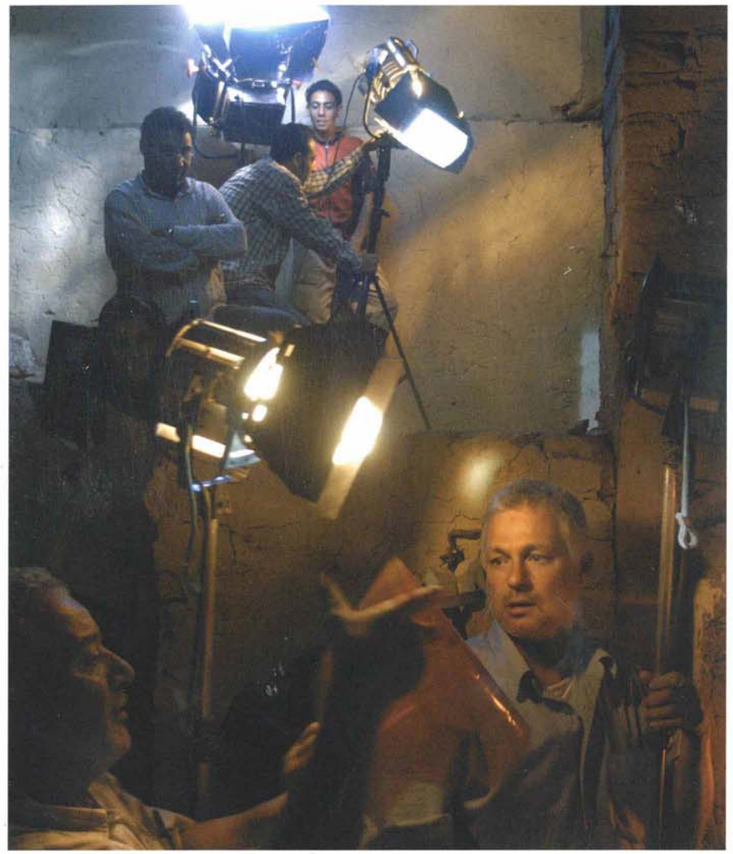

Saudi Aramco World

November/December 2003

# Saudi Aramco World

MAURITANIA'S MANUSCRIPTS

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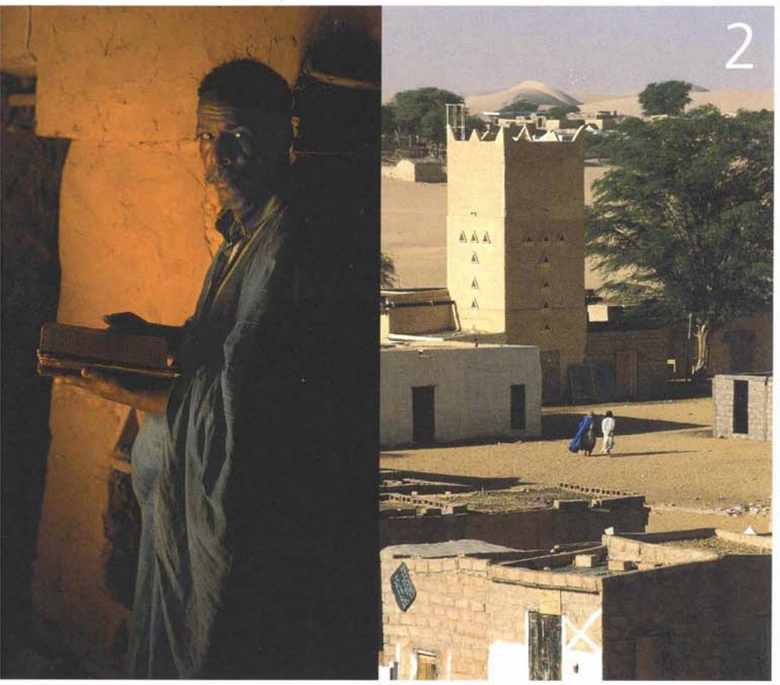



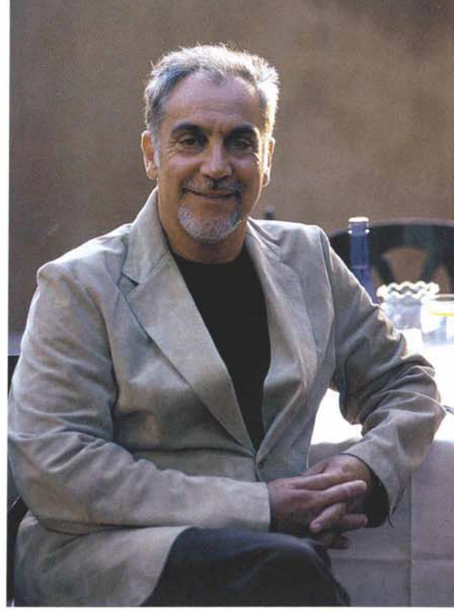



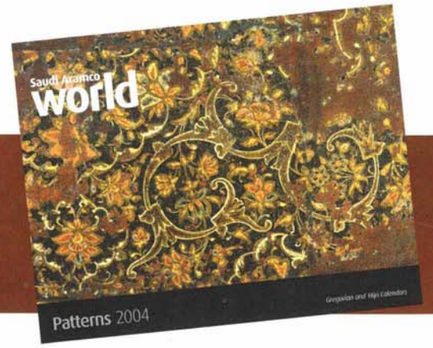




**Cover:**

Four distinct styles of script developed in Mauritania's *mahadhras*, or Islamic schools, from the Middle Ages to recent times, and the strongest influences came from Morocco and Al-Andalus, or southern Spain. This volume is a Mauritanian copy of an early 13th-century Moroccan biographical work about prominent West African Muslims, now preserved in a tooled leather case in one of the country's scores of private libraries. Photograph by Lorraine Chittock.

**Back Cover:**

Khalid Gabry, lighting director of the historical television series *Man of Destiny*, discusses light placements for a scene on a barnyard set in Cairo's Media Production City. A Ramadan series has 28 episodes, each usually 45 minutes long—an amount of footage that makes for considerable hustle on the set: This scene took only 15 minutes to light. Photograph by Stephanie Keith.

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# MAURITANIA'S MANUSCRIPTS

WRITTEN BY LOUIS WERNER
PHOTOGRAPHED BY LORRAINE CHITTOCK

One could easily lose something precious in Mauritania's million square kilometers (398,000 sq mi) of dune fields and rocky steppes, stretching north from the Senegal River and east from the Atlantic into the Sahara's most desolate corners. Nomadic encampments are few, villages are far between, and the wind blows inexorably from the west, scattering all that comes before it.

But Ahmad Ould Mohamed Yahya, director of manuscripts at the Institut Mauritanien de Recherche Scientifique (IMRS) in Nouakchott, believes it is not a fluke that something precious should recently have been found in the small town of Boutilimit, some 150 kilometers (95 mi) east of the capital city of Nouakchott: the world's only known complete manuscript of a work on grammar by the great Spanish-Arab physician and philosopher Ibn Rushd, known in the West as Averroës. This find, so far from the Mediterranean basin, means that historians must rethink just how far Ibn Rushd's writings and influence extended into the Arab hinterland.

Mauritania is known throughout the Arab world—but hardly at all in the West—for its enormously rich heritage of Arabic manuscripts, many brought from the Arab East by pilgrims returning from Makkah, some recopied from those imported sources by students in the Qur'an schools that once flourished throughout the country, and others composed by Mauritania's own jurists, poets and historians.

"The traditions of scholarship in Mauritania during the past three centuries, albeit profoundly linked to the medieval epoch, are probably the richest in West Africa," says Charles Stewart of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, an expert on the country's early modern history. "They compare favorably with [those of] Maghribi societies of an earlier date." Adds Muhammad Shahab Ahmed, a historian of Arab philosophy and a fellow at Harvard University, "The fact that the only existing copy of a work by Averroës has been preserved in Mauritania is a remarkable illustration of the southern migration of the scholarly corpus of al-Andalus and the Maghrib"—Muslim Spain and North Africa.

Ahmad Ould Mohamed has been traveling throughout Mauritania for more than 20 years, visiting private libraries, cataloguing their contents and exhorting their keepers to safeguard their written treasures. "I have already seen almost 200 private libraries, some just a humble stack of pages, others quite fantastic assemblies of learning. I think I have about 100 more to go before I have seen them all. And before then I would not be surprised to find another rare manuscript comparable with that of Ibn Rushd."

The Averroës work is called *Al-Daruri fi Sina'at al-Nahw*, or *What Is Necessary in the Making of Grammar*, and was part of the family library of the young businessman Baba Ould Haroune Cheikh Sidiyya. "I am a librarian by accident," he says modestly, but he is certainly more than that. The library was established by his ancestor Cheikh Sidiyya al-Kabir (1774–1868) and added to by subsequent family savants, book collectors and writers. Stewart has called this library "a culmination of the known and studied Islamic sciences in West Africa on the eve of European penetration."

After the death of his father, Haroune, in 1978, Ould Haroune immersed himself in manuscript conservation work, assisting in Stewart's cataloging of the library, helping the government establish a policy on the protection of the nation's cultural heritage, editing and publishing the critical edition of the Averroës manuscript and now editing his father's own work, a multivolume historical encyclopedia of Mauritania.


"Whenever I travel in other Arab countries," he says, "I just have to say one word—Mauritania—and everyone wants to talk to me about our manuscripts. The mere subject opens up for me so many intellectual doors in foreign capitals. The manuscripts are truly our country's calling cards."

The great Egyptian man of letters Taha Hussein was not the only Arab from the East to recognize Mauritanians' special affinity for collecting manuscripts. In his autobiography *Al-Ayyam*, translated as *Stream of Days*, he remembers a well-known Mauritanian scholar at al-Azhar, the great Cairo university, Muhammad Mahmoud Ould T'lamid of

Opposite, top: **Grade-schoolers browse in old manuscripts in the Al Ahmad Mahmoud Library in Chinguetti.** Here and at private libraries **elsewhere in Mauritania, conservation work is under way with the help of individuals like Ahmad Ould Mohamed Yahya, director of manuscripts at the Institut Mauritanien de Recherche Scientifique** (lower). Above: **Mohammad Said Ould Al Hamody, former ambassador to the United States, relaxes in his library in Nouakchott.** Previous spread, left: **Saif Al Islam shows UNESCO-donated laser prints of manuscript pages to a visitor to the Al Ahmad Mahmoud Library. "If words are not handed down," he says, "sometimes the meaning is lost, never to be found again."** Right: **Twelve-year-old Cheikh Ould Salek contemplates Wadan, a caravan town known for its scholars and its libraries.**

Chinguetti, a town in Mauritania's northern Adrar region.

"The older students mentioned a certain Shaykh al-Shinquity," he wrote, "as a friend and protégé of the imam. This outlandish name made an odd impression on the boy, and odder still were the eccentric ways and unconventional ideas which made this shaykh a laughingstock to some and a bugbear to others.... They nicknamed him "the passionate Moroccan" and told of the wealth of manuscripts he possessed, together with printed books not only from Egypt but from Europe, despite which he spent most of his time reading or copying in the National Library."

Ould T'lamid was also a friend of Ould Haroune's grandfather, Cheikh Sidiyya Baba, and the Boutilimit library contains correspondence between the two, including requests to write commentaries on each other's books. It is still a sore point for many Mauritanians that after Ould T'lamid's death, his personal library was absorbed into Egypt's National Library rather than returned to his homeland.

To browse through the 7000-item IMRS collection is to catch but a glimpse of the country's entire archive, thought to number near 40,000 manuscripts, about three quarters of them written or recopied locally and the remainder brought from Fez, Tunis, Cairo and beyond. The oldest work is a 10th-century copy of al-Mas'udi's world history *Muruj al-Dahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar (Meadows of Gold and Treasures of Jewels)*, written on gazelle skin. There are such basic texts as the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, a standard collection of *hadith* (the authenticated practices and statements of the Prophet), copied and dated in the year 1872 by Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Sirfin, and a copy of the great pre-Islamic poets' works produced in the 18th century by Asnid Ould Muhammad Najim in a fine Mauritanian script.

Unlike North and West Africa, home of such great "library cities" as Tunis, Fez and Timbuktu, Mauritania never had large sedentary population centers. Its four historical caravan towns, Chinguetti, Wadan, Walata and Tichitt, all now UNESCO-designated World Heritage Sites, are and probably always were somewhat removed from the hustle and bustle of great urban intellectual enterprise. Nonetheless, they are all old towns, and their people are proud of their libraries. Wadan even claims that its name comes from the dual form of the word *wadi*, meaning that it was a town of two valleys—a literal valley of palm trees and a figurative valley of scholars. Tichitt has a new manuscript conservation center which, when its staff is fully trained, will work with an 18-person association of private library keepers in nearby Tidjikja. In Walata, a team of Spanish urban preservationists has just completed a UNESCO assignment to repair the town and stabilize its economic base.

Chinguetti holds the country's greatest claim to fame. In fact, for many centuries, all of Mauritania was known in the Arab East as *bilad shinqit*, "the land of Chinguetti," although the term did not appear in any of the great medieval Arab geographies. Mauritania's most famous modern writer, Ahmad ibn al-Amin al-Shinqiti (1863–1913), in his geographical and literary compendium *Al-Wasit*, wrote lovingly of his hometown's special charm.

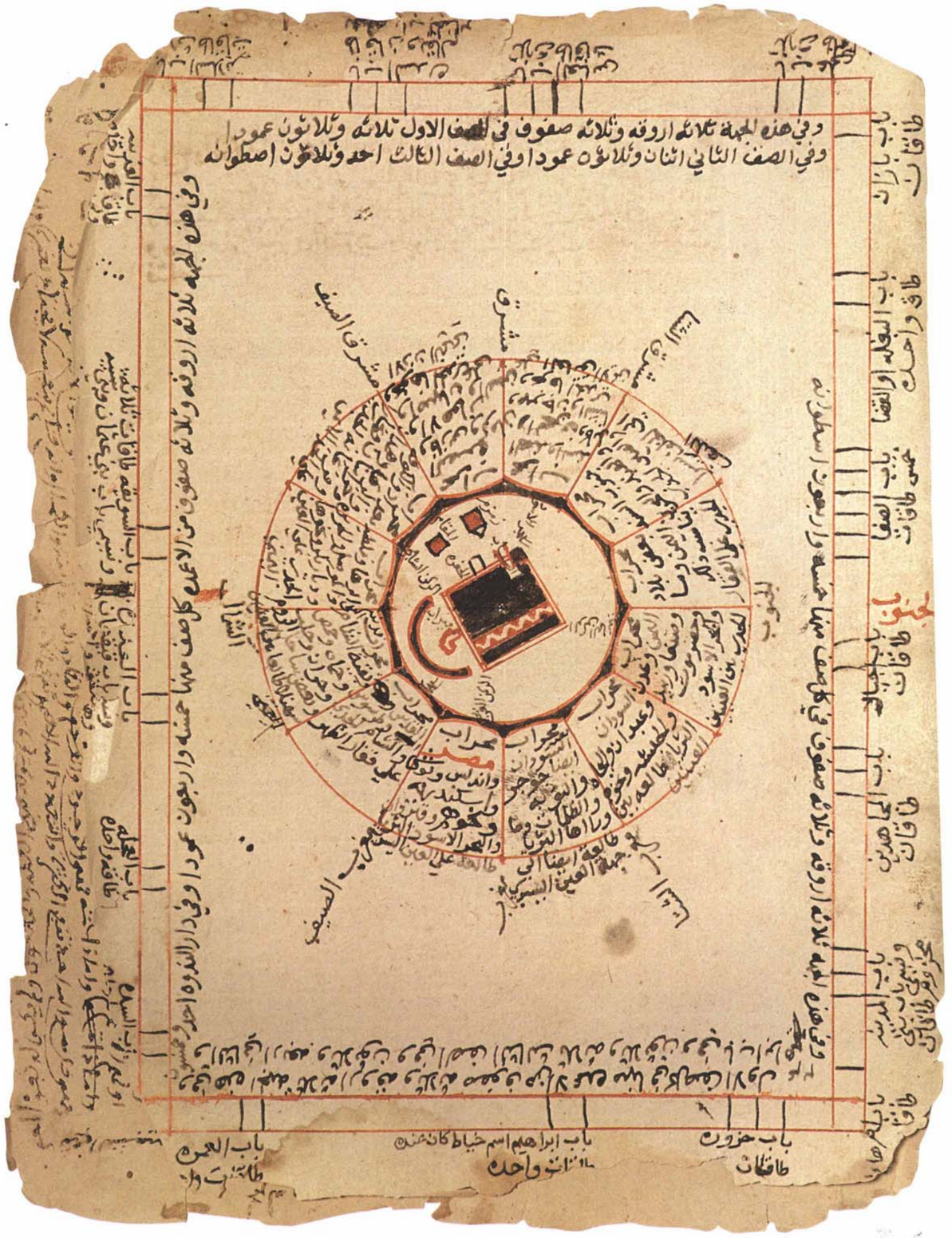
Today the town is something of a showcase for private library conservation, and the French especially have lavished much attention on its first steps forward in this regard. Four family libraries there—the Al Habot, the Al Ahmad Mahmoud, the Al Hamoni, and the Ould Ahmad Sherif—are all quite well organized, catalogued and open for both scholarly and tourist visits. In fact, much of the town's income today comes from such visits.

The Al Habot library is the best known and most thoroughly catalogued. Established in the 18th century by Sidi Muhammad Ould Habot (1784–1869), a descendant

Top: **The library of Mohammad Ould Mala Dade in Tichitt is now run by his descendant, Mohammad Ould Dade. According to Mauritanian bibliophiles, "Anyone who knows anything about manuscripts knows of Dade." Says the librarian, "I welcome all children, from age five. At that age they're old enough to appreciate books, even if they can't read them."** Lower: **This page of Mauritanian poetry from a library in Mata Moulinee, copied in rounded Mauritanian *legrayda* calligraphy, touches on aspects of the life of the Prophet Muhammad.** Opposite: **Sidi Ould Mohammed Ould Ahmad Sageeyir looks up from work in his library in Tichitt.**



THE TRADITIONS OF SCHOLARSHIP IN MAURITANIA DURING THE PAST THREE CENTURIES ARE PROBABLY THE RICHEST IN WEST AFRICA.



of Islam's first caliph, Abu Bakr, it grew through wholesale acquisitions of libraries elsewhere in North Africa as well as by copying locally available books. Now holding some 2000 manuscripts, the collection spans the period from the year 1088, with the only known complete copy of Granadan author Abu Hilal al-Askari's *Tashih al-Wujuh wa al-Naza'ir (The Correction of Appearances and Views)*, to the year 1980, with a more humble manuscript written in ballpoint pen on lined paper: *Taqrir Hawla al-Maktaba Al Habot*, a history of the library by the current keeper's great-uncle.

