study for.

Marching up to the chef in charge of the dining hall, I asked for food to take back to my dorm for my pre-dawn breakfast. I expected to be laughed at, but the burly man looked me in the eyes and simply asked what I would like to eat. "Well, cereal and a sandwich would be nice," I said meekly. The expected argument and humiliation disappeared like a fly waved off my arm. One of my eighth-grade dorm-mates asked me why I was eating a sandwich at check-in that night, around 10:00 p.m. Emboldened by the dining-hall encounter, I said with as much relish as if I had won an Olympic gold medal, "I'm fasting for Ramadan!"

Later, in college, we Muslim students sometimes organized pre-dawn trips to the International House of Pancakes. We would all pile into the school van at around 3:00 a.m., arguing about where IHOP actually was and the best route to take. I always ordered regular pancakes, but the chocolate-chip variety was very popular too, as I recall.

One time, I brought my non-Muslim friends along. I sat between them and the other Muslim students. I thought that maybe I had made a mistake with this clear separation, that perhaps our groups would not be so easily merged. Then one of my friends began to talk about her English professor, and one of the Muslim girls piped up in agreement. Before our chocolate-chip pancakes had come, it was obvious that we were all college girls on a late-night outing. But we were not just "the Muslim girls" and "the friends of Asma"; we were more than the sum of our parts. We were all observing Ramadan.

In law school, I mostly broke my fast with my sister, or alone. I didn't feel the same strong urge I had once had to share Ramadan with everyone I knew. I would go home and quietly prepare a meal. I watched pasta boil and wondered whether it was done. The only way I knew how to tell was to taste it, which I could not do till after sunset. What about people who could see food, through restaurant windows or remnants in the trash, who knew they would *not* be eating at sunset—or perhaps ever? Being alone on those evenings helped me grasp this purpose of Ramadan—to empathize with those who suffer.

Fasting during Ramadan was the first accomplishment in my life that I was really proud of. Being a good student wouldn't make me good at fasting. I had to do it on my own.

—Asma Gull Hasan  
author of *American Muslims: The New Generation*  
(2000, Continuum)  
(www.asmahasan.com)

#### DURING THIS BLESSED MONTH OF RAMADAN, MAY PEACE BE WITH THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS WHO WERE SENSELESSLY LOST ON SEPTEMBER 11.

May peace be with the innocent children of Afghanistan, who are as blameless as those who perished in New York and Washington on that infamous day. May peace be with the mothers of this planet, without whom life would cease. May peace be with those whose homes are the cardboard boxes of large digital televisions. In a time when people succumb to the apartheid of hate, may peace be with those who stand defiantly in the name of faith and love. On behalf of every living Muslim in the world, may peace be with us all.

—Arsalan T. Iftikhar  
St. Louis, Missouri



7:02 p.m.

Wartini and Mita cook *iftar*. "It's fun," says Mita. "I get to learn." "I am proud of her," says Wartini. "She is very helpful."



7:10 p.m.

Adi shows Tonny verses from his Qur'an computer program.



7:15 p.m.

*Iftar*. Eric dishes out noodles.



7:30 p.m.

Wartini and Tonny show a portrait from their 1983 wedding in Madura, Indonesia.



7:45 p.m.

Mita ponders her homework assignment next to a hat from Bali.

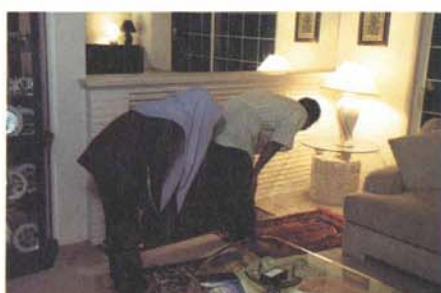


7:50 p.m.

Tonny encourages her reading, even though she's tired.

"This is the most important month to me. It is the month where God's blessings are endless, and the door of repentance is opened wide."

—Tonny



8:00 p.m.

Eric and Ratih say 'ishaa, or evening, prayers in the living room.



8:15 p.m.

Tonny reads from the *hadith*, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.



8:18 p.m.

"I educate my family by the Qur'an and *hadith* regularly, not just in Ramadan," says Tonny.



8:25 p.m.

Eric, Ratih and Mita gather around the piano. Mita studies both piano and viola, but the viola is her favorite.



8:35 p.m.

Tonny sets up a family portrait.





Soeharto  
SEATTLE



**Sunday, 7:12 a.m., 'Id al-Fitr**

On the morning of the 'Id, Tonny gasses up the van for the 90-minute drive to Olympia.



**9:45 a.m.**

Prayers in the gymnasium of St. Martin's College, sponsored by the local Cambodian Muslim community. The Soeharto family has attended 'Id prayers here for four years.



**9:46 a.m.**

Wearing a white cap, Adi prays with the other men.

**'ID**

Ramadan departs with the swiftness of light  
But then comes 'Id, a celebration full of joy.

Excitement occupies our minds  
Splendid, superb, awesome, incredible  
'Id is unmatched against all other holidays.

Spotting the moon,  
Putting henna on,  
Greeting friends and family,  
Exchanging gifts,  
Attending 'Id prayer,  
Enjoying 'Id parties,  
Exhausted!

—Sima A. Dar, 6th grade  
Islamic Academy of New England  
Sharon, Massachusetts

**FIVE YEARS AGO**, when Ramadan fell in January, I visited my parents in Cleveland for a week during the holy month. I was not fasting because I had six broken ribs from a car accident. One morning, my father and I went to the West Side Market. I walked slowly and flexed my fingers to keep warm. Dad strode ahead, choosing cilantro and hot pepper for *salatah*, parsley for *sambusak*, a rock-hard avocado. A man yelled, "Try the fresh honeydew!" Dad told me, "Go ahead." The man sliced and held the melon all with one hand. It was sweet and green. I offered Dad a taste. He half frowned and said my name in chiding way. "Have some," I said. Then I remembered—he couldn't eat it, he was fasting. He laughed when I apologized and bought two melons to eat after sunset.

—Eman Quotah  
Washington, D.C.

**THE LESSON I LEARNED THIS YEAR** was to be kinder to people no matter how they feel toward me. By fasting, especially for a period of 30 days, one reaches a certain point of complete and utter peacefulness where one can truly see all the rights and wrongs that life contains. This year I have learned, through fasting, that by displaying kindness toward your fellow man, true friendship is achieved no matter what social, ethnic, or economic background the other person is from. Ramadan, to me, means a month of peacefulness, a month of prayer, a month of discipline, and now and forever a month of kindness.

—Ahad Ali  
Upland, California

**A LONG TIME AGO** when I was five years old, I wanted to fast, but my mother would not let me because I was very small. But I kept asking her until she agreed to let me fast until 1:00 p.m. When Ramadan came, I ate *suhur* before dawn so I wouldn't get hungry, and I began my first fast! It was very hard because it was my first time, but it got easier and easier as the month went on. When Ramadan finished, I asked my mother if next year I could fast until 2:30 p.m. She said yes. I could hardly wait, and I counted the days until Ramadan finally came. When I started fasting, it was harder than the last year because I was fasting longer, but it got easier and easier as the month went on. The next year, I fasted the whole day. It was easy because I was used to fasting from the years before. Now I have fasted in Ramadan four complete years. I feel very happy, and I will keep fasting for the rest of my life.

—Osamah Kmail, 5th grade  
Islamic Academy of New England  
Sharon, Massachusetts

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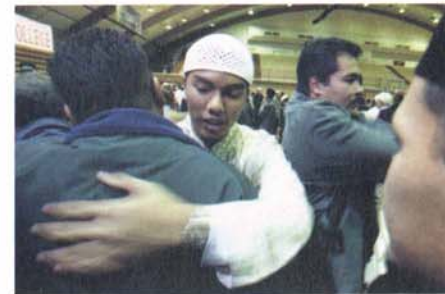
**9:47 a.m.**

Wartini, Ratih and Mita pray with the women.



**11:20 a.m.**

Tonny leads a separate prayer in anticipation of missing prayer time during the drive home.



**11:37 a.m.**

After prayers, Adi and other men greet each other with embraces.



**11:38 a.m.**

Tonny and Wartini embrace.



**11:41 a.m.**

Wartini embraces Adi.



**12:27 p.m.**

Lunch has been prepared by the young people of the Cambodian host community.



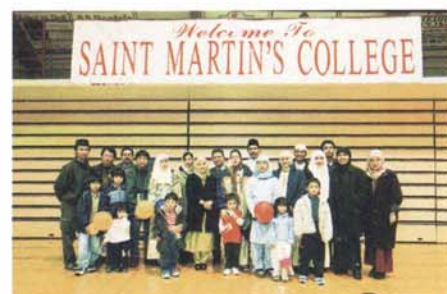
**2:35 p.m.**

Mita jokes with friends after lunch.



**3:18 p.m.**

Tonny sings an Indonesian song about 'Id. "I used to sing this kind of music with groups," he says.



**4:45 p.m.**

The family's friends from throughout the Puget Sound area gather for a group photo.

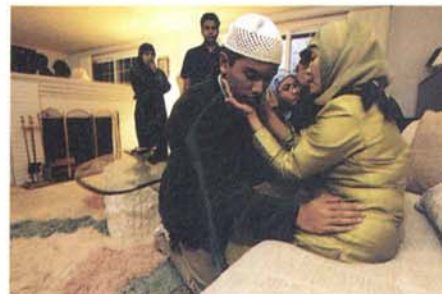


**5:37 p.m.**

Mita and Eric nap in the van on the way home.

"This is the point of 'starting over,' like the feeling of being born again, to be sinless."

—Tonny



**7:15 p.m.**

Back at home, the family gathers for an annual, solemn ceremony in which each member asks Tonny, and then Wartini, for forgiveness for any offense they have given during the previous year.

Veteran news photographer and amateur violinist **Steve Shelton** is currently with the *Eastside Journal* in Bellevue, Washington. His coverage of conflict and peacemaking efforts worldwide is represented by Black Star.





## Khan COLUMBIA, MO.



Thursday, 11:53 a.m.

Faeza, 14, has fasted in Ramadan since she was seven. At school, she joins friends in the cafeteria.

In Bangladesh, the Khans lived under a government headed by a woman prime minister. They laugh when people tell them Muslim women are oppressed. "I tell them I'm not oppressed, *you're* oppressed," says Faeza. "Let's face it, why do girls wear spaghetti straps and little shorts? It's to get that cute guy. I'm my own person, because I wear this *hijab*."



5:35 p.m.

Fazle takes Mahir with him to the Islamic Center of Central Missouri, Columbia's sole mosque.



5:48 p.m.

After prayers, men sit together along mats laid on the floor for *iftar*, an arrangement common in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.



9:47 a.m.

Fazle congratulates Mahir on his progress.



11:00 a.m.

Back at home, Fazle and Mahir photograph each other.



12:20 p.m.

Faeza prays in a storeroom at Jefferson Middle School between classes. She and a classmate asked for a quiet place for prayer.



Saturday, 12:30 p.m.

Mahir combs racks of electronic games at Sam's Club. "We only allow certain computer games in the house," says Fahmida.



12:48 p.m.

The Khans buy only non-meat products at conventional stores; for meat that is processed according to Islamic principles, they visit a specialty shop.



Sunday, 7:55 a.m., 'Id al-Fitr

On the 'Id morning, neighbor children visit for breakfast.



8:34 a.m.

Women and men pray in respective halls of the University of Missouri's student union building.



11:31 a.m.

The family arrives at the second visit, a potluck lunch.



11:48 a.m.

Faeza talks to Deborah Randolph, who has become a friend of the family over the past year. (See next page.)



2:30 p.m.

While the adults visit downstairs, the younger children watch television.

Ted McLaren (Thursday, Saturday) and Faith Cathcart (Sunday) are both graduate students in photojournalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

ON FRIDAY NIGHTS SHLOH BAR AND GRILL HOPS AS college students shake off the stress of a week of studies. Music sometimes booms a block down the street to the Islamic Center of Central Missouri, where local Muslims gather for congregational prayer at the mosque. Among those at the mosque are the Khan family: Fazle Khan, his wife, Fahmida Akhter, and their children, Faeza, 14, and Mahir, 10.

Eight thousand miles away in Bangladesh, where most of the Khan family was born, 88 percent of the population is Muslim. Here in Columbia, there are only 1000 Muslims in a city of more than 100,000.

Fazle is a physician with the state Department of Health. Fahmida, also a physician, is now a stay-at-home mom. They

order pizza, drive their son to soccer practice and watch "Jeopardy" on television. And five times each day, they stop what they're doing, turn toward Makkah, and pray. To announce the prayer times, the Khans keep an alarm clock atop the television in the living room of their duplex. Fazle Khan must reset it every few days, as the time to pray changes with the ever-changing length of the day.

Fazle and Fahmida rouse their children a little after 5:00 a.m. Most of the year they, and Fazle's mother Helena, offer the first prayer, between dawn and sunrise, separately in their respective bedrooms. During Ramadan, the family prays together in the still-dark living room. In this as in each of the four other *salats*, they praise God, seek His forgiveness and ask for guidance.

Fazle retreats for some quiet time reading the Qur'an, then spends a half hour on the treadmill. By 6:45 a.m., he drops Faeza at Jefferson Junior High School and drives 35 minutes to work in Jefferson City, where he coordinates Missouri's surveillance for bioterrorism. Later, Fahmida drops Mahir at the Islamic School of Columbia-Missouri.

In the short winter days, Fazle must pray two of the daily prayers at work. The ritual takes no more than 15 minutes, and Fazle says his employers have always been accommodating. "For some reason or another—I have no way of explaining how—wherever I've worked I've always found a place where I could spread my prayer rug and pray," he says.

In their community, the Khans say that they haven't felt any negativity toward them as Muslims, but rather an

increased, well-intentioned concern. Recently, when the family ordered from Pizza Hut, they asked that the knife that cuts meat pizzas be washed before being used to cut their vegetarian one. (The Khans do not eat meat in restaurants, since it is unlikely to meet Islamic dietary requirements.) When they picked up their pie, the server rushed out to assure them that a different knife had in fact been used.

"The ordinary people in America are extremely nice, extremely understanding," Fahmida says. "Most of the time you don't hear about this."

—Erin Fitzgerald

Excerpted from "Muslims in Missouri," © 2001 *The Missourian*, December 16, 2001. Fitzgerald is a senior at the University of Missouri-Columbia's School of Journalism.





## Randolph JEFFERSON CITY, MO.



**Friday, 7:02 a.m.**  
Breakfast before work: oatmeal with yogurt.



**7:15 a.m.**  
After Deborah performs the prescribed *rakah*, the sequence of physical positions for prayer, she counts several of the 99 names of God. "I am trying to learn all of them," she says.



**7:29 a.m.**  
A cup of coffee, espresso mix.



**7:48 a.m.**  
Bringing holiday cookies to her office holiday party. Back home, there are more to share on the 'Id.



**7:05 a.m.**  
That evening, grocery shopping.



**7:28 p.m.**  
Dinner. "I am fortunate enough to be able to eat at all. I think of the displaced people of Afghanistan when I eat now during Ramadan."



**7:30 p.m.**  
Insulin for the next day.



**Sunday, 8:35 a.m., 'Id al-Fitr**  
On the 'Id, the Khans invite Deborah to spend the day with them, first at prayers with other women at the University of Missouri.



**9:10 a.m.**  
After prayers, Deborah greets Faeza Khan. The family friendship began while Fahmida Akhter was working in Deborah's building and noticed her reading the Qur'an.



**12:30 p.m.**  
At the Khans', Deborah receives a gift from Fahmida: a traditional Bangli dress. "I want to wear the *hijab* in public very much," Randolph says. "I just don't have the courage yet."

Photos by Faith Cathcart.

## RAMADAN, DATE OMELETS, AND GLOBAL COMPASSION

Ramadan was simpler then: It was about date omelets.

My memories of Ramadan are from growing up in Iran in the late 1970's. When I was a kid, it happened in the summer.

Summer fasts are hard: You have to get up around 4:00 a.m. to have a *subur*, called *sahari* in Persian, meaning a dawn-time meal. My mom would come and wake my brother and me. Mind you, we were children, which meant that part of our job in life was to torture our parents by taking forever to get out of bed in the mornings and into bed at night. But not on Ramadan mornings. We got to have a special treat on those days: date omelets.

My mom, God bless her precious heart, would get up and cook *sahari* for us. Ramadan mornings were the only times we got to see her before she had showered and, as we say, "looked as beautiful as a rose." Still, there was something so fragile and sleepy, so warm and comforting about her in those early Ramadan mornings.

She would take four or five fresh dates, cook them in butter (no margarine, please), and then mix in some scrambled eggs. Sugar, fat, protein. Oh, and a tall glass of chocolate milk, and another glass of water. Happiness on a table, served up at 4:30 a.m. We lived for that meal. We were not allowed to have date omelets at any other time of the year, no matter how much we begged for them.

As children, we didn't have to fast, and yet it was an important rite of passage to wake up with our family. My brother and I would do what was called *rooze-ye gonjishki*, "fasting for those who are as big as sparrows." We would have our lovely date omelets, and then skip our mid-morning snack, and then have lunch. We loved our snacks, but it was Ramadan, a time for testing your spiritual willpower. Around 10:00 in the morning we would inevitably ask my mom for our favorite snack, a type of sweet cracker which we dunked in sweet tea. My mom would gently ask us which we loved more, the crackers or God. We hated it when she did that—but we went without the crackers.

My father used to tell us that fasting was a privilege. He said that we chose to not eat from sunup to sundown, whereas there are people in the world for whom not eating lunch or snacks was a daily fact of life, and not a choice. In being hungry, we are to feel their pain and suffering. He would often repeat this poem by the Persian poet Sa'di, from *The Rose Garden*:

The Children of Adam are members of one body,  
made from the same source.  
If one feels pain,  
the others cannot be indifferent to it.  
If you are unmoved by the suffering of others,  
you are not worthy of the name human being.

These days, I miss my mom's date omelets. Ramadan is hard now, but not eating is the easy part. The hard part is feeling the suffering of others. I am a parent now, which means my life is no longer my own. Before I am a Muslim, I am a parent. Before I am an American, I am a parent. And this Ramadan I am thinking a lot about children.

I am thinking about the children whose parents never came home from the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. I am thinking about the children of Afghanistan, who never asked for the Taliban and who have never heard of the Northern Alliance. And I am thinking especially about the children who make up far too many of the 600,000 people who the UN Human Rights Commissioner has stated may perish from starvation in the unforgiving winter of Afghanistan—unless something is done immediately. All of our children are precious, the ones here, the ones there, the ones everywhere.

I have an eight-year old son, and at dawn this Ramadan I will make him a date omelet. And I will hug him tight—nappy hair, sleepy eyes, nasty breath and all.

May he grow up to be one who feels the pain of others as his own.

May he have the courage to bring some healing into this fractured world.

And may he always remember my date omelets.

—Omid Safi  
Hamilton, New York

**THERE IS A MEMORY THAT RETURNS TO ME** as clearly and exquisitely as the sliver of a crescent moon on the eve of Ramadan. It is the memory of my first Ramadan, 18 years ago, spent with my husband's family in Morocco. It was the middle of summer, and the first day of fasting was the hottest day I've ever experienced. I never knew what thirst was, until that day. I remember wondering how I could endure until sunset.

At last the evening call to prayer echoed from a nearby minaret. When my sister-in-law brought me a tall glass of cool water, it was as though she had given me the world. I felt it was the first time I'd ever really tasted water and recognized what a blessing it is. As it began to revive every parched cell of my body, I suddenly understood the truth of God's words: "Verily, with every difficulty, there is relief."

—Barbara Sahli  
Teacher at Islamic Academy of New England  
Sharon, Massachusetts





## McCloud-Al-Deen CHICAGO



**3:05 p.m.**  
Aminah at work in her basement office.



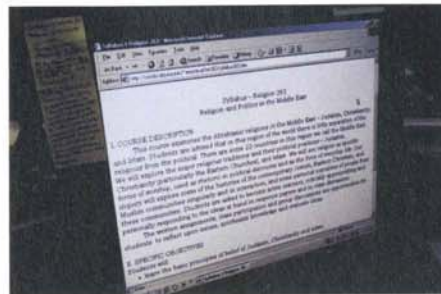
**5:58 p.m.**  
Jenna watches "Clifford" on video while her mom prepares iftar.



**Sunday, 10:07 a.m., 'Id al-Fitr**  
Frederick at the Villa Park mosque.



**Friday, 10:45 a.m.**  
Frederick at work. A former prison chaplain, he has long worked for community betterment. "If you see a stone in the road, you pick it up."