The library of Ould Ahmad Sherif is a more humble affair, guarded by the aged notary public Muhammad Judu', who unlocks its creaky door in a mud-plastered backalley courtyard with a toothbrush-shaped wooden key. Ceiling panels of plaited palm fronds permit only a shadowy half-light to enter the room, whose shelves contain cardboard conservation boxes, numbered into the 600's, in which the manuscripts are held. The library's core holdings were acquired in the 14th century in Tunis during a buying trip by the library's founder, Ahmad Sherif. One work on gazelle skin, the *Sharh Mouta' Malik (Explanation of a Royal Footstep)* by Abd al-Baqi al-Zirqani, is thought to be in the author's own hand, making it a particular rarity.

The Al Ahmad Mahmoud library is kept by an energetic teacher named Saif al-Islam, who maintains a public reading room of modern books and magazines (including a few back issues of *Saudi Aramco World*) for Chinguetti's youngsters next to the historical collection, which contains some 400 manuscripts and 1400 documents related to local family history. Saif al-Islam has a keen curiosity about how and why the written word travels so easily. "Our library has a Hebrew prayer book, and I was told that the Kremlin's library has a manuscript from here," he says. "How both got to their respective shelves I can only wonder."

Despite the intellectual capital of these town libraries, Mauritania's scholarly strength has always been at the grassroots—"en brousse," as they say in French—in the itinerant schools and rural lectures known as *mahadhra*s, organized by charismatic teachers and scholars always on the move. Ahmad Ould Mohamed of the IMRS received his baccalaureate degree on the strength of a *mahadhra*-based education alone, and with it he entered directly into law school. "I was the best prepared in my class," he says.

One cannot overemphasize how important *mahadhra*s once were to the education of Mauritania's scholarly elite—and to the dissemination of books. "*Mahadhra* professors were both printing presses and teachers," says Ould Mohamed. "They had their students recopy manuscripts as assignments, and since their students were not just the young, but sometimes already well-educated adults who thirsted for higher learning, these copies contained marginal notes and commentaries of importance to our local intellectual history."

The future of *mahadhra*s is very much uncertain, however. A national conference was recently held that extolled

Opposite: **A geographical work in a Wadan library describes Makkah in the seventh century; this page shows a diagram of the Ka'bah.** Above, top left: **Marginal notes, made either by the copyist of the manuscript or by a reader, are a traditional way to help readers understand points in a manuscript, or to take issue with them.** Above, upper and lower right: **No matter how beautiful, manuscripts remain vulnerable to the wear and tear of use, to the elements and to insects.** Above, lower left: **Illuminated manuscripts, penned on media from the roughest parchment to the smoothest gazelle skin, dazzle the eye and engage the mind.**

TO BROWSE THROUGH THE 7000-ITEM IMRS COLLECTION IN NOUAKCHOTT IS TO CATCH BUT A GLIMPSE OF THE COUNTRY'S ENTIRE ARCHIVE.

Opposite, top: **French tourists arrive by the busload to view old manuscripts in the Al Habot Library in Chinguetti, which also boasts a reading room with contemporary publications.** Lower: **A youngster in Mata Moulinee presents his lesson on a writing board at a *mahadhra*, a traditional school where scholarship and book-copying flourished side by side.** This page: **The panorama of Tichitt, a desert town bounded by date palms in the foreground and an escarpment behind, is reflected in layers of manuscripts in the 400-year-old library of Cherif Moktar Ould Zeini within its precincts.**

ONE CANNOT OVEREMPHASIZE HOW IMPORTANT *MAHADHRA*S ONCE WERE TO THE EDUCATION OF MAURITANIA'S SCHOLARLY ELITE—AND TO THE DISSEMINATION OF BOOKS.

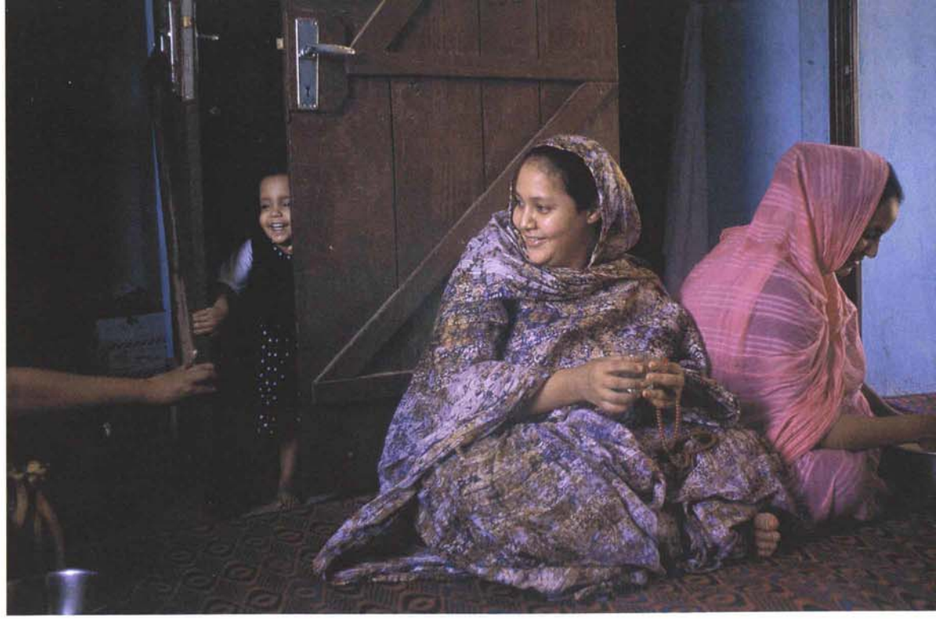
their legacy but worried about their long-term survival. Pessimists note how many have closed in recent years, but others believe that *mahadhra*s can "reclaim" frustrated dropouts from standard primary schooling, precisely because they provide one-to-one teaching of customized curricula, with students grouped together by interest and aptitude, not by age.

The example of former minister of justice Muhammad Salem Ould Abd al-Wedoud is frequently cited to show how the *mahadhra* system might be successfully modernized by providing esteemed professors and a reliable schedule. Ould Abd al-Wedoud teaches in several locations in the countryside and in Nouakchott, and his classes attract top Mauritanian candidates as well as students from elsewhere in North Africa, Pakistan and beyond. The American teacher Hamza Yusef, who recently advised the White House on American Muslim affairs, studied at a *mahadhra* such as this. His Zaytuna Institute of Islamic Studies in California is modeled at least partly on his experience in Mauritania.

Closely tied to *mahadhra* education is a literary genre that thrived in Mauritania over the last three centuries: the *nawazil*, or collection of legal cases presented in question-and-answer format, usually pertaining to the country's predominant Maliki school of law. Dedoud Ould Abdallah, a professor in the Faculté des Lettres at the University of Nouakchott, was recently in the IMRS library examining a rare copy of the *nawazil* of the 19th-century Mauritanian jurist Abdurrahman ibn Muhammad ibn Talb N'buya al-Walati, a native of Walata.

"I am looking for variations between this copy and another I have previously consulted," he said, "to help clear up a historical discrepancy. Copyists frequently made mistakes in the main text, but it is very instructive to have their own marginal notes as a guide."

Ould Abdallah notes that the poor physical condition of many manuscripts does not always reflect poor storage practices. "These manuscripts were read, handled and transported over the years by many students in the bush," he says. "That some were used to the point of near destruction is only natural, just as it is natural that the same students who read them should have recopied them time and time again."



Left: **Cheikh Sid' Ahd Ould Ahmed Al Bechir pauses before entering the library of the Al Bechir Foundation in Chinguetti.** Top: **Members of calligrapher Mohameden Ould Ahmad Salem's family in their home in Mata Moulinee, about a three-hour drive from Nouakchott, where he works.**

Mohameden Ould Ahmad Salem is a young self-taught calligrapher who recently published his university thesis on the history and development of Mauritanian scripts. "Many people think Mauritanian scripts are purely derivative of Maghribi styles," he says, "but this is not so. At a very early period, we adopted Andalusi calligraphy, which in Morocco developed into Maghribi, but we went our own way with it.

"Historians said that Andalusi script had long ago disappeared, but the more I looked at Mauritanian scripts, the more they looked like Andalusi. If you compare an Andalusi manuscript from the 12th century and a Mauritanian manuscript from the 19th century, they are so close in style that they could be by the same calligrapher."

The first manuscript known to have been written in Mauritania, according to Salem, is a collection of advice on how to apply the Almoravid law code, titled *Al-Ishara fi Tadbir al-Imara*, by Imam al-Hadrami, who died in 1097. It is now in the Abd al-Mu'min library in Tichitt, copied in fine Andalusi calligraphy. By comparison, he continues, the second-oldest local work is a book on jurisprudence by Sidi Muhammad ibn Ahmad Abu Bakr al-Wadani, who died in 1527. It is written in a uniquely Mauritanian style called *legrayda*, meaning "lobed," because of its rounded edges.

Of the four main scripts used in Mauritania, *legrayda* is closest to Andalusi, and the most common, as it was suited to fast, small and compact copying. "Paper was a rarity back then," Salem explains. "In the National Museum you can see the cannon recovered from a 16th-century Portuguese ship that went aground on our northern coast. We know

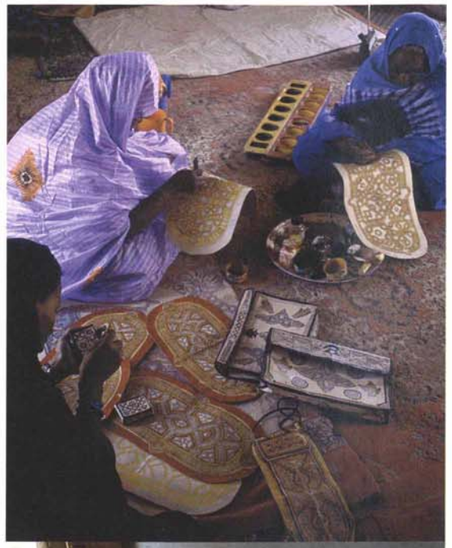
that same ship also carried a supply of writing paper from Ceuta [on Morocco's Mediterranean coast] that was salvaged by local scribes. The Mauritanian jurist Muhammad al-Yadali mentions it in one of his works."

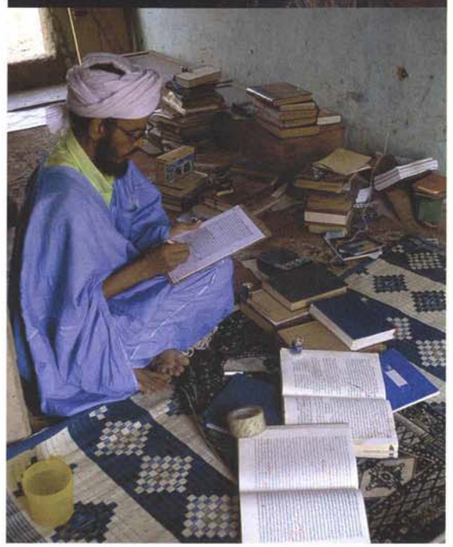
The other Mauritanian scripts are *mushafi*, an ornamental style for title pages, poetry and the Qur'an; *mashriqi*, similar to the *thuluth* style of the Arab East, with floating adornments and sometimes outlined letters filled in with gold; and *sudani*, a simple, bold student style, similar to *kufi* with its angular lines and wide-nibbed penstrokes.

Salem recently addressed the First International Conference on Mauritanian Manuscripts convened by the Project for the Protection and Development of Mauritanian Cultural Heritage, an undertaking financed by the World Bank and headed by Mohamed Haibetna Ould Sidi Haiba. The project aims to coordinate the efforts of international conservation agencies—including UNESCO, the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation established by Ahmad Zaki Yamani of Saudi Arabia, and the Bibliothèque Nationale of France—with the work that is spearheaded locally by IMRS, the University of Nouakchott and others.

Ould Sidi Haiba sets forth an ambitious plan to build manuscript conservation labs throughout the country. One major hurdle to clear remains the unwillingness of many keepers of family libraries to part with their manuscripts even for the short time it would take to fumigate them against termites and stabilize their damaged paper. Many individuals see their manuscripts as a multigenerational trust which should never leave the family's hands.

To illustrate this feeling, he tells the folktale of Sidi Abdullah Ould al-Haj Ibrahim, a pilgrim from Tidjikja who went to Makkah riding a full-blooded Arabian stallion that he had sworn he would never sell. In Cairo, however, he came upon a unique manuscript he could only obtain by trading his precious mount for it. When he returned home, his friends were amazed that he no longer had his horse. "Where is it?" they asked. "My stallion has been turned into a book," he answered—and that was explanation enough in Tidjikja.





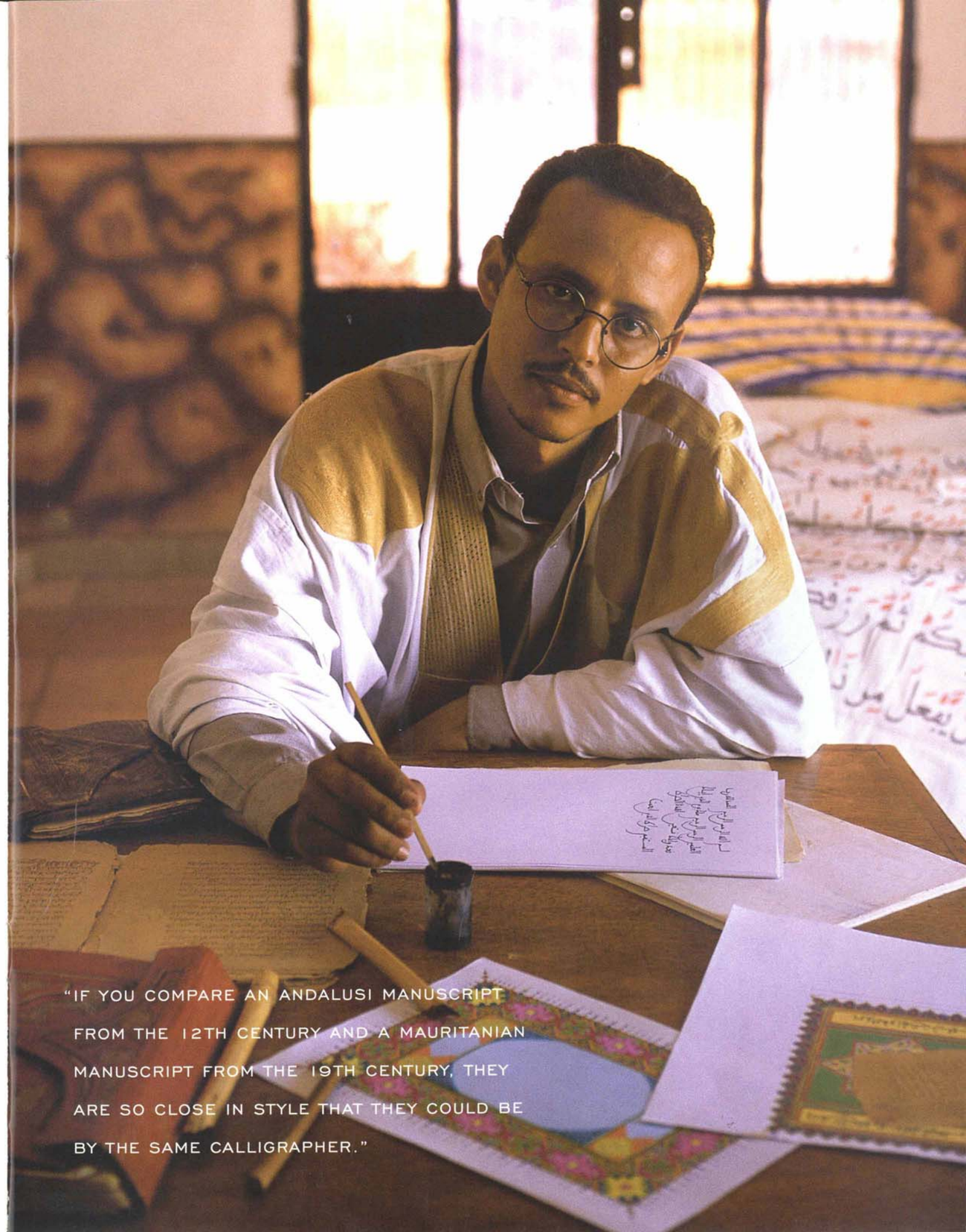
Even though controlled central storage may be essential when the holding conditions in home libraries are inadequate, many individual owners prefer to risk their manuscripts' continued deterioration rather than hand them over to others. Forming local associations of private library keepers who agree to pool their collections, and thus create a critical mass of historical value, is another aim of the project. With reason, Ould Sidi Haiba fears that when the day comes that Mauritania's manuscripts have deteriorated so far that they can no longer be read, recopied or even catalogued, they will become the latest addition to his country's "literature of memory"—folktales, tribal poetry, and genealogies—as examples of what his project calls "intangible" cultural heritage.

One of the country's most famous literary works is the *Rihla*, or *Travels*, of the marvelously named Ahmad Ould T'wayr al-Janna, Son of the Little Bird of Paradise. Between 1829 and 1834, he traveled from his hometown of Wadan to Makkah and back. With most of his adventures behind him, and after having been comically mistaken for the king of Mauritania by the British governor-general of Gibraltar, Ould T'wayr al-Janna arrived in Marrakech as the guest of the sultan. His experience there underscores just how deeply all Mauritanians treasure the written word.