**3:07 p.m.**  
Syllabus of Aminah's upcoming course, Religion 263: Religion and Politics in the Middle East.



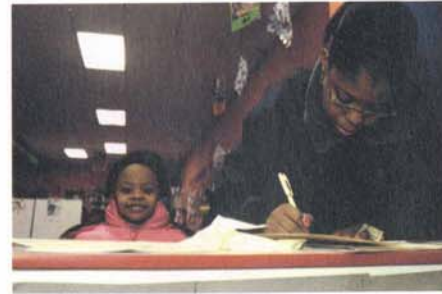
**6:32 p.m.**  
Sadikia and Jenna have dinner. "Aminah was probably on the phone, and I was probably trying to read something to keep up with Aminah," says Frederick.



**2:00 p.m.**  
Frieda Washington, right, was a student of Aminah's. After study and reflection, she embraced Islam in their home with Imam Misbah Rufai accepting her shahadah, or profession of faith.

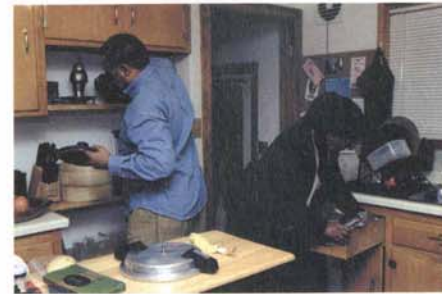


**11:35 a.m.**  
Sadikia at work.



**5:28 p.m.**  
Sadikia picks up Jenna from day care.

"We in America are so driven by the clock, but in Ramadan you run on God's time. It's a time of the willful loss of self."  
—Frederick Al-Deen



**6:14 p.m.**  
Frederick makes chicken stew for dinner. This year, as Ramadan service projects, they produced several programs for www.radioislam.com and helped gather clothes for a needy neighbor family.

## THANKSGIVING, IFTAR AND 'ID IN WASHINGTON

As an American economist currently on assignment in the Arab world, I made sure to be back in Arlington, Virginia with my parents, brothers and cousins for Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is not only my favorite holiday, but also the most American. *Eid al-habash*, my Lebanese cousins call it: Turkey Day.

The trip made me realize that America really has changed since September 11. And I hope it will never be the same.

When my brother and I landed at Dulles Airport, despite his "Arab looks" and my having been born in Beirut, we were treated with the utmost courtesy. And from the moment my dad picked us up from the airport, till Thanksgiving dinner at sunset a few days later, I never stopped counting my blessings.

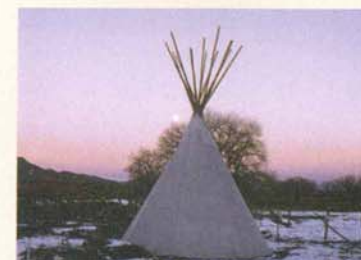
Indeed, this Thanksgiving was different. It was the first Thanksgiving to fall during Ramadan in my lifetime. And as Muslims, my family and I were fasting. It was perhaps the first time in my life that I was able to feel 100 percent American and 100 percent Muslim without any conflict.

Islam is being mainstreamed in America, and there's no going back. Today, there are dozens of mosques in the District of Columbia and Virginia, not just one or two. On this trip, I received several invitations to iftar dinners from members of President Bush's cabinet. That's something new. Cabinet-level iftars, unheard of when Bush's father was president, now are commonplace. And things will stay this way. I can feel it.

This 'Id, at the end of the Ramadan fast, the enhanced American-Muslim dialogue is one small but important thing for which I will be giving thanks.

—Hadi Amr  
National Director of Ethnic American Outreach  
for Al Gore's presidential campaign  
(adapted from The Daily Star, Beirut)  
(hadyamr@hotmail.com)

**THIS IS A TEEPEE THAT I PASS EVERY EVENING**, as I walk home from evening prayers at the mosque in the mountains of Abiquiu, New Mexico. The photo was taken in Ramadan in 1999 when our Muslim neighbors were living in it, Maryam (Mary), her son Issa (Jesus), and her daughter Bezika.



—Karima Alavi  
Abiquiu, New Mexico

**RAMADAN COMES ONLY ONCE A YEAR**, but it can change someone's life forever. I look at it as an amnesty period when I can redeem myself of wrongs that I may have committed the

## OH THE DAYS OF RAMADAN!!!

How I wish they were not gone.  
I can't wait for next year  
To say that Ramadan is here!

—Dina Mortada, 6th grade  
Islamic Academy of New England  
Sharon, Massachusetts

and how nice it feels to break a fast together with many people and pray *tarawih* together. All these things make me look forward to Ramadan more and more each year.

—Nida Muzaffar  
Ellicott City, Maryland

**I AM NINE YEARS OLD, AND MY MISSION IS TO FAST THE WHOLE RAMADAN.** By the time you're almost done you feel so hungry. We invite people to break their fast at our house. After we break our fast, we go to the mosque to pray.

My dad leads the prayer. The prayer is so long that your legs ache. Afterward, we play soccer with the men or we can go to the computer room. I made a lot of friends in Ramadan. And I have completed my mission for the first time, so I felt very happy and strong. Now my little sister wants to fast the whole next Ramadan.

—Hamza El-Guenaoui  
Islamic Academy of New England  
Sharon, Massachusetts

**REMEMBER** God with each pang of discomfort.

Remember: there are many people much more intimate with real starvation who have no hope of an evening meal.

Remember: the incredible abundance we all take for granted.

Remember: this emptiness is a blessing, a hollow accommodation for clarity.

Remember: we are all united in God's mercy.

—Hilal Diane Sala  
San Francisco, California

## Unfamiliar Terms

*tarawih*: supplementary prayers during Ramadan

*jihad*: struggle

*haram*: forbidden

*iftar*: the fast-breaking meal after sunset

*(pbuh)*: Many Muslims say "peace be upon him" after every mention of the Prophet Muhammad; in writing, the phrase is often abbreviated.

*salam*: peace, used as a greeting

*imam*: prayer leader, preacher

*insha' Allah*: God willing

*fajr*: dawn

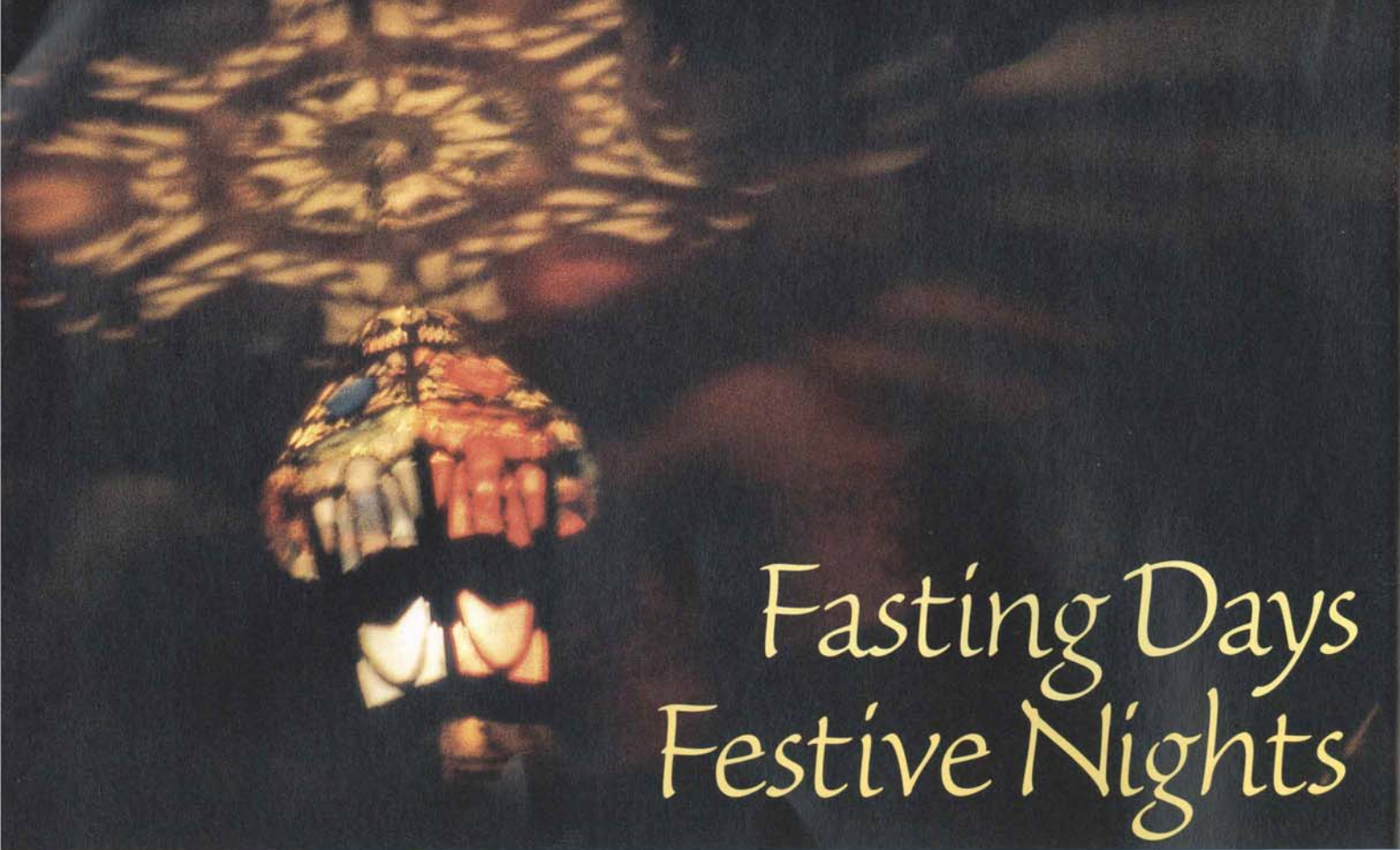
*nur*: light, or the light of God

*suhur*: the pre-dawn meal before the day's fast

*salata*: salad

*sambusak*: fried savory pastries filled with ground meat and/or vegetables





# Fasting Days Festive Nights

## Ramadan in Cairo

Written by Sarah Gauch Photographed by Lorraine Chittock



Top: The colorful lantern, called *fanoos* in Arabic, is the most distinctive Egyptian expression of Ramadan. Its origins hark back to the 11th-century reign of Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim bi-amr Allah. Above: On Ahmad Mahir Street, in the heart of Cairo, a family rushes by a lantern shop. Often purchased by parents and relatives for children, lanterns can cost from less than a dollar to several hundred dollars for the largest and best-crafted ones.

It's three o'clock in the afternoon and a cacophony of car horns, bus engines and shouting people is making an unusually unbearable din in what is, on the best of days, a noisy city. This is not rush hour, nor a construction bottleneck. This is Ramadan. Nearly everyone in this metropolis of 16 million people is trying to get home by exactly 4:55, in time to break the day's fast with family and friends.