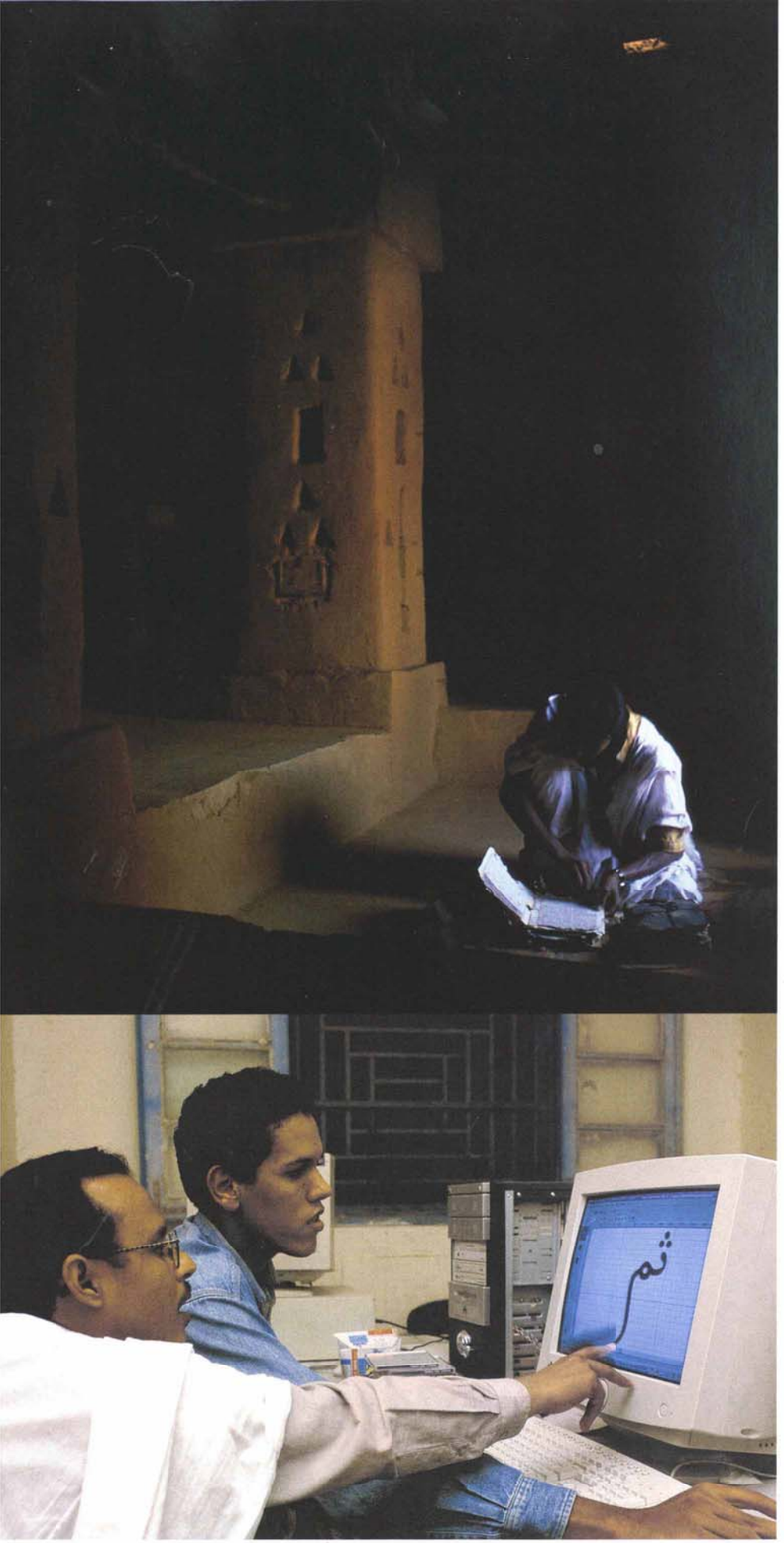
"He gave much money so that I could buy books in Fez," wrote Ould T'wayr al-Janna. "We returned to Fez and there, God be praised, we bought with that money all the heart could desire. My son told Sultan Moulay Abd al-Rahman of the

Top: **Women in Tichitt paint colorful designs on book covers and satchels they have crafted from leather.** Lower: **Mohameden Ould Abd Samed is now the sole book copier in Mata Moulinee, where he operates a grocery store. He and his late father copied hundreds of books.** Opposite: **Mohameden Ould Ahmad Salem, a Nouakchott University graduate, taught himself calligraphy and is a specialist in Mauritania's indigenous calligraphic styles.**





"IF YOU COMPARE AN ANDALUSI MANUSCRIPT FROM THE 12TH CENTURY AND A MAURITANIAN MANUSCRIPT FROM THE 19TH CENTURY, THEY ARE SO CLOSE IN STYLE THAT THEY COULD BE BY THE SAME CALLIGRAPHER."



Left: In a well-lit corner, Ahmad Mohammad Saleh reads a book penned on fine gazelle skin in the library of Ould Ahmad Sherif in Chinguetti. Lower: Designer Mohammad Hassan, right, and calligrapher Mohameden Ould Ahmad Salem team up to produce the first Mauritanian *legrayda* computer font, linking old and new skills to preserve and add to the literary wealth of the country.

quantity of books I had bought. He was amazed at that, and he said to him, 'God has granted you a miracle, something quite out of the ordinary.'"

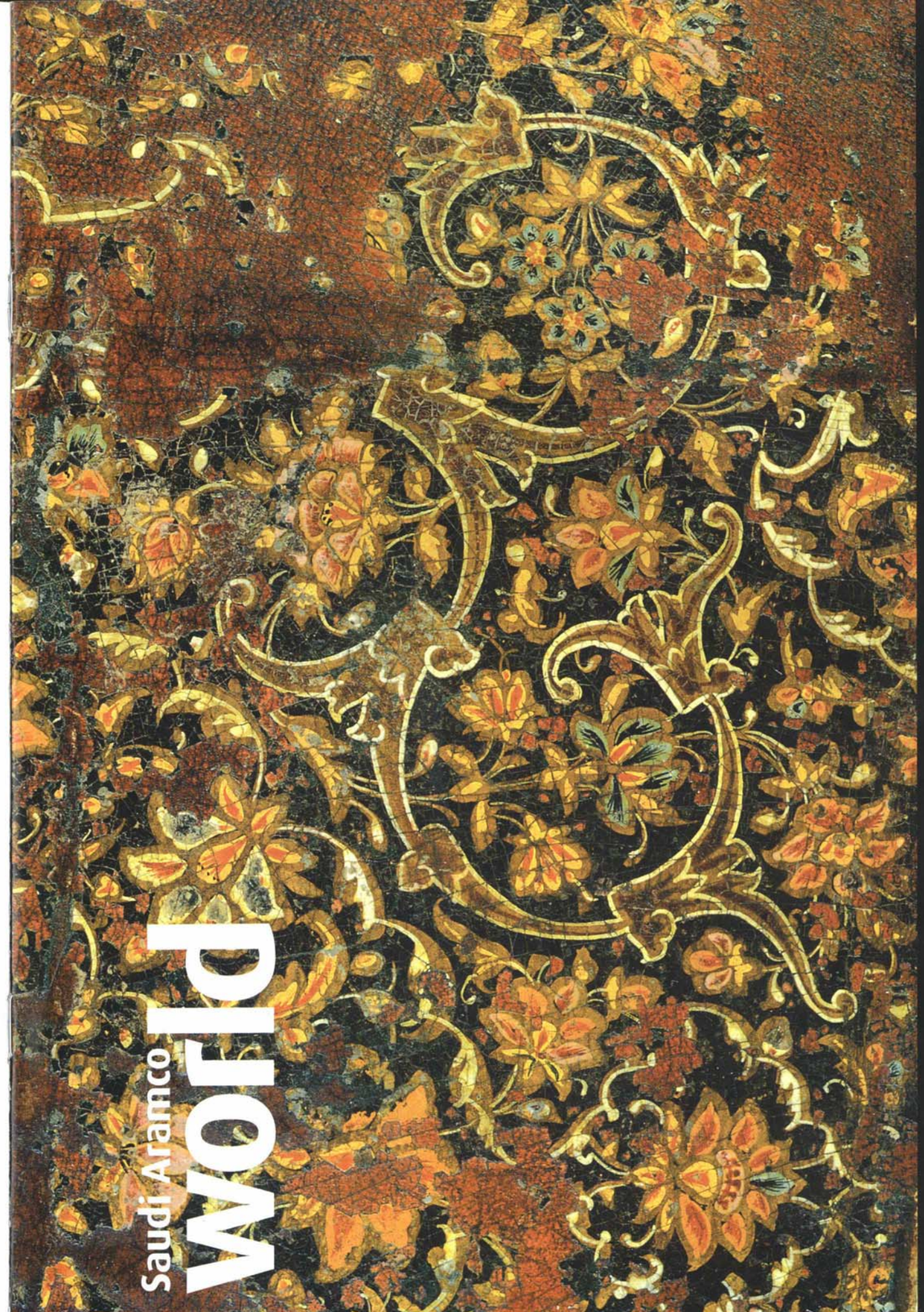
But when the report came back that some scholars of Fez, grumbling that a Mauritanian was buying the best on the market, refused to sell Ould T'wayr al-Janna more manuscripts, the sultan himself intervened, making sure "we could buy what our hearts desired." A caravan of 30 camels was hired to take his acquisitions back to Wadan. "By God," he concluded, "there have been seen on the trip many kinds of hopes and goals wished for and sought after, and many boons and favors granted."

Mauritania's Arabic manuscripts are the legacy of such visionary collectors as Ahmad, Son of the Little Bird of Paradise, and Taha Hussein's Shaykh al-Shinquity. It is not easy to fill their shoes, but their countrymen today—men like Baba Ould Haroune from Boutilimit and Ahmad Ould Mohamed of the IMRS—are doing what they can to ensure that Mauritanian readers of tomorrow will always have original sources to consult and original works from which to learn their national history.


**Louis Werner** (wernerworks@msn.com) is a writer and filmmaker living in New York.

**Lorraine Chittock** (cats@camels.com) is a free-lance photographer and writer who is working on a book about her walking adventures in Africa.



Saudi Aramco **WORLD**

Patterns 2004

Gregorian and Hijri Calendars

# Pattern in Islamic Arts

BY JOHN SABINI

Abstracted, symmetrical, two-dimensional, repetitive and infinitely extendable, patterns are integral to all of the arts influenced by Islam. When natural forms are used, they are stylized to be virtual abstractions. The *arabesque*, for example, is based on vegetal forms, but it has a logic of its own that does not seek to reproduce the logic of growing things. Pure *geometry* is a strong element of design, often mixing the curvilinear with the rectilinear. Another important element is *calligraphy*—Arabic writing. *Color* is also important, although it is rarely used realistically. In the art of patterns, illusion is not an aim: Stone or wood, paint or ceramic is not intended to represent actual bodies or leaves or animal forms; rather, it suggests an ideal or an underlying principle.

Islamic art is essentially the projection into the visual order of a human interpretation of Divine Unity

All this can make it difficult for a westerner to understand and appreciate Islamic art. Until the advent of modernism, the artistic values of the West leaned toward the illusion of three-dimensional space, the direct copying of nature, the historical, mythical or religious anecdote and, above all, the human form and face, subject of many of the West's greatest works of art. In the absence of those touchstones, the westerner tends to equate Islamic art with mere decoration and thus place it on a par with the minor or "applied" arts of the West. But this attitude betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of Islamic art, which has its own hierarchy of values in which calligraphy comes first, because of its holy association with the Word of God, and the human form comes last, because of religious strictures.

Actually, the limitations of Islamic arts are strengths. Freed from the necessity of representing nature, the Muslim artist is able to devote himself with passionate intensity to the development of the two-dimensional and the abstract. As Swiss Muslim convert Titus Burckhardt put it in *Art of Islam*, the absence of images creates "the quite silent exteriorization, as it were, of a contemplative state." And the proliferation of decoration, he continues, "does not contradict this quality of contemplative emptiness; on the contrary, ornamentation with abstract forms enhances it through its unbroken rhythm and its endless interweaving."

The limitations, moreover, were deliberate. As Islam expanded, it absorbed or touched numerous cultures with quite different and sometimes sophisticated artistic traditions. And although some of those alien influences were absorbed, others—such as the portrayal of the human form, sculpture in the round and mural painting—were rejected. All the new influences were soon assimilated in an "Islamic style."

There were reasons for this: the unifying influence of Islam itself and the spread of the Arabic language, as well as the unprecedented, transcontinental mobility within the Islamic world that ensured the spread of ideas, techniques and motifs.

There were also artistic and technical reasons for the unity of style. The artists were largely anonymous, not intent on creating original masterpieces but products of high quality within a continuing tradition. There were no distinctions between crafts and fine arts, between sacred and secular arts. Styles and techniques were freely transferred from the mosque to the palace and even to the public baths. They were also readily transferred from one medium to another, so that a pattern originating in the weaving of textiles was frequently translated into wood, metal or stone. Moreover, the artistic tradition was so strong that non-Muslim artists—Eastern Christians, Armenians, Jews—were often content to work within it.

Above all, there was the spirit of Islam itself: the emphasis on the Oneness of God, the congruence of knowledge and the ultimate unity of humanity. As Burckhardt says, Islamic art is essentially the projection into the visual order of a human interpretation of Divine Unity, one that is expressed by the harmonious patterns of calligraphy, geometry, arabesque, color and rhythm.

—adapted from "The World of Islam: Its Arts" by John Sabini, *Aramco World*, May/June 1976.

## Converting Dates

The following equations convert roughly from Gregorian to *hijri* and vice versa. However, the results can be slightly misleading: They tell you only the year that *began* during the year you are converting. For example, 2003 Gregorian spans both 1423 and 1424 *hijri*, but the equation tells you that 2003 "equals" 1424, when in fact 1424 merely began during 2003. The equation does not tell you precisely when.

**Gregorian year** = [(32 x *hijri* year) ÷ 33] + 623

***hijri* year** = [(Gregorian year – 623) x 33] ÷ 32

Alternatively, there are more precise calculators available on the Internet: **www.rabiah.com/convert/** and **www.ori.unizh.ch/hegira.html** are two.

# Patterns of Moon, Patterns of Sun

*It is he who made the sun to be a shining glory, and the moon to be a light (of beauty), and measured out stages for her, that ye might know the number of years and the count (of time).*

—The Qur'an, Chapter 10 Verse 5 ("Yunis")

BY PAUL LUNDE

### The *hijri* calendar

In AD 638, six years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Islam's second caliph 'Umar recognized the necessity of a calendar to govern the affairs of the Muslims. This was first of all a practical matter. Correspondence with military and civilian officials in the newly conquered lands had to be dated. But Persia used a different calendar from Syria, where the caliphate was based; Egypt used yet another. Each of these calendars had a different starting point, or epoch. The Sasanids, the ruling dynasty of Persia, used June 16, AD 632, the date of the accession of the last Sasanid monarch, Yazdagird III. Syria, which until the Muslim conquest was part of the Byzantine Empire, used a form of the Roman "Julian" calendar, with an epoch of October 1, 312 BC. Egypt used the Coptic calendar, with an epoch of August 29, AD 284. Although all were solar, and hence geared to the seasons and containing 365 days, each also had a different system for periodically adding days to compensate for the fact that the true length of the solar year is not 365 but 365.2422 days.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, various other systems of measuring time had been used. In South Arabia, some calendars apparently were lunar, while others were lunisolar, using months based on the phases of the moon but intercalating days outside the lunar cycle to synchronize the calendar with the seasons. On the eve of Islam, the Himyarites appear to have used a calendar based on the Julian form, but with an epoch of 110 BC. In central Arabia, the course of the year was charted by the position of the stars relative to the horizon at sunset or sunrise, dividing the ecliptic into 28 equal parts corresponding to the location of the moon on each successive night of the month. The names of the months in that calendar have continued in the Islamic calendar to this day and would seem to indicate that, before Islam, some sort of lunisolar calendar was in use, though it is not known to have had an epoch other than memorable local events.

There were two other reasons 'Umar rejected existing solar calendars. The Qur'an, in Chapter 10 Verse 5, states that time should be reckoned by the moon. Not only that, calendars used by the Persians, Syrians and Egyptians were identified with other religions and cultures. He therefore decided to create a calendar specifically for the Muslim community. It would be lunar, and it would have 12 months, each with 29 or 30 days.

Though they share 12 lunar cycles—months—per solar year, the *hijri* calendar uses actual moon phases to mark them, whereas the Gregorian calendar adjusts its nearly-lunar months to synchronize with the sun.

This gives the lunar year 354 days, 11 days fewer than the solar year. 'Umar chose as the epoch for the new Muslim calendar the *hijrah*, the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad and 70 Muslims from Makkah to Madinah, where Muslims first attained religious and political autonomy. The *hijrah* thus occurred on 1 Muharram 1 according to the Islamic calendar, which was named "*hijri*" after its epoch. (This date corresponds to July 16, AD 622 on the Gregorian calendar.) Today in the West, it is customary, when writing *hijri* dates, to use the abbreviation AH, which stands for the Latin *anno hegirae*, "year of the *hijrah*."

Because the Islamic lunar calendar is 11 days shorter than the solar, it is therefore not synchronized to the seasons. Its festivals, which fall on the same days of the same lunar months each year, make the round of the seasons every 33 solar years. This 11-day difference between the lunar and the solar year accounts for the difficulty of converting dates from one system to the other.

### The Gregorian calendar

The early calendar of the Roman Empire was lunisolar, containing 355 days divided into 12 months beginning on January 1. To keep it more or less in accord with the actual solar year, a month was added every two years. The system for doing so was complex, and cumulative errors gradually misaligned it with the seasons. By 46 BC, it was some three months out of alignment, and Julius Caesar oversaw its reform. Consulting Greek astronomers in Alexandria, he created a solar calendar in which one day was added to February every fourth year, effectively compensating for the solar year's length of 365.2422 days. This Julian calendar was used throughout Europe until AD 1582.

In the Middle Ages, the Christian liturgical calendar was grafted onto the Julian one, and the computation of lunar festivals like Easter, which falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, exercised some of the best minds in Christendom. The use of the epoch AD 1 dates from the sixth century, but did not become common until the 10th. Because the zero had not yet reached the West from Islamic lands, a year was lost between 1 BC and AD 1.

The Julian year was nonetheless 11 minutes and 14 seconds too long. By the early 16th century, due to the accumulated error, the spring equinox was falling on March 11 rather than where it should, on March 21. Copernicus, Christophorus Clavius and the physician Aloysius Lilius provided the calculations, and in 1582 Pope Gregory XIII ordered that Thursday, October 4, 1582 would be followed by Friday, October 15, 1582. Most Catholic countries accepted the new "Gregorian" calendar, but it was not adopted in England and the Americas until the 18th century. Its use is now almost universal worldwide. The Gregorian year is nonetheless 25.96 seconds ahead of the solar year, which by the year 4909 will add up to an extra day.

Historian **Paul Lunde** (paullunde@hotmail.com) specializes in Islamic history and literature. His most recent book is *Islam: Culture, Faith and History* (2001, Dorling Kindersley).

Saudi Aramco **world** 2004

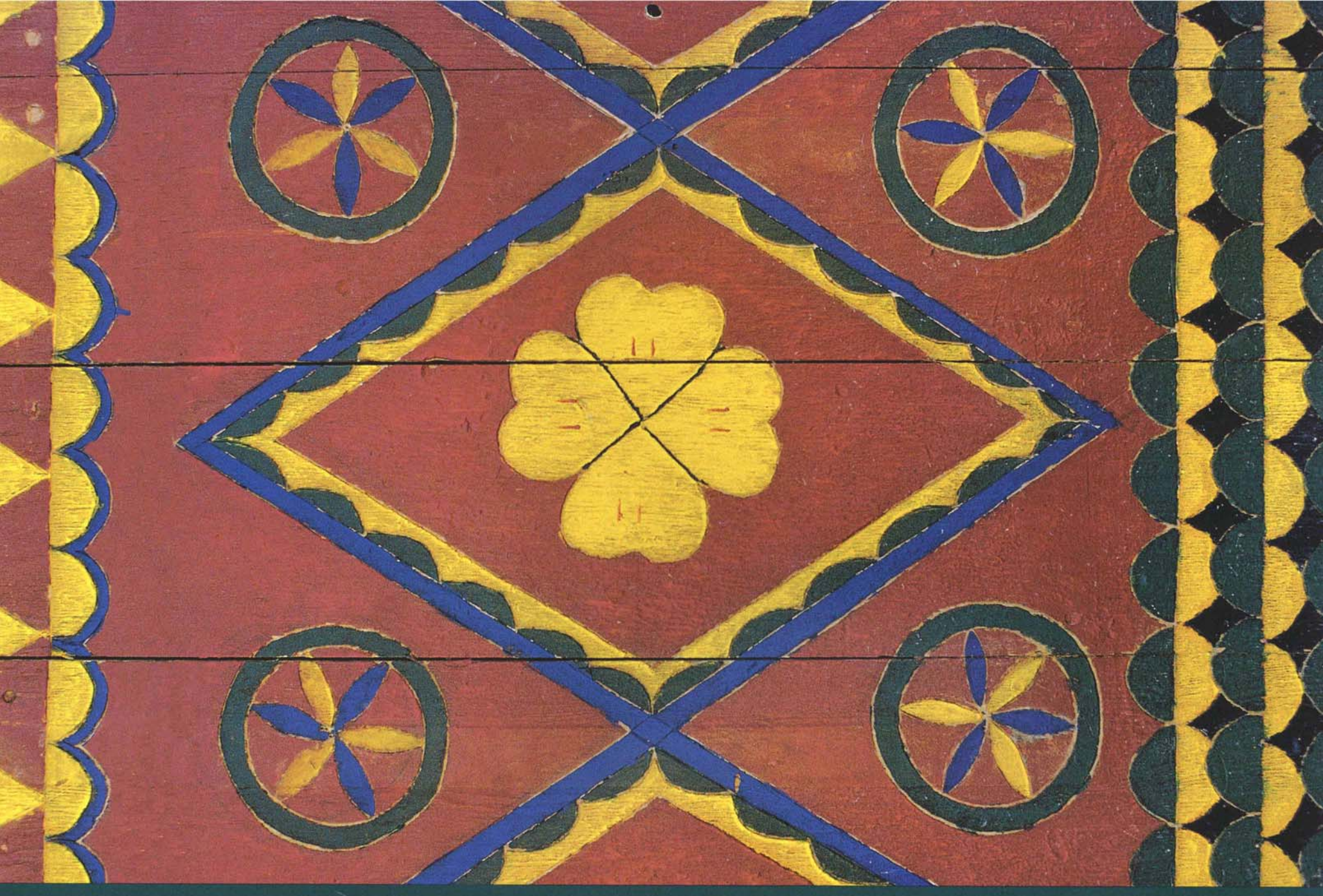
Sunlight regilds a 17th-century Ottoman copy of the Qur'an, one of the treasures of the Khalidi Library in Jerusalem. In copying the Qur'an, calligraphers reached the zenith of their sacred art by setting visually rhythmic *nashkh* Arabic script within the most elegant geometric and floral designs the artists could achieve, often employing the celestial colors, gold, white and blue. The result is a visual metaphor for the infinite creation within which God revealed the Qur'an. Photo by Dick Doughty.

## JANUARY
DHU AL-QA'DAH 1424

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | **1** 9 | **2** 10 |
| **3** 11 | **4** 12 | **5** 13 | **6** 14 | **7** 15 | **8** 16 | **9** 17 |
| **10** 18 | **11** 19 | **12** 20 | **13** 21 | **14** 22 | **15** 23 | **16** 24 |
| **17** 25 | **18** 26 | **19** 27 | **20** 28 | **21** 29 | **22** | **23** |
| **24** | **25** | **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** |
| **31** | | | | | | |

## FEBRUARY
DHU AL-HIJJAH 1424

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | **1** 11 | **2** 12 | **3** 13 | **4** 14 | **5** 15 | **6** 16 |
| 'Id al-Adha | | | | | | |
| **7** 17 | **8** 18 | **9** 19 | **10** 20 | **11** 21 | **12** 22 | **13** 23 |
| **14** 24 | **15** 25 | **16** 26 | **17** 27 | **18** 28 | **19** 29 | **20** 30 |
| **21** | **22** | **23** | **24** | **25** | **26** | **27** |
| **28** | **29** | | | | | |



Saudi Aramco **world** 2004

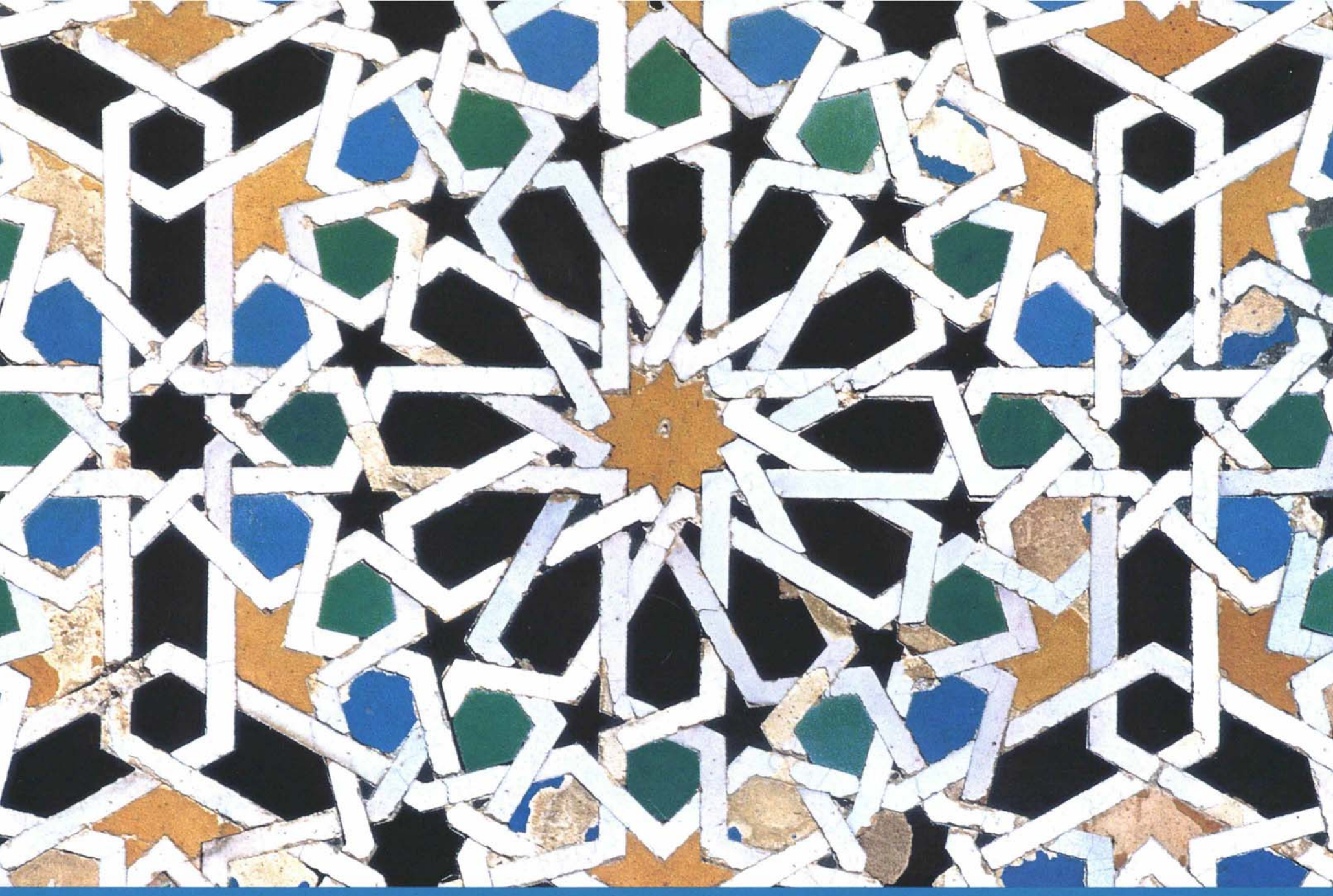
This detail of a door painted in the style of the central Saudi Arabian region of Najd is in the partially restored old city of Diri'yah, on the outskirts of modern Riyadh. Diri'yah was the capital of the first Saudi state from 1745 to 1818. Up until the mid-20th century, doors throughout Saudi Arabia were often decorated in regionally distinctive styles using carving, burning, painting and, in some areas, metalworking and calligraphy. Photo by Dick Doughty.

## MARCH
MUHARRAM 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | **1** 10 | **2** 11 | **3** 12 | **4** 13 | **5** 14 |
| **6** 15 | **7** 16 | **8** 17 | **9** 18 | **10** 19 | **11** 20 | **12** 21 |
| **13** 22 | **14** 23 | **15** 24 | **16** 25 | **17** 26 | **18** 27 | **19** 28 |
| **20** 29 | **21** | **22** | **23** | **24** | **25** | **26** |
| **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** | **31** | | |

## APRIL
SAFAR 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | **1** 12 | **2** 13 |
| **3** 14 | **4** 15 | **5** 16 | **6** 17 | **7** 18 | **8** 19 | **9** 20 |
| **10** 21 | **11** 22 | **12** 23 | **13** 24 | **14** 25 | **15** 26 | **16** 27 |
| | Easter | | | | | |
| **17** 28 | **18** 29 | **19** 30 | **20** | **21** | **22** | **23** |
| **24** | **25** | **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** |



Saudi Aramco **world** 2004

This masterpiece *zillij* pattern on a wall at the 14th-century Attarine Madrasa in Fez radiates from 12-pointed stars to fill black-rimmed hexagons, interwoven with strapwork that creates an illusion of three dimensions and references, in ceramic tile, the intertwining of calligraphic and carved arabesques. Photo by Peter Sanders.

## MAY
RABI' AL-AWWAL 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| **1** 12 | **2** 13 | **3** 14 | **4** 15 | **5** 16 | **6** 17 | **7** 18 |
| **8** 19 | **9** 20 | **10** 21 | **11** 22 | **12** 23 | **13** 24 | **14** 25 |
| **15** 26 | **16** 27 | **17** 28 | **18** 29 | **19** 30 | **20** | **21** |
| **22** | **23** | **24** | **25** | **26** | **27** | **28** |
| **29** | **30** | **31** | | | | |

## JUNE
RABI' AL-THANI 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | **1** 13 | **2** 14 | **3** 15 | **4** 16 |
| **5** 17 | **6** 18 | **7** 19 | **8** 20 | **9** 21 | **10** 22 | **11** 23 |
| **12** 24 | **13** 25 | **14** 26 | **15** 27 | **16** 28 | **17** 29 | **18** |
| **19** | **20** | **21** | **22** | **23** | **24** | **25** |
| **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** | | |

Saudi Aramco **world** 2004

Islam came to lands east of the Oxus River in the early eighth century, and with the flourishing of Silk Roads trade it spread throughout what is today Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This 18th-century leather binding of a Qur'an was designed by Gabdur-Rasul in 1836, and is in the National Library of Kazakhstan. It shows a floral arabesque whose bold curves, intricacy and fine detail speak of influences from Turkic, Persian, Mughal and Chinese artistic traditions. Photo by Wayne Eastep.

## JULY
JUMADA AL-ULA 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | **1** 14 | **2** 15 |
| **3** 16 | **4** 17 | **5** 18 | **6** 19 | **7** 20 | **8** 21 | **9** 22 |
| **10** 23 | **11** 24 | **12** 25 | **13** 26 | **14** 27 | **15** 28 | **16** 29 |
| **17** 30 | **18** | **19** | **20** | **21** | **22** | **23** |
| **24** | **25** | **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** |
| **31** | | | | | | |

## AUGUST
JUMADA AL-AKHIRAH 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | **1** 15 | **2** 16 | **3** 17 | **4** 18 | **5** 19 | **6** 20 |
| **7** 21 | **8** 22 | **9** 23 | **10** 24 | **11** 25 | **12** 26 | **13** 27 |
| **14** 28 | **15** 29 | **16** 30 | **17** | **18** | **19** | **20** |
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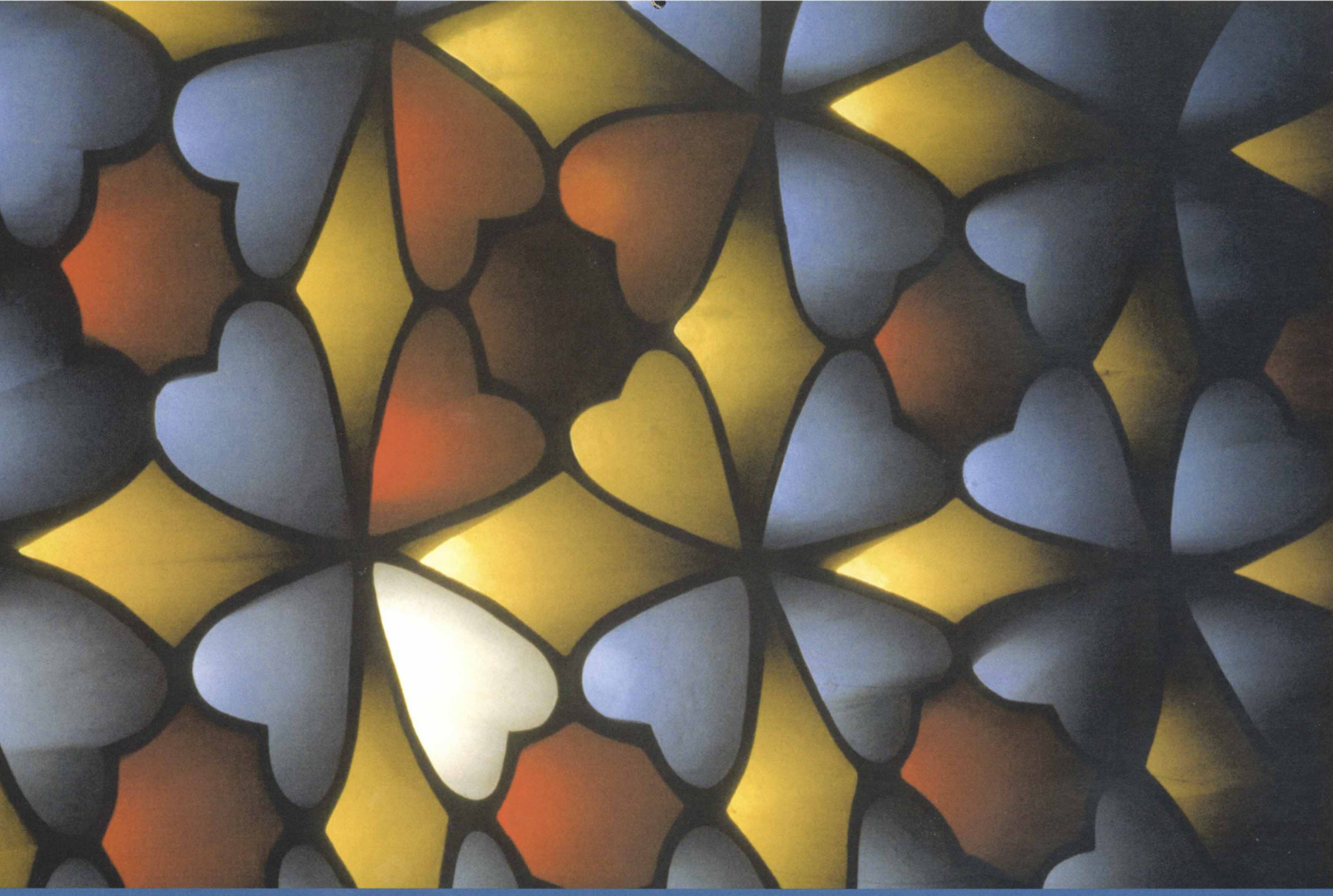
| **28** | **29** | **30** | **31** | | | |



Saudi Aramco **world** 2004

Colored glass filters through a skylight above one of the extensive *hammams* (baths) built in Cairo's citadel during the 19th-century rule of Muhammad Ali. Founded by Saladin in the late 12th century and altered and expanded by nearly every Egyptian ruler since, the city's great fortress-on-a-hill is now a maze of mosques, palaces and defenseworks. Photo by John Feeney.

## SEPTEMBER
RAJAB 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | **1** 16 | **2** 17 | **3** 18 |
| **4** 19 | **5** 20 | **6** 21 | **7** 22 | **8** 23 | **9** 24 | **10** 25 |
| **11** 26 | **12** 27 | **13** 28 | **14** 29 | **15** | **16** | **17** |
| **18** | **19** | **20** | **21** | **22** | **23** | **24** |
| **25** | **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** | |

## OCTOBER
SHA'BAN 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | **1** 17 |
| **2** 18 | **3** 19 | **4** 20 | **5** 21 | **6** 22 | **7** 23 | **8** 24 |
| **9** 25 | **10** 26 | **11** 27 | **12** 28 | **13** 29 | **14** 30 | **15** |
| **16** | **17** | **18** | **19** | **20** | **21** | **22** |
| **23** | **24** | **25** | **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** |
| **30** | **31** | | | | | |

Saudi Aramco **world** 2004

Embroidery fills a diamond-pattern frame with floral designs on a one-by-two-meter *jamawar* shawl of pashmina wool from Srinigar, Kashmir. Such a shawl might take a single embroiderer seven years to complete, taking into account the seasonal rhythms of work among fields, flocks and the textile workshop. Photo by Eric Hansen.