Then, as the call to prayer marking sunset ripples outward from the mosques, everything else falls silent. The streets, suddenly, are empty and the city motionless. It's time for *iftar*, the sun-down meal at which Muslims break a day of fasting. Like a wave, *iftar* moves across the continents: It's been an hour since Saudis broke their fast; next hour Libyans will sit together; then Moroccans and, much later, Americans.

The holy month of fasting is when Egyptians, like all Muslims worldwide, not only abstain from food, drink and sex from sunrise to sunset, but also spend more time in

prayer, get out to visit friends and relatives, and give and receive charity. It is a month of contrasts: celebration as well as reflection; measured abandon as well as strict discipline. During Ramadan, Cairo is transformed, perhaps more vibrantly than any other city in the Muslim world, into a kaleidoscope of light and color, with glittery streamers connecting the houses and colored-glass lanterns hanging everywhere. With religion playing a major role in most people's lives and family relations regarded as paramount, one thing is clear: Everyone loves Ramadan.

"The Egyptians are people who are passionate about Islam," says Shaykh 'Abd Al-Moaty Bayoumy, dean of theology at Cairo's Al-Azhar University. "They are also a people whose customs and traditions are family-oriented. All

Egyptian families like to eat *iftar* together and to visit each other during Ramadan."

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and because that calendar is lunar, Ramadan falls 11 days earlier each solar year. It is celebrated as the month in which the Qur'an, Islam's holy book, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, and Ramadan fasting is one of the five obligations of Islam.

Over the last few decades, religious observance has been on the rise in Egypt. As a result, "there is more of a



Above: Two hours until *iftar*.... One hour.... Among shoppers on Al-Mu'ezz Li-Din Allah Street, photographer Lorraine Chittock noted that, despite the rising hubbub, "people became noticeably friendlier as *iftar* drew nearer." Left: Restaurants set out generous buffet lines for *suhur*, the pre-dawn meal, and families prepare special dishes. Nationwide, food sales rise about 25 percent in Ramadan.

This is not rush hour, nor a construction bottleneck. This is Ramadan.



4:32 p.m.



4:52 p.m.



Left: Clothiers also do good business, since new clothes are traditionally among the gifts that children receive for 'Id al-Fitr, the celebration that follows Ramadan. Above: After its annual *iftar*, the Egyptian Ministry of Housing and Construction distributes complimentary calendars to employees. Many large employers host an *iftar* each Ramadan.





Top: At the Ramses Hilton Hotel, employees of the Alfa Ceramics Company perform *tarawih* prayers, supplementary prayers for Ramadan. Alfa is based in Port Said on the Mediterranean coast, and the annual Ramadan *iftar* in Cairo affords employees a chance to visit family and friends in the city. Top right: On the 40th floor of an apartment building, Youssef Badran, 6, and a friend watch Ramadan television programs while Youssef's mother Azza (lower right) prepares *iftar* and sister Kanzy whisks a vase of flowers to the table. "It's not the quantity of food that is served, it's the quality of the gathering," says Azza. "I don't like preparing food like this every day, because then my family gets used to it and expects it. But during Ramadan, it is special."

celebration during Ramadan," says Abdel Rahman Salem, professor of Islamic history at the American University in Cairo. "More people are going to the mosque to pray and expressing their happiness in a ceremonial way. Ramadan is a bigger social and religious occasion."

During the daylight hours of Ramadan, people seem quieter, contemplative. "Westerners believe that we don't eat or drink and that's it," says Sharifa Attallah, an English language teacher. "No, this is the last thing. Fasting is about abstaining from all temptations and desires. It's a training, a *jihad* against the self." Through fasting, Muslims are supposed to feel compassion toward the poor, practice patience and feel closer to God.

The frenzied rush to get home for *iftar* begins to build around two o'clock as many leave work early. But not everyone goes home: Some break their fast at *iftars* sponsored by companies, clubs and friends at restaurants and hotels. Others visit "tables of mercy," where wealthy patrons set up seating in the street, on the sidewalks or even in the grassy medians of thoroughfares to serve free *iftar* meals to the poor—a popular way for Muslims to donate 2.5 percent of their worth to the poor, as Islam requires.

A traditional Cairene *iftar* table is topped with dishes of meat, rice and vegetables, Levantine *mezzas* such as *hummus* and *baba ghanoush*, vegetable salads and fava beans, the national staple. Customarily, *iftar* begins with dried dates and a drink, which is how the Prophet Muhammad broke his fast some 14 centuries ago. One popular drink is the apricot-based *qamar el-din*. For dessert, Cairenes savor *kunafa*, a kind of syrup-saturated shredded wheat, and *qatayaf*, a folded pancake filled with ground nuts and dried fruit, soaked in syrup, and baked.



Above: Tables set out by neighborhood restaurants pattern the plaza in Al-Hussein Square. Top right: In the neighborhood of Bulaq al-Dakrou, Um Mahmoud feeds a 2:00 a.m. *suhur* to her granddaughter Sharouq while her husband Abu Mahmoud looks on. Top left and above right: The Fatimid sultans decreed a thousand years ago that, each night during Ramadan, the poor should be fed by the wealthy. In keeping with that tradition, an entire block of Road 19 in the suburb of Maadi is closed off to host a *mawaa'id al-rahman*, or "table of mercy." This one is sponsored each night by Fatah Talat, a nearby resident. At thousands of tables like this one, between one and 1.5 million Cairenes receive a fast-breaking meal.

"Fasting is about abstaining from all temptations and desires. It's a *jihad* against the self."



By 4:30 p.m., Hagg Faisal's mercy table, under a colorful Ramadan tent on a sidewalk in the wealthy neighborhood of Zamalek, is filling up with old men in torn plastic sandals and women carrying shoeless children. With his and others' contributions, Hagg Faisal serves 300 meals a day for 30 days to the poor, passersby and students in the area. Huge pots of rice, meat and string beans are heating in the streetside kitchen, and a piece of bread and a dried date waits

at each place. By 4:50, nearly every seat is taken. At 4:55, with the first verses of the call to prayer, the diners begin to eat, ravenously, silently. Meanwhile Hagg Faisal calls to people outside: "Did you have *iftar*? Come. There are places inside." A man hops out of a taxi and runs in. A family hustles to sit down. Ten minutes later, many are already getting up to go to the mosque for prayers, or to get home and rest.

For those who pray after *iftar*, the most popular traditional site is the Al-Hussein mosque in central Cairo. There, men of all ages, wearing suits and ties or *gallabeyas* (robes) and scarves bend to take off their shoes at the door and enter to pray the Ramadan *tarawih* prayers.



Right: In the dining room of the Al-Hussein Hotel, employees of the Egyptian Ministry of Housing and Construction enjoy *iftar*, companionship and a view of Cairo's historic Al-Hussein mosque. Below: A stand serving hot beans (*fuul*) still has customers past 3:00 a.m. in Bulaq al-Dakrou. Center: Aboard the Blue Nile Restaurant boat, the American University in Cairo holds an annual reunion. "It's nice to see them celebrating *iftar* together," says Amina (in red), whose husband is an alumnus. "It's the only time all year that they make the chance to see each other." Below right: Servers wait for their orders at the Blue Nile's kitchen. Jobs, tips and hours all go up during Ramadan.

For many, praying *tarawih* with hundreds of others at Al-Hussein during Ramadan is a holy experience. "I feel more spiritual, a great inner peace," says Mokhtar, a 56-year-old administrator of a textile company. "When there are more people, there is greater submission to God."

By eight o'clock, prayers are over, and the area around Al-Hussein is boiling with activity. People are out shopping in the medieval covered markets, sitting in cafés or listening to live music behind the mosque. Tables and chairs spill onto the streets with people drinking *sahlib*, a hot, creamy drink with nuts and raisins, or smoking *sheesha*, the "hubbly-bubbly" waterpipe.

At the center of all this, the 200-year-old Fishawi's Café, with its intricate, turned-wood screens (*mashrabiyyah*), is so crowded that the brass tables and steel chairs fit like puzzle pieces in the tiny, narrow space. Hawkers squeeze by selling Ramadan-lantern key chains, while patrons sip hot hibiscus tea (*karkady*) and exhale billows of *sheesha* smoke. Many will remain until one or two o'clock in the morning, when they'll eat *suhur*, the lighter, pre-dawn Ramadan meal.

While they enjoy themselves in this most traditional of Egyptian milieus, others are partying in more sophisticated scenes. At Dar al-Amar, on the top floor of a riverboat called Blue Nile, men in black leather jackets and women cling-wrapped in pink Lycra sit at low brass tables, alternately chatting with each other and talking into their mobile phones as they sip tea. It is midnight, and the place is just filling up.

"I usually go out every night during Ramadan until around 3:30," says Dalia Kordy, 33, a marketing manager. Tonight she is wearing big hoop earrings and shiny dark lipstick.

"Usually we can expect family trouble if we're too late, but during Ramadan it's different," says her friend, Dalia Reda, 28, customer service manager at the same firm.



Many will remain out until the wee hours, in the homes of friends or in cafés, markets and restaurants.



Top: Former classmates embrace. Below: A family visiting from Alexandria watches special Ramadan television programming near the Al-Hussein mosque. Lower right: As dawn nears, traffic thins and a Ramadan *fanous* brightens a road. While some lanterns still feature tooled brass, stained glass and candles, modern ones are often plastic and electrically lit—and some are even wired for sound.

"They're used to us having *suhur* at around one or two, so it's fair enough to come home late."

Back on shore, in the lower-class neighborhood of Bulaq al-Dakrou, people are also out, playing dominoes in small cafés, buying fruit for *suhur*, even getting a hair-cut at the barbershop. The apartment buildings appear to be almost interwoven with glittering silver-foil streamers

and lines of colorful plastic pennants. Shops are covered in flashing colored light bulbs.

Inside one home, Khaled Ahmed Mahmoud Moustafa and his family are about to eat *suhur*. "Everyone has a role during Ramadan," says Moustafa, who lives with his wife, daughter, parents and two brothers in a tiny four-room apartment. "The children all get lanterns. Young people like me, we decorate the streets, so they're always

lit. The older people sit with the small children and read the Qur'an. Ramadan is special for everyone."

At 2:30 a.m., he and his family dip fresh pieces of flat-bread into plastic bowls of fava beans and white cheese mixed with chopped tomatoes. It's quiet as they eat. Normally at this time of night a *masaharaty* comes down the street, banging a drum to remind anyone asleep to wake up and eat before sunrise, but tonight he doesn't show.