## NOVEMBER
RAMADAN 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | **1** 18 | **2** 19 | **3** 20 | **4** 21 | **5** 22 |
| **6** 23 | **7** 24 | **8** 25 | **9** 26 | **10** 27 | **11** 28 | **12** 29 |
| **13** | **14** | **15** | **16** | **17** | **18** | **19** |
| **20** | **21** | **22** | **23** | **24** | **25** | **26** |
| **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** | | | |

## DECEMBER
SHAWWAL 1425

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 'Id al-Fitr | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | **1** 19 | **2** 20 | **3** 21 |
| **4** 22 | **5** 23 | **6** 24 | **7** 25 | **8** 26 | **9** 27 | **10** 28 |
| **11** 29 | **12** 30 | **13** | **14** | **15** | **16** | **17** |
| **18** | **19** | **20** | **21** | **22** | **23** | **24** |
| **25** Christmas | **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** | **31** |

# Lights, Camera—Cook!

Written by Juliette Rossant  Photographed by Nik Wheeler

When not in Hollywood—which isn't too often these days, as he says he won't accept bad-guy-Arab roles—Chris Maher relishes waiting on his own customers (above) at Momentitos de la Vida, which opened its doors in 1999 in Taos, New Mexico. "You feel you are in a salon," says one of Maher's former culinary students, Bill Gerber. Left: A boyhood in Alexandria, Egypt left Maher a wealth of memories—and some of the best of them were of his mother's and grandmother's cooking.

**Act 1, Scene 1**
**Los Angeles, California:**

Camera opens on low-angle shot down aisle of 1950's-style diner. Loud clatter and chatter, indistinguishable from jukebox music. Camera turns to head of COOK [Christopher Maher], salt-and-pepper hair and beard and top of a white T-shirt just visible in opening of short-order kitchen's window. Head sideways, COOK says as he puts plates onto window shelves:

[Maher]: **Who's dying? Come *on!* Pick it up! Pick it up!**

WAITRESS [Jennifer Lopez] passes by with coffeepot in hand and pleads for an order:
[Lopez]: **Phil! Big Papa, please! I need 15!**

COOK leans head out aperture towards disappearing WAITRESS and says, almost to himself, in a fatherly tone:
[Maher]: **I love it when you call me 'Big Papa.'**

Moments later, plates are returned unceremoniously by someone else to kitchen window. COOK picks up plate quizzically, shakes it, complains:
[Maher]: **What's the problem here? It's hot—it's *hot!***

The script is from *Enough* (2002) by English director Michael Apted, whose movies include *Nell* (1994) and *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988). Actor Christopher Maher is playing a cook for the very first time.

**Act 2, Scene 1**
**Taos, New Mexico:**

Twilight at candle-lit restaurant in high mountain valley. Band plays southwestern tunes in background. Camera zooms in slowly to lone standing figure. Slow close-up of CHEF/restaurateur [Christopher Maher]. In white shirt, black pants, tinted glasses, CHEF moves around patio, greeting guests. Camera follows CHEF inside. More candles light wooden-beamed ceiling of quiet adobe room. CHEF walks over to couple at low table, presents plate of perfectly grilled shrimp, plump crab cakes and spicy pineapple relish.

This time the script is Maher's own, from his four-diamond restaurant Momentitos de la Vida ("Little Moments of Life") in Taos, New Mexico.

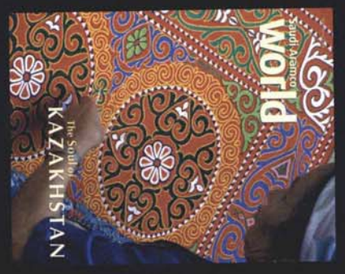
Christopher Maher—chef, restaurateur and Hollywood actor—was born in Egypt as Maher Butros. Although his family left Alexandria when he was nine years old, his face lights at the mere mention of his native country and beams with memories he longs to share—of food.

Maher traces his love of food to his childhood. Both his mother and his grandmother cooked well. At age six, Maher started helping them in the kitchen on the cook's day off.

LOWER: COURTESY OF CHRIS MAHER






In November 1949, the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) launched an interoffice newsletter named *Aramco World*. Over the next two decades, as the number of Americans working with Saudi colleagues in Dhahran grew into the tens of thousands, *Aramco World* grew into a bimonthly educational magazine whose historical, geographical and cultural articles helped the American employees and their families appreciate an unfamiliar land. Today's orientation is still toward education, the fostering of cooperation and the building of mutual appreciation between East and West, but for the last four decades, the magazine has been aimed at readers outside as well as inside the company, worldwide. Its articles have spanned the Arab and Muslim worlds, past and present, with special attention to their interconnections with the cultures of the West. The magazine is published in Houston, Texas by Aramco Services Company on behalf of Saudi Aramco, which in 1988 became the national oil company of Saudi Arabia. In 2000, *Aramco World* changed its name to *Saudi Aramco World* to reflect this relationship.

Subscriptions to *Saudi Aramco World* are available without charge to a limited number of readers interested in the cultures of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their connections with the West. We can also provide multiple-copy subscriptions for seminars or classrooms. From Saudi Arabia, please send subscription requests to Public Relations, Saudi Aramco, Box 5000, Dhahran 31311. From all other countries, send subscription requests by postal mail to *Saudi Aramco World*, Box 2106, Houston, Texas 77252, USA.

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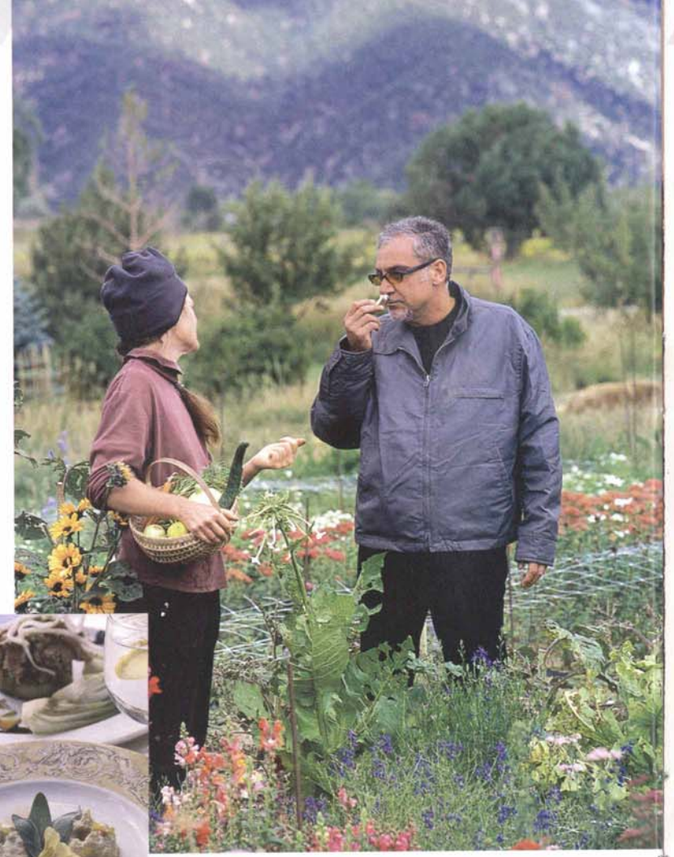
During summers spent east of Alexandria in Aboukir, he remembers that his family would buy fresh gray mullet (*bouri*) directly from the fishermen at the dock and take them to a local bakery to cook. The whole, wet, ungutted fish would first be smothered in wheat chaff to keep it from drying out, then thrown directly onto hot coals. Once well blackened, the fish was dipped in saltwater. Immediately, Maher and his family would eagerly peel away the blackened crust and skin to eat the soft, white flesh within.

Maher also remembers eating fresh blue crabs dropped into a pot of heated water to which generous handfuls of onions and cayenne peppers had been added. Fishmongers would come to his grandmother's house with baskets of fresh sea urchins. While Maher watched, the fishermen would cut open the tops of each spiny urchin to reveal the yellow, caviar-like roe within.

Even such simple chores as clarifying butter launch Maher into intense food reveries.

"I remember my grandmother would receive a huge shipment of butter. She would carefully sterilize all the jars, then heat the butter gently till it melted. Then she would pour the clear, golden liquid into the jars, and as it cooled, it would slowly thicken and get cloudy, until it was opaque. There would be enough clarified butter for a whole year."

In the mid-1960's, Maher's family left Alexandria for Toronto, and they recreated Egyptian dishes with the ingredients they found in their new home. He recalls his mother's delight when she discovered that an Egyptian neighbor grew fresh *molokhia* (mallow), a favorite dish. Otherwise, fresh vegetables were hard to find in the Canada of the 1960's: Vegetables, he says, were a frozen food by definition.



Maher buys organic produce from local growers such as Melinda Bateman whenever he can. Left: Part of the restaurant's "Global Fusion" menu is a "trio of Middle Eastern dips," classics that hark back to his roots. Opposite: This year Momentitos de la Vida won a four-diamond rating from the American Automobile Association, but Maher's latest dream is a restaurant in Cairo. "I would want to appeal to westerners, but most of all I want to bring back what I have learned and give that to Egyptians."

While his brother Peter went to medical school in Egypt and second brother, George, went to medical school in Egypt and Canada, Maher found two years of pre-med studies to be enough. In his third year, he tried liberal arts, including an acting class. During his very first rehearsal, he turned to his director and said, "I'm going to be doing this for the rest of my life." After he finished at the University of Toronto, his newfound passion drove him to New York in 1978. There he attended the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre in mid-Manhattan, alma mater of Gregory Peck, Al Pacino and Diane Keaton, as well as of director Sidney Pollack.

Like most starving actors, Maher also worked as a waiter, in his case in no less prominent a place than Tavern on the Green in New York's Central Park. But instead of staying in the front of the house, Maher was drawn to the kitchen, where he helped the *garde-manger* chefs prepare vegetables and make cold salads. At Tavern on the Green, he met restaurateur-to-be Drew Nieporent, who guided Maher-the-foodie through the intricacies of a first-rate professional kitchen, while Nieporent's mother helped Maher-the-actor get his first talent agent.

Otherwise completely self-taught, Maher began catering at people's homes until he landed his first major acting role: a year's stint as the evil assassin Colonel Hashim on the soap opera *Another World*. In 1982 Maher moved to Los Angeles to pursue motion-picture roles. He changed his name from Maher Boutros to Christopher Maher, but despite the change he was offered only evil-Arab roles.

"I was typecast as a dumb Arab or a bad Arab, one or the other. It depressed me, and I just refused to do any more."

To support himself while holding out for better roles, Maher returned to catering. By 1990 he had founded Christopher Michael's catering, the name reflecting a short-term partnership with Michael Toolin. The catering business thrived, and Maher added a bakery and a café. Eventually, he moved all these, along with a new fine-dining restaurant, into the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood and received favorable reviews in *The Los Angeles Times*.

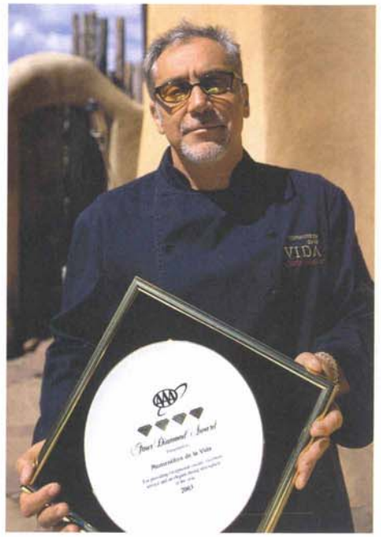
Maher was invited by Creative Artists Agency agent Fred Spektor to teach Saturday-morning cooking classes to actors and producers at Spektor's home. Bill Gerber, a music and film talent agent who headed Warner Brothers and then formed his own production company, was one of Maher's students.

"When I was first invited," Maher says, "I thought, 'What a weird idea. I don't even cook for myself, let alone devote that kind of time going to a cooking class.' The fact that it was in somebody's home, with nice people, made it more of a social gathering, though, and it really did turn into some very fun, social lunches. We cooked, and then we ate and ate."

Gerber became a regular at the weekly cooking classes.

"The reason we went so often," Gerber says, "is because Chris's personality is very soothing and he enjoys life so much, eating and entertaining. You feel you're in a salon, and you're with someone who appreciates friends and the finer things in life." Gerber and Spektor even threw a party for the launch of Maher's bakery.

Yet with all his powerful friends in "the business," Maher never asked for help in getting good roles—indeed, he never told his cooking students he was an actor. He kept his cooking and his acting completely separate.



In his mind, though, acting and cooking are closely associated. "Restaurant life is like theater: It's opening night every night," Maher says. "We are always ready."

In the early 1990's, Maher joined the numbers of Hollywood people who vacationed in Taos, New Mexico, and he eventually built a vacation home there. Then, in 1998, he got a call that an old restaurant in Taos was up for sale. Time was short; a quick decision had to be made. Maher decided to go for it. He managed to sell his bakery and café and his house in Los Angeles, all at a profit, and bought the dilapidated restaurant. It was the single largest financial transaction of his life, with amounts in eight digits—a long way from buying *bouri* from fishermen in Alexandria. As he restored the Taos restaurant, he shuttered his catering business and finally opened Momentitos de la Vida in January 1999.

"I felt the demand was here for a great restaurant, but it was like I was opening in the wild, wild West," Maher remembers. He reached out to local farmers to grow vegetables and fruit that would meet his standards, but because of New Mexico's short growing season, he still had to "import" many of his ingredients from both coasts: "We totally raised the bar."

He worked his way into the local community and his restaurant won respect and praise. Breathlessly, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* raved, "There, at Vida, is present-tense vivid: a gestalt of excellence and elegance. This is a playground for the senses, full-on beauty of place matched by exquisite attention to the myriad details of gustatory pleasure."

Maher has by no means quit acting. He travels to Los Angeles a few times a year for television guest appearances or to try out for a film. After 9/11, he found a number of more interesting and less stereotypical Arab roles. Besides *Enough*, in which he played an Arab cook and restaurant owner, he has appeared on Fox's *24*, playing a deputy prime minister, and twice on CBS's *The Agency*.

The challenge in Los Angeles is to find more "good" Arab roles. The challenge in Taos is to keep the restaurant at the level of excellence Maher demands even when he is not there. With no shortage of young chefs who adore the Taos ski slopes as much as Maher's kitchen, the Taos challenge is the easier one.

**Act 3, Scene 1**
**Alexandria, Egypt:**

Camera opens on elegant restaurant on Alexandria's newly expanded *corniche*. Lines of cars roll up to deposit excited diners. Camera follows one family inside, where CHEF/restaurateur [Christopher Maher] greets them with warm, familiar salutations. CHEF sends diners off to their table and waiters to kitchen to return with long trays of *mezze à la Maher*—Egyptian and Californian appetizers. Close-up on CHEF smiling—at both past and present.

How far off is this script?

"All I know is that I would love to open there," Maher says. "Everything I make has a touch of Egypt in it, the spices and the palate of the Middle East. I would make everything from risotto to steak and serve terrific *mezze*. I would want to appeal to westerners, but most of all I want to bring back what I have learned and give that to Egyptians."

As we taste his *mezze*, his steak, his risotto, clearly there is something about the spicing, about the boldness of flavors and about the presentation, that is Egyptian. Maybe this script is not too far off.

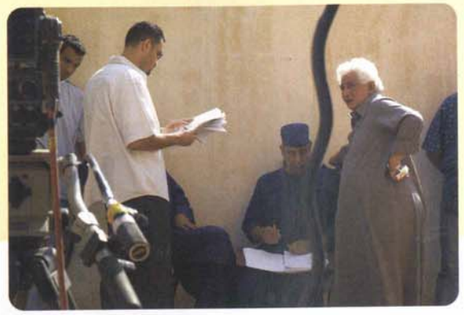
**Juliette Rossant** (www.julietterossant.com) is an author and journalist who has written on food and travel as well as business and politics from bases in Istanbul, Moscow, Paris, Jeddah and various us cities. Her first book, *Super Chef* (May 2004, Simon & Schuster) chronicles the adventures of empire-building celebrity chefs. **Nik Wheeler** (www.nikwheeler.com) has photographed for international publications for more than three decades, and he currently specializes in travel and food. His work for *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World* began in the 1970's, and includes some 20 articles as well as special issues on Central Asia, China and the Silk Roads.

**www.vidarest.com**

# Prime-Time Ramadan

Photographed by Stephanie Keith  Written by Sarah Gauch

For the cast and crew of the new television serial *Kanaria and Company*, the day is not going well. They were supposed to shoot street scenes, but the cars arrived two hours late. The star didn't show at all because he hadn't been paid. Now they've been thrown off their location—the driveway of a glitzy, five-star Cairo hotel—for not getting permission to film there.



The crew and their equipment move to the sidewalk and spill over into a street of honking cars. A rickety donkey cart veers frighteningly close to the female lead, who is wearing a sleek black pantsuit and sunglasses encrusted with faux diamonds.

Every television production has its delays, but *Kanaria and Company* has had more than its share. As one of about 60 Egyptian *musalsalat*—television serial dramas—vying for 12 local airtime slots during Ramadan, plus several more schedule slots on pan-Arab satellite channels, *Kanaria and Company*'s star cast, top scriptwriter and noted director—all Ramadan television "regulars"—face their stiffest competition ever. With less than three weeks to go until the Islamic holy month begins and only about five of its 34 episodes ready, *Kanaria and Company* is feeling the heat.

Musalsalat have long been a staple of television production in Egypt, historically the Arab world's capital of film and television, and in many other Arab countries. However, the most and the best have always been produced for Ramadan. Just a decade ago, there were only about 12 productions annually. The five-fold increase is largely due to the proliferation of satellite outlets, as well as the migration of talent from the movie industry to television as Egypt's film industry falters for technical, logistical and financial reasons in the context of the country's overall economic woes and the increasing dominance of the ubiquitous tube.

The past decade has also witnessed the resurgence of new and improved musalsalat from other Arab countries—especially Syria, Lebanon and Jordan—as well as

Opposite: **On the set of *Kanaria and Company*, Lucy plays Madiha, who in this scene waits to meet her husband for the first time since he was jailed for counterfeiting—and sets in motion a great deal of scripted intrigue.** Above from top: **The popular director of the series, Abdel Hafez, with his signature white hair and *galabiyah* (robe), discusses a scene with his crew. For a car shot, the sound man rides under the hatchback; for another car shot, Lucy practices a final line from the back seat.**

pan-Arab productions for which, for example, a producer from the Gulf may bring together a writer from Jordan, a Syrian director, actors from Lebanon, Syria and Morocco and technical specialists from all over the Arab world, or even from Europe, to produce serials of impressively high quality. In the past five years in particular, these have started to outshine the dominant Egyptian dramas—but they have followed the pattern of their Egyptian counterparts by saving the best of their productions for Ramadan broadcast, thus making the fight for airtime and audience attention during that month even fiercer.

These Ramadan serials, wherever they are produced, range in their subject matter from contemporary social stories to historical epics to comedies. Some people call them soap operas, because they can be excessively melodramatic, with cliffhanger endings in each episode. But unlike America's never-ending and sometimes tawdry soaps, Arab musalsalat, and Egypt's in particular, show little skin, have a limited number of episodes and sometimes include a serious message for the country's—and the Arab world's—mass audience. And over the years they have grown so popular that they have become for many the favorite entertainment during the devout month of sunrise-to-sunset fasting and prayer.

Highlighting the role of these serials as entertainment during Ramadan, Hassan Hamed, chairman of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union, says, "You can't think of Ramadan without thinking of the television serials. So many people are gathered to break the fast at the same moment, so many pray all in unison. Then comes the television, and everyone gathers together to watch."

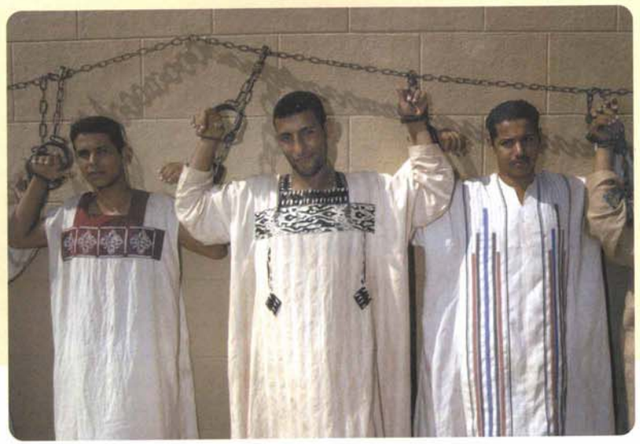
The musalsalat are the best of Egypt's yearly television offerings. They become the topic of national conversation and they garner the highest advertising revenues. What makes the competition among the programs and the anticipation of the viewers more intense than in any western counterpart is that no one—neither the public nor the stars nor the directors nor the broadcasters—knows which serials will show on the mass-appeal local stations until the government-run Policies Planning Committee announces its decisions, sometimes only a couple of days before Ramadan begins. Although Egyptian, Arab and other satellite channels also broadcast the dramas, only 20 percent of Egyptians have access to satellite television, and thus the greatest popular renown is still won through the four local government-run channels.

For *Kanaria and Company* and some other serials, though, the Policies Planning Committee's decision may be moot if they can't finish shooting in time for Ramadan. Ideally, a Ramadan serial needs six months to shoot, but the *Kanaria and Company* crew is trying to do it in four. There have been constant delays and money problems, in addition to the simmering chaos typical of any film or television production in the world.

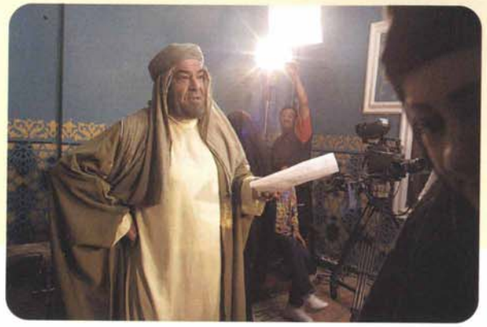
"You see how we're sitting here," says the female lead, who is known only by her first name, Lucy. She is sitting

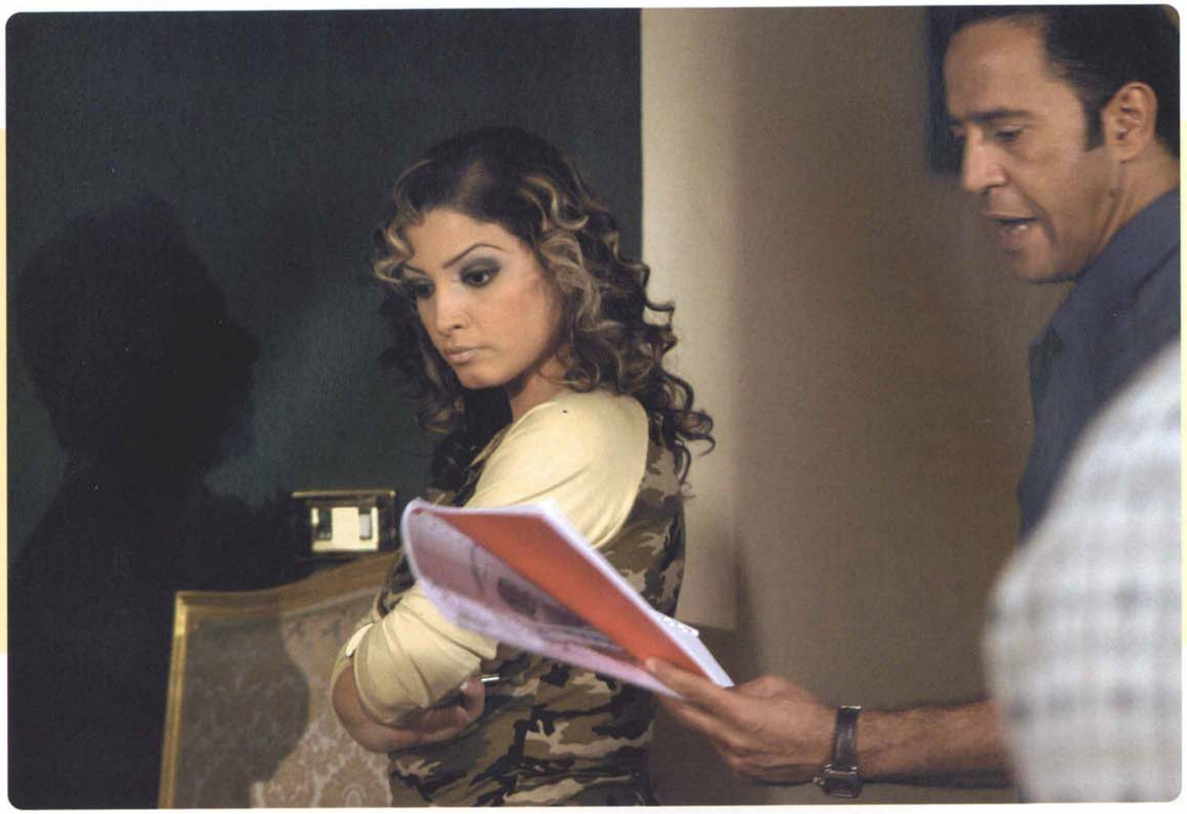
The *musalsalat*'s popularity lies in their realistic portrayal of events that could easily happen to the average person. People also learn from them. "I think these soap operas are absolutely terrific, the way they get their message across indirectly," says Nabil Dajani, professor of communications at the American University of Beirut.

Above: **Working as extras on the set of *Man of Destiny*, a historical drama of the conquests of 'Amr ibn al-'As, the general credited with bringing Islam to Egypt in the seventh century, a band of "Roman soldiers" takes direction as they prepare to deal with a group of "Egyptian prisoners,"** right. **The *musalsalat* are a boon to part-timers seeking cash as extras, and the same extra may work in any number of Ramadan productions.** Opposite: ***Man of Destiny* extra Nisreen Dashoush works most of the year as a model; here she relaxes in Media City's cafeteria after a shoot.** Insets, from top: **An animal wrangler prepares for a scene in which a poor farming couple discovers riches in their barn. 'Amr ibn al-'As is played by Nour El Sherif, one of the country's best-known actors, shown here among extras portraying Romans. In the series *Women of Islam*, actor Nabil El Hograssy takes a break from his 13th-century role.**







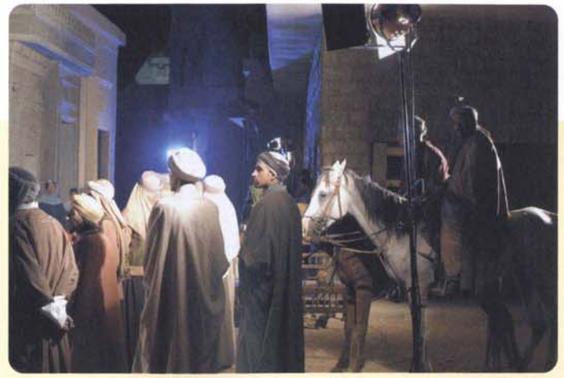


nonchalantly on the sidewalk as cars and minibuses careen past, her rhinestone sunglasses still wrapping her eyes. "The shooting was supposed to start two hours ago." Eventually she does see some action: She drives off in a white Hyundai piloted by a man in a purple suit and tie, camera crew trailing.

Everyone on the set agrees that it's non-negotiable: *Kanaria and Company*, with its million-dollar budget, *must* finish on time. After all, it would be very awkward for the musalsalat to launch without a serial scripted by Osama Okashah, who since 1976 has authored some 40 musalsalat—or without one by director Ismail Abdel Hafez, who since 1986 has directed some of the best of all time—or without Farouq Fishawi, the series' lead and a popular film and television star. Besides, *Kanaria and Company* is potentially a real money-maker. According to Emad Abdullah, general manager of its production company, the show has already signed a contract with one Arab satellite station, and it could sign with a dozen more. And if it can earn a top local-channel slot, there's more money to be made from advertising. And ultimately, it's a good story: A counterfeiter discovers after getting out of prison that the justice system is far more forgiving of his past crimes than Egyptian society.

Unfortunately, if *Kanaria and Company* doesn't finish on time, there are plenty of others to fill its slot. In Egypt, there's *Malak Rohi*, with Egypt's leading female star, Yosra. There is *Come, Let's Dream of Tomorrow*, featuring superstars Leila Elwi and Hussein Fahmi. And there is respected film director Khairy Bishara's first try at television, *It's a Matter of Principle*. From other Arab producers, there are the historical serials *Rabi' Gharnatah (The Spring of Granada)*, *Al-Hajjaj* and *'Umar al-Khayyam* and the social drama *Al-Liqa' al-Akhar (The Other Meeting)*, among many others.





Opposite, top: **Well-known comic actor Ashraf Abdel Baky practices lines with star actress Rugina in *Tales of a Modern Husband*, set in a suburban Cairo apartment.** Opposite, lower: **Abdel Baky meets a young fan outside the set.** Right, from top: **Actors prepare for a night scene in Media Production City. On screen, their melodrama and the cliffhanger endings of episodes lead some to call the musalsalat "soap operas," but the English term is too narrow for all that the musalsalat offer. In the control room, an editor assembles footage for *Women of Islam*.**

In any case, *Kanaria and Company*'s cast and crew aren't the only ones worried about finishing on time. Similar concerns haunt their counterparts in the historic-religious serial *Man of Destiny*, in which superstar Nour El Sherif plays the lead role of 'Amr ibn al-'As, the seventh-century Arab general largely credited with bringing Islam to Egypt.

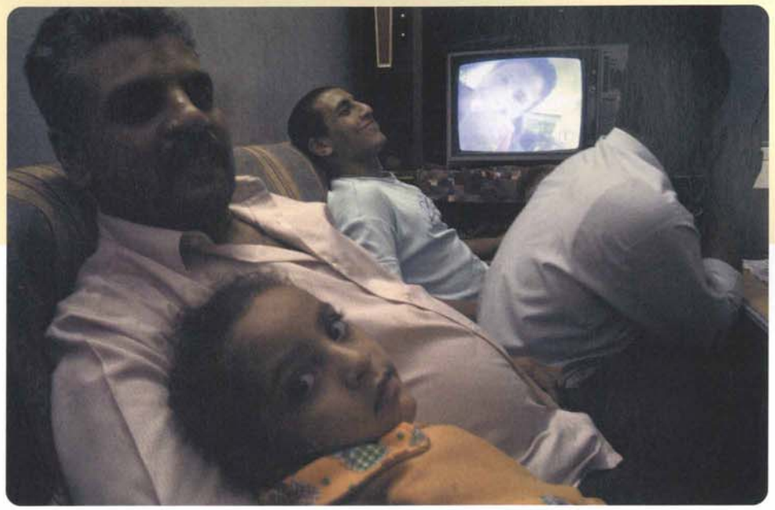
"We're all nervous," says actor Yaser Maher, who plays a friend of the lead. "Because the Islamic stories have their biggest audience during Ramadan, we'll probably have to wait another whole year if this serial doesn't air."

During Ramadan, which is also the most social month of the year, the musalsalat run from the morning to the wee hours of the following day. And they run everywhere. Television sets are not only in homes, but also in public places—restaurants, hotels, stores and even outdoor sports clubs. According to Nabil Dajani, professor of communications at the American University of Beirut, television allows a family-centered culture to entertain in their own homes for free. Friends and families gather to surf channels in search of the best programs, to discuss the characters and to debate the wisdom of their decisions.

The musalsalat's popularity, says Dajani, lies in their portrayal of problems and concerns that could easily be those of the average person. People also learn from them: The government has long used them to educate the public and shape public opinion. Although there is less state control of Egyptian television today than in the past, the producers, to varying degrees, are still aware of the serials' didactic power. "I think these soap operas are absolutely terrific, the way they get their message across indirectly," says Dajani. He describes one that sent a positive message about Muslim-Christian relations by showing a Muslim man who had gone bankrupt being deserted by all his friends but one, a Christian. Others depict the evils of greed, denounce religious militancy or extol hard work and patriotism. With the largest number of viewers being women, there is an abundance of strong female characters, and there are frequent allusions to women's rights.

Of course, some say the stories are largely hack work. "There's nothing interesting," says Summer Said, who writes on culture for the English-language weekly *The Cairo Times*. "I'm really fed up with the same themes. They're either about Egyptians 50 years ago, or love stories, or very rich people. I'd like to see something new. Or maybe keep the old theme, but deal with it from another angle."

Cutting edge or blunt instrument, three days before Ramadan *Kanaria and Company* has more immediate concerns. In the last two weeks, it has completed only two more hours of finished production, and it has eight to go. Things are not looking good. Gathering on today's set, the "villa" at Media Production City outside Cairo, cast and crew show the pressure and



Left: **Nermeen Abdallah readies her family's table for *iftar*, the post-sunset meal that breaks the daily Ramadan fast. Later,** below, **her husband Aziz and other family members relax at home for the evening with a few musalsalat.** Opposite: **Young men do their watching into the wee hours at a café.**

exhaustion in the deep circles around their eyes and their dark, furrowed brows. At five p.m. director Abdel Hafez, immediately recognizable by his white mane of hair, arrives and struggles out of his silvery turquoise car. After shooting until three that morning and editing until seven, he is tired, his eyes are puffy, and white bristles dot his chin. "He's 64," a crewmember says. "His health won't take this."

Abdel Hafez walks onto the rooftop set in his trademark *galabiyah*, the traditional full-length robe, barely greeting the crowd that soon gathers around him. The cast and crew now know that the Policies Planning Committee didn't pick *Kanaria and Company* for a local channel because production was so far behind schedule. Still, the series can still show on the local channels after Ramadan, and on Arab satellite stations during Ramadan —if they can finish. The crew says they'll work 20 hours a day, maybe even until the last day of Ramadan, toward the end of the month airing at night what they shoot during the day.

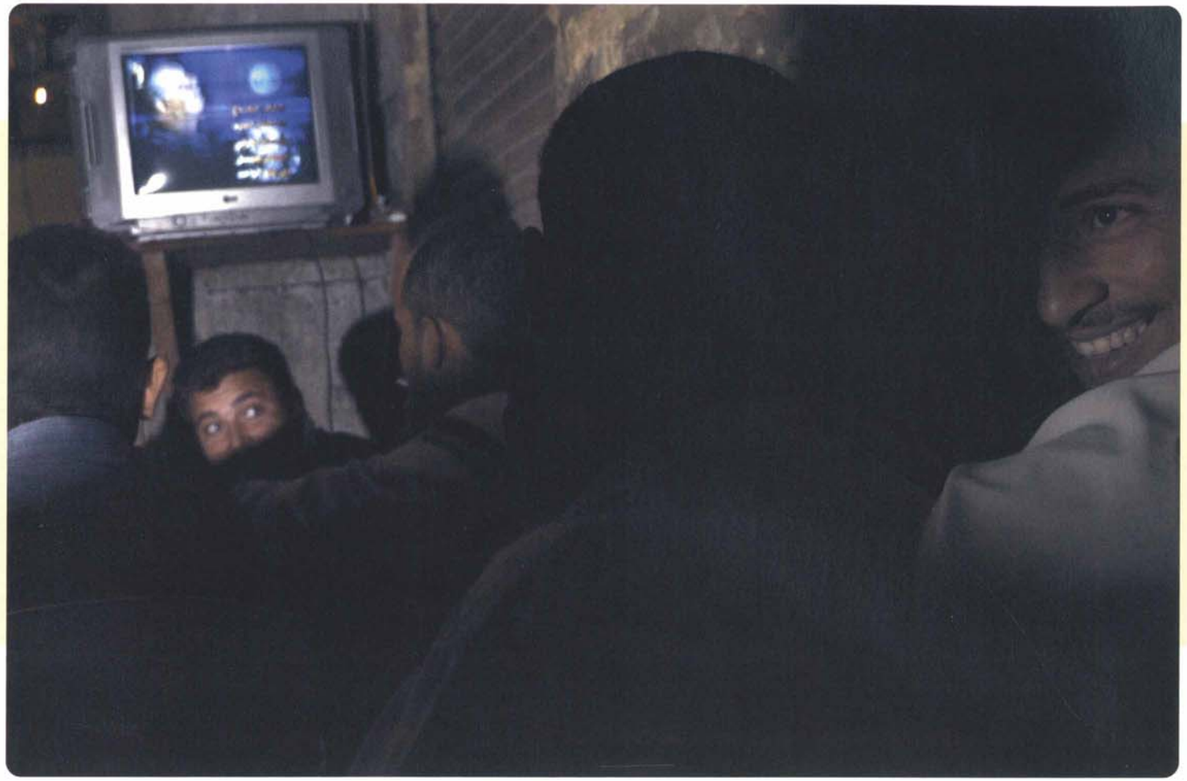
The mounting pressure makes Abdel Hafez nervous, however. "The closer Ramadan gets, the faster we work, and any mistake can lead to a disaster," he says. "There's always the fear that we won't finish, but what scares me the most is that the quality of the work will suffer."

The following day, on the set of *Man of Destiny*, a row of Roman soldiers stands in a turreted "fort," pointing bows and arrows at a motley group of Egyptian "prisoners" in chains. Although all is not well for the Egyptians in this scene, the situation is looking up for this serial: The Policies Planning Committee chose it to run at midnight on local channel one.

"That's the best time," says Moutaz Metawi, the director's first assistant, who is clearly pumped at the news. "People will see it. They'll be up to see it."

The origins of musalsalat in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world go back centuries, some say, to storytellers and shadow-play performers who told serial tales in cafés during Ramadan nights. Others say the origins lie in the classic format of *The Arabian Nights*, known in the Arab world as *One Thousand and One Nights*, the famous Arabic series of "to-be-continued" stories. Other scholars see modern connections. "I see them harking back to modern film and somewhat to modern literature," says Lila Abu-Lughod, professor of anthropology at Columbia University in New York. "It's a modernist genre with its own conventions of narrative and acting."