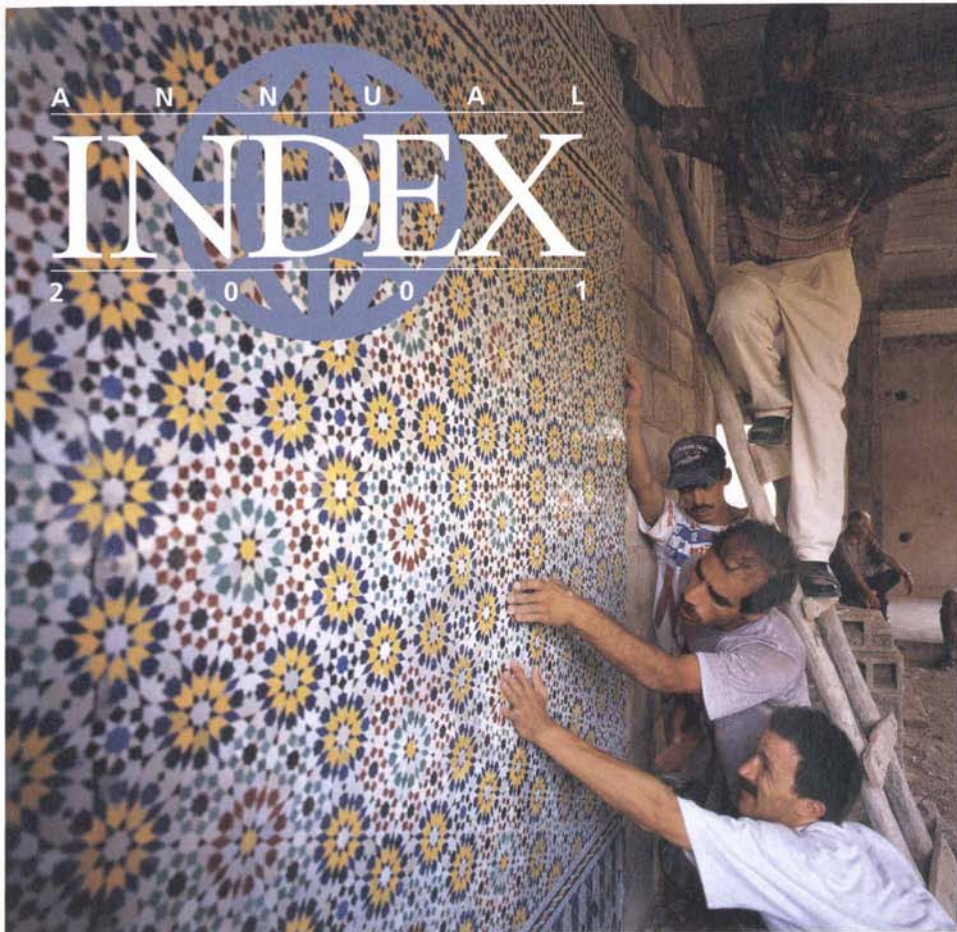
For the Moustafas, it doesn't matter. They've eaten and soon they'll sleep. After a few hours they'll wake up and, with Muslims around the world, begin another day of fasting. ☪

 Sarah Gauch is a free-lance news and magazine-feature writer in Cairo.  Lorraine Chittock (cats@camels.com) is a free-lance photographer and writer whose most recent book is *Cats of Cairo: Egypt's Enduring Legacy* (Abbeville Press, 2000).

 Related articles have appeared in these past issues of *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World*:

Fishawi's Café: S/O 96  
Ramadan Lanterns: M/A 92  
Karkady: S/O 01





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#### AGA KHAN AWARDS FOR ARCHITECTURE

*Shaking Up Architecture*, Lawrence, L., J/F01: 6–19

#### AIRCRAFT

*By Flying Boat From Cairo to Southampton*, McGregor, A., M/A01: 30  
*Flying the Furrow*, McGregor, A., M/A01: 24–31

#### ALBANIAN ISLAMIC CENTER

*Import, Adapt, Innovate: Mosque Design in the United States*, Khalidi, O., N/D01: 24–33

#### ALEXANDER THE GREAT

*Alexander: The Great Mystery*, Limber, T., M/J01: 2–13  
*Dead Kings are Hard to Find*, Holt, F., M/J01: 10–11

#### ALEXANDRIA, Egypt

*Alexander: The Great Mystery*, Limber, T., M/J01: 2–13

#### ALGARVE, Portugal

*The Mystery of Algarve's Chimneys*, Eigeland, T., M/A: 38–41

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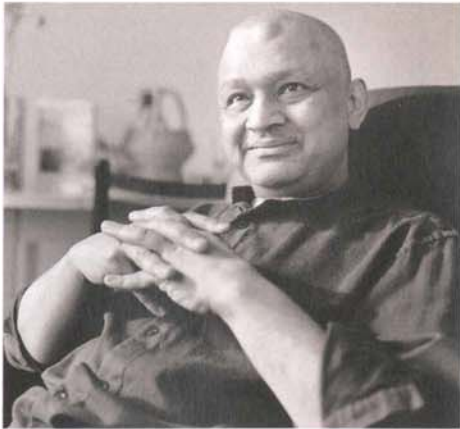
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**MUSEO ARQUEOLÓGICO NACIONAL, Madrid**  
The Ivories of Al-Andalus, S/O01: 22–31

**MUSEO DE BURGOS, Spain**  
The Ivories of Al-Andalus, S/O01: 22–31

**MUSEO DE NAVARRA, Spain**  
The Ivories of Al-Andalus, S/O01: 22–31

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SAUDI ARABIA, Riyadh**  
Well of Good Fortune, M/J01: 14–17

**PETER VOLL ASSOCIATES, Palo Alto, CA**  
New Doors to the Kingdom, M/A01: 2–17

**REUTERS**  
Great Leaps: Saudi Arabia's First Olympic Medals, J/F01: 2–5

**RIZZOLI INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS, New York**  
Saudi Arabia: The Desert, S/O01: 16–21

**SANDRA GERING GALLERY, New York**  
Karim Rashid's Global Cooling, S/O01: 32–35

**SAUDI ARAMCO**  
New Doors to the Kingdom, M/A01: 2–17

**SKIDMORE, OWINGS & MERRILL, New York**  
Import, Adapt, Innovate: Mosque Design in the United States, N/D01: 24–33

**SOTHEBY'S, London**  
The Ivories of Al-Andalus, S/O01: 22–31

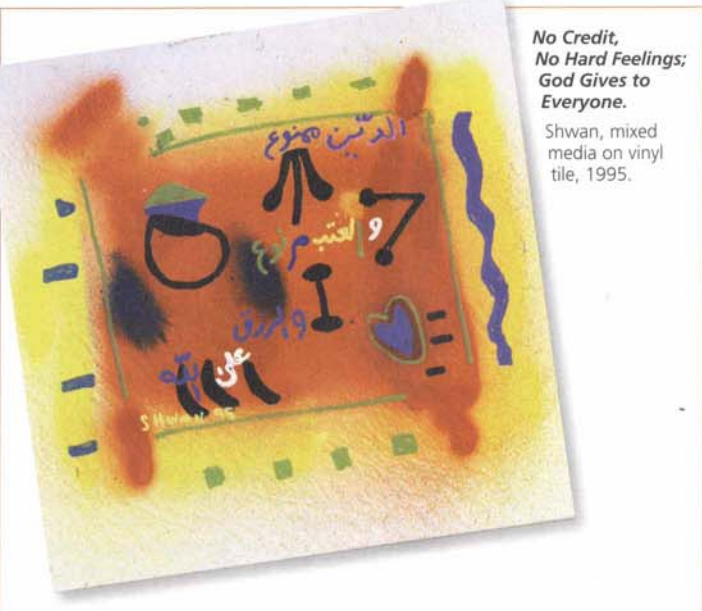
**TATE GALLERY, London**  
Alexander: The Great Mystery, M/J01: 2–13

**T. C. BARGER COLLECTION, Vista, CA**  
Well of Good Fortune, M/J01: 14–17

**VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, London**  
The Ivories of Al-Andalus, S/O01: 22–31



# Events & Exhibitions



**No Credit, No Hard Feelings; God Gives to Everyone.**

Shwan, mixed media on vinyl tile, 1995.

**The Lands Within Me: Expressions by Canadian Artists of Arab Origin** is the largest exhibition of work by contemporary Arab-Canadian artists ever shown in Canada. More than 60 works form a “*chant d’amour*,” a love song to the culturally interwoven worlds of the imagination” in varied styles and genres, including figurative and abstract painting, folk art and fine crafts. The various works are not presented as exotic items from far-off lands, but rather as unique expressions of each artist’s experience in a multicultural society. A central theme of the exhibit is how personal identity is constructed from multiple belongings—the “I” of the artist has been culturally blended. The show thus reminds the audience that cultural identities are multiple and complex, that we are all cultural hybrids. The artists represent Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia and their work is similarly diverse: painting, sculpture, printmaking, installation, photography, ceramics, video, jewelry and calligraphy. Canadian Museum of Civilization, **Quebec**, through March 9, 2003.

## Current Archeological Research.

The lectures in this series, which runs through June, concern discoveries and scholarship in the Middle East and western Asia. Each is presented at noon by a speaker intimately involved in the work under discussion.

- January 18: “From Troy/Wilusa to Homer’s Iliad,” Manfred Korfman
- January 28: “In Search of Absolute Dates in the Early Hellenic Context,” Yannis Touratzoglou
- January 31: “Excavations at Istabl ‘Antar,” Roland-Pierre Gayraud
- February 1: “Ja’dé, a Ninth-Millennium Neolithic Village on the Syrian Euphrates,” Eric Coqueugnot
- February 4: “Return to Cnidos: Old and New Excavations in Asia Minor,” Ian Jenkins
- February 14: “New Tombs of the New Kingdom at Saqqara,” Alain Zivie

- March 18: “Yemen in Proto-History and the South Arabian Period,” Frank Braemer and Michel Mouton
  - April 5: “The Dawn of Sumer: German Archeological Research at Uruk,” Hans Nissen
  - June 7: “Bahrain and the Land of Dilmun: New Excavations at Qalat al-Bahrain,” Pierre Lombard
- Information: +33-1-4020-8498 or [brisset@louvre.fr](mailto:brisset@louvre.fr). Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

**Iranian Cinema:** New Directors, New Directions is the museum’s sixth annual Iranian film series, this time celebrating a new generation of first-time directors. All films in Persian with English subtitles. Freer Gallery of Art, **Washington, D.C.**

- January 18: *Djomeh*, Hassan Yekta Panah
- January 25: *Paper Airplanes*,

Farhad Mehranfar

- February 1: *Under the Moonlight*, Seyyed Reza
- February 15 and 17: *Going By*, Iraj Karimi
- February 22 and 24: *Unfinished Song*, Maziar Miri and *Tabaki*, Bahman Kiarostami

**People of 1000 Gods:** The Hittites brings together approximately 170 objects from the archeological museums of Anatolia. Stone reliefs, clay tablets and seals, bronze statuettes, ceramics, gold work and a model of Hattusa, the Hittites’ 13th-century BC capital, shed light on the culture that rivaled ancient Egypt and Babylon. Bundeskunsthalle, **Bonn**, January 18 through April 28.