In the 1920's, radio serials began transfixing Ramadan fasters. The television musalsalat began to appear in the 1960's, and since the 1990's revolution in satellite broadcasting, they have become only more popular. In recent years Egyptian and Arab private investors have joined the Egyptian government in financing them, though private money still makes up only an estimated 10 percent of the total.



Other Arab countries produce musalsalat for Ramadan too, but they sometimes attract fewer viewers and are often of lesser quality. However, Egypt's main serious rival, Syria—where the shows' political and social messages are surprisingly bold—has presented a consistent string of very high-quality, serious social and historical productions in recent years. Pan-Arab productions have also been on the rise and compete fiercely in terms of quality and audience attraction. In any case, whether one prefers Egyptian or Syrian musalsalat, or perhaps an upstart show from, say, Lebanon—or even something from the long list of special Ramadan shows of other types—it is all part of the sociable debate that flourishes every Ramadan.

But this year there is series that nobody is talking about: *Kanaria and Company* is not even showing on a satellite channel. It was just too far from done. It's not the only upset of this season. Star actor Yosra's frontrunner serial *Malak Rohi* only made it to a satellite channel, and her personal complaint left the Policies Planning Committee unmoved. But *Kanaria and Company* crewmembers are sorely discouraged. "The series was really good," says camera engineer Ahmed Moustafa. "We worked so hard and exhausted ourselves."

As for the public, with so many serials to choose from, it surely doesn't know what it's missing. By mid-November, halfway into Ramadan's month-long television binge, 21-year-old Islamic philosophy student and night-shift baker Ahmed Abdel Aziz says he's following six musalsalat, watching 10 hours a day. "This is the chance to see the serials," he says. "There are so many—religious serials, social serials. During the rest of the year, there's only one a day." He's standing in a narrow bakery on a noisy street in the working-class neighborhood of Imbaba. Fresh loaves of bread are stacked in a tall rack of metal sheets. Above them on a shelf sits his small television, blasting superstar Nabila 'Ubaid's musalsal *Aunt Nour*. After that, he says, there's *The Night and Its End*, with Egypt's famous physician-turned-actor Yahya El Fakhrani, and then, at midnight, *Man of Destiny*—and more, almost until sunrise.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**Related articles** have appeared in these past issues of *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World*

Ramadan: J/F 02, M/A 90, M/A 92
Ramadan entertainments: M/J 96, M/A 99

# Reader's Guide

BY JULIE WEISS


**This two-page guide** offers activities and discussion topics that will help sharpen your reading skills and deepen your understanding of this issue's articles and images. We encourage reproduction and adaptation of these ideas, freely and without further permission from *Saudi Aramco World*, by teachers from late elementary school through early university courses, whether they are working in a classroom or through home study.

—THE EDITORS

## Class Activities

### Theme: Culture

Anthropologists define culture as the beliefs, values, traditions and meanings shared by a group of people. For example, the US Independence Day holiday on July 4 means much the same thing to all people who live in the US and is therefore a part of their culture, but people in Mauritania, Egypt and other countries do not share that culture. Similarly, Muslims in those countries share the culture of Ramadan with Muslims in the US, but if you are not a Muslim, Ramadan probably doesn't mean much to you: You don't share that culture. Thus we all live within cultures that we co-create with other people. Usually it's easiest to think of "big" cultures—"Islamic" culture, "American" culture and so on—but culture can also refer to something small: a family's culture, a high school's culture or a soccer team's culture. The following activities are grouped around three questions about culture: How is culture expressed? How is it spread? How does it change? But first, go to a dictionary to see how "culture" is defined there. You'll find many definitions. As a class, decide which ones make the most sense to you and why. How many cultures can you name that you are part of?

#### Cultural Expression

*How do people express what is important (their values), what they believe, and the history (the stories and traditions) that comprise their culture?*

You're probably most familiar with the term "cultural expression" as it relates to art in museums. But paintings, sculptures and photographs aren't the only forms cultural expression can take. This month's magazine has many examples of culture: *hijri* and Gregorian calendars, language, documents and television. As a class, brainstorm from your reading of the articles as many examples of culture as you can. Refer to your definition(s) to guide you. Have a class volunteer write the examples on chart paper.

*What do cultural expressions or "artifacts" say or reveal about the people of the culture they come from?*

Sometimes it's pretty simple: If your cable company carries 10 news channels, you can say with some certainty that people who subscribe to that company's cable service want to know what's happening in the world. Other times, however, it's more complicated.

Take the example of language. Perhaps the easiest way to grasp how language expresses culture is to look at how language has changed over time. With a partner, come up with a list of 20 words or terms that you know are relatively recent additions to the English language. For example, "cell" used to refer to a biological unit that has a membrane and a nucleus, but now it more commonly refers to a type of telephone. "Spam" used to refer to a meat product that came in a can, but now it refers to unwanted e-mail. ("E-mail" itself is a term that didn't even exist 15 years ago.) When you've got your list, write a sentence or two explaining what the words say about what's important to the people who use them.

Now let's look at some cultural artifacts from this issue's articles. Fill in the table below with your ideas about what the cultural expressions on the left reveal about the cultures that created them. On the right, list any parallels in your cultures—family, peer group or country—that come to mind. Add any terms that you came up with in the exercise in the first paragraph of this section.

| Cultural Artifacts | What they reveal about their culture | Parallels among your cultures |
|---|---|---|
| **Visual arts ("Patterns 2004")** | | |
| **Television shows ("Prime-Time Ramadan")** | | |
| **Calendars ("Patterns 2004")** | | |
| **Language ("Mauritania's Manuscripts")** | | |
| **Handwritten books ("Mauritania's Manuscripts")** | | |

*Do cultural artifacts, such as television shows, reflect a group's culture, or do they shape it? Or both?*

"Prime-Time Ramadan" says that sometimes the government uses Egypt's televised *musalsalat* to direct public opinion. What about TV shows you watch? How well, or how badly, do they reflect your life? How much, or how little, do they shape your wishes and your beliefs? Choose a TV show you know. (For this exercise, don't use a "reality" show.) Watch one episode and, as you watch, write down the things you see and hear that are *similar* to your own experiences. For example, the characters on the show might use language you use. Also write down what you see and hear that *differs* from your own experiences.

Afterwards, mark any of those differences that might be shaping your own wishes. Do you want to lose 10 pounds? Start working out? Buy a particular product because what you see on TV doesn't reflect your actual experiences—but makes you wish that it did? Finally, write a letter to the head of the TV network that airs the show you watched. In it, praise the show for three ways it accurately reflected your life, and criticize it for three ways it seemed unrealistic.

#### Cultural Migration

People move. As they do, they bring with them their values, beliefs and traditions. Then people who don't share them see them, and perhaps adopt some of them for themselves. This is how cultures influence each other, sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly. Long ago, traders and explorers spread their cultures as they traveled. In modern society, cultures now migrate via television, the Internet and international business, often without actual physical movement taking place.

Divide the class into four groups and assign each group one of the following articles: "Mauritania's Manuscripts," "Prime-Time Ramadan," "Pattern in Islamic Arts" or "Patterns of Moon, Patterns of Sun." With your group, identify what each piece suggests about cultural migration. Use these questions to guide you.

- How did manuscripts get to Mauritania? Where did manuscripts go when they left Mauritania? What effects did the movement have? Is the culture that produced the manuscripts still there? Name four people in the article who are trying to prevent the disappearance of that culture.
- How has satellite TV spread Arab culture? Does it spread it to everyone in Egypt? Describe the differences between the culture spread by Egypt's local channels compared to the culture spread by satellite channels.
- How did the spread of Islam influence Islamic art? How might Islamic art be different if Islam had remained in one locale?
- How did migration affect the establishment of the *hijri* and Gregorian calendars?

Closer to home, identify one way your daily life is influenced by another culture. Maybe it's someone else's music you hear, or maybe it's a style of clothes you wear, food you like or certain words you have heard and now use. How do you feel about being influenced by another culture? Look at recent immigrants from other countries who are bringing their culture to your area. How are they affecting what is happening? What would be different if this weren't happening?

#### Cultural Change

"'You can't think of Ramadan without thinking of the television serials,' says Hassan Hamed, chairman of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union." That's a statement of dramatic cultural change: For more than 1000 years before TV was invented, Muslims observed Ramadan. Now, for some people in Egypt at least, television is an important part of the holy month: They value it—it's part of the culture.

Using "Prime-Time Ramadan" as a model, think about how TV and movies and music affect the way you celebrate holidays. Does your family watch football on Thanksgiving? (What did people do on Thanksgiving before there was football on TV?) Do they sing certain songs, listen to certain music or watch a certain movie at holiday time? Choose your favorite holiday, and take the point of view of someone who was your age 100 years ago. Write a letter from that person to you about how he or she celebrated that holiday. Have your person-in-the-past challenge you to explain why your celebration of the festivity makes any more sense than his or hers.

## Analyzing Visual Images

We spend a lot of our time looking at visual images—on television and computer screens, in newspapers and magazines, in art galleries and on billboards. Most of us enjoy them without thinking too much about them. It's a good idea, though, to be able to look at visual images with a critical eye: How was this image made? What is its creator trying to communicate? Why? What draws you in? How? What do you get from it?

#### Patterns

The human eye and brain look for patterns. It's part of our cognition—how we know what we know. In the article "Patterns in Islamic Arts," arabesque, geometry, calligraphy and color are described as four major elements of Islamic pattern. Do all patterns in Islamic art need all four elements? Applying what you have learned in the previous section, if cultural artifacts reveal information about the people who create them, what might the patterns used in Islamic art reveal about the beliefs of Muslims? Then study the patterns in one of the six photographs that are part of the calendar.

Using the caption as a guide, describe in as much detail as you can the pattern you see: What shapes does it include? What colors? How often does the pattern repeat? Are there smaller patterns within the larger pattern? If so, describe them, too. Then draw or trace part of the pattern. Finally, write a poem whose pattern of words reflects your sense of the visual pattern you see.

Where do you see patterns in your daily life? Find three examples. Try looking around you right now. Look at magazines, clothes or floor tiles. Analyze the patterns the same way you analyzed the patterns in the calendar. What do you like and dislike about the patterns you have found? Based on your answer, create a pattern of your own that can fill up a whole page. Remember to pay attention to shapes and colors, as well as to what will comprise a complete pattern. How often will your pattern repeat?

#### Abstract or realistic?

The patterns in Islamic art are "abstract." In other words, they don't try to create the illusion of things you can see or touch. Why is Islamic art abstract? What values does this visual style express? Are there parts of some patterns in the calendar that are realistic? See if you can find one. What about patterns in nature? Are they abstract? Name as many as you can. (Hint: snowflakes, the veins in a leaf, and so on.)

#### Close-up or panoramic?

So far you've looked at the images in the calendar as examples of Islamic art. What about looking at them as *photographs* of examples of Islamic art? In other words, rather than looking at them as expressions of Islamic culture, look at them as photos in a magazine that a photographer took and an editor selected. Probably the first thing you'll notice when you think about it this way is that each photograph presents just a small part of a much larger work of art. You might call it a representative fragment—a part of something that is used to represent the whole thing. Imagine a different selection of photographs in the calendar—one that shows not just a fragment, but the whole thing: the entire cover of the Qur'an; the whole door; the whole *zillij* wall and so on. What would be the benefits of using such photographs instead? The drawbacks? Why do you think the photos are presented as they are?

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# Events&Exhibitions

**Porphyry, the Purple Stone:** From Ptolemy to Bonaparte focuses on the purplish-red rock first quarried in Egypt in the Ptolemaic era and its special role in architecture and sculpture from the Hellenistic period to the late 18th century. The stone's extraordinary hardness, the imperial monopoly on its exploitation and, above all, its royal color—for which it is named—bestowed a precious character and a remarkable symbolism upon it. In the medieval mind, it was linked to the Emperor Constantine and to the grandeur of Rome, and its use by Carolingian rulers, popes and the Norman kings of Sicily thus had political implications. Workshops for children ages six to 12 will be held January 3 and 31 and February 14 and 16, supported by an exhibit publication entitled "The Secrets of the Purple Rock." (A conference entitled "Mount Porphyretes and the Imperial Quarries in the Egyptian Desert" will be held in the Louvre Auditorium at 12:30 p.m. February 9.) Musée du Louvre, Paris, November 21 through February 16.

**This porphyry and bronze bust of Alexander the Great, now in the Louvre, was executed in Rome in the 17th century.**





**Festival of Films from Iran** is a 16-program event that includes some of the latest dramas exploring developments in the country. Award-winning filmmaker Rakhshan Bani Etemad, who has focused on social issues in both her fiction and documentary work, is the special guest at this year's festival. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, November 14 through December 14.

**Gallery Talks** at the Met begin at the "Gallery Talks" sign in the Great Hall.
- Egyptian Art of the Middle Kingdom: Creativity in a Time of Change (7 p.m., November 15)
- A Closer Look: *Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh* (3 p.m., November 22 and December 20)
- Neo-Assyrian Art: Monumental Stone Reliefs and Small Ivory Carvings from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud (1 p.m., December 14)

**Metropolitan Museum**, New York.

**The PanEastern Showcase** features ethnic singers and musicians representing the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, China and India and showcasing their traditional music. At the conclusion of the concert, they perform a communal piece that illustrates the unity of all eastern music. Regent Theater, **Arlington, Massachusetts**, November 15.

**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, school district, office of education or university. ⓘ www.mepc.org, www.awaironline.org. Sites and dates include: **McPherson, Kansas**, November 15, and **Willington, Connecticut**, November 18.

**The City of Sardis:** Approaches in Graphic Recording features images of Sardis in western Turkey ranging from 18th-century pencil and ink drawings to computerized renderings. The city, capital of the Lydian kingdom in the seventh and sixth centuries BC, has been the focus of a 45-year study by the Harvard University Art Museums and Cornell University. Catalog. Fogg Art Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, through November 16.

**Visions:** Palestine is the title of both an exhibition and a new book by documentary photographer Andrea Kunzig showing daily life among Palestinians and Israelis in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel. ⓘ rlr@zedat.fu-berlin.de. Emerson Gallery, **Berlin**, November 18–26.

**Thematic Tours** cover particular artifacts and aspects of the museum's collections. Topics include "Women in Ancient Egypt" (November 19 and 26 at 2:30 p.m.) and "Religion in Ancient Egypt" (December 3, 10 and 17 at 2:30 p.m.). Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

**Veil** is a touring exhibition that examines the veil as a symbol in contemporary culture through the selected and commissioned work of 20 artists and filmmakers. The show explores the roles of photography, film and video as modern tools for addressing notions of the veil. Museum of Modern Art, **Oxford, England**, November 22 through January 25; Kulturhuset, **Stockholm**, February 20 through May 2.

**Rugs and Textile Appreciation Mornings** enlighten visitors about "The What and How of Central Asian Rugs" (November 22); "Silk Carpets: Beauty and Luxury" (December 13); and "Textile Arts of the Silk Route: Suzani from Uzbekistan" (December 20). All talks are at 10:30 a.m. Discussions will be led by experts and visitors are invited to bring clean, well-vacuumed examples related to the topic. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**

**Visits to a Collection** in November offers discussions of art including Iran and the Persians (Mondays); Coptic Egypt (Fridays); and Islamic Art (November 22). All programs are at 11:30 a.m. Subjects in December are Egyptian Antiquities (Mondays, 7:45 p.m.) and Roman Egypt (Saturdays, 2:30 p.m.) Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

**Discoveries 2003** screens *Confession*, a film by Turkish director Zeki Demirkubuz (2001, Turkish with English subtitles), in the second annual showcase of new films from Asia. 2 p.m. Freer Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, November 23.

**ReOrient 2003** presents a festival of short plays by playwrights from, or focusing on themes concerning, the Middle East. This is the fifth anniversary of a festival pioneered by Golden Thread Productions, an ensemble that explores Middle Eastern culture and identity as represented around the globe. (**An Evening of Poetry, Performance and Music** with Palestinian and Lebanese poets and artists will be presented in conjunction with the festival November 17.) New Langton Arts, **San Francisco**, through November 23.

**Photographing the Void:** The Camera and the Representation of Islamic Architecture is a lecture that uses new photographs of the Sultan Hassan complex in Cairo to illustrate how photography can aid in the understanding of form and space in Islamic architecture. Canadian photographer-architect Gary Otte, who has worked extensively for the Aga Khan Development Network, will present the lecture at 7:30 p.m. at MIT in **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, November 24.

**The Egyptian Temple:** Rites and Architecture is a workshop that uses a diorama, models and simulations of Medinet Habu in Upper Egypt to help visitors understand the methods architects of antiquity used to solve construction problems. 6:30 p.m. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, November 26 and December 10.

RÉUNION DES MUSÉES NATIONAUX / LEWANDOWSKI

**Gallery Lectures:** Current Archeological Research present practicing archeologists and experts speaking on recent discoveries: "Research on Attalid Portraits," François Queyrel, November 26; "Samarkand," Yuri Karev, December 3; and "Gilgamesh and Symbolic Thought," Jean-Daniel Forest, January 21. All talks at 12:30 p.m. Liard Amphitheater, Sorbonne University, **Paris**.

**Empire of the Sultans:** Ottoman Art from the Khalili Collection explores the influence of the Ottoman sultans on 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 Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. Catalog. Frick Art and Historical Society, **Pittsburgh**, November 29 through February 8; **Worcester [Massachusetts]** Art Museum, March 6 through May 16.

**Antoin Sevruguin and the Persian Image** presents a glimpse into the history of Iran through the eyes of one of that country's most creative photographers. Sevruguin, who lived mainly in Tehran from the late 1830's to 1933, was influenced by both western and eastern artistic traditions and brought a new sense of artistry to Iranian photography. He served the royal court and also ran a public studio. Museum of Lifestyle and Fashion History, **Delray Beach, Florida**, through November 30.

**Journeys & Destinations: African Artists on the Move** features artists from the significant and long-standing African diaspora in Europe and America. Their art, their life experiences and their place in the global art world are shaped by their journeys, which are rarely simple stories of migration, but rather complexes of multiple moves, degrees of homecoming and fluctuating affinities to place and space. Their lives and their ductile identities force us to reexamine the borders, both actual and imagined, between Africa and the rest of the world. National Museum of African Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through November 30.

**The Nance Collection**, containing some 2500 artifacts from Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, including metalwork, clothing, jewelry and textiles, has been donated to the Archives and Museum of Central Missouri State University, which is mounting a permanent rotating display of objects from the collection, beginning with one of the few original Bedouin tents on view in the United States. **Warrensburg, Missouri**, through November.