**Along the Nile/Threads From the Nile** displays some 170 objects which trace the history of Coptic art from the second to the 14th century of our era. The art of weaving is the thematic thread that runs through the exhibition, but other objects shed light on daily life of this era, and also illuminate Albert Gayet’s famous excavation at Antinoë and stylistic currents in Coptic art. Musée Dobrée, **Nantes, France**, through January 20.

**Between Damascus and Rome:** The Architecture of Abolodro the Damascene in Classic Culture highlights common cultural traditions of Syria and Italy. Born in Damascus in AD 60, Abolodro carried out works at the request of the emperors Trajan and Adrian, including the Jupiter Temple, now part of the Umayyad Mosque. The exhibition includes 16 pieces from Trajan’s Column, documents and illustrations. Catalog (Arabic-Italian). Khan Assad Pacha, **Damascus**, through January 20 and thereafter at the National Museum.

**The Golden Deer of Eurasia:** Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes displays spectacular finds of gold and silver recently excavated in Bashkortostan, Russia along with related Scythian, Sarmatian and Siberian objects from the Hermitage Museum. Created around the fifth and fourth century BC by nomadic people who lived in the open steppe in the southern Ural region, these distinctive works of art include wooden deerlike creatures overlaid with sheets of gold and silver, as well as gold attachments for vessels and gold plaques originally fixed to leather or fabric. The subjects are similar to those of Scythian art, but the vibrant curvilinear elaboration of the body surfaces is unique in the area, and resembles the style of artworks found much farther east in the frozen tombs of the Altai region of Siberia and in western China. Catalog. Hermitage, **St. Petersburg, Russia**, through January 20.

**The Glory of Ancient Egypt’s Civilization** displays more than 123 objects selected from the inexhaustible collection of the Egyptian Museum of Cairo and the Luxor Museum. **Shizuoka**

Prefectural Museum, through January 20; **Fukuoka** Asian Museum, February 2 through March 6; **Hiroshima** Prefectural Museum, March 16 through April 21; Ishikawa Prefectural Museum, **Kanazawa**, April 27 through May 26; Tohoku Historical Museum, **Sendai**, (tentative) June 8 through July 14.

**Poetry of the Loom:** Persian Textiles in the MFA spans 15 centuries of weaving and includes silks, velvets, embroideries, printed and painted cottons, rugs and costumes juxtaposed with Persian manuscript paintings and decorative arts. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, through January 21.

**The Astronomy of the Pharaohs** explores the mythology and science of ancient Egypt. Planétarium de **Montreal**, January 24 through May 20.

**King Fouad:** At Work and Play is a collection of black-and-white photographs from the collection of Mohamed El Ghazouly, including portraits, royal visits, and ceremonial and inaugural scenes that reflect the magnificence of the court life of Egypt’s first king. Sony Gallery, American University in **Cairo**, through January 24.

**Teaching About the Arab World and Islam** is the theme of teacher workshops co-sponsored by the Middle East Policy Council in Washington, D.C. and conducted by Arab World and Islamic Resources and School Services (AWAIR) of Berkeley, California. The program is fully funded and workshops can be requested by any school, district office of education, or university. Scheduled sites and dates include: **Worcester, MA**, January 26; **Wayland, MA**, January 27; **Barre, MA**, January 29; **Sharon, MA**, January 30; **Plymouth, MA**, February 1; **Bridge-water, MA**, February 2; **Cincinnati, OH**, February 6; **Seattle, WA**, February 8; **San Francisco, CA**, February 9; **Wilkesboro, NC**, February 12; **Washington, D.C.**, February 16; **Roanoke, VA**, March 9; **Flint, MI**, March 16; **Rockville, MD**, March 22–23. Information: 202-296-6767 or 510-704-0517; [awair@igc.apc.org](mailto:awair@igc.apc.org).

**Empire of the Sultans:** Ottoman Art from the Khalili Collection explores the influence of the Ottoman sultans over affairs of state and religion with displays of calligraphy, Qur’anic and other manuscripts, arms and armor, metalwork, ceramics, textiles and scientific instruments from the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. Catalogue. Bruce Museum, **Greenwich, Connecticut**, through January 27; **Milwaukee** Art Museum, February 16 through April 28; North Carolina Museum of Art, **Raleigh**, May 18 through July 28.

**Photographs of Egypt from the La Salle Bank Collection** inaugurates the Holleb Family Temporary Exhibits Gallery, part of the ongoing renovation of the Oriental Institute galleries. The contem-

porary photographs, taken by Linda Connor, Lynn Davis, Tom Van Eynde, and Richard Misrach, who have worked in Egypt over the last two decades, range from dramatic images of pyramids and views of the monuments of Luxor to images that juxtapose ancient monuments and modern life. Oriental Institute of the University of **Chicago**, through January 27.

**Reflections of the Divine.** In Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, craftsmen always applied their greatest skills to the noblest of materials (earthenware and bronze) when honoring the gods. This exhibition, which assembles a hundred or so works from a private Genevois collection, seeks to evoke the millennial spirituality reflected in the art of three great civilizations. Musée d’art et d’histoire, **Geneva**, through January 28.

**Egypt:** Gift of the Nile highlights the religion, funerary practices, education and family life of ancient Egypt. **Wind-sor [Ontario]** Community Museum, January 29 through March 27.

**Iraqi Art and Literature Around the World** is an elaborated version of the exhibition “Strokes of Genius,” which shows works in varied media, selected by an intercultural curatorial panel and created by some 35 Iraqi artists living in that country and in more than a dozen countries abroad. At this venue, three Iraqi poets—Dunya Mikhail, Fadhil al-Azzawi and Fadhil Assultani—will read from their works on January 30 (4:15 and 8:00 p.m.). At a January 31 symposium, archeologist McGuire Gibson of the Chicago Oriental Institute will speak on “The Plunder of the Cradle of Civilization” (11:00 a.m.) and anthropologist Elizabeth Fernea of the University of Texas will speak on social changes in Iraq in the last half of the 20th century (4:15 p.m.). The “Strokes of Genius” project includes a book, a website ([www.strokes-of-genius.com](http://www.strokes-of-genius.com)) and the traveling exhibition, which highlights both historical roots and contemporary experiences. The book of the same title (London, Saqi Books, ISBN 0-86356-563-8, £17.95 pb) uses reproductions, interviews, essays and biographical sketches to impart a broad understanding of Iraqi art in recent decades. Exhibition information: [jenkins@grinnell.edu](mailto:jenkins@grinnell.edu); symposium information: [simawe@grinnell.edu](mailto:simawe@grinnell.edu). Faulconer Gallery, **Grinnell College, Iowa**, January 29 through March 15.

**A Tale of Three Cities:** Kabul, Herat and Kandahar is a lecture by Dr. Zarra Faridany-Akhavan on the rich cultural past of the region. 7:00 p.m., Carlos Museum, **Atlanta, Georgia**, January 31.

**Fire and Light:** 3000 Years of Glass Artistry shows more than 100 glass pieces spanning four continents and three millennia and helps to celebrate the reinstallation of the museum’s own internationally known Eugene Schaefer Collection of Ancient Glass. This collection comprises over 1000 pieces of ancient glass from Egypt of 1500 BC through Greece, Roman and the Islamic cultures to AD 1200. The exhibition traces the use of glass from its beginnings as a rare and magical medium in ancient Egypt and

Mesopotamia, through the colorful perfume containers of ancient Greece, to its mass production under the Romans. Ancient Roman sculpture, pottery and metalwork reveal other aspects of daily life in the Roman world. Glass in jewelry and women’s vanity items are also shown, as are video clips of master glassmaker Bill Gudenrath demonstrating ancient glassmaking techniques. **Newark [New Jersey]** Museum, through January.

**Masterworks from the Age of the Pyramids** showcases extraordinary objects that epitomize the lasting achievements of Egypt’s Old Kingdom, including monumental royal sculpture, stone vessels, jewelry, tools and weapons. Nagoya/Boston Museum of Fine Arts, **Nagoya, Japan**, through February 3; **Cincinnati** Art Museum, March 17 through June 9.

**Along the Silk Road:** Rugs and Textiles from Syria to China features rugs, dowry textiles and silk robes from China, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Part of a collaborative public education project exploring cultural interaction across Eurasia that includes lectures, seminars, a virtual art exhibit, education courses, photographic exhibits and a concert series. Henry Art Museum, **Seattle**, February 7 through May 12.

**Jewish Life in Ancient Egypt** reveals the daily life of a multicultural community on Elephantine Island (in present-day Aswan) during Persian rule in the 27th Dynasty (525–402 BC). The exhibit’s highlights are eight papyri written in Aramaic, part of a family archive belonging to Ananiah, a Jewish temple official, his wife, Tamut, and their children. The papyri illustrate their life from their marriage in 447 BC to the final payment on their daughter’s wedding gift in 402 BC. Other objects in the exhibition include life-size statues, reliefs, bronze statuettes, silver vessels and gold jewelry. **Brooklyn** Museum of Art, February 15 through May 12.

**Cavafy’s World** features manuscripts, contemporary art and archeological objects that reflect the world of the premier modern poet of the Greek language who, through birth, verse and Durrell’s *Alexandria Quartet*, is that city’s expatriate par excellence. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, **Ann Arbor, Michigan**, February 21 through May 5.

**Wit and Wine:** A New Look at Ancient Iranian Ceramics from the Sackler Foundation presents a selection of whimsical jugs, jars, beakers and vessels from Ancient Iran, many of which feature animal motifs. McClung Museum, **Knoxville, Tennessee**, February 23 through May 19.

**From the Amu Darya to the Potomac:** Central Asian Bags from Area Collections features pile bags dating from the 19th century and earlier from the Turkmen, Baluch, Uzbek and Kyrgyz ethnic groups. The bags are beautiful, yet fully functional objects for everyday use both in the yurt home and on pack animals. Styles include *chupal* (a large storage bag hung on the wall), *torba* (a long, narrow storage bag), *boche* (an envelope-style square storage

bag), *mafresh* (a small storage bag for personal items), *khorjin* (saddlebag), *ok bash* (a tent-pole cover), *chinakap* (a cylindrical bag used to hold household utensils), and *namakdan* (a salt bag). The exhibition takes its name from the Amu Darya River, the ancient Oxus, which flows northward from Afghanistan to the Aral Sea. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through February 24.

**Worlds of Wonder and Desire** traces the evolution of Indian painting from the 12th to the early 20th century and depicts a variety of traditional themes. Watercolors, executed on palm leaf, paper, ivory and cloth, were commissioned by nobles, religious institutions and well-to-do merchants, and celebrate the pleasures of the royal courts, love, the seasons of the year and musical modes. **Virginia** Museum of Fine Arts, **Richmond**, through February 24.

**Discovery and Myth:** The Burial Chamber of Tutankhamun tells the story of the tomb’s discovery and presents a full-scale replica of the tomb with its artifacts and wall paintings. The exhibition also examines the “Tutmania” of the 1970’s and 80’s. Museum Schloss Hohentübingen, **Tübingen, Germany**, March 1 through July 31.

**Arab Culture and Ottoman Magnificence in Antwerp’s Golden Age.** Antwerp, “the commercial metropolis of the world” for much of the 16th century, traded extensively with North Africa and the Middle East, but it was also one of Europe’s principal centers of book production, and that fact added a further dimension to the Low Countries’ experience of the Islamic world. Maps and descriptions of the East were published there for the benefit of navigators, travelers and merchants. Production of a polyglot Bible brought together a team of scholars who launched the study of Arabic in European universities. This exhibition shows a selection of magnificent manuscripts collected by the first Arabists and their Dutch pupils, the publications produced by Raphelengius’s Officina Plantiniana in Leiden, and documents the spread of Arabic studies. It also illustrates the impact of Antwerp’s printing industry and the crucial role of Christopher Plantin in contributing to a growing understanding of Arab culture. Catalogs: Dutch/Arabic pb 180pp, €40; English hb 148pp, €100. Plantin-Moretus Museum, **Antwerp**, through March 3.

**Cleopatra of Egypt:** From History to Myth looks at the real-life reign of Cleopatra VII, last of the Ptolemaic line to rule in Egypt, whose liaisons with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, and her suicide in 30 BC upon Octavian’s capture of Egypt, have made her an object of fascination ever since. Of Macedonian descent, she was the only ruler of her house to learn the Egyptian language and sacred iconography, and she used them skillfully to political advantage. The exhibit traces representations of her from her own time to the present day. Field Museum, **Chicago**, through March 3.

**Conversations With Traditions:** Nilima Sheikh and Shahzia Sikander explores

the work of two contemporary South Asian women artists in a dialogue with their traditional sources: Indian miniature paintings. Asia Society. **New York**, through March 3.

**The Pharaoh’s Photographer:** Harry Burton, Tutankhamun, and the Metropolitan’s Egyptian Expedition displays some 60 photographs taken between 1906 and 1936 by members of the Metropolitan Museum’s Egyptian Expedition. The exhibition presents these images both in their context as important documents of the Museum’s excavations and as works of artistic merit that deserve a place in the history of photography. The majority of the photographs are by Harry Burton (1879–1940), the outstanding archaeological photographer of his day. Burton was hired by the Museum to photograph the monuments at Thebes and after the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb in 1922, his services were shared with Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon. The exhibition covers all phases of Burton’s work in Egypt, including selections from his Tutankhamun portfolio and film footage dating to the early 1920’s. **New York**, Metropolitan Museum of Art, through March 3.

**Armenia: Hidden Kingdom** From the Mountains illuminates the culture of the pastoral people who lived south of the Caucasus Mountains some 3000 years ago, in today’s Armenia. The exhibition, centered on a unique 15th-century BC wooden cart, focuses on the so-called *kurgan* period between 2100 and 700 BC, when the Armenians buried their dead, with grave-goods, in tomb-mounds called *kurgans*. More than 80 finds excavated from *kurgans*, including metal cart decorations, weapons, jewelry and amulets of gold, silver and bronze, shed light on the prehistoric Armenians’ riches, religion and predilection for astronomy. Activities, catalog/magazine (€12.50). Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, **Leiden, Netherlands**, through March 3. Related exhibitions also in de Lakenhal (**Leiden**) and Catharijneconvent (**Utrecht**).

**Beauty of Ancient Egypt** examines traditional ways of portraying beauty through statues, engravings, jewelry, and cosmetic implements gathered from the Roemer Pelizaeus Museum in Hildesheim, Germany. The exhibit travels Japan for one year; dates are tentative. National Museum of Art, **Osaka, Japan**, March 8 through April 14; **Kohriyama**, April 24 through May 13; **Sapporo**, July; **Tokyo**, July through August.

**Glass Beadmaking through the Ages** is a symposium covering the history and techniques of the ancient art form invented in Mesopotamia 4500 years ago. Information: [www.beadexpo.com](http://www.beadexpo.com). **Santa Fe, New Mexico**, March 8–10.

**Saladin’s World:** In the Time of the Ayyubids presents more than 250 objects to illuminate the “Ayyubid century” (1169–1260) in Egypt and Syria and the dominant figure of Saladin (Salah al-Din). Artistic influences from Fatimid, Zangid and Seljuk sources helped to form Ayyubid



art in a period that was also marked by impressive military architecture, the foundation of many schools and other intellectual institutions, and an extensive political unity forged in opposition to the crusades. Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, through March 10.

**Agatha Christie and the East:** Criminology and Archeology traces those two strands in the life of the “Queen of Crime,” displaying diaries; hitherto unpublished photographs of Christie and her husband, archeologist Max Mallowan; more than 200 artifacts from his excavations in Iraq and Syria; and a compartment from the Orient Express. The exhibition emphasizes Christie’s participation in the digs as restorer and photographer. British Museum, **London**, through March 17.

**Gold of the Pharaohs** celebrates the reopening of the galleries of the Egyptian and Oriental Collection. Apart from early dynastic jewelry, the exhibition will focus on golden bangles and rings that once adorned the queens of the Middle Kingdom, and hairbands, pectorals, bracelets and jewelry made of semi-precious stones. In addition, the exhibition includes funerary statues and funerary offerings from tombs. Kunsthistorisches Museum, **Vienna**, through March 17.

**Courtly Radiance:** Metalwork from Islamic India displays some 25 objects of daily and ceremonial use fashioned from silver, bronze, copper and other metals during the 16th and 17th centuries. Highlights include a monumental metal fountain of the late 17th century, a rare Mughal vase with superb tracery work, examples of the celebrated *bidri* inlay tradition and a richly embellished writing box. Both Mughal and Deccan metalwork traditions are represented, revealing a rich variety of technical and decorative effects, such as casting, etching, chasing, inlay and hammered relief, that reflect their inspirations from within India as well as from the greater Islamic world. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through March 24.

**Recent Work of 12 Arab Artists:** The Egee Art Gallery Selection offers a survey of some of the foremost Arab artists at work in the world today, whose

paintings and ceramics reflect the intercultural climate from which they draw their inspiration. A diverse array of styles, techniques and topics informs the works: Calligraphy influences some of the artists while others are inspired by political events; some defy attribution to a specific cultural heritage. The artists are Mohammed Bennani (Morocco), Jamal Abdulrahim (Bahrain), Rachid Diab (Sudan), Ali Omar Ermes (Libya), Maysaloun Faraj (Iraq), Abdelkrim Kebir (Algeria), Rachid Koraichi (Algeria), Sami Mohamad (Kuwait), Khairat Al Saleh (Syria), Laila Shawa (Palestine), Awad Al Shimy (Egypt), Faisal Samra (Saudi Arabia), and Dia Azzawi (Iraq). Nearly 50 works are exhibited, all on loan from the Egee Art Gallery in London. Catalogue. World Museum, **Rotterdam**, through March 24.

**Under Foreign Influence:** Textiles from Europe and Asia. Since ancient times, Europe has been prone to the influence of textile materials, techniques, and motifs from the Near and Far East, such as silk imported from China, the complex early medieval woven fabrics from Syria, or the carpets and rugs from the Middle East. The exhibition presents European pieces, from the Middle Ages to the present, that document the interest in the “exotic” and the impact of Asian and Middle Eastern models. MAK Museum, **Vienna**, through March 24.

**The Spiritual Edifices of Islam** is a Smithsonian traveling exhibit that features 33 original graphite drawings by internationally acclaimed Arab-American artist Wahbi Al-Hariri-Rifai (1914–1994) depicting some of the world’s most significant mosques. Included are earlier works in watercolor and pastel. National Museum, **Riyadh**, through March 31.

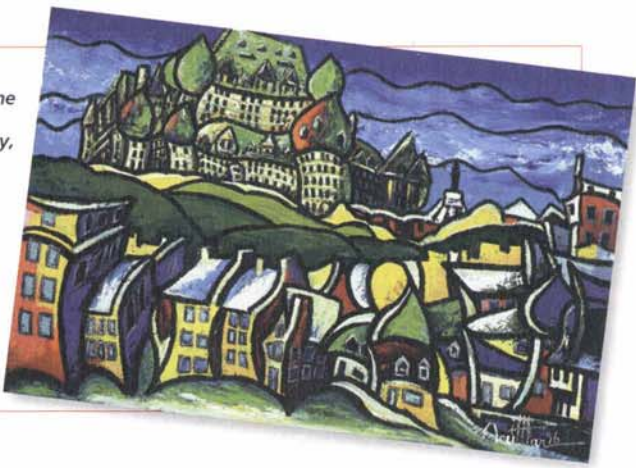
**William Morris:** Myth, Object and Animal showcases glass artist William Morris’ ability as an *animalier*: an artist whose renderings of animals display a special sensitivity and an eye for scientific accuracy. Morris evokes ancient myths and motifs by referring to such artifacts as the 3000-year-old ceramic mastodons and bulls unearthed from the Amlash graves of Iran, Egyptian canopic jars and Nubian giraffes. Mint Museum, **Charlotte, North Carolina**, through March 31.

**Outer and Inner Space:** A Video Exhibition in Three Parts is a showing of recent work by three artists, including Shirin Neshat from Iran, whose entry “Rapture” uses lush black-and-white projections on opposite walls to explore the strict separation of men and women in some Islamic countries. A selection of earlier videos by the artist treats the themes of gender roles, cultural identity and spatial divides. **Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond**, April 6 through June 2.