**The Code of Hammurabi Room** is scheduled to reopen in the Louvre in November. King Hammurabi made Babylon (in what is now southern Iraq) his political, intellectual and religious capital when he ruled Mesopotamia in the 18th century BC, and his law code is a principal work in Babylonian literature. Room No. 3 in the museum's Department of Oriental Antiquities is devoted to the enormously creative and tumultuous second millennium BC in Mesopotamia, with sections highlighting the region's successive empires. It houses not only the centerpiece black stele on which Hammurabi's code is recorded, but more than 500 other objects including the bronze lion, the mural paintings of Mari and the statues of Eshnunna. To celebrate the reopening, the Pergamon Museum of Berlin has lent a large cuneiform tablet inscribed with Assyrian legal decisions, on display beside the code until February 2. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.



**Afghanistan** not only presents works of art from the country's Buddhist and early Islamic period but also focuses on items of everyday use, arranged to reflect Afghans' history and values, war and vanity, pilgrimage and hospitality, work and songs. Highlights include a fully equipped Pashtun nomad tent from the southeast and a completely furnished yurt from the western part of central Afghanistan. The exhibition also features ornamental knotwork and embroidered garments, inlaid weapons, treen vessels, ceramics, objects woven of Mazari palm leaves, waterpipes, musical instruments, silver and glass jewelry, make-up utensils for women and men, amulets and prayer beads, oil lamps, household goods and architectural fragments. Museum für Völkerkunde, **Vienna**, through December 1.

**Trinidad: A Spiritual Portrait**. Photographs by Wyatt Gallery. Kanvas Gallery (9th Ave. at 23rd St.), **New York**, December 1–22.

**The Aga Khan Lecture Series:** A Forum for Islamic Art and Architecture will present: "A String of Pearls: Cross-Currencies between Africa and Andalusia in the Era of Al-Sahili, Granada's Early 14th-Century Architect in the Court of Mali" (December 4); "Chinoiserie Ceramics in the Muslim World: Telling Them Apart" (December 11); "Kerman, the 'Miniature' Isfahan: A Study in Urban History" (December 12); "The Ways of Learning About Islamic Art" (February 5); "Paintings and Politics in 17th-Century Iran: A New Interpretation" (February 26); "Authenticity and Identity in Crusader-Islamic Visual Encounters" (March 18); "In and Out of the Orientalist Genre: The Representation of History in the Paintings of Osman Hamdi Bey" (March 25); and "Encounters With and Beyond Empire: Urban Imagination in Ottoman Travel Writing" (April 17). The free lectures are at 5:30 p.m. ⓘ 617-495-2355. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**.

***Camera Mayya* Reborn:** An AUC Reincarnation focuses on a vanishing feature in Cairo: the box camera that delivers a picture five or 10 minutes after the operator removes the lens cap to capture an image. Canadian photographer Christian Langtvet revives the camera and its technique in the exhibition, with portraits of American University in Cairo students, staff and visitors. Langtvet has worked as the archivist and printer of the Lehnert and Landrock Archive of some 5000 plate-glass negatives from Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Italy, Greece and France, dating from 1904–1930, and has made prints for exhibitions in Cairo; he has also developed a system for making modern duplicate negatives from the deteriorating glass plates. Sony Gallery for Photography, American University in **Cairo**, through December 4.

**The SHARQ Arabic Music Ensemble** of six Arab-American musicians performs suites and songs from the Andalusian period and Egyptian classical music of the mid-1900's with authentic acoustic instruments, including the *qanun* (plucked zither), the *'ud* (fretless lute), the *nay* (bamboo flute), the *keman* (Oriental violin) and the *riqq* (fish-skin tambourine). 8 p.m. MIT Student Center, **Boston**, December 5.

**Where Traditions Meet:** Painting in India From the 14th Through the 17th Century uses the context of the full history of Indian painting—from early manuscript illustrations to the 18th- and 19th-century masterpieces of the Rajput and Mughal courts—to highlight the Persian stylistic influences on the artists of the Muslim courts during the formative years of India's painted arts. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, through December 7.

**The Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra**, directed by Abdel Razzak Al-Azzawi, will perform for the first time in the United States with the [US] National Symphony Orchestra and cellist YoYo Ma. Program includes Beethoven, Ezzat, Fauré, Abdullah Jamal Sagirma (conducting his own work) and Bizet. Admission free. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, **Washington, D.C.**, December 9.

**Children's Stories from Lebanon and Palestine** by Praline Gay-Para and Salim Daw will be read as part of activities to mark the opening of a new Islamic Arts Department at the Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, December 10 and January 21.

**Activities and Workshops** offer a variety of activities for children from six to eight and from eight to 12 focusing on the ancient Middle East. Topics include "Living in Egypt," "The Creation of the World According to the Egyptians," "Three-Dimensional Art in the Time of the Pharaohs," "Hieroglyphics," "Animated Egypt," "The Epic of Gilgamesh," "The Birth of Writing: Cuneiform," and "King Darius and His Scribe." ⓘ activitesmusee@louvre.fr, +33-1-4020-5177. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through December.

**The Hidden Treasures of the Egyptian Museum** marks the great facility's centenary celebration. On display will be nearly 150 artifacts brought up from the basement and not seen in public for many years, including gold amulets and jewelry from the tomb of Tutankhamun. Egyptian Museum, **Cairo**, through December.



**Crossing the Channel:** French and British Painting in the Age of Romanticism features some 80 paintings and 35 works on paper by artists such as Constable, Gericault and the noted Orientalist Eugène Delacroix. Catalog. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through January 4.

**The Dawn of Photography:** French Daguerreotypes, 1839–1855 features some 175 of the best surviving examples of the medium that changed the history of art and visual representation. Photographic pioneers used daguerreotypes for artistic, scientific, ethnographic and documentary purposes. Catalog on CD-ROM. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through January 4.

**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). Exhibit 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. Other objects in the exhibition include life-size statues, reliefs, bronze statuettes, silver vessels and gold jewelry. Carlos Museum, **Atlanta**, through January 4.

**The Art of Resist Dyeing** showcases some 25 objects that demonstrate various methods of decorative resist dyeing of textiles. The technique encompasses a variety of processes in which areas of cloth or individual yarns are protected from dye penetration by wax, paste, thread or some other substance. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through January 5.

**The Decoration of the Palace of Sedrata** focuses on a group of six stucco panels uncovered in the 1950's in the ruins of a 10th-century palace in the desert region of Ouargla in Algeria. Their imaginative geometric designs combine Abbasid influences with elements of local patterns of ornamentation, and are the first evidence for the existence of palace architecture in Algeria. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through January 5.

**Tanagra:** Myth and Archeology surveys the painted terra-cotta figurines named after an ancient city in Boetia (Greece), whose necropolis was uncovered during excavations in the early 1870's. The figurines were much sought after in the 19th century, giving rise to great rivalries among major museums and private collectors, in part because they seemed to evoke an image of antiquity that was more everyday, more decorative and less rigorously classical than commonly perceived. Some of the finest specimens of these figures came from Tanagra and were exported all around the Mediterranean by the late fourth century BC. Catalog. (A related lecture will be delivered at National Library of France, November 22 at 12:30 p.m.) Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through January 5.

**Ancient Egypt** is an elaborate recreation of the interior of an Egyptian temple complex, including the actual mummy of Padihershef, a 26th-

*Continued from previous page*

Dynasty Theban stonecutter, along with his decorated coffins, as well as tools, baskets and other objects from everyday Egyptian life. Smith Art Museum, **Springfield, Massachusetts,** through January 6.

**Butabu:** Adobe Architecture in West Africa features large black-and-white photographs by James Morris that illustrate the creative ways architects in West Africa shape earth and water into works of art and feats of engineering. Among the Batammaliba peoples of Togo, the term *butabu* describes the process of moistening earth with water in preparation for building. The exhibition and an accompanying book of the same title dispel the misconception that African architecture comprises little more than mud huts. Included are buildings from Mali, Niger, Togo and Burkina Faso. Morris's photographs, taken in 1999 and 2000, portray a form of architecture that is increasingly under threat. Zelda Cheatle Gallery, **London**, through January 11.

**Homelands:** Baghdad–Jerusalem–New York is a retrospective of the sculpture of Baghdad-born artist Oded Halahmy, which combines abstract elements with organic forms. Halahmy's monumental but engaging sculptures originate in modernist attitudes but pay homage to the art of the ancient Middle East, existing between abstraction and representation. Yeshiva University Museum, **New York**, through January 15.

**Arms and Armor:** Notable Acquisitions 1991–2002 celebrates additions to the Arms and Armor Galleries that have significantly enriched the collection of European, North American, Japanese and Islamic arms. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through January 18.

**Eternal Egypt:** Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum displays some 150 pieces spanning 3000 years of Egyptian history. The exhibition includes colossal sculptures—such as the three-ton red granite Lion of Amenhotep III and a large standing statue of Ramesses the Great—as well as masterworks in wood, terra-cotta, gold, glass, bronze and papyrus. Egyptologists will lead a daylong symposium entitled "Tradition and Innovation: Artists in Ancient Egypt" on opening day. ⓘ www.thewalters.org. Catalog. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, through January 18.

**The Hunt for Paradise:** Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501–1576 explores the origins and evolution of the distinctive Safavid style that emerged during the first half of the 16th century. The show focuses on the great hunting carpet by Ghyas al Din Jami in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum and includes other carpets, ceramics, metalwork, lacquer and hardstones, as well as important examples of miniatures. bindings and other arts of the book. In Milan, the exhibition is enriched by loans from Iranian collections. Asia Society, **New York**, through January 18; Poldi Pezzoli Museum, **Milan**, February 23 through June 28.

**From Delacroix to Renoir:** The Algeria of the Painters is part of a program of events celebrating "Djazaïr, Algerian Year in France" through the works of artists such as Algerian-born Eugène Delacroix. Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, through January 18.

**From Delacroix to Matisse:** Drawings from the Algiers Museum of Fine Arts features a selection of drawings highlighting Orientalist artists of the 19th and early 20th century, including Delacroix and some of the leading exponents of French drawing of the time. The exhibition is also part of "Algerian Year in France." Catalog and documentary film. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through January 19.

**Draped, Wrapped and Folded:** Untailored Clothing highlights how simple, untailored clothing can reveal a great deal about both the wearer and the culture from which the clothing originates. While some cultures prefer to make highly tailored garments that echo the human form, others favor rectangular lengths of cloth worn draped, wrapped or folded about the body. Despite the latter's simplicity of form, the design and decoration can reflect a high degree of visual complexity and artistic expression, and pieces are often deliberately crafted with the outfit's three-dimensional appearance in mind. The exhibition will also explore how clothing often communicates information about social distinctions within a culture. It features 19 garments from around the world, including Tunisia and Indonesia. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, January 30 through June 6.

**Kings on the Tigris:** Palace Reliefs from Nimrud. Skulpturensammlung, **Dresden,** January 30 through March 21.

**Saudi Arabian Traditional Costumes** presents antique and reproduction costumes from each of the kingdom's five regions, along with artifacts from those areas lent by local collectors. Saudi Aramco Community Heritage Gallery, **Dhahran, Saudi Arabia,** through January.

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**Spirit of Islam:** Experiencing Islam through Calligraphy is a website introducing visitors to the esthetics, spirituality and educational principles of the Muslim world through the time-honored art of calligraphy. It is based on the eponymous exhibition held in 2001 and 2002 at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Educational additions to the website, such as lesson packages for high school teachers, are expected to be completed in January. **www.moe.uc.ca/spiritofislam**.

**Bravehearts:** Men in Skirts places the fashion of western men wearing what is often considered women's clothing in historical and cross-cultural context. The exhibition of more than 100 items shows how designers have looked to Asian, African and Oceanic cultures, and garments including the Middle Eastern and North African caftan or *djelleba*, the Japanese kimono and the South Asian sarong as sources of inspiration and legitimization. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through February 8.

**The Legacy of Iraq:** The Looting and Loss of Cultural Heritage is the title of a lecture by Dr. Erica Ehrenberg, the dean of the New York Academy of Art. 7 p.m. Speakers Auditorium, Georgia State University Student Center, **Atlanta**, February 10.

**A Woman's Treasure:** Bedouin Jewelry of the Arabian Peninsula features more than 100 pieces, including jewelry, headdresses, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, coffee urns, incense burners and other artifacts in gold, silver and brass. The craftsmanship and design of the pieces reflect a variety of cultural referents, both social and religious, and reveal the significant roles played by jewelry in the lives of nomadic women of the Peninsula—as dowry, talisman and endowment. Bead Museum, **Glendale, Arizona**, through February 15.

**Portraits without Names:** Palestinian Costume focuses on 200 years of costume and embroidery. **Bathurst** Regional Gallery, **NSW, Australia**, February 20 through April 12.

**A Woman's Way:** Feminine Attire in 20th-Century Morocco provides an introduction to the distinctive quality of women's clothing, showing Berber, Arab and Jewish influences. More than 50 textiles demonstrate many of the changes that occurred during the last century in Morocco, a country where women use fashion to express personal esthetics and conform to cultural traditions that place a high value on the art of individual artisans. The display includes 11 mannequins dressed in full ensembles of clothing and jewelry. It points out the differences between the clothing in urban and rural areas; textile representations range from the Rif Mountains in the north to the desert areas of the south, as well as inland and coastal cities. **Minneapolis** Institute of Arts, through February 21.

**Love and Yearning:** Mystical and Moral Themes in Persian Poetry and Painting displays 26 finely illustrated manuscripts demonstrating how artists from the 15th to 17th century transformed the rich imagery of Persian lyrical poetry into stylized, detailed and colorful images. Manuscripts include pages from Nazami's *Khamsa (Quintet)*, Jami's *Halft Awrang (Seven Thrones)*, and *Bustan (Orchard)* and *Gulistan (Rose Garden)* by Sa'di. ⓘ www.asia.si.edu, 202-357-2700. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through February 22.

**The Quest for Immortality:** Treasures of Ancient Egypt presents coffins, masks, jewelry, papyri, sarcophagi and sculpture from Cairo's Egyptian Museum. An IMAX film, *Mysteries of Egypt*, and a planetarium program, *Stars of the Pharaohs*, are shown in conjunction with the exhibit. **New Orleans** Museum of Art, through February 25; **Milwaukee** Public Museum, March 28 through August 8.

**Courtly Arts of the Indian Subcontinent** are displayed in an installation depicting a maharajah's library. Royal portraits from the 18th and 19th centuries and 22 miniature paintings are on display, along with ivory figures, an embroidered tent hanging and a marble table inlaid with semiprecious stones, all in the Mughal style. **Newark [New Jersey]** Museum, through February.

**Breaking the Veils:** Women Artists from the Islamic World presents the work of 51 female artists from across the Muslim world. The continuing exhibition aims to break the stereotypes of Muslim women and includes 63 paintings and etchings in a variety of genres. The artists themselves reflect the mixed faiths and cultures within the 13 Islamic countries represented in the show. Co-organized by the Royal Society of Fine Arts, Jordan, and FAM (Femme Art-Mediterranean). Foundation Laboratorio Mediterraneo, **Naples**, February and March.

«« March

**Asian Games:** The Art of Contest will explore the role of games as social and cultural activities in the diverse societies of pre-modern Asia. The exhibition comprises 120 to 150 artworks, including spectacular examples of game sets dating from the 12th to the 19th century, Persian and Indian court paintings, and illuminated manuscripts. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, March 5 through May 22.

**Memento:** Muriel Hasbun Photographs features the work of a woman of Palestinian and Jewish heritage, raised as a Catholic in Latin America, who uses her family history as an inspiration for her layered, collage-like images. Corcoran Gallery of Art, **Washington, D.C.**, March 6 through June 7.

**Byzantium:** Faith and Power (1261–1557) focuses on the artistic and cultural significance of the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire. The exhibition explores the impact of its culture on the Islamic world and the Latin-speaking West. It begins in 1261, when Constantinople was restored to imperial rule, and concludes in 1557, when the empire that had fallen to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 was renamed Byzantium. Catalog. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, March 23 through July 4.

«« April

**Teachers' Institutes on Understanding and Teaching about Islam** will be offered in two-week sessions during the summer. Classes on Islamic faith, practice, history and culture will be taught by university professors from the United States and abroad. Participants will become more familiar with teaching resources and techniques for integrating them into social studies, religion or world history curricula. College credit is available. ⓘ (505) 685-4584, kdalavi@cybermesa.com. Application deadline **April 5**. Dar al Islam, **Abiquiu, New Mexico**.

**Sacred Scripts:** World Religions in Manuscripts and Print draws on the finest examples in the University Library of sacred manuscripts from all over the world. It includes magnificent illuminated copies of the Qur'an, fine illustrated Bibles and printed Buddhist texts from the eighth century AD, which are among the earliest datable printed documents in the world. **Cambridge [England]** University Library, through April 24.

**Secret Splendors:** Women's Costume in the Arab World. **Noosa** Regional Gallery, **QLD, Australia,** April 30 through June 14.

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

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

**The Continuous Stroke of a Breath:** Calligraphy from the Islamic World portrays the art of ornamental writing that is the quintessential visual expression of the Muslim faith. Arabic script, the medium for this expression, evolved into a powerful and flexible form of esthetic and spiritual expression. Muslim scribes were inspired to improve the legibility and artistic qualities of this script by the need to preserve and disseminate the Qur'an. Over time, calligraphy spread from the written page to become a major decorative element in virtually every medium of Islamic art. The exhibition takes its title from a traditional expression that likens the movement of the pen in a master calligrapher's hand to the flow of breath in his body. Included are masterpieces of calligraphy from the ninth through the 20th century from Arab, Indian, Persian and Turkish regions of the Islamic world. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, December 20 through July 18.

**This folio from a famous blue-vellum copy of the Qur'an, featuring gold and silver calligraphy, is from North Africa—possibly Kairouan in Tunisia—and dates from the ninth century.**

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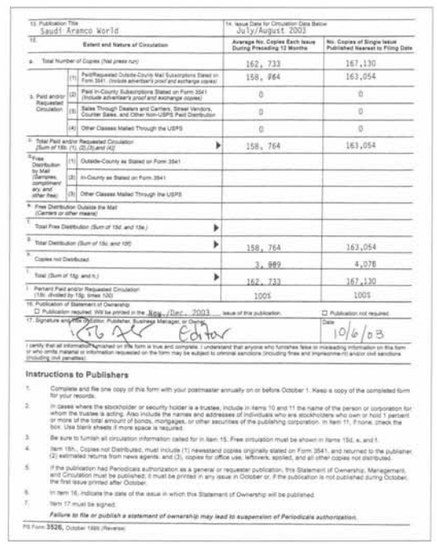

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