**The Eternal Image:** Egyptian Art from the British Museum is the first loan ever of some 150 pieces that span 3000 years of Egyptian history, from a tiny royal portrait of carved ivory to the colossal granite statue of Seti II. Included also are rare wooden sculptures and papyrus paintings, neither

**Québec, La Cinquieme Saison (Quebec City, the Fifth Season).**

Joseph Moukhtar, oil on canvas, 1996.



of which survived the passage of years in great numbers. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, **Kansas City, Missouri**, April 12 through July 7; The Fine Arts Museums of **San Francisco**, August 10 through November 3.

**Marcel Khalifa**, one of the world’s leading Arab musicians, performs Lebanese music with a five-member ensemble. **Cleveland Museum of Art**, April 19.

**Pharaoh’s Artists:** Deir el-Madinah and the Valley of the Kings uses 300 objects from the museum’s collection to present the private, daily and imaginative lives of the artists, craftsmen and workers who lived at Deir el-Madinah in the New Kingdom period and worked to create the royal tombs of the Valley of the Kings. Besides a presentation of the site itself, the exhibition deals with the themes of home, daily life, family, leisure time, artistic creation and death. In conjunction with the exhibition, there will be an international colloquium on “Life in Egypt in the Time of the New Kingdom Pharaohs,” May 3–4. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, April 19 through July 15.

**Akhnaten**, an opera by Phillip Glass, makes its Australian debut. “Akhnaten, Gandhi and Einstein are three men who revolutionized the thoughts and events of their times through the power of an inner vision: Einstein, the man of science; Gandhi, the man of politics; and Akhnaten, the man of religion. Akhnaten was a modern man on an ancient throne,” Glass explains. Glass’s libretto is drawn from texts written in Akhnaten’s own time. State Opera’s Opera Studio, **Netley, SA, Australia**, May 16–18, 23–25.

**Nomads Between the Nile and the Red Sea** presents the everyday life of the Abada tribes in Southern Egypt and Northern Sudan. Photographs, objects of everyday use and drawings by Abada school children reveal a nomadic culture in the course of change. Wereld Museum, **Rotterdam**, April 24 through March 9, 2003.

**Visual Poetry:** Paintings and Drawings from Iran and India highlights the work of artists who, beginning in the late 15th century, created independent drawings and paintings that no longer corresponded to a specific text. Freed from the stricture of the written word, these works focused primarily on figural themes and explored the formal potentials of line and color in a new manner. The images were often combined with the finest examples of calligraphy in lavishly prepared albums called *muraqqa* whose beauty was described as rivaling that of an unspoiled paradise. Some 30 works are on display, including several by Riza Abbasi, the most celebrated painter of this genre, and by other notable artists active in 16th- and 17th-century Iran and India. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through May 5.

**The Spirit of Islam:** Experiencing Islam Through Calligraphy introduces visitors to the esthetics, spirituality and principles of education of the Muslim world through the time-honored art of calligraphy. The exhibition includes a gallery, a prayer space, and a *madrassa*, or school. Objects that include calligraphy as integral or decorative elements are on display, including a 14th-century glass mosque lamp commissioned by the Mamluk Sultan Barquq, an 11th-century ceramic bowl from Samarkand, a brass astrolabe from 14th-century Iran, ceramic tiles, inlaid furniture, 19th-century armor, and pages from the famous “Blue Qur’an” from North Africa. Educational programs, music and dance performances will also be offered. Museum of Anthropology at the University of **British Columbia, Vancouver**, through May 12.

**Kenro Izu:** Sacred Sites Along the Silk Road displays approximately 27 large-format platinum prints of sacred sites in western China, Ladakh and Tibet. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, June 9 through January 5.

**The Queen of Sheba:** Treasures from Ancient Yemen examines the early history of the ancient Arabian kingdom of Saba through rarely-seen paintings, drawings, clothing, jewelry, funerary busts, religious iconography and architecture. The British Museum, **London**, June 9 through October 13.

**Pharaoh’s Harvest:** Plants from Ancient and Modern Egypt features photographs of plants as depicted in tombs and monuments and as they appear today. McClung Museum, **Knoxville, Tennessee**, June 10 through August 18.

**The Adventures of Hamza** (the *Hamzanama*) is a fantastic traditional adventure story based very loosely on the travels of Hamza, an uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, who traveled the world spreading Islam. The narrative tells of his encounters with giants, demons and dragons; of abductions, chases and escapes; of those who believed and those who resisted the truth. The tale was told in coffee-houses from Iran to northern India and was also a favorite story for illustration. The greatest manuscript of the *Hamzanama* was made for the 16th-century Mughal emperor Akbar, and originally included 1400 oversize illustrations, of which only a fraction survive. Sixty of them are presented, alongside new translations of the related text passages, in this exhibition, the first to examine narrative aspects of the text in such depth. A catalog, and additional works displayed, explore the

**Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur** presents 150 extraordinary objects revealing traditions of royal life and death, excavated in the 1920’s by Sir Leonard Woolley. They include the famous “Ram in the Thicket”—a statuette of a goat nibbling the leaves of a tree—jewelry, a comb, a wooden lyre decorated with a gold-and-lapis bull’s head, games, furniture, seals and vessels of gold, silver and alabaster,

many found in the intact tomb of a woman—a queen or high priestess—named Puabi who died between 2600 and 2500 BC, a high point of Sumerian culture. Catalogue \$50/\$35. Fogg Art Museum, **Boston**, May 18 through September 1.

**From Far-Off Lands:** Art Along the Silk Route displays sculptures and murals dating from the fifth to the 11th century and found in caves near Kucha and Turfan. MAK Museum, **Vienna**, through May 26.

**Earthen Architecture:** Constructive Cultures and Sustainable Development is the theme of six separate, intensive courses in project design and building and conservation techniques, many of which are drawn from traditional methods of the Middle East. Course lengths vary from four days to four weeks, and all instruction is in French. Information: www.craterre.archi.fr. CRATerre-EAG, **Grenoble, France**. Courses May 27–31.

**Out of this World:** Textiles from the Spirit Realm features 17 prayer rugs from Persia, Turkey and the Caucasus Mountain region of Russia and Azerbaijan, as well as other textiles—from Indonesia, India, Afghanistan, Mexico, Bolivia, China, Tibet, the Philippines and Nigeria—believed to be invested with powerful and protective properties. Textile Museum of Canada, **Toronto**, through June 2.

**Traders to Tartary** uses maps, artifacts, life-size dioramas and a recreated Bukhara market stall to trace the paths of the traders who traveled back and forth from Germany and Poland to the Caspian Sea from the Middle Ages to the 19th century, exchanging European woolens, amber and silver for Central Asian silks, furs, horses, carpets and gems. Yeshiva University Museum, **New York**, through July.

**A Passage to India** is the new annual exhibition at the World Awareness

pivotal role of this manuscript in the development of Mughal painting. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, June 26 through September 29.

**The Jeweled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals** shows some 300 pieces dating from the mid-16th to the early 18th century from the al-Sabah Collection of Kuwait. In addition to earrings, pendants and bracelets, the show also features a superb collection of daggers with jewel-encrusted scabbards and hilts (including the famous Ruby Dagger), as well as jeweled boxes, cups and gaming pieces. **Houston Museum of Fine Arts**, June 30 through October 27.

**Modern Mongolia:** Reclaiming Genghis Khan challenges the traditional view of the great conqueror by inviting the visitor to see Mongolia through the eyes of his modern descendants. Three life-size dioramas of *gers* (the Mongolian word for “yurt”) feature many of the exhibition’s 192 costumes and artifacts shown in America for the first time. Rare archival photographs reconstruct 20th-century nomadic life, and four films made especially for the exhibition provide historical background and help illuminate Genghis Khan’s relationship to contemporary Mongolians’ democratic ideals. University of **Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia**, through July.

**The Touma Near Eastern Collection** is a lavish assembly of antiquities, ceramics, manuscripts, icons, architectural tiles, edged weapons, firearms, brass and copper vessels, furniture and prayer rugs donated to the Huntington Museum of Art by Drs. Joseph and Omayma Touma. **Huntington, West Virginia**, permanent.

**Saudi Bedouin Jewelry** displays more than 100 pieces, donated by Lewis Hatch and Marie Kukuk, that have

Children’s Museum. Children’s art, interactive installations and activities such as role-playing, music and storytelling are used to raise awareness of the traditions and customs of India, Nepal and Bangladesh. **Glens Falls, New York**, through August.

**Classical Tradition in Anatolian Carpets** presents approximately 40 works dating from the 14th through the 19th centuries in the context of their history and relationship to a centuries-old weaving tradition. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through February 2003.

**Qurna Discovery:** Life on the Theban Hills 1826 is a unique record of the village of Qurna (Gourna) and of the Theban necropolis that has long supported the village economy. The exhibition includes copies of two 360-degree panoramic drawings, showing tombs, tomb dwellings and the richness of Qurnawi life, that were made by Scottish artist and explorer Robert Hay in 1826. Hay lived and worked in Qurna for extended periods; his many drawings, paintings, plans, notebooks and diaries, unpublished, are now in the British Library. The panorama copies, a gift of the British Museum, are housed in the old Omda (Mayor’s) House, which has been renovated by local craftsmen using traditional materials and techniques. **Qurna, Egypt**, permanent.

**The Tuma Near Eastern Collection** is a lavish assembly of antiquities, ceramics, manuscripts, icons, architectural tiles, edged weapons, firearms, brass and copper vessels, furniture and prayer rugs donated to the Huntington Museum of Art by Drs. Joseph and Omayma Touma. **Huntington, West Virginia**, permanent.

**Saudi Bedouin Jewelry** displays more than 100 pieces, donated by Lewis Hatch and Marie Kukuk, that have

doubled the museum’s collection. Information: 816-697-2526. Nance Museum, **Lone Jack, Missouri**, permanent.

**Traditional Iran** displays ethnographic portraits, street scenes and cartoons of daily life along with textiles, brassware, wooden figures and replicas of monuments, from the collection of the Nance Museum. Central **Missouri State University Museum, Warrensburg**, permanent.

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

Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Most institutions listed have further information available on the World Wide Web. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion in this listing.

**“Bridging East and West: Saudi Aramco World, 1949–Present”** (formerly “50 Years of *Aramco World*”) is a traveling exhibit of 90 photographs selected for their artistic and educational qualities. The images show a changing view of the Middle East, and captions link photographs to historical patterns of communication about the region. The exhibit is available for temporary display in schools, universities and special events. For details, please write to Dick Doughty, Assistant Editor, *Saudi Aramco World*, Box 2106, Houston, Texas, 77252, USA.

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